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ECOFEMINIST PERSPECTIVE ON MUTATION AND IDENTITY IN ANNIHILATION

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Abstract
The goal of this research is to analyze the ecofeminist view of mutation and identity in the film Annihilation (2018) by director Alex Garland. The research approach is qualitative textual analysis from Ecofeminist Theory developed by Ecofeminists such as Françoise d'Eaubonne (1974) and furthered by Karen J. Warren, Val Plumwood and Greta Gaard. The film is a study of the interconnection between women, nature and ecological change as evident in the film's use of the Shimmer, mutation and the female characters' experiences. The results show that the Shimmer is an ecological counterbalance to patriarchal and anthropocentric ideologies and that mutation implies reconstruction of identity and not destruction. Moreover, the women characters exhibit resilience, adaptation and living in harmony with nature, as they break away from the idea of power and superiority. Through ecological interconnectedness, transformation, and environmental harmony, the study finds that Annihilation offers an intriguing ecofeminist interrogation of the exploitation of women and nature. This research is a contribution to ecofeminist film studies because it provides informed analysis of the interactions of women, power, identity and natural world in mainstream science fiction films.
Keywords: *Annihilation, Ecofeminism, Ecological Transformation, Film Studies, Identity, Mutation, Patriarchy, Women and Nature.*

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The term ecofeminism was coined in 1974 by the famous Fresh feminist Francoise d' Eaubonne. He was of the opinion that women and nature have always been oppressed as both are interlinked together in a patriarchal society. But when one speaks about using western perspective, nature is being treated as something feminine, passive, submissive and exploitable socially and as well as from capitalist perspective. Ecofeminism has become "cross-functional" as it has become part of the theory of feminist, ecological ethics and cultural criticism. Furthermore, ecofeminism is related with two primary perceptions: the mistreatment and oppression of nature and of women. Just as men desire to control women, humans on the motive of power and control indiscriminately destroy nature for their motive and satisfaction.

In a lengthy period of time, says Warren (2000), nature has been represented and explained by feminine terms, such as "Mother Nature", "Virgin Land" and "she". There is a constant message to women that they are weaker, submissive, subordinate and emotional. Same is the case with nature. It's used by man, destroyed, desired to control and desire its end, exploited. It's not natural, it's a whole pattern, he continues.

Another scholar like Val Plumwood (1993) says that if one talks about western thinking and philosophy is always dominated by pairs such as man/woman, white/black, good/bad. In this binary opposition, one side is always regarded in a positive light as good and proper. She

further clarifies the fact that this so-called dualism is the root cause of both environmental deterioration as well as gender oppression.

Ecofeminism grows from a simple and authentic connection between nature and women as both are interdependent and talks about gender, colonialism, race, environment and class at the same time. Humans want power and control on both nature and women, they demand profit and consistency over care, life and balance.

This film refers to and depicts a space called Shimmer, which in a sci-fi horror film (2018) is annihilated using a branch of the philosophy called 'Ecofeminism'. This place or zone cannot be called dead and passive. Instead, it "rewrites" or attempts to "conquer" the DNA of each person that enters it. On entering, women don't take ownership of it, but rather, their bodies, identities and their nature change. This is the main motto of ecofeminism. The feeling of one's self and the outside world is definitely gone. This demonstrates that if nature is unwilling to bow to its own will, and women are unwilling to be tamed and controlled by others, then everything will change.

1.2 Significance of the Study

There remains a void in this study space because no one has taken up this topic and no one has done the research from an ecofeminist perspective. This is a study that is worth reading when analyzed through the lens of great connection between nature and women. Humans are living in such an environment where everyone is facing the problems of pollution, deforestation, climate changes and many other crises. This study aims to analyze this fact that humans use nature just to utilize its resources, take benefits and further want to be dominated in the same way they want female bodies to be controlled, used for their pleasure and then later on exploit them. In many horror movies, mutation has always been imagined as something abnormal, horrible and terrifying but through the prism of this modern and cutting-edge theory, it is expected to clarify that *Annihilation* (2018) has been studied by focusing on the denying nature of nature when it totally refuses to be controlled. It further holds this notion that what makes a human "human". He or she is far different than mutation. Thus, the fear of biological change has been the primary focus. The readers will learn that not all movies portray women as main fun objects; they're portrayed as complicated, pondering and changing creatures. Because of their experiences and sufferings, they have become visible, noticed and untamed human beings. Through this movie, the teachers can demonstrate students about how to critically analyze the power, gender, voices, experiences and ecology. It is an interdisciplinary discipline and can make significant contribution to cultural and social studies.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. To make the image of Shimmer in Annihilation appear larger in terms of the ecofeminist perspective of nature as a resistant force.
2. To critically analyze the role of mutation as a resistance to the male power and human body image.
4. To explore how the female transformation and experiences in Annihilation reflect the close bond of woman, power and nature.

1.4 Research Questions

The following are the research questions of this study:

1. How the Shimmer in *Annihilation* (2018) can be analyzed as a force of resistance from ecofeminist point of view?

2. Why mutation represents a challenge against patriarchal force and perceptions of human body?
3. How the female's transformation and experiences in *Annihilation* (2018) represent the strong relationship between woman, power and nature?

1.5 Statement of the Problem

Analyzing other literary works through the lens of ecofeminism have largely been the center of attraction but despite of its growing interest in literary fields, it has mainly been minimized by the lens of mutation and its interdependence on the vehement relationship between women and nature. It is filling a heavy gap of having an organized and systematic concern to study the subjugation and oppression of both woman and nature analytically, critically and culturally. Ecofeminism has mainly attracted the readings from psychoanalytical point of view but no one has ever looked over this movie by treating nature and woman equally and simultaneously. It can be analyzed that both science fiction and patriarchy have a desire to control women and nature.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

The study focuses on analysis of the film *Annihilation* (2018) from the point of view of ecofeminism. It concentrates more specifically on the theme of mutation and identity and does not consider other themes of the film, like adaptation, cinematography and audience reception. Since this is a qualitative study, the results are based on the researcher's interpretation of the movie, as well as the scholarly material.

1.7 Organization of the Study

The entire study has been organized into five chapters. Chapter 1st is the introduction of this study. It carries the background, significance, research questions, research objectives and problem statement. Chapter 2nd is the literature review. It carries the opinions and standpoints of researchers, scholars and critics. Chapter 3rd is the research methodology. It carries the methods, theoretical framework, method of data analysis and method of data collection. Chapter 4th is the analysis of the entire topic. Chapter 5th is the conclusion. It gives recommendations and suggestions ahead. Last are the references.

2. Literature Review

This chapter carries the reviews, opinions and standpoints of researchers, scholars and critics. It also carries the gap that all the researchers aim to seek. Below are the different points of view of different scholars and researchers related to ecofeminism on different works and movies.

The researcher Vandana Shiva (1988) has recently introduced the colonial looking lens and global south by stating that damage, destruction and harm done to the nature because of the rapid industrialization and other economical and social crises ultimately affect the women who were highly dependent on nature. Ecofeminism is not a theory, but an observation that one can see straight away, if one had an environmental perspective, that a little change in the environment will automatically mean harm to women; they are exploited and manipulated by all the capitalist and colonial systems.

Another researcher, Stacy Alaimo (2010) speaks about ecofeminism by means of her renowned notion of 'transcorporeality'. She feels that human beings are susceptible to external influences and their bodies are easily affected by various changes such as when they consume water, food and other chemical substances. She further says that all the environmental factors such as toxins, pollutants, chemicals, climate literally change the human bodies, especially, the

female bodies. Another film that has garnered significant ecofeminist interest is Disney's Moana (2016).

According to Hernawati (2021), the film does not continue the princess tale by portraying Moana as a heroine of romance, but as a protagonist who is a defender of the environment. The film is an articulation of the indigenous ecological values that connect feminine leadership with environmental sustainability, thereby showing that the restoration of nature is achieved by cooperation and not domination. In addition, the study proposes that Moana questions the notions of power in a patriarchal society with its emphasis on ecology and care.

Ojeda et al., (2022) threw the light on recent feminist ecological studies by saying that environmental crises are inseparable from gendered systems of exploitation. According to the feminist ecologists, climate change, ecological degradation and the exploitation of natural resources resocialize the same hierarchical structures that marginalize women and other bodies that are vulnerable. This wider definition of ecofeminism has led to a new focus in literary criticism that looks beyond issues of conservation and preservation to issues of ecological agency, multispecies cohabitation, and change of identity.

The most widely analyzed film from an ecofeminist point of view is Princess Mononoke (1997). Sanjigandewi and Setianingsih (2022) contended that the movie created a direct connection between the oppression of women and the degradation of forest. In the light of Karen Warren's ecofeminist theory, they prove that the female protagonist's suffering is the same as the treatment of nature. With the destruction of the forest, San also loses her home, her identity, her community, underscoring the interconnections between ecological degradation and the oppression of females.

Chinsya and Sain (2024) explain that "ecofeminism goes beyond simply creating a 'symbolic relationship between women and nature", appealing to them for environmental protection in the name of social equality. Their study indicates that patriarchy is both a system of exploitation of women and nature, using both as means of economic development. They also argue that sustainable ecological practices must work towards the abolition of gender hierarchies as well as environmental exploitation and therefore an ecofeminism is a full-fledged solution to the ecological crisis in the contemporary world. In recent years, ecofeminist critique has broadened to film depictions of women subjectivity and Eco ethics.

According to ecofeminist Yushu (2024), the identity of a woman is formed through her emotional and ethical interaction with nature rather than through the patriarchal societies and their systems. The study proves that ecological landscapes are spaces of freedom in which female characters assert their autonomy, identity and resistance to the dominant cultural norms. The results support the feminist argument that nature is an active agent in the process of women's experience, not just a backdrop. Recent scholarship has made great strides in analyzing environmental ethics, climate change, female agency and multispecies relationships in the context of ecofeminism, but there has been relatively little work focusing on the relationship between mutation, bodily transformation, and identity reconstruction in an ecofeminist film criticism. Most of the existing scholarship concentrates on either the environment or women's struggle against patriarchal oppression, while there is not a lot of discussion about the mutation of the environment and its impact on identity in science fiction films. The present study is thus aimed at tackling this gap, as it examines mutation and identity formation from an ecofeminist point of view in *Annihilation* (2018).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The qualitative interpretive research design is used in this study to analyze the representation of mutation and identity as seen from an ecofeminist perspective in the film Annihilation. Qualitative textual analysis is appropriate because the researcher wants to find out the meaning, symbol, visual representations, character development and ecological themes, so as not to measure the numerical data. The study is interested in the relationship of women with nature, and the ecological transformation as well as to identity the narrative negotiates.

3.2 Primary Source of Data

The main source of information for this research is the film *Annihilation* (2018) by Alex Garland (2018). The film becomes the core text, and the interactions, dialogue and images of ecological mutation and identity are analyzed. These factors have been analyzed from an ecofeminist viewpoint to understand the relationship between women, nature and environmental change.

3.3 Secondary Sources

Secondary sources in this research are those related to ecofeminism, ecocriticism, feminist literary criticism, film studies and environmental humanities, including academic publications and peer-reviewed journal articles.

3.4 Method of Data Collection

The film *Annihilation* (2018), directed by Alex Garland, has been watched and analyzed multiple times by the researcher, and elements related to ecofeminist analysis were identified in the film. Relevant scenes and text passages have been recorded, classified and encoded in accordance with the concepts of the ecofeminist. Scholarly books and peer-reviewed journal articles have been the source of supporting evidence.

3.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Ecofeminist Theory, which originated from the works of Françoise d'Eaubonne (1974). His theoretical frame of thought offers a conceptual framework to analyze the relationship between environment, nature, ecology, women and identity construction and environmental agency. These concepts inform the discussion on the representation of mutation and identity in Annihilation (2018) from an ecofeminist perspective.

4. Analysis

Annihilation (2018) is a science fiction psychological thriller film directed by Alex Garland, and based on Jeff VanderMeer's novel of the same name. The story is about a biologist and former soldier named Lena who embarks on a scientific expedition in an unexplored quarantined zone called the "Shimmer" with a group of women. It is an unexplained phenomenon that is continually growing and changing the DNA of all living organisms within its reach, and causing strange mutations in plants, animals and humans.

The group starts to find more and more weird life forms and starts to undergo physical changes as well as psychological changes in the Shimmer. The environment becomes a space of interweaving human and natural forces, while each member faces his or her trauma, loss, and issues of identity. After some time, Lena arrives at the lighthouse in the middle of the Shimmer where she meets an alien being that mimics and copies her. In this encounter, the

Shimmer is ultimately destroyed, but the film is left somewhat ambiguous, implying that there are still some ecological mutations and transformations found in Lena and her husband, Kane. Themes of ecological transformation, mutation, identity, self-destruction and the interconnections of humans and their natural environment are explored in the film, making this an important work to analyze from an ecofeminist perspective.

4.1 How the Shimmer in *Annihilation* (2018) can be analyzed as a force of resistance from ecofeminist point of view?

Focusing on the ecofeminist view, the Shimmer in Annihilation (Garland, 2018) can be seen as a strong counter-agent against anthropocentric and patriarchal ideologies that would dominate, categorize and control nature. The movie does not simply depict nature as a passive, subservient force to humans, but rather as an independent, ecological entity with its own agency and power. This depiction questions the traditional mindset of human superiority over nature and highlights the relationship of nature and nature's creatures. Ecofeminism suggests that the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature stems from the same logic: a patriarchal one of domination in which both are treated as victims of the same oppressor (Warren, 2000). The Shimmer defies this approach in Annihilation, steadfastly rejecting to be controlled, understood, or conquered by knowledge and military force.

It's humanity's attempt to dominate and contain an alien, ecological phenomenon and the establishment of a military quarantine around the Shimmer. Scientific teams and military expeditions have repeatedly infiltrated the Shimmer in order to study, control or eradicate it. But all these efforts fail due to the non-conformity of the Shimmer with human expectation and science. Rather, it grows and changes and morphs every organism that passes through. This resistance exemplifies ecofeminist theory that nature has its own agency; it does not exist for the sole use of humans (Plumwood, 1993).

Ecological systems are not always pacified through knowledge and power systems that rely on patriarchy, as evidenced by the failure of scientific control. The visual environment of the Shimmer is another way of resisting anthropocentrism. The landscape inside the Shimmer is strikingly beautiful, colorful and diverse, whereas movies often portray the wilderness as being hostile. Flowers are in the form of human figures, trees are humanized, and various species are combined into new beings. The pictures represent the theme of life, the capacity of nature to create life without human help. Ecofeminism challenges cultural versus natural dichotomy, protests that people are not merely in nature but also part of it (Gaard, 1993).

The Shimmer embodies this idea by breaking down the barriers between man, plant and animal. Genetic mutation is one of the most important ways of resisting. The Shimmer keeps incorporating DNA, allowing plants, animals and human beings to become bio-mixed. Rather than mutation being viewed as a purely destructive process, the film shows it as an ecological process which is a disruption of fixed identities. Human beings are no longer seen as being outside nature but we are seen as a part of nature.

A transition that mirrors Alaimo's (2010) notion of transcorporeality, that is the inseparability of human bodies from environmental processes. The ecological resistance in the Shimmer is one in which biological boundaries, which have traditionally been considered as superior to nature by humans, are broken. Another important example of ecological resistance is the mutated bear. The result is a new species that is not known to science and retains the traits of both the bear and one of the members of the expedition. The bear's frightening look represents the effects of humans' refusal to embrace ecological complexity and its patterns. The bear is not a straightforward monster, it is a symbol of the nature's inability to be subdued,

predictable, or stable by human minds. Ecofeminism states that the mind-set of patriarchy is based on dichotomies and hierarchies, while the mind-set of ecology is based on diversity, interdependence and change (Plumwood, 1993). The bear is thus the symbol of nature's opposition to human categorization. The all-female expedition itself reinforces the ecofeminist meaning of resistance. *Annihilation* (2018) is a science fiction movie in which women are the protagonists and the main scientific explorers, as opposed to most sci-fi movies that are centered on a male military hero. Lena, Josie, Ventress, Anya and Cass don't seem like conquerors looking for a piece of this pie. Rather, as each woman slowly comes to understand that human control is only a part of the equation in the Shimmer. From their experiences they have come to know that survival is not about dominating but adapting.

According to Warren (2000), ecofeminism helps to build a new relationship of care, respect, and reciprocity rather than one that is based on hierarchy and control. This alternative ecological ethic is presented in the encounters that the female characters have with the Shimmer.

This is one of the most obvious exhibits of ecofeminist resistance: Josie's transformation. She does not resist the ecological changes taking place inside her, but accepts that she has become a plant-like organism. Slowly sprouting flowers grow out of her skin until she is one with the plant life. This scenario depicts that humans and nature are not different from each other. The film does not portray death but rather coexistence in nature. The acceptance Josie represents is the harmony that the natural world offers, in contrast to a value placed on domination over adaptation, which is typically assumed as a result of patriarchy. Her metamorphosis embodies ecofeminism, a philosophy of connectedness and reverence for non-human nature (Alaimo, 2010).

Lena's journey is also an example of ecological resistance, identity reconstruction. In the beginning of the film, Lena is a scientist who is looking for rational explanations for an unknown phenomena as she approaches the Shimmer. However, as the story unfolds, she begins to understand that the Shimmer is not a subject that is completely scientific. The object from another world that she comes across at the lighthouse isn't necessarily aggressive but replicates her actions, implying that nature is not necessarily against human nature. This experience challenges Lena's feelings of self and environment and makes her reflect on how she relates to the environment. Iovino (2014) states that ecological narratives give people the chance to understand that they are not individuals, but rather are part of a wider material and environmental system. This is the ecological awareness that was embodied in Lena's experience. The lighthouse is a symbol of an ecological resistance. Lighthouses are traditionally symbols of human attempts in navigation, control and guidance of nature. To the contrary, the lighthouse is the genesis of an ecological power in *Annihilation* (2018) that's more potent than man. It is not the conquest of the nature that symbolizes civilization but the end of anthropocentric certainty. The alien’s fortifying power within the lighthouse does not want to conquer or take over politically. Rather it changes life through biological interaction, implying ecological change is not according to human will. The Shimmer's resistance is another important part of its story, too: it repels the identification of the self.

All the organisms in the Shimmer are genetically connected but the identity is not fixed. Ecofeminist scholars challenge the idea of the creation of rigid dichotomies between human and nature, male and female, culture and wilderness within patriarchal systems (Gaard, 1993; Warren, 2000). The Shimmer challenges these binarism by producing mixed modalities of life which are not subject to conventional categories. Mutation is thus a sign of ecological variation,

rather than biological sin. The closing of the movie is a powerful reinforcement of the ecofeminist point that nature can't be simply conquered. The physical Shimmer cannot be seen after the destruction of the lighthouse, however, in the final scene, one can see that Lena and Kane have some of the lighthouse's genetic transformation in them, due to the fact that their eyes were shimmering.

The ending is not entirely clear and indicates that ecological shifts are ongoing even after the Shimmer is destroyed. Humans have already been transformed by nature, the evidence of which is that humans cannot live apart from the ecological process. Ecofeminism also maintains that human beings are inextricable from nature since they are bound together by their fundamental interconnectedness (Alaimo, 2010). Overall, the Shimmer is a force of resistance, a rejection of anthropocentrism, a challenge to systems of domination, a dissolving of the boundaries between humans and nature, a reconstruction of identity through ecological transformation. Instead of nature being a thing which man has to control, *Annihilation* (2018) shows it as an independent and creative power which can redefine life itself. In the ecofeminist view, the Shimmer is a reminder of the agency of the environment, and that living in coexistence, adapting, and relating to one another provides alternative paths to life that are more sustainable than paths of domination and exploitation.

4.2 Why mutation represents a challenge against patriarchal force and perceptions of human body?

The mutation in Annihilation can be seen as a critique from the ecofeminist point of view of the patriarchal ideology that perceives the body as unchanging, manageable, and more valuable than nature. Patriarchal systems tend to be highly hierarchical and tend to divide humans from nature, men from women, and culture from nature. The dualistic nature of these structures is seen as a justification for women's and nature's domination by Ecofeminism. In *Annihilation* (2018), mutation breaks these hierarchical lines by altering human forms into something beyond control and beyond the ability to be categorized or understood by the male-dominant paradigms of the past.

The biggest obstacle to patriarchy to come from mutation is the denial of the body as a fixed and finite form. In the Shimmer, all life forms are genetically refracted, and life continuously changes. The human body is fluid and not fixed: Human DNA intermingles with plants, animals, and other life-forms. This transformation is an antidote to patriarchy's ideas of body perfection, cleanness and management. In *Annihilation* (2018), the mutations break down the barriers between humans and the natural world and demonstrate how humanity is a part of the ecological world.

The change in Josie is one of the most evident displays of this resistance. She doesn't fight the physical changes taking place in her body, but gracefully embraces her transformation into an "animal of the plant kingdom. As the flowers grow out of her skin, she becomes part of a landscape. This scene represents the denial of the conventional idea of the human body as something that is separate from nature. The film doesn't depict mutation as a loss of humanity as the mutation is actually seen as a new way of being in harmony with the nature. Josie's change indicates that the human organism is in constant interaction and relationship with the natural environment.

In addition to this, mutation also poses a challenge to the patriarchal perception that the science and technology can completely dominate nature. Scientists and military operatives try to study and limit the effects of the Shimmer rationally and scientifically throughout the movie. But the mutations that take place inside the Shimmer are unpredictable and uncontrollable. All

organisms develop in a self-governing manner in accordance to ecological processes that are not under man's control. This failure shows that nature has its own agency, and will not be made into an object of human domination. Rather than making nature to their own image, the Shimmer alters the people who enter it, thus altering the power dynamic between humans and the environment.

Moreover, it is not only the process of identification that is reconstructed, but the concept of human life itself, which is based on a sense of interconnectedness rather than individuality. Lena's experience with the alien being at the lighthouse is an example of this metamorphosis. The entity reflects her movements, rather than attacking her directly, indicating a relationality of identity, in contrast to autonomy. The film poses a series of questions on the traditional patriarchal idea of the fixed and independent identity of a human being as Lena goes through biological and psychological transformation. Mutation turns into a process of reconfiguring identity, not only based on biological and social boundaries, but on interactions with the environment.

The mutated bear adds to the conventional understanding of the human body. It brings together human and animal traits, helping to break down the binary logic on which the idea of the species is often based, as a product of patriarchy. The hybrid creature shows that life is not always human or non-human. This ecological hybridity is an assault on hierarchical thinking, in favor of a vision of the biological diversity and coexistence, rather than of domination.

Finally, the mutating aspects of *Annihilation* (2018) serve as an effective critique of the prevailing patriarchy, challenging the notions of fixed bodies, superior humans and controlled science. The film is a continually evolving work, redefining the human body as dynamic, interconnected and inherently connected to a network of ecological systems. Ecofeminism, however, views mutation not as just a biological process, but as an act of resistance, challenging the hierarchical system of patriarchy and fostering a more inclusive notion of identity, nature and cohabitation.

4.3 How the female's transformation and experiences in *Annihilation* (2018) represent the strong relationship between woman, power and nature?

In an ecofeminist lens, the female protagonists of *Annihilation* (2018) exemplify a strong affinity for women, the natural environment and change. Annihilation (2018) differs from traditional science fiction movies, in which the nature is a hostile figure that must be overcome, by depicting nature as a change agent and reinventor of the female characters' lives and identities. The entire female venture to the Shimmer represents a trip of self-discovery, therapeutic, and ecological connection. Instead of controlling nature, the women slowly merge with the nature and are able to coexist with it, which is the belief of the ecofeminists that women and the nature are connected and they coexist with it rather than control it.

The movie is purposely focused on five women who all have emotional baggage when they enter the Shimmer: Lena, Dr. Ventress, Josie, Anya and Cass. Their interactions with this enigmatic place make them realize that nature isn't just threatening them; it's also a mirror of their struggles and slowly changing them. This indicates that nature has the capacity to reveal our emotions and traumas that we are not aware of, to transform our identities, and to test our perceptions of strength and survival as human beings.

Lena's journey is the best case study of woman, power and nature. At first, she goes into the Shimmer as a scientist looking for answers to a mysterious phenomenon. As she delves deeper into the environment, however, she feels that nature can only be understood by a combination of scientific reasoning and intuition. After meeting the alien being in the

lighthouse, she changes her perception of the natural world and her own self. Lena is not fighting nature, she is yielding to uncertainty and adapting to the changes of her natural environment. Her metamorphosis embodies her internal fortitude, resilience, and capacity to live in harmony with forces she cannot control.

But Josie's change adds to this ecofeminist connection. She doesn't stand in the way of the changes that are happening to her body, unlike the rest of the expedition. She lets herself embrace the other plants around her, and in time, flowers grow out of her, becoming a part of the environment. This metamorphosis is a metaphor for the balance of woman and nature, not strife. Josie's acceptance is that rather than domination, true power is when you coexist and adapt. Her experience contradicts to patriarchal ideals that involve control, violence and resistance for what it means to be strong.

Dr. Ventress is still another aspect of a woman's power. Curiosity and the need to know are her constant companions during the expedition, and she becomes fascinated with the Shimmer. Later she becomes anonymous, but her transformation exemplifies how far man's knowledge can be pushed when he meets the power of nature. Her experience demonstrates that the natural world is outside of human control and doesn't always make sense. This film thus portrays nature as a force that is autonomous, greater than man, and at the same time metamorphosing those who come into contact with it.

The Shimmer is a symbol of the female creative power in action. It is not life destroying but is constantly forming new life forms from the combination of plant, animal and human characteristics. This is the nature's regeneration, transformation and new forms of existence. The female characters are not victims of this creative ecological process, but participants. The shifts that they undergo highlight their growth, renewal, and interconnectedness, key tenets of ecofeminism.

Furthermore, the film challenges the stereotypes of patriarchalism that attributes woman weakness or passivity. As the female characters of the expedition, each of them displays intelligence, courage, emotional resilience and scientific expertise. Each woman feels fear and vulnerability and even then, continues to explore the unknown, despite the dangers. They are not portrayed as strong through any means of domination, but in terms of endurance, adaptability, and self-awareness. These attributes extend the definition of power from an ecofeminist point of view, and indicate that resilience and cooperation are more powerful than conquest or control.

The film also has a visual theme, corresponding to the theme of women and nature. The Shimmer is packed with colors, trees and changing ecosystems that coexist with the female characters. These landscapes do not seem threatening, but rather reflect the women's emotional and psychological changes. The lines between their bodies and the environment slowly fade and the film strongly argues that humans are intricately linked to ecology. Nature is not the source of destruction but of transformation.

Finally, through the enduring bond between woman, power, and nature, the female characters in *Annihilation* (2018) are portrayed as agents of ecological change, rather than victims. Their travels are a testament to adaptability, resilience, and humility in the face of nature. The film has been criticized as a patriarchal work that reinforces the idea of men dominating the world; however, from an ecofeminist point of view, it undermines the idea of “domination” and highlights the interconnections between women and nature as a source of identity, renewal and strength.

5. Conclusion

In this study, the film *Annihilation* (2018) by director Alex Garland was examined from the lens of ecofeminism with a focus on mutation, identity and the representation of women, power and nature. The study aimed to explore the role of the film in the interrogation of patriarchy by depicting nature as an independent and evolving entity, which is not subject to human control. Using a qualitative textual analysis and a post-structuralist perspective with an ecofeminist lens, this research examined the symbolism of the Shimmer, the portrayal of mutations and the metamorphosis of female characters.

The results are revealing, however, that the Shimmer is neither a mysterious phenomenon in ecology, nor merely a natural state of being, but rather a force of resistance and a process that disintermediates anthropocentric and patriarchal views of nature. Nature is not an inert and subordinate force, but rather an active, dynamic and force that can transform both the material world and man. The Shimmer tells us that nature is constantly changing all things inside it; that nature is not something that can be fully controlled, classified or exploited. The movie portrays humanity as superior to nature and poses ecological interconnections.

The analysis also shows that mutation is more of a symbolic process of transformation than destruction. The characters' biological transformations erode the distinctions between humans, animals, and nature, and thus confront the male perspective of the human body as stable and more human than animals or nature. The movie, on the contrary, evokes identity as malleable, shifting and inextricably intertwined with ecological systems. Mutation becomes a metaphor of adaptation, co-existence and constant re-construction of identity in the natural environment.

The other major conclusion of this research is the role of the female characters as the key to the change. *Annihilation* (2018) is unlike conventional science fiction stories, which often put women on the sidelines as passive recipients, in that it puts women at the heart of the scientific investigation and ecological transformation. Each story arc in the book shows character traits of resilience, self-discovery, emotional strength, and adaptation, as Lena, Josie, Dr. Ventress, Anya, and Cass travel to new experiences and places. Their experiences create a deep connection between women and power, and an understanding of how strength is not found in the domineering of nature but through the understanding, living alongside and embracing the change of nature.

In a nutshell, the movie *Annihilation* (2018) provides a compelling ecofeminist critique of the patriarchal systems which exploit women and nature. The movie invites audiences to explore new ideas about power, identity and the relationship between people and nature, by showing nature as a creative and self-determined "power. The film teaches viewers how to view the world in a more holistic and balanced way as it depicts mutation, ecological agency, and transformation of women.

This research is also a further step in the current works on ecofeminist film criticism as it shows that the mutation in *Annihilation* (2018) is not only a threat or destruction but also a source of hope and goodness. Rather, it is a symbol of ecological renewal, identification and

opposition to hierarchical systems of human-natural distinction. This study looks at the movie from an ecofeminist perspective, as it widens the scope of science fiction film as an environment for the discussion of the ethical issues of the environment, gender relations, and posthuman identity.

5.1 Recommendations

As a result of this study the following recommendations are suggested:

- Future researchers should take a different approach, such as using posthumanism, new materialism, ecocriticism, or trauma theory to see *Annihilation* (2018) from a different lens and gain a more holistic perspective of the film's ecological and philosophical aspects.
- Science fiction films should remain an important genre for future films and scholars to continue researching and developing as a medium to examine and discuss current environmental issues, climate change, ecological ethics and gender equality.
- Educational institutions can include an ecofeminist perspective within literature, cultural studies and film studies syllabus as a way to raise awareness, critical thinking, and a better understanding of the interconnection of humanity and nature.

Finally, *Annihilation* (2018) shows that the bond between women and nature goes beyond weakness and subordination, it is a bond of resilience, transformation, and coexistence. The film's narrative complexity and its rich visual symbolism offer a reimagining of relationships within the ecological realm and a challenge to the patriarchy, which is still quite relevant in today's environmental and feminist debate. Thus, the study highlights the relevance of ecofeminism as a lens to interpret the contemporary science fiction movie and its role in the conversation around identity, power and environmental justice.

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