Re-thinking Green:

Ecofeminist Pedagogy and the Archetype of the Witch in Young Adult Literature

by

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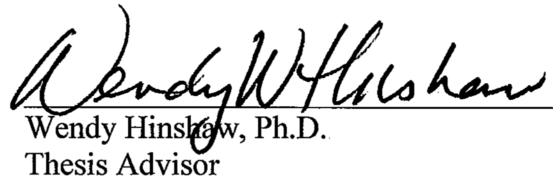

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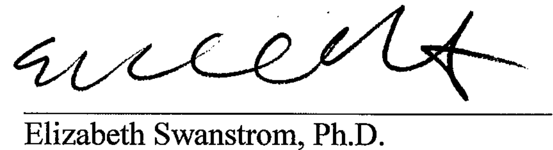

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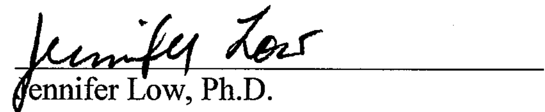

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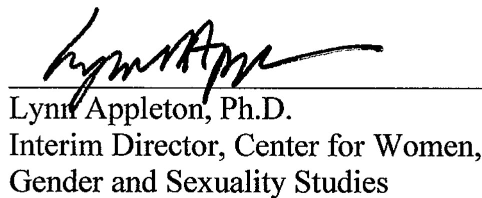

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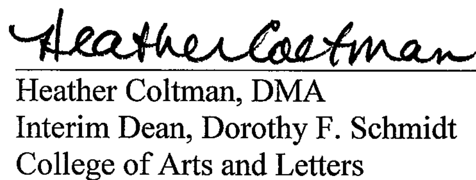

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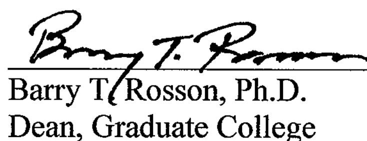

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Abstract

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This project examines the presence and significance of ecofeminism and pedagogy within contemporary Young Adult literatures, particularly girls' ecofantasy literatures. Specifically, I examine the role and representations of the female body in nature and any real or perceived connections between them. To accomplish this, I bring the theories of several feminist, ecofeminist, and environmental studies scholars together with my primary texts, *Green Angel* and *Green Witch* by Alice Hoffman, to examine the depiction of the female body in nature through interconnectedness and reciprocity between human and non-human nature, green transformations, and the archetype of the witch.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

Many theorists and scholars believe that ecofeminist principles are critical to the building of a more sustainable, egalitarian society in which neither women nor non-human nature are viewed as commodities available for use but are respected as entities vital to society and the ability of humanity to survive, with needs and desires of their own and the ability to act as autonomous beings. Little research has examined the ecofeminist pedagogies present in popular literature. For this project, I bring the theories of several feminist, ecofeminist, and environmental studies scholars together in order to analyze my primary texts, *Green Angel* and *Green Witch* by Alice Hoffman. My ecofeminist critique of these works examines how each text re-imagines the female body. It is my argument that because each text presents characters who disrupt stereotypes and destabilize problematic hierarchies between men and women, as well as human and non-human nature, each promotes tenets of what I am terming an ecofeminist pedagogy.

I combine theories of mind/body dualisms, the female body in nature, and Native American theories of interconnectedness and reciprocity to create a working model of ecofeminist pedagogies and a more complete view of relationships between humans and non-human nature, particularly between girls or women and non-human nature. I then examine what these theories can mean for women and the female body. Green, these books' main character, creates reciprocal, interconnected relationships with non-human

nature, but although she is shown as having special, earth-based talents, she is not shown as being innately connected to non-human nature. Green must learn how to survive and live in balance with the natural world, human and non-human, surrounding her. Both novels illustrate the harm of mind/body dualisms on non-human nature and feminine bodies through witch stereotypes in which the female body is devalued, villainized, and punished through the denigration of natural processes, discrediting powerful women, and casting disobedient women as a catastrophic Eve-like figure. In a bold reversal of patriarchal traditions, the archetype of the witch and "unruly" nature is beautifully reimagined as a positive or neutral position in Hoffman's novels which allow women/girls and nature power and autonomy.

Ecofeminist Pedagogies

Providing ecopedagogy through young adult literature is imperative in creating social activism as it helps to transform attitudes and behaviors towards non-human nature. Throughout this project, I employ Greta Gaard's definition of ecofeminism as laid out in her article:

> 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. Ecofeminism studies the structure of oppressive systems, identifying three steps

> in the 'logic of domination': first, alienation (the belief in a separate self-identity, individualism, autonomy), then hierarchy (elevating the self based on its unique characteristic), and finally, domination (justifying the subordination of others based on their inferiority and lack of the Self's unique characteristic). (323)

An ecofeminist reading of my chosen texts will help to illuminate the intersectional quality of environmental issues with other social issues such as gender. Gaard uses this definition to create a pedagogy for children's environmental literature. Gaard's definition of ecopedagogy translates well into girls' eco-fantasy literature and will be applied to my chosen texts through close reading. She claims that many children's (and young adults') books depict ecological crisis, but often fall short on showing how collective action can promote changes in how non-human nature is viewed and treated.

Nature is often depicted as backdrop or setting, whether in stories or in everyday life. It is generally represented either as scenery that is unable to act for itself or as a malevolent force whose autonomy only causes harm. Often, nature is considered an asset or belonging that humanity tries to possess. Ecopedagogies teach readers to reassess these stereotypical views of nature. For Greta Gaard, ecopedagogy helps teach healthier real-world attitudes and behaviors towards plants, animals, and the earth and "argues for the necessary confluence of social, ecological, and inter-species justice" that has emerged from an evolving history of ecocriticism (Gaard 326). By adapting Greta Gaard's framework for determining what qualifies as ecopedagogy with Native American and ecofeminist theory, I argue that an ecopedagogical text portrays both humans and nature

as having autonomy (including possessing their own wants and needs), engaging in reciprocal relationships, being fundamentally interconnected, and having the potential for transformation through natural processes.

Viewing humanity as interconnected with nature and as an integral part of our ecosystems makes readers re-think interactions with non-human nature. Rather than thinking of nature as a collection of resources which exists for human use, such an understanding means that nature must be recognized as active, autonomous, and valuable in its own right. A reciprocal relationship demands a mutual exchange between the parties involved. Recognition of this reciprocity between human and non-human nature would enable readers to assess what we, as humans, need to contribute to our natural ecosystems or environment for mutual benefit. This demands re-thinking what the power balances would look like between human and non-human nature. In reciprocal relationships where humans are not at the center or on a quest to dominate non-human nature, it is important that non-human nature be recognized as autonomous. This does not mean that there is no need for interaction or help from human nature, but instead that non-human nature should be perceived as active, with needs of its own and the ability to act without human influence. So although non-human nature may at times be dependent upon human nature (and vice versa), that dependence or need for assistance does not remove the autonomy of non-human nature. I use the terms human nature, non-human nature, and other-than-human nature to resist splitting humanity from nature, from other animals, and to instead place humans within a context where they are simply a subgroup of a larger whole, nature, and as an integral part of an ecosystem in which they live.

An examination of ecojustice, which I define as an elimination of harmful hierarchies in which nature is perceived to be below humans and exist solely for human use, needs to go beyond the relationships between human and non-human nature; further analysis of how gender functions in an ecological framework will provide a more complete understanding of the text. Greta Gaard sees ecopedagogies as part of a larger discipline of ecofeminist thought and criticism. I use Gaard's definitions of ecopedagogy and ecofeminism as interconnected theories and add feminist and Native American theories of mind/body dualisms, interconnectedness and relatedness, and reciprocity. Much as nature has been considered background to humanity, women have provided the background to men's stories, actions, and accomplishments in books, films, television shows, advertisements, education, and the workplace (Plumwood 22). In patriarchal societies, both women and non-human nature are perceived as commodities available for use by men. The association of women with nature is ancient, though the debasement and the complete and total separation of men from both other-than-human nature and women has evolved throughout time and by culture. The separation of mind and body in western culture has been essential in separating men from women and the earth. Viewing interactions between men and women, girls, and other marginalized groups as interconnected, however, forces a reevaluation of how disenfranchised people are viewed and valued.

Another important element in creating reciprocal relationships (both with women and with non-human nature) is the examination of the desire for progress at the cost of forgetting the women and earth-centered traditions of our ancestors. Instead of scorning

these traditions as primitive or even uncivilized, it is critical to recognize the important lessons that they can teach which may help lead to a more egalitarian modern society in which women, girls, and non-human nature are valued. Ecopedagogies are imperative to help teach reciprocal relationships not only between human and non-human nature, but between human individuals, social groups, and communities as well. Although women and non-human nature have been equated in ways that degrade and oppress both, it is important to recognize that because of this historical association, women have often been more strongly connected to non-human nature and more active within ecological movements (Plumwood). However, an ecofeminist interpretation avoids characterizing women as having an innate closeness with non-human nature beyond men's relationships with their ecosystems; instead, it may demonstrate that all humans are interconnected with non-human nature and that deeper understandings of non-human nature must be learned, just as with any relationship, and that all humans must consciously align themselves with non-human nature.

Lastly, to re-think understandings of non-human nature and the female body, it is crucial to consider the power of transformation. Neither human nor non-human nature remains static; both are constantly changing and evolving, and to ignore this physical and spiritual reality is harmful to the earth and to our physical bodies, especially female ones whose natural cycles of menarche and childbirth change the body in ways which are socially taboo for women (Allen, "The Woman I Love"). I suggest that if ecopedagogies can build a consciousness around the importance of change, of transformation, then the

fear change provokes will lessen, resulting in more acceptance of natural processes like aging, reproduction, disability, disease, and death.

Gaard identifies three important questions that can help us evaluate the extent to which environmental literatures for young readers resonate with ecofeminism: 1) “Is the human self-identity constructed in relation or in opposition to nature, animals, and diverse human cultures/identities?” This would provide opposition to the first step in the logic of domination that Gaard details. 2) “Does the narrative conclusion offer an appropriate strategy for responding to the problem posed in the story, rejecting hierarchy in favor of community and participatory democracy?” In other words, this question asks whether change occurs on an individual level only (such as a child having to solve the environmental crisis of adults), or as something that takes place among communities as a consequence of group effort. 3) “What kind of agency does the text recognize in nature? Is nature an object to be saved by the heroic child actor? Is nature a damsel in distress, an all-sacrificing mother, or does nature have its own subjectivity and agency?” (327-330). These questions can help to determine or illustrate the ecopedagogic potential of young adult literatures, specifically girls’ eco-fantasy. In this thesis, I ask them of two primary texts: *Green Angel* and *Green Witch.*

Although Gaard focuses on children’s ecological education, concepts of ecofeminist pedagogies hold true for young adults as well. Gaard explains that ecopedagogy emerged from a tradition of ecofeminist criticism; she adapted qualifications for ecopedagogies to children’s literature because many of our attitudes and behaviors towards non-human nature are formed during childhood and because many

children's books deal explicitly with ecological themes and ecojustice. Young adulthood is a transitional time between childhood and adulthood during which attitudes and behaviors towards non-human nature are still fluid and have the potential for development. Ecological themes have become incredibly popular in YA fiction, especially with recent popularity of dystopian teen fiction. Finding and recognizing ecofeminist, environmental young adult literature is necessary for the development of young reader's environmental awareness, development of environmental activism, and creating ecofeminist views on human interconnectedness with non-human nature; therefore, I suggest that it is critical to examine how ecofeminist pedagogy functions in young adult literature.

Subversive narratives, such as ecofeminist readings, teaching about the environment and human interconnectedness with non-human nature are most likely to raise young readers' awareness about local and global ecojustice issues, inseparable from social justice issues, such as the globalizing Western capitalist regime, which generates worldwide environmental destruction. Ecofeminist scholar Greta Gaard explains that research has shown that when children's knowledge about nature is strictly scholarly, they do not remember the information long term and do not change negative behaviors: "While the first and strongest emotional connection with nature may be children's innate love of animals, children's environmental literature also has the capacity to address children's emotions and make deep, lasting impacts because it appeals to both the emotions and the intellect" (Gaard 332).

Girls' eco-fantasy literature has subversive potential to increase young readers' understanding of human interconnectedness with non-human nature, the importance of reciprocal relationships between humans and non-human nature, and develop readers' environmental awareness and activism. Through a close, ecofeminist analysis of my chosen texts, I offer a re-reading of the female body and witchery as representative of an ecofeminist pedagogy that provides positive representations of human relationships of reciprocity and interconnectedness with other-than-human nature. I claim that Hoffman's novels function as pedagogies for young readers through an ecofeminist lens, as defined by Greta Gaard, by providing a positive ecofeminist reading of female bodies – of their value, capability, strength, power, autonomy, and intelligence.

The Female Body in Nature

Because of the negative connotations and history of women and women's bodies being equated with nature, many ecofeminists believe that it is problematic to connect women and non-human nature. Mind/body dualisms promote association with nature as negative and result in perceiving the human body as inferior to reason and the mind. Feminist scholar Susan Bordo describes how the body has been linked with the earth by philosophers like Descartes, Augustine, and Plato. First, she says, the body is mentally separated from the self; although it is physically attached to the self, which is defined as the mind, it acts to weigh the true self down from unearthly paradise or reason until such a time as the mind can ascend. This, she says, means that the body is experienced as something that confines the true self, a prison from which the mind must escape. As a consequence, she says, the body is seen as the enemy, "the locus of *all that threatens our*

attempts at control. It overtakes, it overwhelms, it erupts and disrupts" (Bordo 145). According to this model, physical bodies, including that of the earth, that ultimate physical body called "Mother Earth," are prisons which the mind is unable to completely control. Women, then, as a part of the lower end of dualisms, are associated with the body, and also with nature. Feminist religion scholar Rosemary Radford Ruether explains:

> It is from the perspective of this male monopoly of culture that the work of women in maintaining the material basis of daily life is defined as an inferior realm. The material world itself is then seen as something separated from males and symbolically linked with women. The earth, as the place from which plant and animal life arises, became linked with the bodies of women, from which babies emerge." (Ruether 15)

According to this ideology, women and girls are associated and devalued with nature as procreative forces separate from the more valued male reason, and men, especially white men, are ascendant from their own physical bodies as well as nature. This creates hierarchies of domination, in which women and nature are open to use and destruction by men.

There is a rich history, even within feminism, of considering the earth itself as nurturing, as mother, as female. Feminist scholar Carolyn Merchant writes in *Earthcare* that:

> however inspirational, the cultural baggage associated with images of nature as female means that gendering nature is at present too problematical to be adopted by emancipatory social movements in Western societies. A view of nature as a process, one that is more powerful and longer lasting than human societies and human beings, is a sufficient basis for an ethic of earthcare. (xxii)

Many ecofeminists focus on nature, both human and non-human, as an interconnected system. It is important to look for themes in eco-fantasy literature of human and non-human nature working together, not simply for themes of humans working to save a passive environment. How girls and women are portrayed in girls' eco-fantasy is also important. Merchant provides a background for nature's appearance in an Edenic recovery story, in which nature takes three forms:

> As original Eve, nature is virgin, pure, and light – land that is pristine or barren, but having the potential for development. As fallen Eve, nature is disorderly and chaotic; a wilderness, wasteland, or desert requiring improvement; dark and witchlike, the victim and mouthpiece of Satan as serpent. As mother Eve, nature is an improved garden; a nurturing earth bearing fruit; a ripened ovary; maturity. (32)

If girls and women are equated with nature in the dominant narrative, they will reflect original Eve, fallen Eve, and mother Eve. Subversive young adult texts complicate these hierarchical themes, instead creating new narratives which depict women, girls, and non-human nature as free agents who do not reflect recycled stereotypes. In such works,

women are still associated with non-human nature, but the attributes of both shift from stereotypical and patriarchal understandings of an innate connection with nature based on sex rather than the creation of interconnected relationships.

Although it is dangerous to equate women with non-human nature, we must show how women *and* men are related and positioned with non-human nature, as well as recognizing that humans as a group are not distinctly separate from non-human nature, but are a part of nature themselves. Val Plumwood has similar reservations about equating only women with nature, saying that to "be defined as 'nature' in this context is to be defined as passive, a non-agent and non-subject, as the 'environment' or invisible background conditions against which the 'foreground' achievements of reason or culture (provided typically by the white, western, male expert or entrepreneur) take place" (4). As previously mentioned, it is not only dominant ideologies which gender nature as female, but often feminists as well. Plumwood questions a gynocentric essentialism which promotes women (and then only certain women) as the sole providers of green knowledge. She says that it seems "to combine a romantic conception of both women and nature, the idea that women have special powers and capacities of nurturance, empathy and 'closeness to nature', which are unshareable by men and which justify their special treatment, which of course nearly always turns out to be inferior treatment" (8). This view upholds the very dualisms that have been oppressive to women and non-human nature rather than subverting them.

> The very idea of a feminine connection with nature seems to many to be regressive and insulting, summoning up images of women as earth mothers, as

> passive, reproductive animals, contented cows immersed in the body and in the unreflective experiencing of life. It is both tempting and common therefore for feminists to view the traditional connection between women and nature as no more than an instrument of oppression, a relic of patriarchy which should simply be allowed to wither away now that its roots in an oppressive tradition are exposed. (Plumwood 20-21)

However, Plumwood says that the idea of women's connection with nature cannot be completely set aside, and that it is actually

> perilous for feminism to ignore the issue because it has an important bearing on the model of humanity into which women will be fitted and within which they will claim equality. (…) how it is that women and nature have been thrown into an alliance remains to be analyzed. This analysis forms the basis for a critical ecological feminism in which women consciously position themselves *with* nature." (21)

This clarification is important because it allows us to salvage and reclaim an important history. With this overview of relevant ecofeminist theory in place, I will now move into my analysis of *Green Angel* and *Green Witch* as working examples of ecofeminist pedagogies.

Chapter Two

Feminist Ecopedagogies

Published in 2003, Alice Hoffman's *Green Angel* demonstrates the importance of Plumwood's claims, especially in terms of girls' and women's relationships with nature. In *Green Angel* and *Green Witch*, Green is closely connected with nature; however, beyond the ways in which all humans are a part of nature, her connection with non-human nature is shown as learned, first through her mother and father, and later by necessity. This connection is also created through the interdependent, reciprocal relationships she develops with the animals who live with her, with Diamond (an injured boy who comes to live with her), and with her neighbor. The animals teach her how to work with non-human nature to feed and support herself; Diamond teaches her to believe in the power and agency of non-human nature when he works with it to bring back her garden, and her neighbor uses plants and her own wisdom to bring Green back to herself. In short, Green learns her skills through respectful relationships with both human and non-human nature. Plumwood recognizes women's efforts and positive connections with nature as being a sort of guideline for a societal reevaluation of non-human nature and its connections to human nature and culture.

> To the extent that women's lives have been lived in ways which are less directly oppositional to nature than those of men, and have involved different and less oppositional practices, qualities of care and kinds of selfhood, an ecological

feminist position could and should privilege some of the experiences and practices of women over those of men as a source of change without being committed to any form of naturalism. (35)

So Green's reciprocal relationship with and connection to non-human nature should be privileged without being reduced to an essentialism based on her biological and social position as a woman. Diamond, as a boy/man, also displays the ability to cultivate these skills and a connectedness with nature, taking on the ecofeminist care ethics he sees Green using.

Native American theorists Paula Gunn Allen and Leroy Little Bear write that human bodies are intrinsically connected to non-human nature and are a part of natural processes. Paula Gunn Allen claims that "Our physicality – which always and everywhere includes our spirituality, mentality, emotionality, social institutions and processes – is a microform of all physicality. Each of us reflect, in our attitudes toward our body and the bodies of other planetary creatures and plants, our inner attitude toward the planet. And, as we believe, so we act" (52). She claims that the very planet is a physical and spiritual being that has emotions and a mind, so a body hating culture is destructive to the earth we live with and depend on for our very survival:

> We are each and all a part of her, an expression of her essential being. We are each a small fragment that is not the whole but that, perforce, reflects in our inner self, our outer behavior, our expressions and relationships and institutions, her self, her behaviors, her expressions and relationships, her forms and structures.

> We humans and our relatives the other creatures are integral expressions of her thought and being. We are not her, but we take our being from her, and in our being we have being, as in her life we have life. As she is, so are we. (Allen 54).

Leroy Little Bear reflects on the ways in which non-human nature is literally a part of our human bodies. He describes how "humans and the natural world interpenetrate one another at many levels, including the air we breathe, the carbon dioxide we contribute to the food we transform" (Little Bear 25). So as humans, not only are we a part of non-human nature, but it is, in a literal, physical sense, a part of us.

Themes of interconnectedness and reciprocity are deeply rooted and persistent in Alice Hoffman's *Green Angel* and *Green Witch* and are depicted through Green's relationships with several animals, plants, and other humans. From the beginning of the story, Green has an extraordinary talent for gardening that borders on magical. She learns how to work with the earth, seeds, and plants when her mother teaches her to garden, an ecopedagogy in itself, but Green soon surpasses her mother's skill and knowledge until she can literally encourage the plants in their family garden to grow. After a man-made disaster lays waste to much of the environment around her and kills her family, Green must relearn how to work with non-human nature to survive and heal. Green meets and cares for several wounded animals as she is able, and in return, they help her regain her sense of self-worth and begin to see that there is still beauty in the world around her. Although she begins by trying to heal them, they always end up helping her to survive as well. She meets an elderly neighbor and helps feed her and clean her home. Before long, unlikely gifts and imparted wisdom from the old woman

help Green to discover the girl she thought she had lost through grief and transform into an even stronger woman. When she takes a chance and shelters an unknown, mute boy she calls Diamond, he helps her to rejuvenate the garden she thought lost forever and teaches her to love herself and others once more. Even her fellow townspeople come to need her help. They fear non-human nature because they have little knowledge about its systems and processes, having separated themselves from it for so long. They must rely on Green's knowledge of the forest and animals when their foods and medicines are depleted, and many become a part of her family-like community by the end of the novels.

The Hierarchy of the Great Divide

Ecofeminist scholar Val Plumwood explains in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* that Descartes created a hierarchic dualism in which mind and body were separate, with mind having more value than the inferior body. In this hierarchy, white men were associated with mind, reason, and heaven, whereas women and ethnic minorities were associated with the body, emotion, and the earth. "Nature, as the excluded and devalued contrast to reason, includes the emotions, the body, the passions, animality, the primitive or uncivilized, the non-human world, matter, physicality and sense experience, as well as the sphere of irrationality, of faith and of madness. In other words, nature includes everything that reason excludes" (Plumwood 19-20).

Through the mind/body split, humans separate themselves from non-human nature and define it as below them, as lacking humanity and civility. Nature is consistently portrayed as one vast, homogenous, unending plethora of resources,

available for human use and misuse without consequence. Separating oneself from non-human nature helps to Other it, to deny dependence on it. If one does not depend on non-human nature, then it can be seen as lower than humanity, there simply for human use. Plumwood explains five forms of dualism which create hierarchies and colonize Others: backgrounding (or denial) is the attempt of the master to use the Other, relying on its/her services while denying any dependency; radical exclusion hyperseparates the master from the Other; incorporation allows the master to define the Other in relation to himself as lacking and negative; instrumentalization objectifies the Other and portrays it/her as a tool for the master's use; and homogenization ignores any differences within the Othered group so that they can all conform to their essential nature as defined by the master (48-55). Although humans cannot survive without non-human nature, the dependence is often ignored. Ecopedagogy not only resists the backgrounding of non-human nature but employs reciprocity and interconnected characters to highlight its absurdity. "What is involved in the backgrounding of nature is the denial of dependence on biospheric processes, and a view of human as apart, outside of nature, which is treated as a limitless provider without needs of its own" (Plumwood 21). Ecofeminist texts treat all characters including non-human nature as actors who can choose whether or not they have an interest or stake in the heroine's journey or dilemma, whether or not they will act, and if so, whether they will act to help or hinder.

These dualisms are supported (and perhaps even created) by patriarchal religion. Feminist scholar Rosemary Radford Ruether argues that "The image of God as single, male, and transcendent, prior to nature, also shifts the symbolic relation of male

consciousness to material life" (16-17). This worldview denies the possibility of reciprocal relationships. A clear hierarchy is formed with God at the pinnacle with man serving as his earthly representatives, and women, children, and the earth underneath men's stewardship, existing for their use. Barbara Mor, author of *The Great Cosmic Mother* (illustrated by Monica Sjöö), expands on this concept: "Under patriarchy, there is a literal belief that all life is created for men to *use*. And what patriarchal men see as useable is also seen as contemptible. (…) Exclusive identification with the father is a way of denying dependence on the mother – who is always ultimately Mother Earth" (316). So by identifying solely with God and the master and denying the earth which we depend on for survival, humans create this duality with non-human nature. However, as only man is said to be created in the image of god, and women created from man, this leaves women further removed from divinity in Christian theology. Women have been historically denied positions within the Christian church because of this, and being considered further from the image of god places women closer to non-human nature in the theological hierarchy.

This duality between human and non-human nature is dangerous to both parties. Whether we like it or not, we are dependent on the earth, on non-human nature, but although we (and our actions) are an important part of its biosystems, it is not totally dependent on us. Eco-scholar Wangari Maathai comments, "In degrading the environment, therefore, we degrade ourselves and all humankind. The reverse is also true. In the process of helping the earth to heal, we help ourselves" (17). Current depictions of the human relationship with non-human nature include the dependence of a

defenseless and reliant non-human nature on autonomous man. We are consistently told that we must save the planet, as though we need to come to "her" aid as a damsel in distress. We are never told that the planet can or will save us. In reality, reciprocal relationships still include dynamics of dependence and autonomy, but they are never fixed. Though non-human nature as a whole may not depend upon humans for survival, humans often play a vital role in their individual ecosystems. Other-than-human nature, then, depends upon the actions of humans to contribute to a stable, though constantly evolving, biosphere. There is a dependence upon humans to work with non-human nature rather than use it, thus warding off the devastation of natural processes which humans often interrupt or blatantly destroy. On the other hand, non-human nature can also function autonomously, without the need for human action.

One way to learn interconnectedness is to think of non-human nature as family. It is more difficult to Other non-human nature when we view plants, animals, and the earth as individual relations. Feminist native studies scholar Carol Lee Sanchez advocates for a focus on the interdependence of humans, animals, and plants to promote Native American ideals of harmonious coexistence. She says that most whites think of themselves as separate from nature, but that many "Native Americans believe themselves to be an integral part of the natural world" (Sanchez 211). She relates the Principle of Relatedness or Relationship, which states that every creature has a special place in nature and an important task to perform. She says that Native Americans think of the creatures and plants of the earth as family relations, which reminds them of their constant "personal connection to the universe." If we think of non-human creatures as family,

Sanchez points out, it would be natural to ask them for help and to help them. This approach makes it easier to see how non-human nature (or humans) can be dependent upon human nature and yet still be considered active and autonomous.

Hoffman uses a talented, strong female heroine who re-thinks and changes dominant ideologies about human/non-human nature relations. These stories are fantasy, but give the reader a possibility of what human relationships with non-human nature have the potential to become if we make the conscious choice to align ourselves with, rather than against, the world and creatures around us. For these reasons, I would characterize these texts as ecofeminist pedagogies.

Interconnectedness and Reciprocity

Green's story shows the importance of human connection to non-human nature and animals by giving them agency. Green is presented in relation to nature, animals, and other humans: non-human nature does not need to be saved. When she cares for and respects it, it reciprocates and provides for her. Animals and plants are shown as having autonomy and a will to act in their own best interests in addition to nurturing Green. The animals only stay with her for a time, taking help from her and helping her in return before going back out on their own. Green begins to heal with their physical and emotional support. Before her family is killed, Green tends their garden with great care, but instead of lording over it and simply taking from it, she nurtures it and even communes with the plants and the earth, convincing them to grow. "I could whisper to the old, twisted wisteria and it would turn green at my urging. I could encourage the

sweet peas to blossom with one word" (Hoffman, *Green Angel* 10). The use of "encourage" here is important as it shows that she understands that she needs their cooperation to grow and recognizes their agency. We can see both renewal, through the greening of the old, twisted wisteria as well as new birth through the literal blossoming of the sweet peas. Her family calls her Green because of her talents in the garden; her abilities involve, not a control over plant life, but a relationship with it. After learning all that she can from her mother about gardening, Green surpasses her mother's skill and knowledge by literally talking to the plants in her garden, working with them to create a fuller and more healthful garden, beneficial to both the plants and Green's family. Instead of trying to force the plants to grow through traditional methods, Green actually speaks with the plants, forming a relationship with each one.

Green learns the importance of reciprocity, and gets back as much as she gives, though not always in the ways she expects. After the disaster, the world covered in ash and her garden destroyed, Green loses faith in the power and beauty of nature. She casts off her name and decides to call herself Ash instead. As time goes on, however, she slowly learns how to respect and live in and with non-human nature without fear and is provided for. Half-blinded from the fire and ash, she learns to walk through the woods by touch and gathers chestnuts deep in the forest to make bread. On one of her trips, she comes across a huge white greyhound whom she names Ghost. The dog follows her home and eventually approaches her. When Ghost comes closer, Ash/Green realizes that her paws are burnt, oozing and blackened, and tears stream from the dog's eyes. After allowing the dog to rest, she applies one of her mother's salves to her paws. Though she

mourns the eventual departures of the animals who come to stay with her, Green never tries to force her friends to stay with her, recognizing that they have their own parts to play in the forest's ecosystem. She never considers them her pets, but is happy to help them to heal and return to lives that may not include her. She does not anticipate the help that she receives in return but eventually comes to see how they have helped her to heal as well, both physically and emotionally.

Green's reciprocal relationships are not limited to non-human nature. Ghost leads Green to her closest neighbor, an elderly woman whom Green had never had a relationship with. She sees that the woman's house is covered in soot and that she has nothing but birdseed to eat. Ash/Green gives the woman her thermos of water and a loaf of bread and cleans her house until it gleams, leaving herself covered in ashes. The woman gives her a bag of birdseed in exchange; Ash/Green thinks it is worthless, and leaves it in her garden, but Ghost tosses it in the air, shaking the seeds out over the garden. In the morning, there are a hundred birds in her garden, eating and leaving the husks of the seeds. Two baby sparrows are left behind, their wings burnt. Ash/Green makes a worm paste for them and nurses them back to health. In return, they weave her a fishing net from her hair that she had cut off and thrown in a corner; with it, she catches fish to eat. She catches three fish, one for herself, the dogs, and the sparrows, one for her neighbor, and leaves the third in a pail of water on her porch. Later, she sees a hawk with a burnt beak perched on the bucket, watching the fish. She had always chased hawks from her garden, thinking them thieves, but now she lets him stay and eat the fish, knowing that he cannot hunt with a burnt beak. He stays and allows her to treat his beak

with lavender oil, which her mother had told her could treat most any burn. When she goes deep into the woods that day, the hawk shakes down so many chestnuts from the trees that she can hardly carry them all. Green repeats throughout the novel that the animals would not be themselves if they could not act as they are meant to. In recognizing this, Green understands that the animals have individual, active parts to play in a larger ecosystem. She removes herself as a central part of their existence, thereby treating them as equals rather than pets.

Green successfully negotiates several reciprocal relationships with humans as well as animals, and by allowing and accepting their departures, she acknowledges their autonomy. After being joined by Ghost, the sparrows, and the hawk, a boy Green names Diamond shows up at her door, his face covered and his scorched vocal cords leaving him unable to speak. Instead of turning him away and bolting the door, she lets him in and shares her food, giving him shelter in her barn. He helps her to overcome her grief, accepting her as she is, but seeing the beauty and value within her. Spending time with him helps her to transcend Ash and return to the name Green. "I thought perhaps I'd dreamed him up. A hallucination made out of loneliness, black ink, sorrow. (…) But even when he'd gone and was already sleeping, I could see something bright everywhere he'd walked. It was almost like having moonlight again" (Hoffman, *Green Angel* 80). Despite her protestations, Diamond believes that with work, her garden could grow again. She thinks it is hopeless, as the soil is full of ash, and that nothing will ever grow there. Nevertheless, she sells her mother's pearls that had been meant for her sixteenth birthday to buy seeds for the garden and a new coat for Diamond. She hears him every night in

the garden, hauling away bad soil, picking out stones, and raking the earth. Ash/Green says that for the longest time, she didn't understand why she had let Diamond stay. She only begins to understand when she finds herself singing while gathering chestnuts, dancing while doing the wash, and smiling while polishing silver to trade. "Something had indeed happened to me. This was not the way I ordinarily behaved. I was not someone who danced and sang and smiled at her own reflection. I was Ash, the girl with thorns on her clothes, the one who preferred stones to people" (Hoffman, *Green Angel* 91). When summer comes, the garden Diamond planted and nurtured blooms, and she begins to green with it. Her tattoos turn from black to green, and her heart begins to open again, seeing that there is love in the world, even for her, and that life is worth living. Like the animals Green helps, Diamond eventually has to leave her, needing to find the mother he was separated from during the disaster. Green finds it difficult to let him leave, but she knows that she cannot force him to stay. She can only hope that he will keep his promise and return to her.

Green Transformations

> When I woke from my dream I was crying. I cried like the rain, like the river that flowed to the city, and all my tears were green. At last my eyes were cleared of embers. At last I could fully see. There was daylight out my window. There were the seedlings Diamond had grown in the garden. There was the world waiting outside, aching and ruined, but beautiful all the same. (Hoffman, *Green Angel* 110)

In non-human nature, very little ever remains static. Plants, animals, and even entire ecosystems are constantly changing and adapting. Change and transformation are generally accepted as normal in non-human nature. Yet when it comes to ourselves, particularly our physical bodies, we fight change, sometimes even considering it an

enemy to be vanquished. Paula Gunn Allen characterizes change as a part of natural processes. She asserts that we must cherish and honor our bodies; that they are not the dwelling place of the spirit, as advocates of the mind/body dualism would have us believe, but that they are the spirit: “The mortal body is a tree; it is holy in whatever condition; it is truth and myth because it has so many potential conditions; because of its possibilities, it is sacred and profane; most of all, it is your most precious talisman, your own connection to her” (Allen 56). This does not mean that bodies or the earth do not or should not change. Allen claims that even the earth changes, her body transitioning, mutating, morphing into something new. We must accept natural changes within ourselves of sickness and disease, aging and weight changes, and we must stop devoting our lives to avoiding or stopping these changes: “Healing the self means honoring and recognizing the body, accepting rather than denying all the turmoil its existence brings, welcoming the woes and anguish flesh is subject to, cherishing its multitudinous forms and seasons, its unfailing ability to know and be, to grow and wither, to live and die, to mutate, to change” (Allen 56-57). Ecofeminist pedagogies then, should also show human change and transformation, bodily and otherwise, as “natural,” as necessary, and as inevitable.

Part of placing oneself with non-human nature is consciously becoming a part of biospheric processes, of which change is a fundamental part. Green undergoes a rather drastic transformation that is aligned with and aided by both human and non-human nature. When she feels something begin to change within herself after living with Diamond, Ghost, the sparrows, and the hawk, Green asks her unnamed neighbor if she

seems different. Her neighbor asks her to look at an entire wall of photos and identify which one was her. Green cannot tell her, as one is too pretty, one too sad, and another to silly to be her neighbor. The old woman tells her that they are all her, each and every one. "*Did you think nothing ever changed?*" (Hoffman, *Green Angel* 89; italics in original). Beyond eating plants, drinking water, breathing the air, and having relationships with other-than-human animals, Green merges with non-human nature, painfully inking vines, flowers, thorns, and animals into her skin using pins as a form of release for her overwhelming grief. Her tattoos make non-human nature symbolically and literally a part of her through her skin, aiding her transformation. As her tattoos mutate in color, turning green, so does she change back to Green, though more capable, stronger, and sure of herself.

Green's tattooing functions as a form of self-mutilation, though it is an act which is not self-destructive but transformative. After cutting her hair, sewing thorns into her clothing, and driving nails through her boots, she turns her pain onto her skin; however, Green uses tattooing as a form of expression which tells the story of her grief through tangled thorns, dark birds, and "a rose that looked like a flower found at the end of the world" (Hoffman, *Green* Angel, 30). She uses pain and physical expression to try and understand both her profound grief and the new, ruined world in which she finds herself. This kind of self-mutilation as a form of transformative self-expression has recently become a more common theme in YA fiction, particularly in girls' literatures. Cheryl Cowdy, in her article, "Resistant Rituals: Self-Mutilation and the Female Adolescent Body in Fairy Tales and Young Adult Fiction," reinterprets acts of self-mutilation in YA

as not just acts which destroy female bodies, but which offer modes of change and transformation in the wake of grief. She quotes Angela Failler, who recognizes that "for those who practice it, self-harm serves as a means of survival in the wake of psychical trauma" (qtd. in Cowdy 43). Green begins tattooing after the death of her family, feeling as though the girl she had been had died along with them. The tattooing serves as a form of release and grieving, which allows Green to feel some kind of connection to a world which has undergone a total transformation from that which she had always known. Cowdy uses Armando Favazza's definition of self-mutilation, as "the deliberate, direct, nonsuicidal destruction or alteration of one's body tissue" (qtd. in Cowdy 43-44). In an attempt to destroy the girl she had once been, Green actually ends up altering or modifying her body instead, creating a combination of her old self and someone new, transforming rather than destroying what she had been. Cowdy claims that self-mutilation in YA literature can be a therapeutic and transformative act and that it can "[encourage] the development of creative strategies for self-expression and healthy reaggregation within dysfunctional societies (Cowdy 45). So rather than representing self-mutilation as self-sacrifice (as Cowdy argues is its function in traditional fairy tales), YA fiction employs self-mutilation as having the potential for agency and the positive, physical expression of female pain created by social dysfunction (Cowdy 47). Green successfully reconstructs traditional stereotypes of self-mutilation/modification as destructive and punishing by using her body as an active, physical representation of change and renewal.

I argue that if one is conscious of the body and sees self-mutilation as a transformation of the self, it becomes more difficult to consider the physical body as separate from the true self. Activist and theologian Elias Farajajé-Jones describes the sacred function of self-mutilation through piercing and tattooing, making one constantly aware of parts of the body which are ignored or cause shame. I have examined how in the mind/body dualism, the physical body functions as a sort of prison for the spirit, soul, or mind, tying it to the earth, which is despised as being low beneath heaven. Celebrating the body and physicality is one way to move past dangerous binaries and move towards psychic wholeness. Farajajé-Jones explains that "These piercings in my body then become powerful reconfigurations of the body as icon. They reflect my sex-spirituality, a journey back into the body" (Farajajé-Jones 334). Ecofeminist pedagogies such as *Green Angel* may show that acts of self-mutilation have the potential to bring us back into our bodies rather than allowing us to continue to distance ourselves from them, and allowing us to recognize them as the spirit itself rather than simply as its dwelling. Just as Green has a literal journey which she embarks upon to help her loved ones, she must journey back to her body through tattooing, showing that self-transformation is critical to building a healthy self-identity. As Green heals, her tattoos begin to change color and she begins to recognize the strength of her own body and mind through hard physical labor and even through writing her story. Ecofeminist pedagogies will recognize that the recognition and acceptance of the female body is a necessary prerequisite to feminine power. In other words, Green could not have successfully survived without first acknowledging the

power and ability of her physical body and accepting the inevitable changes that she must experience.

Green Angel displays self-mutilation as both a literal modification of the body as well as symbolism of the "natural" changes in our physical selves, as discussed by Paula Gunn Allen. Green's pain and grief are physically manifested through her tattoos. Later, the reader (and Green) can see her emotional and physical transformation to a new, evolved Green. Such acts also turn the body itself into text, into a mirror of its environment as well as inner turmoil (Cowdy 49). Cowdy suggests that if "self-mutilation can be interpreted as an attempt at self-healing that seeks to change the relationship between the individual human body and the communal social body," then acknowledging these stories of the skin can help readers to heal from personal and societal dysfunction through creative and artistic expressions (50). She ends by addressing concern about young readers copying behaviors they read about in YA: "Translating an otherwise unsharable pain into art also benefits readers and the broader society, extending to us the opportunity for empathy and healing when we read the stories as expressions of agency rather than as 'triggers' for copycat behavior" (Cowdy 50). By portraying these acts of self-mutilation as transformative rather than sacrificial or destructive, ecofeminist narratives have the power to symbolize girls' ability to turn reactive pain into active renewal. The stories are not about creating more pain, but turning existing pain and grief into positive self-expression.

The physical changes, or alterations, that Green undergoes are even shown as necessary to her transformation. In this way, *Green Angel* functions as a Cinderella story

through the narrative of rebirth as Green literally and figuratively rises from the ashes of her broken world. Jane Caputi, in *Goddesses and Monsters*, examines Harold Bayley's interpretation of Cinderella as a gynocentric story of transformation which resists mind/body dualisms and celebrates physical and spiritual metamorphosis. Caputi looks at how he links Cinderella to ancient goddesses throughout the world and

> finds in the story the soul's suffering because of the splitting of earth, nature, and physical body from spirit: 'Cinderella, the bright and shining one, who sits among the cinders, and keeps the fire alight, is a personification of the Holy Spirit dwelling unhonoured amid the smoldering ashes of the Soul's latent, never totally extinct, Divinity, and, by patient tending, fanning them into flame.' Gradually the soul awakens to the full radiance of its divinity. (Bayley, qtd in Caputi, *Goddesses and Monsters*, 330)

Like Cinderella, Green must be literally and metaphorically covered in ash to hide the radiance of her inner self. Her tattoos function as Cinderella's gowns, physical representations of non-human nature and symbols of her "acquired elemental Wisdom" as she creates reciprocal relationships with non-human nature and recognizes her interconnectedness with both human and non-human nature. As they change from black to green, her true self shines through the ash, and she transforms, literally becoming Green/green, and displaying the transformative power of greenness and green living. She sheds the name that she had given herself while in despair – Ash – and not only reclaims her given name of Green, but grows into it in a way which her previous self could not.

Green's transformation is also a symbol of the vital cycles of death and renewal integral to human and non-human nature. Death is generally despised and considered the antithesis of life, but in reality, death is a part of the life cycle, its "natural" conclusion, and necessary to create new life. "Being good, holy, and/or politically responsible means being able to accept whatever life brings – and that includes just about everything you usually think of as unacceptable, like disease, death, and violence. Walking in balance, in harmony, and in sacred manner requires staying in your body, accepting its discomforts, decayings, witherings, and blossomings and respecting them" (Allen 52). Death is necessary for renewal, for rebirth, and is a representation of the agency and transformative power in nature. In *Green Angel* and *Green Witch*, fires and ash kill many of the plants and animals as well as Green's garden. Through her own transformation, she finds faith in the restorative power of non-human nature to heal and renew itself.

Conclusions

Green Angel and *Green* Witch are magical fantasies that explore the possibilities of aligning human and non-human nature. Despite their fantastical nature, they model relationships with non-human nature that are progressive and incorporate the theories of many ecological and feminist scholars that offer beneficial alternatives to humanity's current destructive relationships with non-human nature. I argue that Green's story functions as an ecofeminist pedagogy as it subverts traditional frameworks of the domination of non-human nature and women by superior man; of splitting the mind/soul/true self from the body allowing for the devaluing and oppression of

physicality – which is equated with non-human nature and women; of viewing non-human nature and women as homogenous commodities or unending resources to be harvested or used, but without any wants, needs, or agency of their own; and of the denial of the fundamental interconnections between human and non-human nature. Instead, these narratives focus on themes of fundamental interconnection or relation between human and non-human nature, individual autonomy and agency of both women and non-human nature, the necessity of reciprocal relationships between human and non-human nature, and of transformation as a necessary and natural process. They resist simply showing the heroine Green as having innate relationships with non-human nature because she is female, but instead stress the importance of consciously aligning the human self with other-than-human nature and learning how to create healthy relationships with nature, humans, and themselves.

Though Hoffman resists such stereotypes, there is a historical tendency to portray women, especially within ecological literatures and movements, as fundamentally connected to non-human nature in ways which men are not. As previously discussed, this is deeply problematic for both women and non-human nature. In the next chapter, I explore how historical alignment of the feminine and non-human nature through the archetype of the witch has led to a devaluing of both non-human nature and the female body and their natural processes, as well as how Hoffman's Green undermines these stereotypes.

Chapter Three:

Witches

The image of the witch has often been examined in feminist critiques of literature as it can be representative of rebellious women, and, in particular, women who have (real or perceived) relationships with non-human nature. In folktales, fairy tales, and children's stories, witches have commonly been aligned with non-human nature in several ways. Often, these witches live alone (i.e. without men) deep within dark woods or marshes, in places that terrify and threaten to devour unsuspecting, innocent victims. Sometimes, the environment in which the witch lives is even complicit in her evil plans, luring victims to her lair. Witches are also regularly depicted as having distinct connections with animals of all sorts, including cats, bats, and wolves, which they either use as familiars or magically transform into, literally making them synonymous with non-human nature. Furthermore, witches use plants and the powers of nature for spells to steal youth, beauty, money, power, or to harm others. They speak to our fear of non-human nature, using its power to be-spell, maim, and kill.

Earth and the environment are depicted and represented in many ways, but most of them are inherently feminine. Through the mind/body dualism, the female body is placed alongside non-human nature as either bountiful and nurturing, ready for man's use, or as chaotic, untamed and even evil (Bordo; Merchant). Historically, women who

were in tune with non-human nature, such as healers and midwives, have been subject to persecution by the church on suspicions of witchcraft (Barstow). Girls' and women's very bodies were, and often still are, viewed as deviant and disobedient because of their emissions of menstrual blood, birthing matter, and breast milk. Compared to men's bodies, those of girls and women are often viewed as naturally more dirty and animalistic, innately connected with the wild, yet fruitful, "body" of non-human nature through animals and the earth.

Though the female body is considered inherently closer to nature, it is not enough to make a girl or a woman a witch on its own. It is the connection of the female body with knowledge production (especially knowledge which most men do not possess or that is considered feminine) and with behavior which breaks traditional feminine gender roles that makes a woman powerful, that makes a woman dangerous, that makes a woman a witch. Being viewed as too close to or too knowledgeable about non-human nature puts girls and women in danger of being suspected of witchcraft. Alice Hoffman, in *Green Angel* and *Green Witch*, directly engages the archetype of the witch. In these texts, the main character, Green, is viewed as a witch or as witch-like throughout the novels because she is seen as being closer to non-human nature and faces ostracism from her community. However, it is only through her witch-like powers and relationships with non-human nature that she is able to survive incredible circumstances and complete her path to self-discovery.

Eve and Witchery

The earth is often labeled the mother of humanity, but this is only one of "her" three distinct personifications: the virgin land ripe with possibility for use and exploitation, the witch or bitch who is wild and destructive but needs taming, and the mother who is ripe and fertile and provides freely for her children. Ecofeminist Carolyn Merchant discusses these three personifications in her Edenic recovery story:

> As original Eve, nature is virgin, pure, and light – land that is pristine or barren, but having the potential for development. As fallen Eve, nature is disorderly and chaotic; a wilderness, wasteland, or desert requiring improvement; dark and witchlike, the victim and mouthpiece of Satan as serpent. As mother Eve, nature is an improved garden; a nurturing earth bearing fruit; a ripened ovary; maturity. (Merchant 32)

Only original Eve and mother Eve are considered acceptable examples of womanhood, and are what traditional feminine gender roles are created from. As original Eve, good young women or ladies as well as non-human nature are expected to be pristine, worthy and in need of love and protection, and as having the potential for development. They are passive and unmoving, simply presented to be gazed upon as landscape or environment in opposition to men who have agency and are active. Later, as wives and mothers, women are expected to fulfill the role of mother Eve, maternal, nurturing, and, both literally and figuratively, bearing the fruit of the Earth to sustain humanity. Women are meant to reflect these more passive, peaceful representations of non-human nature, as virgin land

awaiting penetration or rape by plows, deforestation, or other uses of "her" resources. In this way, "her" ripe and fruitful "body" is symbolically sexually taken by man and used to sustain him.

In opposition to the constantly giving Eve as Mother Earth is Father God the patriarch. As Barbara Mor states, this Father God becomes an all-seeing eye, not unlike a Panopticon, with an ever-watching gaze over woman and nature. God is accepted as the father, but there is a patriarchal denial of the mother who provides care and nurturance. When women rebel against the pre-assigned gender roles of original Eve and mother Eve, they become fallen Eve. The uncontrolled fallen Eve is dark and witch-like, with the ability to wield destructive elements. She is, above all, depicted as chaos, which Merchant defines as the "reemergence of nature as power over humans, nature as active, dark, wild, turbulent, and uncontrollable" (54). She is shown in contrast to the "higher" and more respected mind, she acts through her physicality, which is often sexualized. The patriarchal representation of fallen Eve shows nature in opposition to "civilization," which Merchant says "is the final end, the telos, toward which 'wild' Nature is destined. The progressive narrative undoes the declension of the Fall. The 'end of nature' is civilization" (Merchant 44). I argue, then, that fallen Eve is not just witch-like, but is the archetype of the witch as she is the combination of dark, unruly non-human nature and the uncontrolled, corrupted feminine body.

The European witch hunts, which occurred from approximately the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries CE, are perhaps the most infamous example of the fear of female power manifesting as witchcraft. The images of witches from the Inquisition, a

famous participant in the European witch hunts that condemned witchcraft as heresy, have carried over into contemporary consciousness and have greatly contributed to the current archetype of the witch. According to feminist scholar Rosemary Radford Ruether, women were considered "the gateway of the Devil. If women were completely obedient to their fathers, husbands, ministers, and magistrates, they might be redeemed as goodwives. But in any independence of women lurked heresy and witchcraft" (19). Anne Llewellyn Barstow gives a thorough history of the European witch hunts in her book *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*. In it, she explains that the work of village healers and midwives often overlapped with that of priests, believing they could provide magical help by delivering babies safely, making potions, predicting the future, and acting as peacekeeper between villagers.

> Denied the ancient role of clergy or the newly emerging one of doctor, women drew on their own networks of information and skills inherited from their mothers to serve as privileged counselors and practitioners. But power creates fear, and power based on magic can cause panic. The witch hunt records speak eloquently of the fear of the wise women that developed, especially in men. The role of healer, long respected and even seen as essential, became suspect. Believing that some women were powerful enough even to threaten male sexuality, some segments of society began to carry out a terrible revenge on the magic-workers whom they suspected of having this control. (Barstow 110)

These women were perceived as being closer to non-human nature through their use of plants and herbs and their proximity to birthing and abortions, which are connected to both the earth and the body.

Ecofeminist scholar Barbara Mor also discusses the European witch hunts in their relation to the church and patriarchy. "If life is inherently evil, the church fathers needed someone to blame; and who is better to blame than woman, who creates life from her own body? Living women, also, can be publicly punished, as the iconic and illusory Devil can never be" (Sjöö and Mor 298). Women's bodies became subjected to intense scrutiny, believed to be oversexed, insatiable in sexual desire, and considered evil by nature. "The myth of 'feminine evil,' which has dominated the Western world for over two thousand years, led logically and directly to the religiously targeted murder of women as witches during the Great Inquisition of Europe" (Sjöö and Mor 298). Women, then, became the scapegoat of the church, allowing for a physical enemy who could then be publicly judged and disciplined, thereby proving that the church was making progress against evil while asserting dominance over much of the population. Though there were some male victims, it was women as a group who were made suspect by the fifteenth to eighteenth century European witch hunts. Everything about them was a betrayal: their perceived alliance with non-human nature, their strength when they were supposed to be weak, their intelligence when they were supposed to defer to male authority, even their very bodies were considered suspiciously mysterious and bizarre, and ripe for condemnation.

The Green Witch

In *Green Angel* and *Green Witch*, the women who are perceived as having the closest relationships with non-human nature are suspected of witchcraft. The fire that destroys the city near Green burns much of the landscape, and its ashes infect all of non-human nature for many miles in every direction, ruining crops and polluting the air and water. Many of the women identified as witches in the novels are ones who are believed to have been tainted by their ashy surroundings and by non-human nature itself. They are thought to be hybrids with non-human animals, to have powers that no human should have, and even to be monsters who lure men to deadly fates. Green finds that these women, including herself, are simply women who have lost loved ones in the disaster and who have frightened others by violating traditional feminine gender roles and acquiring skills and knowledge that place them closer to non-human nature. We can see the presence of Merchant's edenic recovery story in both of Hoffman's works; the girls and women featured throughout the story start as original Eve or mother Eve, but eventually end up as fallen Eve. In most cases, it is the loss of qualities that identify a girl or woman as original or mother Eve (often through loss or maturation) that forces her into the role of fallen Eve. By employing the archetype of the witch in these novels, Hoffman forces the reader to rethink the figure of the witch, to critique stereotypes about witchery as well as the female body in nature. She creates witches who are different than those found in religious texts and children's stories and gives them full humanity and new endings that include a place within their community.

In *Green Angel*, Green's magical talent for growing flowers and food places her closer to non-human nature than any other character in the novel. When she goes into town after the attack on a nearby city that leaves most of her family dead to trade items for food, the shopkeepers try to cheat her when they see that she is mostly blind. She surprises them with an ability to tell silver from gold, "green tea from black, navy beans from kidney beans, earth from ashes, honesty from deceit. I had another talent, it seemed. One that made people nervous" (Hoffman, *Green Angel* 43). Afterwards, rumors circulated that to even touch her hand would cause misfortune, and most people avoided her. The fears of the townspeople are reminiscent of the rampant fear during the 15th-18th century European witch hunts when even making eye contact with an accused or suspected witch was to invite affliction or disaster. To be kin to a witch or simply friendly or close with one was to be tainted by association, contaminated by her evil doings, and was often enough to get one accused of witchcraft as well (Barstow).

In addition to her uncanny and possibly magical powers, Green's refusal to act properly feminine unsettles those she comes in contact with. Green is strong and independent in the wake of disaster; even without her sight, she is determined and does not allow others to use her. As she can no longer be identified with the nurturing, bountiful earth representation or with virgin land passively waiting to yield to others, then she can only be identified with the more dangerous, chaotic Fallen Eve: the witch. All of the physical changes Green/Ash undergoes only succeed in making her less properly feminine, more assertive, and potentially more powerful. She shears off her long, dark hair so that she is left with a jagged, boyishly short cut, and she tries to harden herself by

wearing her father's boots (which she hammers nails into) and leather jacket, and sewing thorns into her clothing. She collects rocks and keeps a slingshot with her to use as protection against looters. "I wanted to be hard and brittle as the stones I carted into the woods, stones that could not feel or cry or see" (Hoffman, *Green Angel* 28). It is only when her food runs out and she begins to go hungry though, that she takes a pin and black ink and begins to tattoo herself with bats, ravens, vines, and "a rose that looked like a flower found at the end of the world. That's who I was now without my mother and my father and my moonlit sister. Blood and ink. Darkness where before there had been patience, black where there'd once been green" (Hoffman, *Green Angel* 30). Giving in to her grief, Green begins to call herself Ash, her real name sticking in her throat. She tries to distance herself from the emotionally and physically vulnerable girl she believed that she had been, hardening herself against her newly desolate world.

At this point in the story, Green is very far removed from herself at the beginning of the novel as Merchant's original Eve, who is pure and light, girl-like, and waiting with the potential for development. She no longer dreams of washing off the dirt and trying to impress others. She is no longer gangly, shy, and timid, but is physically strong and assertive. She has had partially fulfilled the role of mother Eve, as nurturing and fertile through her ability to grow food, but discards this role when her garden is destroyed as she refuses to replant it. Instead, she inhabits the role of fallen Eve, discarding the properly feminine and becoming dark and witchlike.

Green's unnamed neighbor fills the archetype of the witch, helping her to grow and transcend her grief, able to see herself as she truly is: Green. Over time, she feeds

Green tea, bread, soup, and a cake made of nettles that all taste inexplicably sweet, and slowly shows Green that she is not Ash, but truly Green, as even her black tattoos change from black to green. Her neighbor's function as a witch archetype helps Green to make it through her transformation, literally becoming green, and ready to write her own story and the stories of others, telling her, "You made it happen. You are the ink. Write as you want" (Hoffman, *Green Angel*, 115). She uses the power of non-human nature through her nettle potions for Green, and helps Green to discover that there is a magic in writing. Later, in *Green Witch*, when certain women begin to be suspected of being witches, Green's neighbor begins to be called the Stone Witch: "Lately, there has been talk of witches in our midst, women they call the Enchanted. People have superstitious minds, especially in difficult times" (Hoffman, *Green Witch*, 23). The same people whom Green had helped through emotional upheaval and physical survival begin to whisper about her with suspicion; they whisper about Green's garden being the only one growing, about her making potions, and about how her tattoos seem to have magical abilities to move and have a scent stronger than perfume. In what is a difficult time for the townspeople, they begin to look to possible sources of their continued misery, and Green is not the only woman made suspect: "In town there are rumors that some of us have also been altered in deep, strange ways. The Enchanted – those said to be witches – are those who stood outside for too long while the cinders rained down, or looked at the sun as it gleamed, or drank from the river when it was thick with toxins. People believe in black magic even when there is none" (Hoffman, *Green Witch*, 28). Thus, the women thought to be witches are those who are seen as being too close to non-human nature, who drank from

the transformed river, or whose skin absorbed the dark cinders from the fire. They are said to have powers akin to non-human animals, such as flying, changing appearance, and swimming with gills: "They assume that whatever is different is dangerous" (Hoffman, *Green Witch*, 28). When Green goes and actually meets these women, she finds that they are women who have lost loved ones and who now live alone, just like Green and her neighbor. They are not bound by traditional gender roles because of this, and gain a certain kind of power through their autonomy and independence. This break from gender norms and association with non-human nature causes the townspeople to fear these women and their possible abilities.

Though Hoffman shows the townspeople as having similar attitudes to church officials and frightened civilians during the fifteenth to eighteenth century European witch hunts towards women whom they fear, she resists traditional stereotypes of witches and witchery. Instead of creating a narrative which simply repeats the tragic punishment of women who were considered witches during the infamous witch hunts, the author uses Green, a young woman and suspect herself, to reach out to these suspected women and portray them as human beings. Green makes special paper for each of the women people have said are witches: her neighbor, known as the Stone Witch, the Sky Witch, the Rose Witch, and the River Witch. She leaves to write down their stories as she goes looking for Heather, a friend who has inexplicably disappeared, and Diamond, the boy she loves who left and never returned. She wants to hear and give voice to the stories of women who are warily suspected of having malevolent ambitions, of being a threat. The witches have secluded themselves from other humans, each living in or near the element which

the people identify her with: sky, plant life, and water. Like all of the inhabitants of their world, these scarred women are all trying to cope with immense personal grief from the loss of their loved ones. Not surprisingly, they also have a justifiable fear of possible retribution from people who have lost everything and need a scapegoat. Because of this, Green has to follow rumors to find the women she seeks: "The Enchanted never allow themselves to be known. They don't wish to be made into goddesses or demons. They are merely women who have suffered. They want to be left alone. They know what happens to witches in this world. Every little girl does" (Hoffman, *Green Witch* 50). Green's comment alludes to that fear of suspicion and persecution of witchcraft that has lived in women's consciousness long past the Inquisition and infamous 15th-18th century European witch hunts. Children learn what happens to witches through reading folk and fairy tales and even religious texts such as the Bible. Girls, as Green points out, may take this message more personally as they are the ones at risk of being accused. So the people of Green's town gossip and tell each other lies, saying that the Enchanted "steal children and keep them in cages. They cast spells in which dogs become men and men become dogs. They turn women into birds, fish, stones, thorns, hedges, monsters" (Hoffman, *Green Witch* 51). In short, they are witches and must be feared and avoided if not punished.

Green's journey highlights the destructive effect of patriarchal attitudes on modern life and society. Though Green has simply been trying to survive each day rather than planning for the future, she decides that it is time to see the Stone Witch, who is supposed to be able to tell the future through the stones in her field. "They think my dear

neighbor is one of the Enchanted because she lives alone and seeks no one's council or love (…) but she's just very old, and wiser than most" (Hoffman, *Green Witch*, 28). The Stone Witch takes Green to a field of stones which turns into a forest overnight. Though real magic seems to have taken place, it is unclear whether it was wrought by non-human nature, the Stone Witch, or by Green herself. What is clear is that whatever power the Stone Witch holds is deeply connected to non-human nature and its processes. After meeting with her neighbor, Green learns that her friend, Heather, has been taken by an extremist group called the Horde, who instigated the attack against the city which killed Green's family as a kind of heavenly retribution for becoming too technologically advanced (through building schools, libraries, and cities) and who want to return to a time when "men toiled in the fields without plows and trucks, when women were shut into their houses, sweeping, cooking, never daring to speak back" (Hoffman, *Green Witch*, 8). They kidnap women and imprison men whom they cannot convert or disagree with their ideals, and they burn any book they come upon on sight. Green also finds out that Diamond is kin to the Horde but is unsure whether he is a part of their group or if he has also been taken by them. She decides to find the other Enchanted, both to tell their stories and to see if they can help her find Heather and Diamond. The Horde and their actions demonstrate how patriarchal beliefs affect not just women and girls but any group which does not conform to their beliefs. By putting an entire community in fear, the Horde is able to control the use of land, technology, and women's bodies as well as effectively silence both men and women who question them through capture and imprisonment.

Green uses the knowledge she has of the Enchanted and the Horde to set out on her journey, on which she discovers women whose intimacy with non-human nature exceeds that of most, giving them both literal and figurative power that frightens the townspeople. However, Green finds that the only crime these women seem to have committed is non-conformity, causing others to fear them for their difference. The first woman Green goes to see after her neighbor is called the Sky Witch, who lives in a fire tower overlooking town. She is rumored to have talons and lay eggs: "They say she knows things a flesh-and-blood woman has no business knowing. She knows your thoughts, your deepest despair, your brightest hope. She can call you by your given name even though she's never seen you before. If you aren't careful, she gets inside your mind" (Hoffman, *Green Witch* 51). Green finds that she had been the mother of six children and the wife of a fireman who had all died during the disaster. She had gone blind from staring at the fire and ash for too long, looking for her family. The Sky Witch does not have talons or feathers, but wears blue jay down as a dress and in her hair and when she sings, birds of every kind gather around the tower to listen. The Sky Witch is a woman who was considered normal, safe, before the disaster. However, living without a man or children means that she can no longer fulfill the role of mother Eve, for she no longer has anyone to nurture or care for. In a patriarchal framework, the very reason for women's existence is to provide and care for others. To focus solely on one's own life and work as a woman is considered the ultimate act of selfishness; it is taboo. The simple fact that she now lives for herself alone, though in grief, makes the Sky Witch fallen Eve, and, therefore, a witch. Although the Sky Witch is blind, "her lack of vision doesn't keep

her from knowing what our future might bring" (Hoffman, *Green Witch*, 59). Despite the rumors others spread about her, she watches over the children of the town at night, singing lullabies and never sleeping, taking flight as a woman-shaped blue bird. The ability to fly, especially as a woman, is integral to the witch archetype, as is the ability to shape shift into non-human animals, including flying ones like bats and birds. The Sky Witch has powers that connect her with non-human nature, with air and with birds, but she uses them to protect the town nearest her to help those who accuse her of witchcraft to avoid her grief.

Next, Green goes to a woman called the Rose Witch, who is rumored to be greedy and vain, and no one can decide if she is terribly ugly or extremely beautiful. Some say that she entrances men who would give up anything for her, and later reveals herself to them as a monster. Witches are commonly stereotyped as being both old and ugly but disguising themselves as young and beautiful, often through the use of potions or black magic, to wreak havoc, seduce men, lure children, or kill a hero. Witches are also traditionally associated with specific non-human animals like reptiles, bats, wolves, and cats. Some of these animals, such as the chameleon, can change their appearance, while others, like bats and wolves, have had legends which bestow shape shifting unto them. During the inquisition, many women accused of witchcraft were said to change into other animals during their satanic practices. Green is intrigued by the widely varied descriptions of the Rose Witch as beautiful, monstrous, or both. When Green made paper for the Rose Witch's story, bees, which had not been in her part of the world for quite some time, hovered over the kettle, which Green took as a sign of good fortune. Later,

she is told that where bees are, a garden is beginning. "*Gardens are stronger than buildings. They bloom when everything else is* gone" (Hoffman, *Green Witch* 88; italics in original). Green learns that the physical and spiritual survival of humanity is intrinsically linked to non-human nature and to each other. When she meets the Rose Witch, she has bright red hair and a beautiful face that had been horribly scarred. Ghost, the dog Green brought back to health after the disaster, is living with her. She tells Green that she was supposed to be married on the day of the disaster; instead, her lover was killed in the fire and she had been burned watching him die from across the river. The Rose Witch, like the Stone Witch and Sky Witch, lives alone after her loss. One of her greatest offences in the eyes of her community is that her beauty has been marred. The pursuit of beauty is considered in many societies one of the most important traditional feminine gender roles, so when a woman does not fit her society's beauty ideal, she may be considered deviant.

The last woman Green goes to see is the River Witch, who is rumored to have scales for skin and gills to swim beneath the water. Green finds an old woman keeping eternal watch from her dock with a lantern. The woman had once been the wife of a fisherman. She had always wanted a better life than what he could give her, but after the disaster, he used his boat to go out and rescue those who had made it to the river. He hadn't made it back from one of those trips. Since then, the old woman has not left her vigil on the dock, hoping to find a way to help people as her husband had. She tells Green that she simply hadn't known his worth until it was too late. The River Witch lives alone like the other "witches," and is an older woman whom people fear because of

her comfort with the river she lives on. Almost all modern depictions of witches portray them as old. For women and girls in several societies, youth is the only acceptable time in life to be considered beautiful, and since women's value in these societies lies almost entirely in their status as pretty commodities, their value disintegrates at an alarmingly rapid pace. Barstow explains that the loss of youth during the fifteenth to eighteenth century European witch hunts was actually dangerous: "Old people, and old women especially, were hated for the way they looked. In an age that worshiped outward beauty and equated it with inward virtue, an ugly old woman was seen as evil, and therefore as a witch" (137). In many pagan and goddess-worshipping religions and societies, the crone was considered an important part of the lifecycle, equal in consequence to the maiden and the mother, the other parts of the triple aspect. But in modern society and religion, old women are not supposed to have power or to even exist outside of the supporting roles of wife, mother, and grandmother. So if they are deemed intelligent, strong, independent, or overly capable, they are immediately deemed dangerous.

Green gains knowledge and help from the women she encounters. All of the witches point Green to the Horde's (those responsible for the attack) prison, and give her strange gifts that help her to free prisoners and defeat the Horde: a stone with a leaf inside, a feather, a rose petal, and a fishhook. Green takes Diamond, who was kin to the Horde, into her home, realizing that he and his family were victims of the same army as the rest of them. Heather, her brother Troy, and her baby also come to live with Green and Diamond. It isn't until later, once she has created a family of refugees within her home, that she realizes that she is the Green Witch, "the one who can bring your heart's

desire" (Hoffman, *Green Witch* 133). They all find that acceptance of difference and working together are necessary for them all to survive and live harmoniously. They bring the witches into their lives as part of the community, no longer ostracized or demonized for their real and perceived connections to nature. Through this new acceptance, nature itself, both human and non-human, is accepted and recognized as vital for the existence of all. Embracing all of nature, both human and non-human, allows them to find hope within the future. In this way, Hoffman resituates the archetype of the witch into a new narrative: one in which the female body can be celebrated as strong and capable without being corrupt, and where humans position themselves with non-human nature without fearing its agency and power.

Conclusions

Hoffman successfully re-imagines the archetype of the witch and places witchery within a new framework in which the female body and non-human nature are valued, girls and women are granted full humanity, and witches can go from being ostracized to becoming active members of their communities. There is a tradition in storytelling of the ritualistic killing of the divine feminine and denigration of the female body. When strong, powerful female characters are discredited and vilified so that they can be justifiably murdered by male heroes, girls only learn that strong women are evil and monstrous and that they are punished for their power. When women's bodies and natural bodily processes are portrayed as dirty or polluted, it creates a culture of shame surrounding the female body. Girls then learn from that shame to fear the humiliation of their bodies; this fear results in strict male control over feminine bodies. *Green Angel*

and *Green Witch* resist portraying witches and women's/girls' bodies stereotypically and avoids repeating themes of body shaming and goddess murder. Though Merchant's edenic recovery story can be seen within the novels, the characters transcend the roles of original, mother, and fallen Eve to model a fuller range of possible feminine ways of being. In these novels, the alignment of humanity – rather than femininity – with non-human nature subverts the long-established devaluing of non-human nature, girls and women, and their natural processes.

We can see in Hoffman's novels that it is often the connection of the female body with knowledge production that make women powerful and witchlike. Patriarchy has a vested interest in suppressing feminine knowledge production, especially ecofeminist pedagogies, so when that knowledge production is closely associated with non-human nature, both the woman and the area of knowledge become suspect or automatically demonized.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

Throughout this project, I have chosen to focus on the intersection of environmental justice with gender. Due to mind/body dualisms, women have been historically associated with non-human nature, seen as exemplifying the devalued body with men representing the valued and respected mind or soul; this has resulted in the debasement and Othering of both women and non-human nature. Non-human nature is generally portrayed as a backdrop for the lives and stories of humanity, simple scenery with no agency. It is also considered a never-ending set of resources whose purpose is to provide for and be consumed by humans. Like the earth, women often function as background for men's stories and lives and are considered commodities available for use and consumption. When women and non-human nature are shown this way, they are considered good and safe; however, if they cannot be bent to human or male use, they are characterized as threatening to patriarchal power. The figure of the witch emerges from patriarchal fear of the unruly, wicked woman who has aligned herself with or embodies those aspects of non-human nature which cannot be controlled and are therefore volatile. Women and non-human nature have obvious power and agency in these forms, but if they can be contained or controlled, then women's unruly bodies, sexuality, and procreative power as well as non-human nature's elemental power are no longer frightening, no longer a threat. There is nothing formidable about livestock, pets, or

gardens, but wild, untamed animals, forests, and jungles are often portrayed as daunting. Likewise, a docile daughter or wife whose identity is determined by her male relatives and is available for sexual consumption and care work without having wants or needs outside of what she can provide, is unthreatening and safe: a perfect woman in a patriarchal world.

Storytelling as Knowledge Production

Ecofeminist ecopedagogies call for female knowledge production; however, as we can see through Hoffman's novels, being considered close to non-human nature can cast a woman as witch-like, and it is the connection of the female body, which is considered inherently closer to non-human nature, with knowledge production that changes her from original or mother Eve to the more dangerous fallen Eve: the witch. Unsurprisingly then, women and their stories have been overwhelmingly silenced throughout history in comparison to the voices, stories, and histories of men. Feminist and post-colonial scholar Trinh Minh-ha focuses on stories and storytelling as being inseparable from history in her book *Woman, Native, Other*. Storytelling is a practice that is often considered to be primitive and juvenile, a preoccupation of simple, native peoples. Children can partake in stories and storytelling, but must realize that stories are not reality and that they will one day "grow up" into that reality, leaving stories behind. However, in reality, Minh-ha claims, stories, including myths and legends, are a part of history and cannot be discounted. She says that everyone experiences stories differently, whether young or old, man or woman, master or Other, and that all of their stories put together make up lived history. Until recently, only the story of the dominant group,

which is usually white, Western men, was recorded and is often considered indisputable truth, making the experiences of everyone else involved invisible and silent. In some cultures though, a much greater value is placed on storytelling, and it is often recognized as interpretations of lived realities, so less importance is placed on what is fact or fiction. Green's story is obviously fiction, but that makes her stories and lessons no less important. Both narratives model certain real-world possibilities for interconnected, reciprocal relationships between human and non-human nature and the valuing of girls' and women's lived experiences by granting them full humanity, celebrating their bodies and natural processes, and giving them a voice.

Trinh Minh-ha and Moroccan feminist and religious scholar Fatima Mernissi, in her memoir entitled *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*, detail the power that storytellers have in other cultures, similar to the power found in academic and rhetorical speaking and writing: all are manifestations of the power of language. Mernissi explains that in the Arab world, storytellers are believed to be very influential as they are masters of language. Words are recognized as having great power, which can bring danger or freedom to the speaker. Of these storytellers, Scheherazade is supreme. A highly intelligent strategist who uses her skill to captivate and mold her audience, Scheherazade is the ultimate rhetorician in *A Thousand and One Nights*. One of the reasons she is so highly celebrated and is considered a role model for Arab women is that she starts out in a quite powerless position, but by her skilled use of words alone, she is able to change the balance of power. Mernissi says that the story appears anti-woman initially, due to the extreme power imbalance of the relationship, but that by the end,

many Arabs consider it a story of female empowerment as Scheherazade subverts the power differential and takes over. It is important to note then, that *Green Angel* and *Green Witch* are told in first person, making Green a storyteller. By telling her own story, she is not only given a voice, she is able to speak for the lived realities of non-human nature as well as a diverse group of women and girls. Hoffman resists traditional portrayals of women as remaining within the accepted roles of Merchant's original or mother Eve, and she resists characterizing those who break away from those strictures as becoming fallen Eve or the evil witch. Hoffman's women and girls are allowed to have a full range of emotions, opinions, thoughts, fears, strengths, and talents. By telling her own story, Green is able to show women as complete human beings and non-human nature as diverse and autonomous.

So what kinds of knowledge are dangerous for women to have and produce? Though pretty much any kind of knowledge production is taboo for women within patriarchal hierarchies as knowledge produces power, there are some forms of knowledge production which have been more dangerous than others for women. In Chapter Three I characterized the patriarchal fear of feminine knowledge production which is associated with nature and therefore is not possessed by men. Prior to the Enlightenment, women whose skills and knowledge were seen as too closely related to the earth, such as midwives and healers, became suspect and the knowledge itself was demonized. Even the covers of *Green Angel* and *Green Witch* reflect the importance of themes of knowledge and knowledge production in the story. On the cover of *Green Angel*, Green is shown reading an open book; the reader can literally see Green's transition from

learning to producing knowledge by seeing the cover of *Green Witch* where she is now looking up with a sheet of homemade paper in one hand and a feathered quill in the other, sheets of paper with her writing on them floating around her. In her more active state, Green looks confident and powerful. In *Green Witch*, Green becomes a sort of healer for her town, a position which has traditionally, like in the European witch hunts, put women in danger of accusations of witchcraft. All winter townspeople and even the councilmen come to her, begging for food, advice, and solace. Green helps them all, never turning anyone away. When people find out that she is a writer, after transcribing her own story, they ask her to write down their stories, which have taken on a new significance since the fires have taken away most of their books and their loved ones: “These people have so much to say, a single volume isn’t enough. They’re the ones who know that our stories are all we have now” (Hoffman, *Green Witch*, 19). Despite her help, she is soon suspected of witchcraft, not only because of her special abilities, but because she is making paper and ink, writing, and telling stories.

Though feminine knowledge production can make women suspect if they have relationships with non-human nature, when women participate in more masculine knowledge production, such as writing, they are seen as deviant by patriarchal standards because they are taking something that does not belong to them in addition to breaking gendered roles and expectations. Trinh Minh-ha explains that writing is considered a part of man’s domain, so women writers effectively become invaders who steal language: “Learned women have often been described in terms one might use in describing a thief. Being able to read and write, a learned woman robs man of his creativity, his activity, his

culture, his language. Learning 'unfeminizes'" (Minh-ha 19). Writing has historically been considered masculine largely because, through the mind/body dualism, it is associated with the mind rather than the body. However, Minh-ha argues that we think, write, create, and theorize with our bodies, not just with the abstract mind. She claims that women write "through their bodies" and uses language which seems to equate creation through writing with childbirth. Writing is figuratively born from our bodies, a creative endeavor that begins and grows within us and is then sent forth from the body to have its own physical existence. Minh-ha also uses imagery of water, breast milk, and menstrual blood when speaking about the birthing of writing, the woman author becoming the mother of her creation. In this way, we can see how women can write and tell stories through their bodies; the stories told cannot be simply relegated to the mind, but are comprised of the body's lived experiences and realities.

I argue that hybrid forms of knowledge production like those used by Green are the most dangerous for women as they are inconsistent with traditional patriarchal frameworks for knowledge production. Green uses a ream of paper she found in a drawer at her home that had been untouched by the fires during the disaster to write her own story. Inevitably, though, she eventually runs out of ink and paper and must learn to make her own to write down the stories of others. She begins by making ink from flower sap: "It's an extract from the flower's heart; it won't wash away or smear" (Hoffman, *Green Witch*, 18). When she runs out of paper, she uses plant pulps and other natural ingredients which she boils in a large kettle, similar to a cauldron, that she keeps burning in her yard, the dark smoke visible in the sky. She effectively combines feminine ways

of knowing that are aligned with non-human nature with the masculine domain of writing, making her doubly suspect and particularly threatening. Using ingredients that most do not know how to use and experimenting with them to make paper and ink for writing others' stories, Green becomes a target of gossip: "Maybe that's why some people whisper about me, even the ones who depend on me for their vegetables and fruit, who wouldn't have made it through the winter without me. (…) They've seen the plumes of black smoke rise" (Hoffman, *Green Witch*, 19). She fears the whispers she hears, and makes sure to say hello and shake hands with people who suspect her, but in the end, she does not think of herself as a witch and dismisses the gossip: "If they believe that writing a book is casting a spell, so be it. If this is magic, then call me a witch" (Hoffman, *Green Witch*, 24). By giving voice to her own story and those of others, Green is eventually able to gain the support of her community, who finally accept her rather than condemn her.

Future Research

Due to the scope of this project, there are limitations to what I can cover. Future research might measure real-world results of the changes in attitudes and beliefs in young adults after reading feminist ecopedagogies. Though I chose to examine the intersection of gender with ecological justice, future analysis could focus on further intersections with class, sexual orientation, or ability. In particular, there is a large body of theoretical work examining how race intersects with ecological justice; an analysis of racial privilege and oppression as it functions in mind/body dualisms may reveal particularly interesting connections to the domination of non-human nature by human nature.

To complicate and further the research and analysis I have done in this project, I have begun to further the research I started in this project with Hoffman's *Green Angel* and *Green Witch* using Nnedi Okorafor-Mbachu's *Zahrah the Windseeker* as a primary text. Like Hoffman, Okorafor-Mbachu illustrates the harm of mind/body dualisms on non-human nature and female bodies. She demonstrates the harm of witch stereotypes in which the female body is devalued and villainized, and she shows how patriarchal societies denigrate natural processes like menstruation, discredit powerful women through goddess murder (a tradition in which goddesses must be demonized and then killed in order for patriarchal gods to be worshipped alone), and cast disobedient women as disastrous Eve figures.

In *Zahrah the Windseeker*, the people of the fictional Ooni Kingdom fear the Forbidden Greenie Jungle more than any other place. They refuse to go there and do not even speak of it. Anyone who goes there is considered mad. Although they live quite harmoniously with the non-human nature around them, the Ooni people greatly value a certain separation from what they consider the more uncivilized aspects of non-human nature. Zahrah, the novel's main character, is considered closer to this uncivilized nature because she is born "dada," with green vines growing from her scalp, intertwined with her dreadlocks. Once she begins to menstruate, Zahrah begins to gain the powers of a Windseeker, people who can fly but who are considered a myth by the Ooni. Despite her perceived closeness with non-human nature, Zahrah is actually rather frightened of it. It is not unit her best friend, Dari, gets a snakebite for which her people have no antidote

that she must overcome her fears and learn to work with the autonomous non-human nature of the jungle to save him.

Like Green's story, Zahrah's provides readers with a tale about interconnectedness and dependency on non-human nature. Animals, plants, and even an ecosystem as a whole are given autonomy to act either alongside or in opposition to humanity, though not necessarily as a strict division. Through her experiences, Zahrah learns that the jungle and its inhabitants, her world's embodiment of "Nature," are neither inherently good nor evil, but like humanity, are an important part of a balanced ecosystem. Human and non-human nature are shown as interconnected, and the fear of the Ooni Kingdom towards the Forbidden Greeny Jungle is shown as only harming them, depriving them of much-needed medical cures and knowledge of the world in which they live. During her journey through the jungle, Zahrah comes to realize that it is really made up of hundreds of actors living out their own lives. They contribute to her transformation from a timid girl afraid of non-human nature and her own emerging powers to a strong and confident woman ready to embrace her unique talents.

Like Hoffman, Okorafor-Mbachu offers an unconventional re-reading of the witch in *Zahrah the Windseeker*. In the novel, Zahrah and Nsibidi, a woman Zahrah meets before her journey, are seen as having relationships with nature that are closer than the Ooni are comfortable with and, consequently, are ostracized within their community as Other, as undesirable, as witches. Zahrah is marked at birth as being closer to non-human nature and therefore more witch-like. The vines in her hair that literally formed in the womb designate Zahrah as a Medusa figure from Greek mythology, a powerful

woman who was labeled evil for her connections with non-human nature and is considered dangerous and unpredictable. At first, Zahrah is apprehensive and even frightened by both non-human nature and her own abilities. She hesitates to embrace her own strength and autonomy, but through an incredible display of courage, Zahrah fully embraces her powers, especially her ability to fly, and refuses to be dependent upon or submissive to others by the end of her journey.

We can also see Merchant's edenic recovery story in *Zahrah the Windseeker*; at the beginning of the novel she is on the cusp of original Eve and fallen Eve. Though she thinks and acts as original Eve through her timidity and passivity, her very body brands her as fallen Eve and as connected to the darker, wilder aspects of non-human nature which the Ooni fear. Once Zahrah begins to menstruate and her powers manifest, she is more strongly associated with non-human nature and becomes more like fallen Eve than original Eve. As she sheds her fear, gains self-confidence, and learns to act for herself, Zahrah fully embodies fallen Eve and the witch. Okorafor-Mbachu challenges the connection of women with non-human nature as evil or even negative. Zahrah grows as a character and a human being throughout her journey through the Forbidden Greeny Jungle, and it is only through this growth that she is finally able to fully embrace her powers.

The witchlike characters in *Zahrah the Windseeker* are not shown as evil, ugly, deceptive, or as having aberrant relationships with non-human nature. Instead, Zahrah (and Nsibidi) are depicted as complete and complex human beings who are an important part of multiple ecosystems. In this way, Nnedi Okorafor-Mbachu, like Alice Hoffman,

re-writes the witches as fully human rather than a caricature and gives them a positive ending within their own community. In doing so, the reader must re-think traditional feminine gender roles and what violating them says about the female body and non-human nature. If that which is considered witchlike is cast as positive, then strong, capable, and powerful girls and women cannot be considered deviant but can become familiar in stories and everyday life and can be celebrated.

By making Zahrah's connections with non-human nature those which make her powerful, Okorafor-Mbachu makes a statement not just about the female body, but about non-human nature as well. Just as the reader, and Zahrah herself, view Zahrah differently by the end of the novel, they must also think differently about non-human nature and its powers and connections with human nature. As the female body transforms from something weak, afraid, and controlled to something strong, confident, and autonomous, non-human nature transforms from dark, frightening, chaotic, and malevolent to a more multifaceted, ambivalent presence that is interconnected with the human-nature which shuns it. Throughout the novel, as Zahrah discusses the many ways in which the Ooni try to do battle with certain parts of non-human nature, it becomes clear that this struggle is much like the fight to keep women and girls, especially rebellious, powerful, or witchlike ones, in "their place," in their traditional gender roles. So long as women are associated with non-human nature to the exclusion of men, both will be considered deviant when not under male control.

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