Georgia State University
Digital Archive @ GSU

English Dissertations | Department of English

12-1-2009

Ecocritical Theology Neo-Pastoral Themes in American Fiction from 1960 to the Present

Joan Anderson Ashford
Georgia State University, jashford2@student.gsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalarchive.gsu.edu/english_diss

Recommended Citation
Ashford, Joan Anderson, "Ecocritical Theology Neo-Pastoral Themes in American Fiction from 1960 to the Present" (2009). *English Dissertations.* Paper 52.

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of English at Digital Archive @ GSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Archive @ GSU. For more information, please contact digitalarchive@gsu.edu.

ECOCRITICAL THEOLOGY

NEO-PASTORAL THEMES IN AMERICAN FICTION FROM 1960 TO THE PRESENT

by

JOAN ANDERSON ASHFORD

Under the Direction of Dr. Randy Malamud

ABSTRACT

Ecocritical theology relates to American fiction as it connects nature and spirituality. In my development of the term "neo-pastoral" I begin with Virgil's *Eclogues* to serve as examples for spiritual and nature related themes. Virgil's characters in "The Dispossessed" represent people's alienation from the land. Meliboeus must leave his homeland because the Roman government has reassigned it to their war veterans. As he leaves Meliboeus wonders why fate has rendered this judgment on him and yet has granted his friend Tityrus a reprieve. Typically, pastoral literature represents people's longing to leave the city and return to the spiritual respite of the country. When Meliboeus begins his journey he does not travel toward a specific geographical location. Because the gods have forced him from his land and severed his spiritual connection to nature he travels into the unknown. This is the starting point from which I develop neo-pastoral threads in contemporary literature and discuss the alienation that people experience when they are no longer connected to a spirit of the land or *genius loci.* Neo-pastoralism relates Bakhtin's idea of chronotope and the expansion of the narrative voice of the novel to include the

time/space dialogic. Neo-pastoral fiction shows people in their quest to find spirituality in spite of damage from chemical catastrophic events and suggests they may turn to technology as an ideological base to replace religion. The (anti) heroes of this genre often feel no connection with Judeo-Christian canon yet they do not consider other models of spirituality. Through catastrophes related to the atomic bomb, nuclear waste accidents, and the realization of how chemical pollutants affect the atmosphere, neo-pastoral literature explores the idea of apocalypticism in the event of mass annihilation and the need for canonical reformation. The novels explored in this dissertation are John Updike's *Rabbit, Run*; Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*; Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer*; Don DeLillo's *White Noise*; Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*; Toni Morrison's *Paradise*; and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*.

INDEX WORDS: Ecocriticism, Ecology, Theology, Pastoral, Neo-pastoral, American literature, Chronotope, Totem, Animism, Apocalypse, Ecofeminism, Neo-paganism, John Updike, Thomas Pynchon, Bernard Malamud, Don DeLillo, Leslie Marmon Silko, Toni Morrison, Cormac McCarthy, Leo Marx, Lawrence Buell, Terry Gifford

ECOCRITICAL THEOLOGY

NEO-PASTORAL THEMES IN AMERICAN FICTION FROM 1960 TO THE PRESENT

by

JOAN ANDERSON ASHFORD

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2009

Copyright by
Joan Anderson Ashford
2009

ECOCRITICAL THEOLOGY

NEO-PASTORAL THEMES IN AMERICAN FICTION FROM 1960 TO THE PRESENT

by

JOAN ANDERSON ASHFORD

Committee Chair: Dr. Randy Malamud

Committee: Dr. Audrey Goodman

Dr. Malinda Snow

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

December 2009

DEDICATION

To Elizabeth Lucille Fitzsimmons for support and encouragement all my life

To James Michael Ashford for being in my life

To Josephine Louise Hooper for giving me new life

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Dr. Randy Malamud for such thorough readings of my work and giving this project so much time, thought, patience, and input.

Thank you to Dr. Audrey Goodman for teaching great classes and staying with me through two comprehensive exams, the prospectus, and the dissertation process.

Thank you to Dr. Malinda Snow for your enthusiasm and support in this project. I am forever grateful you were in your office the day Patricia sent me there.

Thank you to Dr. Tim Renick for teaching ecological philosophy in Religious Studies classes. Even though I am an English major your ideas got me started on this dissertation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS v

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTERS

1. FREUD, BAKHTIN, AND RABBIT: AN ECOCRITICAL LOOK AT TOTEM, ANIMISM, AND THE ROGUE IN JOHN UPDIKE'S *RABBIT, RUN* 18
2. AND THE WORD WAS MADE METAPHOR: OEDIPA'S RELIGIOUS INSTANT IN THOMAS PYNCHON'S *THE CRYING OF LOT 49* 42
3. NATURE, GOD, AND POLITICS: DEEP ECOLOGY AND SPINOZAN THEORY IN BERNARD MALAMUD'S *THE FIXER* 68
4. APOCALYPSE VISITED: TOXIC CONSCIOUSNESS IN DON DELILLO'S *WHITE NOISE* 88
5. RE-WEAVING MASTER METAPHORS IN LESLIE MARMON SILKO'S *ALMANAC OF THE DEAD* 111
6. ECOFEMINIST THEOLOGY IN TONI MORRISON'S *PARADISE* 136
7. SOPHIA'S TABLE AND NUCLEAR NARRATIVE IN CORMAC MCCARTHY'S *THE ROAD* 176

CONCLUSION 208

WORKS CITED 213

INTRODUCTION

From the time of Virgil's pastoral poetry to the present day pastoral trope, humankind has been in constant vacillation with its relationship to the environment. Leo Marx in *The Machine in the Garden* explains this ongoing relationship through his discussion of Virgil's *Eclogues*. In the first poem of the *Eclogues*, "The Dispossessed," Marx describes Virgil's poem in the context of the consequences of two men, Tityrus and Meliboeus, and the emotions they experience as conquered citizens of Rome. Meliboeus must leave his pastures in search of a new homeland because the Roman government has given his land to its war veterans. Tityrus has been granted the privilege of staying on his land by the Roman government. As Meliboeus passes by Tityrus' homestead on his trek into the unknown, he expresses grief to Tityrus that not only has he lost his land but also his flocks are in peril. Meliboeus cannot ever return to his land of origin, and he must leave the only place he has ever known.

Leo Marx points out that the melancholy of this pastoral lamentation in many ways parallels the American literary tradition. Because of ecological knowledge now available, humankind is in the grips of recognizing the effects of its own dispossession from the land. With the creation of previously unimaginable weaponry and chemicals, World War I sets into motion the global violence that continues into the twenty-first century. During World War II, the realization of the vast destructive capabilities of nuclear fallout begins as the United States drops atomic bombs over Japan in 1945. At the same time, Nazi atrocities during the Holocaust transform American cultural consciousness. The traditional ideal of literary pastoral changes forever. Post- World War II novels show a progression of modifications from the modern to the postmodern, a change characterized by fragmentation of the narrative voice.

Another reaction to these historical events, which parallels the ideas associated with people's estrangement from the land, is the reinterpretation of theological metaphors and the reconsideration of religious denominations and classifications. With the widespread destruction of both human and non-human beings, various theologians and philosophers are beginning to reinterpret religious canon in an attempt to explain the ideas of self, God, and nature and their connection to one another. At the same time, fiction demonstrates concepts people's estrangement from religious beliefs and separation from nature. The conventional ideal of pastoral in the novel changes as a result of the encroachment of history on people's perceptions and a new category of writing emerges that I will define and describe as the *neo-pastoral*.

Three theorists who trace and evaluate patterns of the established use of pastoral are Leo Marx (1964), Lawrence Buell (1995), and Terry Gifford (1999). Their tenets deal with ideologies from the settlement of the United States and the earliest pastoral writings (Marx); to the substantive encroachment of apocalyptic ideology in the pastoral (Buell); and, to the changes of pastoral in terms of anti-pastoral and post-pastoral in the "present frame of our age" (Gifford). While these three theorists deal in depth with the development of pastoral themes in literature, most of the examples they use are from poetry and non-fiction writing. To continue with their explorations, the last published in 1999, I will explore how the neo-pastoral extends and renews the process of their research in regard to the post-1945 American novel. All three theorists explain the pastoral as emphasizing the harmonious nature between the gods, man, and nature that ultimately suggests a theological idealism. What centrally defines the pastoral is the concept that humankind accepts without question: inner peace, a relationship with the environment, and a serene relationship with the gods. However, none of the above critics explore an historical biblical basis for their terminology when discussing people's inner thoughts and a sense of a

divine creator. Therefore, the reader must interpret terms such as apocalyptic, edenic, fatalism, alienation, without a baseline theological explication of the terms. Gifford closes his arguments by saying the knowledge, attitudes, and ideology of our frame of time continue to vary according to ever changing social and political situations, yet he ignores the theological implications that all of these terms imply. Extending the pastoral research of Marx, Buell, and Gifford, I will examine the ideologies of both religion and spirituality and how they ultimately connect with humankind's relationship to the environment. I will demonstrate these relationships in terms of a different form of pastoral that exists in contemporary fiction: the neo-pastoral.

In 1964, Leo Marx traced the tradition of pastoral metaphor in American writing. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* begins with an in depth discussion of pastoral patterns. Marx refers to Virgil's *Eclogues* as "the true fountainhead of the pastoral strain in our [American] literature" (19). According to Marx, Virgil first uses the word *Arcadia* to refer to the landscape as symbolic and, thus, he created a balance of both myth and reality in the characterization of the shepherds in his poem. Tityrus inhabits a pasture, *Arcadia*, and according to neo-pastoral interpretation, both Tityrus and the pasture symbolically represent the Garden of Eden of Hebrew Scripture. Meliboeus' expulsion corresponds to Adam and Eve's being forced to leave the Garden of Eden. Tityrus is at peace with the higher power, the Roman government, and with nature in the garden, while Meliboeus faces an unidentified future. Because the reality of the unknown could result in suffering, despair, and chaos, the title of the poem suggests that the instant Meliboeus leaves his land, he becomes *dispossessed* because he has been severed from his place of origin. Once Meliboeus has no relationship to the land, his internal spiritual connections shift, as well. He laments that he is "heartsick" because while on his exodus, one of his goats gives birth to twins and the babies might not live.

Meliboeus feels chastised by the gods because his connection to his land has been removed by a higher power and he experiences a sense of helplessness because his flocks might die. In the next line, out of a feeling of frustration, he asks Tityrus, “Who is this god of yours?” (25). Marx does not explore the spiritual crisis Meliboeus faces.

Because Meliboeus confronts the unknown both spiritually and physically, “so that he eventually locates value as far as possible, in space or time or both” (22), he represents humankind’s never-ending search to return to the sanctuary of the higher power and to restore a connection to the land. To Marx, the *Arcadia* Tityrus inhabits merely represents the *illusion* of the ideal, and this ideal cannot be copied or redesigned in society or by individuals. In the setting of this pastoral, the city of Rome is the god of Tityrus. The governing powers of Rome represent the supreme, divine powers of the universe and Tityrus remains, for now, safe from their caprices. While the character of Tityrus suggests joy and contentment, Meliboeus represents the disenfranchised who will never return to his place of origin. In the dramatization of this division, the neo-pastoral denotes not only physical alienation from the land but also a spiritual downfall of humankind since the Garden of Eden. Marx refers to this never-ending quest through the unknown as the *counterforce* of the pastoral and adds that the counterforce takes over a good deal of contemporary American writing with an increasing amount of *violence* in the narratives. He terms this counterforce or violence the *anti-pastoral*. (26) I will argue that the critical concept of contemporary pastoralism begins with Marx’s idea of man’s never-ending search for *Arcadia* but that religious/spiritual beliefs play a larger role in pastoral development than Marx explores.

Lawrence Buell builds on Marx’s ideas in his work *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (1995). While questioning the future of the pastoral in American literature, Buell bases much of his research on

the concept of "environmental apocalypticism." To define his idea, Buell argues that humankind's relationship to the environment has changed because of technological and scientific advances in society. Because of humankind's disassociation with nature caused by industrialization, a new rendition of pastoral encompasses a linear time frame to suggest the world ending. Since America's nuclear attacks on Japan in the twentieth century, Buell writes, "environmental holocaust now seems not only a potential by-product of nuclear attack but also an imminent peril in its own right" (21). I will also depict how environmental apocalyptic fiction distrusts mainstream metaphors of both ecology and God in contemporary fiction to explain humankind's alienation, i.e. the unpromising search for the Garden. In my explanation of neo-pastoral fiction, I will justify the idea that humankind no longer relates to ecological or scriptural metaphors of the past and that even the term *apocalypse* connotes a secular meaning often exemplified in contemporary movies and television shows.

In *Pastoral* (1999), Terry Gifford questions the continuation of the pastoral form in the twentieth century and beyond. Gifford defines three distinct types of pastorals: 1. The classical pastoral based on Virgil's *Eclogues*; 2. The anti-pastoral tradition, and 3. The post-pastoral. Gifford links modern ecological criticism, such as Leo Marx's and Lawrence Buell's, to explore earlier pastoral literature "that engaged with our relationship with the natural environment" (5). He writes, "Ecocriticism is concerned not only with the attitude to nature expressed by the author of the text, but also with its pattern of interrelatedness, both between the human and the non-human, and between the different parts of the non-human world" (5). Gifford uses the novels of Cormac McCarthy and the nature writing of Edward Abbey to demonstrate his definition of the anti-pastoral in American writing. The beauty and fulfillment experienced by Tityrus in the *Eclogues* no longer exist in anti-pastoral development. "That the natural world can no longer be

constructed as ‘a land of dreams’, but is in fact a bleak battle for survival without divine purpose” (120) defines Gifford’s explanation of the anti-pastoral. Moreover, Gifford writes that another major theme in anti-pastoral writing contains an expression of social history and “what people have done to people in a landscape pastoralized by others” (123). The humans/shepherds experience a loss of hope, as they are alienated from their countryside. In the *Eclogues*, Meliboeus spends the night with Tityrus before he leaves on his journey but he does not feel hopeless. Meliboeus could become the pastoral’s hero, because he is capable of accomplishing remarkable feats on his journey outside his place of origin. Meliboeus symbolizes the character that *could* establish *pastoral fulfillment* by re-establishing a connection to a new land. In the anti-pastoral as defined by Gifford, everyone feels a personal alienation that verges on apocalyptic. No God or divine purpose is capable of rescuing humans from their sense of fatalism, and re-establishment in another place is not a possibility.

To bridge the gap between his ideas of anti-pastoral and post-pastoral, Gifford readily admits, ”Ecocriticism may be the frame of our age, informed with a new kind of concern for ‘environment’, rather than ‘countryside’ or ‘landscape’ or the ‘bucolic’, but we cannot pretend that there have not been changes in our knowledge, attitudes and ideology” (147). Gifford correctly identifies the “frames of our age” that must be discussed to define the construct of the post-pastoral and beyond. Gifford outlines six points that define his idea of post-pastoral:

1. An awe in attention to the natural world
2. Recognition of a creative-destructive universe equally in balance in a continuous momentum of birth and death
3. Recognition that external nature is also the workings of the outer; that our inner human nature can be understood in relation to external nature

4. Awareness of both nature as culture and culture as nature
5. Acceptance of consciousness and our ability to take responsibility for our behavior towards the other species of the land and toward the land itself
6. Exploitation of the planet is of the same mindset as the exploitation of women and minorities (152-67).

Gifford closes his text expressing the need for literature to continue to investigate the pastoral in terms of the *return and retreat motif*. Since the frame of our age lacks a separation between the realms of rural and urban "we need a post pastoral literature that will help us understand that dialectical experience and how we can take responsibility for it" (174). In "The Dispossessed," Tityrus exemplifies the motif of *retreat*. He remains on his land while Meliboeus exemplifies the expectation of *return*. The reader will always wonder if Meliboeus returns or arrives safely at a new pasture or ends his journey in an urban environment. Neo-pastoral fiction reinforces these motifs through various themes.

After reading these three approaches to pastoral literature as discussed above, I want to discuss the idea of the neo-pastoral as a continuation of those ideas. However, the theorists I have discussed skirt around the issue of spirituality and the idea of inner development of humankind's relationship to God or any form of a higher power. I will argue that humankind's alienation from the spiritual realm has created the disenfranchisement from nature and therefore the lack of respect for nature. Unlike the descriptions of pastoral criticism of earlier research, my discussion will define the following threads that are woven into contemporary fiction as an extension to the works explained above. I will discuss these eight threads briefly here and later, as I relate them to a specific novel. The neo-pastoral modifies other pastoral forms to include:

1. **The land, often described as "space," has a voice and a place in both the language and the ecological dialogic of the narrative**. In exploring this theme I will discuss Mikhail Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981) and his work on the idea of chronotope in the novel. According to Bakhtin, chrontope is the meeting of time and space in the novel, where *chronos* is the Greek word for time and *topos*, the Greek word for space. Through the artistic chronotope, the novelist determines an historical intention that relates not only to the space/time relationship within the text, but also to other texts and language from the past, present, and future. I will explore how Bakhtinian ideology adds to the discussion of where and how non-human forms fit into the chronotope and what types of relationships and language of non-human beings influence the themes of the neo-pastoral novel.
2. **People disrupt the symbiotic union in the ecosystem because of a disconnect with canonical scripture or formative creation narratives**. In exploring this theme, I will discuss the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, which is also known as the Torah. I will refute the argument that since God placed Adam over animals and non-human life in the Garden of Eden humankind has the authority to destroy creation. Karen Armstrong's two volumes *A History of God: The 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (1993) and *The Bible: A Biography* (2007) will relate historical references to my discussion of canonical scripture. Armstrong suggests that many ancient cultures believed forces existed in the world that were spiritual, holy, unseen, and unexplainable. To understand the disconnection with God Armstrong returns to the ancient world of the Middle East and traces how the idea of monotheism began 14,000 years ago. In addition to this historical research, Armstrong develops ideas of other

religious philosophers such as Spinoza. I will discuss the philosophy and theoretical ideas of scripture from Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise* (1670) since his ideas are quite different from traditional Judaism and influenced by Descartes' scientific ideologies. Like poetry, the Bible reveals the sense of the sacred relationship between people, nature, and the divine. I will relate these arguments to American fiction to add depth and scope to the themes of neo-pastoral ideology.

3. **Characterization of people in contemporary fiction emphasizes their need to search for religious or philosophical meaning in the world**. In this proposition, I will discuss the change in twentieth-century philosophy as influenced by Freud's philosophies. Freud's writings on *Totem and Taboo* that discuss people's relationship to the environment through his chapters on "Taboo and the Ambivalence of Emotions," "Animism, Magic and the Omnipotence of Thought," and "The Infantile Recurrence of Totemism" will be especially helpful while arguing for people's search for religious connection to the world around them. Freud delves into the idea of animism, claiming that primitive people attributed all naturally occurring phenomenon to spirits or demons. He expresses the idea of the "soul" as a primitive belief that originally developed from man's conceptions of dream imagery, shadows, and reflections. Freud also explains in these works how the totem originated and evolved into the modern day idea of the Christian Eucharist, which for Freud remains a form of primitive animism. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), Freud negates the ability of religion to lift man's conscience/ego to a higher level of integrity and writes, "Its [religion's] technique consists in depressing the value of life and distorting the picture of the real world in a delusional manner - which presupposes an intimidation of the intelligence" (36).

4. **People no longer view ecosystems as a reflection of their own spirituality and connection to nature.** David Abram stresses this point in *The Spell of the Sensuous*. When people invented the alphabet and began to move away from the ideology of sacred spaces, they had nothing on which to reflect but themselves. "If we no longer experience the enveloping earth as expressive and alive, this can only mean that the animating interplay of the senses has been transferred to another medium, another locus of participation" (131). Abram discusses that people only see what *they* create, and teleologically, this creation can only be a reflection on them, not of nature and not of a God of the universe.
5. **People own the land and subject the natural environment to their ideological development**. This translates into an ecofeminist approach as industrialism (the male metaphor) "rapes" the land (the feminine metaphor). Leo Marx traces the beginnings of this metaphor in his work *The Machine in the Garden* (1964) and Louise H. Westling follows up on his discussion in *The Green Breast of the New World: Landscape, Gender and American Fiction* (1996). The outcome, as expressed in this theme, amounts to genetic tampering with nature that has degraded and crippled the Biota. Rachel Carson's work on chemical destruction of ecosystems in *Silent Spring* also drives and influences this theme.
6. **Humankind projects apocalyptic considerations of further life on earth**. Lawrence Buell in *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (1995), as well as many other articles in the *Ecocriticism Reader: Landmark in Literary Ecology* (1996), discuss the idea of "Environmental Apocalypticism." Buell writes, " Apocalypse is the single most powerful master

metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal" (285). The role of the imagination and the "arousal of the imagination to a sense of crisis" place humankind within a metaphor of its own design. I plan to explore scriptural apocalyptic literature and discuss how neo-pastoral novels use apocalyptic allusions. Further, I will explain how the apocalypse will be seen in an historical linear sequence that foretold a temporary destruction and then *hope* for the reversal of fortune and a renewed sacredness of life on earth. I will argue that because of twentieth-century nihilistic philosophy and the lack of legitimate biblical knowledge, hope is also annihilated in neo-pastoral fiction.

7. **Individuals may receive a temporary insight of hope or redemption during the course of the narrative**. If, like Meliboeus, modern humans are looking for hope for themselves and for the future of humankind, then theological philosophies of hope and positive expectations for the future can be found in the thoughts of Sallie McFague and Rosemary Radford Ruether. Their works will help me to explicate this theme in neo-pastoral American fiction. I will discuss Sallie McFague in terms of her metaphorical approach to the nuclear age. In her book *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*, (1987), McFague makes the following comment as her thesis, "No matter how ancient a metaphorical tradition may be and regardless of its credentials in Scripture, liturgy, and creedal statements, it still must be discarded if it threatens the continuation of life itself" (68-9). McFague looks at many of the metaphors, some previously suggested by Buell, and examines them in terms of believability and acceptability in regard to world continuation. These theologians give current views on ideas of God for the twentieth century and discuss whether or not the possibility of believing in a higher power exists for humankind in the twenty-first century.

8. **The idea of hero is replaced with the concept of the anti-hero or mock-hero.** The ideas I will discuss in this theme include Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas of the chronotope. In Bakhtin's "The Functions of the Rogue, Clown and Fool in the Novel" (158), he emphasizes that these figures create their own chronotope and may act out their foolishness on a particular landscape, usually a public square. Typically, they have a metaphorical significance in the novel, i.e., they are symbolic of something other than themselves. Thus, they are related to a metamorphosis whose identification may be in the realm of human nature, non-human, or spiritual. Many Native American, African American and Latino/a American novels display this type of feature in the characterization of their heroes as they relate to their creation myths and narratives. Contemporary American fiction uses this character type as a trickster who has the right to parody others or has the right to betray to the public the private life of others. I will show that the hero as characterized by altruistic motives or lifestyle cannot be located in the contemporary American novel.

Some of these themes emerge in novels and short stories published as early as 1945, yet by the 1960s, most, if not all of these themes fill the pages of contemporary works. The following material describes American fiction I will consider in this dissertation and gives a brief example of why each work will be considered as part of a neo-pastoral trope.

Most of the neo-pastoral themes can be found in John Updike's 1960 novel *Rabbit, Run*. The main character, Harry Angstrom, or Rabbit, cannot truthfully establish himself in any type of relationship with family or friends. Updike creates the anti-hero on a theological search for self and God, yet at every turn of events, Rabbit perceives a negative representation of both religion and community. In inventing the character of Rabbit, Updike creates a metamorphic

creature. Rabbit has "the breadth of white face, the pallor of… blue irises, and a nervous flutter under his brief nose," and he tends to scurry into hiding when trouble comes his way. When any female character crosses his path, his main drive is to have sex with her. As Bakhtinian rogue theory suggests, "Hypocrisy and falsehood saturate all [his] human relationships" (162). This rings true for Rabbit. The bleak, red landscape of a declining small, industrial town in Pennsylvania confines the character to a point that raises his level of anxiety and his desire to run away to save himself. Throughout his conflicts in the novel, the character knows when the vernal equinox and the summer solstice have arrived. He also has a keen sense of nature and the ability to find his way out of a landscape when he gets lost. While trying to find his way through his hardships, when both religious and social structures fail him, he feels the wind on his ears, and he runs away from the struggles of humanity.

In *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965) Thomas Pynchon tells the tale of Oedipa Maas and her experience of trying to uncover the truth about the will of Pierce Inverarity, a former lover. Oedipa has been appointed the executrix of Inverarity's will and travels to San Narciso, California, where "[s]mog hung all round the horizon, the sun on the bright beige countryside was painful; she and the Chevy seemed parked at the centre of an odd, religious instant" (14). Oedipa realizes Inverarity's will is a maze of clues that leads her to believe that a revolutionary group with the code name *Tristero* has been committing postal fraud for 800 years. However, the puzzle revealed in Inverarity's will represents a metaphor for Oedipa's search for the sacred, for the Word. I will discuss this novel in biblical terms; the Word represents not only God's creating the universe out of chaos, but also the person of Jesus as found in the gospels. Throughout the novel, Oedipa wonders if by unraveling the dialogue in the play, the chaos of *Courier's Tragedy*, she will be able to uncover a "central truth." Oedipa seeks the meaning of the metaphor while

immersed in a landscape of “contemplative contours of residential streets like rakings in the sand of a Japanese garden” but they “had not allowed her to think as leisurely as this [American] freeway madness” (87). Pynchon gives numerous clues about what the metaphor *Tristero* represents when he writes, “ The act of metaphor then was a thrust at truth and a lie, depending where you were: inside, safe, or outside, lost” (105).

In 1967, Bernard Malamud examined man’s place in the world of both theology and politics through the eyes of his main character, Yakov Bok, in his novel, *The Fixer*. Because Bok, a Fixer by occupation, is a Jew, he cannot maintain political and theological equilibrium within the established European system. Like Meliboeus in the poem, “ The Dispossessed,” Bok leaves his place of origin to encounter political and spiritual chaos in his travels. He cannot admit to being of Jewish origin when he arrives in Kiev’s Czarist Russia. When he is accused of killing a young Russian boy as part of a Jewish ritual Christ-killing, Bok gets thrown into prison. While in prison, Bok examines the writings of Spinoza and both the Old and the New Testaments in terms of his search for spiritual fulfillment. Influenced by Spinoza’s ideas about God and nature being one and the same encourages Bok to plead his case and not confess guilt for which he would receive a light sentence. According to Spinoza, God is a God of Nature; God is not a personal God who partakes in human history and thus, religion takes on a hypocritical justification to attack a fellow human being. Bok also learns that Christianity stands for the love people should be showing to one another and from the beginning of his trek across the frozen fields of the Russian autumn, this has not been his experience. More than anything, religions of the world divide humankind and allow people to commit atrocities towards one another. I will discuss *The Fixer* in terms of Spinoza’s theology and show how his philosophies not only

influenced Malamud, but also were adapted by Arne Naess to form his theories of the Deep Ecology movement of the 1980s.

In 1985, Don DeLillo's *White Noise* considers the response of humankind in the wake of a chemical catastrophe. When an airborne toxic event threatens the small college town of Blacksmith, Jack Gladney and his family must deal with the consequences. This novel epitomizes all of the neo-pastoral themes especially in terms of religion, destruction of ecosystems, and apocalyptic expectations. Leslie Marmon Silko published *Almanac of the Dead* in 1991. As a Native American of the Laguna Pueblo tribe, Silko relates creation narratives of her ancestors and threads the tribal beliefs through her novels. Silko delves deep into Native American myth in *Almanac of the Dead* through the quest of the twins Lecha and Zeta and their goal to re-narrativize the almanac of the tribal elders. To the Laguna Indians, ancestral history is divided by worlds. During the fourth world, someone drains the lake where the Great Snake lives. The image of the Great Snake had appeared again to Sterling, a native Laguna Indian, on his reservation. The origin narrative of the re-appearing of the Great Snake signaled for the Native Americans to begin their march to the North and to take over the land that rightfully belonged to them. *Almanac of the Dead* consists of characters from multiple time frames but they all intricately bond to form web of environmental story telling that connects all peoples of the earth through Native American myth.

Toni Morrison's *Paradise* (1997), demonstrates her understanding of the blending of the African American origin myth and its semiotic mixture with the Christianity of the New World. Morrison further develops the ideology of myth and phenomenology in her novel *Paradise*. When one of the finer houses of the territory, built outside of the town of Ruby, Oklahoma, becomes a convent and then a shelter to wayward women, the citizens of Ruby do not

immediately concern themselves with the rumored happenings. Some of the women, Soane, Arnette, Billie Delia, and Sweetie visit the women for cures and conversation. Some of the men buy homegrown produce from the women, and their rhubarb pie gains a reputation as the best in Oklahoma. However, when unexplained episodes of persistent bad luck begin to distress the townspeople, the male citizens of Ruby eventually blame the women in the house, whom they then come to believe practice witchcraft. Morrison moves the action from the center of Ruby to "outside" of town, from normal reality to the paranormal to create a perception of mythical and magical synaesthesia. The women take on the role of "the others" and seek to find meaning for their lives, while the men of the town take it upon themselves to destroy them. The men of Ruby, Oklahoma, feel that it is their duty to destroy women who live alone and outside the traditional roles of women. I will also argue the practicing of witchcraft does not undermine spirituality for the women in the convent. By using examples from the novel, I will show how the craft can be used as a way for abused women to get closer to nature and to heal themselves.

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) tells the story of a man and his son traveling in a landscape that has been totally destroyed by an apocalyptic event. As they travel to possibly find others who reflect some characteristic of human dignity, they witness the total devastation of non-human existence. McCarthy questions the long-standing Christian belief that nature was created by God to serve man. When non-human existence becomes destroyed, will humankind survive? McCarthy's themes also suggest once man has lost the non-human aspect of life on the planet, religion and philosophy become unimportant to sustain life; the quest for human survival plays out primarily according to Darwinian principles.

The eight themes of neo-pastoral literature that weave together the novels in this dissertation suggest that Judeo-Christian metaphors for God will have to change to keep up with

social and world transformations of the twenty-first century and beyond. This dissertation will discuss that these changes are already taking place through nature based neo-pagan religions. Magic and alternate forms of spirituality are in the process of being re-evaluated by people as an attempt to return to nature worship and nature connections such as pre-Christian pagan religions and goddess worship. Models of God for the nuclear age will begin to unravel even further in apocalyptic nihilistic literature. Animals and non-human life will gain new respect and acceptance as having souls and spirits from which people can learn and develop their own self worth. Nature and non-human beings will be considered as a narrative dialogic voice that humans will come to understand and respect in the coming years of American literature.

The taboo prohibitions lack all justification and are of unknown origin. Though incomprehensible to us they are taken as a matter of course by those who are under their dominance.

Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*

Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history.

M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*

"Well I don't know all this about theology, but I'll tell you, I *do* feel, I guess, that somewhere behind all this…there's something that wants me to find it."

Rabbit Angstrom in John Updike's *Rabbit, Run*

CHAPTER 1

FREUD, BAKHTIN, AND RABBIT

AN ECOCRITICAL LOOK AT TOTEM, ANIMISM, AND THE ROGUE IN JOHN UPDIKE'S *RABBIT, RUN*

In his 1960 novel *Rabbit, Run*, John Updike creates the main character as an anti-hero on a search for religious or philosophical meaning in life. The main character, Harry (Rabbit) Angstrom, who lives in the small, shabby town of Mt. Judge, which is a suburb of the industrial town of Brewer, Pennsylvania, lives a conflicted life. Rabbit believes in following his instincts and professes faith in the unseen although he cannot cognizantly define either concept. Rabbit's immediate environment of Mt. Judge consists of run-down, littered, and decaying neighborhoods, and this landscape takes on its own voice as Rabbit tries to relate to the surroundings. As a record-setting high school basketball star, Rabbit feels his best days are a

thing of the past and in his current life situation he feels anxious and trapped. As an outlet for his increasing sense of frustration, Rabbit seeks human connection and relief through increased sexual encounters. Although his aggression seems overtly predatorial, this is his only way to connect to the physical world. His instincts tell him he is like an animal in a trap. Updike heightens Rabbit's sense of claustrophobia when he likens Rabbit the character to a rabbit where captors are tracking him and trying to catch him in a net, thus preventing his escape from a frightful situation. Given that Updike characterizes Harry Angstrom (note the pun on hare) as a rabbit, an ecocritical explanation of animism and totems demonstrates the neo-pastoral themes of Rabbit's disconnection from nature, his search for meaning, and his temporary insight of redemption. Sigmund Freud's theories on guilt formation of primitive tribes help to explain why Christianity causes Rabbit added worries rather than uplifting him while he hunts for theological truth.

Rabbit earned his nickname when he was a child, because of "the breadth of white face, the pallor of his blue irises, and a nervous flutter under his brief nose" (Updike 5). Other references to his rabbit-like nature include: "His upper lip nibbles back from his teeth in self-pleasure" (7); and he, "senses he is in a trap" (15); "pricked by an infinite urgency, he turns away" (18); "the animal within him swells in protest" (31); "He feels caught" (88); "He senses the tenacity of his captor" (88). At every turn of phrase, Updike takes the opportunity to let the reader know that Harry or Rabbit Angstrom is a metaphor for the fearful, hopping, skittish animal. In *Poetic Animals and Animal Souls* Randy Malamud discusses the concept of relating people's souls to animal souls. "The animal soul describes the animal component, or complement, of a human soul; what is on some level a shared existence, a symbiotic human-animal consciousness" (61). Anthropological findings explain that some primitive cultures

believed that people are linked to the energies of the earth through the spiritual guidance of animals. Each animal companion guides its human counterpart and oftentimes predicts the destiny of the person as well. Updike relates Rabbit's human spirit to the animal soul of the rabbit. Rabbit releases all of his human civilities when he is on the run as if he is escaping from his societal responsibilities.

In *Animal Speak: The Spiritual and Magical Powers of Creatures Great and Small* Ted Andrews describes the physical attributes of the rabbit in the "Dictionary of Animal Totems." In many ways they are similar to Rabbit, the character. The rabbit is found in a variety of ancient mythologies and its "essence" and "energy" remain a paradox. In Greek myth, the rabbit correlates with Hecate, the goddess of earth and fertility. In *Rabbit, Run* Rabbit's wife, Janice, is pregnant with their second child and during the course of the novel he enters into an extramarital relationship with a prostitute, Ruth, in which she becomes pregnant, as well. Because rabbits are one of the most common animals of prey, nature blesses them with tremendous fertility. "Rabbits can have between two and five litters of young per year, usually with three to six young per litter. It is because of this that the rabbit has long been a symbol for sexual fertility" (Andrews 303-4). Within 28 days of their birth, newborn rabbits mature enough to leave the nest, thus identifying the rabbit with lunar cycles. The "Dictionary of Animal Totems" also recounts a rabbit's physical characteristics. Rabbits may be perceived as fearful, but they have excellent defense capabilities. They can freeze and hold perfectly still or double back, making sharp, quick turns (304).

Throughout the novel, Rabbit displays all of these characteristics, even praying to the moon. During one of the most stressful events of the novel, Rabbit runs to the hospital when he learns that Janice has gone into labor. Updike writes:

> The St. Joseph's parking lot is a striped asphalt square, whose sides are lined with such city trees; and above their tops in this hard open space, he sees the moon, and for a second stops and communes with its mournful face, stops stark on his small scabbled shadow on the asphalt to look up toward the heavenly stone that mirrors with metallic brightness the stone that has risen inside his hot skin. Make it be all right, he prays to it, and goes in the rear entrance" (167).

Rabbit's instincts connect him to the realm of the *unseen* and spiritually to the sacredness of the universe. Rabbit feels united to the moon and believes that he shares in the universal energy of creation. The moon has a "mournful face" because it is concerned about Janice's giving birth to another child and the pain both she and Rabbit suffer because of their strained relationship. Also, Rabbit senses oneness with the moon due to the bonds of the lunar cycle that link Rabbit to his rabbit spirit.

Rabbit always feels trapped, and he escapes from each of these encounters by running. For example, Janice drinks heavily, has no desire to be a homemaker, and does not act as a role model for their first child, Nelson. When Rabbit comes home from work, Nelson is at Rabbit's mother's house, their own house is strewn with dirty dishes, broken toys and litter, and Janice has no plans for dinner. She is sitting in the living room, pregnant, drinking Old-Fashioneds, and watching *The Mickey Mouse Club Show* on television. When Rabbit sees this scene, it is as if he is standing outside of himself and watching his life deteriorate. In response, he gets in his car and takes off to the southern beaches of the United States where he was stationed during his military service. His rabbit spirit feels trapped by marital life, fearful of what will happen to him in the future, and his instinctive defense is to run away. If he stays he will be caught, as if someone has thrown a net over him, dragging him to his death.

In addition to his first name being a metaphor for the rabbit, Updike tells of his selection of Rabbit's last name, Angstrom.

> The hero of *Rabbit, Run* was meant to be a representative Kierkegaardian man, as his name, Angstrom, hints. Man in a state of fear and trembling, separated from God, haunted by dread, twisted by the conflicting demands of his animal biology and human intelligence . . . condemned as if by other worldly origins to perpetual restlessness . . . such was . . . my conception" (In Morley 63).

Rabbit undergoes deep anguish or angst over the things he believes in spiritually yet cannot explain ontologically. Although he believes in the Christian concepts of God, at the same time he feels guilty because he is not following the precepts of Christian living, especially in regard to his sex life. The rabbit spirit of his being makes him experience constant fear and dread for the future. In addition, he experiences "perpetual restlessness" seeking the unseen forces that influence his life. An ecocritical explanation of animism and totems demonstrates the neo-pastoral themes of Rabbit's disconnection from nature, his search for meaning, and his temporary insight of redemption. Because Updike characterizes Harry Angstrom as a rabbit, Sigmund Freud's theories on guilt formation of primitive tribes may help to explain why Christianity causes Rabbit added worries rather than uplifting him while he searches for theological truth.

According to Freud's studies in *Totem and Taboo*, primitive tribes frequently adopted a totem, which became the first system of "nature philosophy." The totem could be an animal, a plant, or a force of nature, like rain or wind, and was thought to be the tribal ancestor and protector of the clan. Festivals and games were held to honor the totem through imitational movement and ceremonial dances (*Basic Writings* 776). Freud defines the totemic system as *animism* because primitive races believed nature was controlled by benevolent or malevolent unseen spirits that, in turn, controlled the natural forces that had power over their lives. Through the totem spirits, tribal clans formed their own laws and societal organization around these spiritual forces of nature. The people of the clan would "attribute the causation of natural

processes to these spirits and demons; they also consider that not only animals and plants, but inanimate things are animated by them" (833). The primitive totemic systems led to a system of social and sexual restrictions within clans. These restrictions, or *taboos*, were not religious or moral. They were not issued by the gods as laws that must be obeyed without question or knowledge of why they must be followed. Freud writes, "They are not traced to a commandment of a god, but really they themselves impose their own prohibitions" (789). Freud continues, "The taboo prohibitions lack all justification and are of unknown origin. Though incomprehensible to us they are taken as a matter of course by those who are under their dominance" (789). Freud concludes that human conceptions of the universe began with the *animistic* phase, which formed the beginning patterns of guilt that people experienced when breaking a taboo of self imposed totemic restrictions. This phase of evolution is "*succeeded* by the *religious*, and then in turn by the *scientific*" (845). Freud explains how human power and guilt change during each stage of evolution:

> In the *animistic* stage man ascribes omnipotence to himself; in the *religious* he has ceded it to the gods, but without seriously giving it up, for he reserves for himself the right to control the gods by influencing them in some way or other in the interest of his wishes. In the *scientific* attitude towards life there is no longer any room for man's omnipotence; he has acknowledged his smallness and has submitted to death as to all other natural necessities in a *spirit of resignation*. [italics added] Nevertheless, in our reliance upon the power of the human spirit which copes with the laws of reality, there still lives on a fragment of this primitive belief in the *omnipotence of thought* (843, emphasis added).

Freud concludes that as humans evolved, they removed themselves from nature identification through totems, and they depended less on their inner selves, i.e., omnipotence of thought. The innate connection with nature for protection and order in their lives diminished as they turned their omnipotence of thought over to the power of organized religion and an unknown, unseen God. In the contemporary, scientific stage, where we find Rabbit, people

experience acquiescence to the empirical laws of science, which according to Freud, render people powerless. Religion does not empower Rabbit because he has acknowledged his smallness and abides by the *spirit of resignation*. Prayer or petitioning God, or the gods, or influencing them in some way is not an option for those living in the scientific age. Biblical wisdom is reduced to the technological sound bites and commercialism that Janice and Rabbit learn from the Mousketeers on *The Mickey Mouse Club Show*. Rabbit cannot empower himself through religion because he is dominated by it. Yet, his inner being senses he must find a better way to understand his life and to feel better about himself. Through Updike's characterization of Rabbit and the many references to natural phenomenon within the novel, Updike indicates Rabbit's initial solution to his problems is through self-recognition of his inner animal nature, which, of course, relates to Freud's initial stage of animism. Rabbit's constant source of angst is caused by his vacillation between the animistic phase and the scientific phase. He gets caught up between relying on his own instincts to problem solve or trusting in organized religion as a guide to right and wrong living. When he cannot make a decision between these two stages, he trembles with fear and runs away from the situation.

In "Rabbit Angstrom's Unseen World" Dean Doner describes the pressures and traps that Rabbit faces on a daily basis. Doner writes:

> Few novels delineate more clearly than this one the claustrophobic nature of our institutions: an economy which traps a man into mean, petty, lying hucksterism; tenement-apartment housing which traps a man and his family into close, airless, nerve-shattering "togetherness"; unimaginative, dirty cities which offer no release for the spirit; the ugly voices of advertising and television; the middle-class morality which wars against man's nature . . . . But behind all these forces, as though they were mere facades, lies the real net which snares this Rabbit, the real crowding which he consistently fears. That net is essentially the total implications of Humanism, the denial of the Unseen, the insistence upon shared life and therefore shared guilt – in short, those concepts which have produced the quintessence of modern feeling, Angst." (59)

Rabbit makes several references to his idea of the unseen world. The first time he spends the night at the prostitute Ruth's apartment he awakens to Sunday morning church bells ringing loudly. Rabbit asks Ruth if she believes "anything" as if he cannot even mention the name of God either because of his guilt or because of the idea of God's holiness. Ruth answers no, that she does not believe and when she asks Rabbit the same question, he responds: "Well, yeah. I think so" but then "he wonders if he's lying" (79). As Rabbit wonders whether or not he believes in God, he looks out the window. "Across the street a few people in their best clothes walk on the pavement past the row of worn brick homes; are they walking on air? Their clothes, they put on their best clothes: he clings to the thought giddily; it seems a visual proof of the *unseen* world" (79, emphasis added). Ruth denies the existence of God and the world of the unseen; Rabbit asks her: "Well now if God doesn't exist, why does anything? (79) Rabbit is positive that God exists and that God is the obvious reason for the existence of the real world.

Another time in the novel, when Rabbit attends a church service, Updike describes Rabbit's feelings about going to the service as "happy, lucky, blessed, [and] forgiven and he wants to give thanks" (201). Updike continues, "His feeling that there is an *unseen* world is instinctive, and more of his actions than anyone suspects constitute transactions with it" (201, emphasis added). The intensity of the novel builds as Rabbit tries to come to an understanding of his belief in the unseen. Most of his exploration on this issue comes in response to Rabbit's conversations with Jack Eccles, the Episcopal minister. As Janice's family's minister, Jack Eccles finds Rabbit roaming the streets after he has walked out on Janice. He stops his car and asks Rabbit to ride around with him for a while so they can talk. The conversation between Rabbit and Eccles leads to a discussion of religion. Eccles asks Rabbit if he believes in God. When Rabbit answers, yes, he does believe in God, Eccles replies: "'Do you think, then, that

God wants you to make your wife suffer?'" (92). Without even considering the circumstances Rabbit faces in his marriage, Jack Eccles, the Episcopal minister who represents holiness and godliness to Rabbit, makes him suffer even more guilt for leaving his pregnant wife. With this judgmental question, Eccles takes away Rabbit's power to evaluate his present situation and Rabbit experiences a sense of guilt according to Eccles' Christian standards. Rabbit feels small and meaningless knowing he has made bad choices without understanding his motivations; he needs help from Eccles, not judgment. Later in the conversation, Eccles asks Rabbit if he wants to play golf, so they can continue their conversation. "Rabbit knows he should run, but the thought of a game, and an idea that it's safest to see the hunter, make resistance" (94). Rabbit agrees to meet with Eccles later in the week to play golf knowing Eccles will continue to represent the negative judgment of Christianity in which Rabbit sees no chance for redemption. This agreement continues to complicate Rabbit's remorse for his current circumstances and exacerbates Rabbit's abhorrence of being trapped.

The next time they meet, Eccles asks Rabbit if he can explain his religious belief to him. Rabbit confides to Eccles: "'Hell, it's nothing much,' he says. 'It's just that, well, it's all there is. Don't you think?'" (108). Rabbit lives with the intensity that the spiritual world of the unseen envelopes him and by acknowledging his instinctive feelings towards its sacredness, he finds joy. When Eccles tells Rabbit about his personal belief in hell as a separation from God Rabbit intuitively responds, "'Well then we're all more or less in it'" (109). Rabbit intuits through his inner being that God and the sacred are in a realm just out of human reach and that human beings need to search for them and find meaning in them. When men and women do not acknowledge this instinct, they are separated from God. Rabbit also believes most persons do not look for this

aspect of sacredness in their everyday lives. Eccles replies that he believes Rabbit lives in a world of "inner darkness" and Rabbit disagrees with him. Rabbit responds:

> "Well I don't know all this about theology, but I'll tell you, I *do* feel, I guess, that somewhere behind all this" – he gestures at the scenery; they are passing the housing development this side of the golf course, half-wood half-brick one-and-a-half-stories in little flat bulldozed yards containing tricycles and spindly three-year-old trees, the un-grandest landscape in the world – "there's something that wants me to find it." (110)

Rabbit cannot explain his belief of the unseen when he experiences a heightened sense of spirituality through his connection to his animal soul. Eccles on the other hand believes in orthodox Christianity. Humankind experiences a shared guilt through everyone's sin since the time of Adam and Eve. People are incapable of experiencing a sense of the divine until they arrive in the afterlife, which Eccles refers to as heaven. To Rabbit, the unseen exists on earth, in the now, but in the "upward space." Rabbit begins to sense the hypocrisy in Eccles because he knows Eccles does not believe in the unseen, or God. Eccles only believes in the human capacity to connect to one another through their common guilt of sin. Rabbit inwardly questions formal Christianity when he wonders: "Why did they teach you such things if no one believed them? It seems plain, standing here, that if there is this floor there is a ceiling, that the true space in which we live is upward space" (98). Rabbit begins to feel sorry for Eccles, knowing that Eccles does not experience a sense of the sacred. Rabbit tells Eccles: "'I tell you, I know what it is'" (115) Eccles disparages Rabbit, and mockingly asks him: "'What is it? What *is* it? Is it hard or soft? Harry. Is it blue? Is it red? Does it have polka dots?'" (115) Rabbit's reaction to Eccles is one of disgust. "It hits Rabbit depressingly that he [Eccles] really wants to be told. Underneath all this I-know-more-about-it-than-you heresies-of-the early-Church business he really wants to be told about it, wants to be told that it is there, that he's [Eccles] not lying to all those people every

Sunday" (115). Rabbit senses that Eccles is a "madman" who is trying to "swallow" his soul. Eccles wants Rabbit to experience his own sense of inner darkness. At this point, Rabbit begins to understand that even though Eccles represents Christianity, he does not believe in the sanctity or the holiness that surrounds them at the present moment. Further, Rabbit comprehends that Eccles represents the separation that most people experience when they attend church or profess a belief in God. When Rabbit asks Eccles why he teaches these things and then does not believe in his own teachings, Rabbit grasps the hollowness that Christianity represents for most people, even its ministers.

One of the themes of neo-pastoral literature focuses on a temporary insight of hope or redemption an individual may receive during the course of the narrative. Rabbit has one narrow window through which to grasp some inner knowledge of nature and, thus, of his own nature. Eccles tells Rabbit one of the senior parishioners, Mrs. Horace Smith, needs help with her garden. Since he has no income after quitting his job selling MagiPeel Peelers in the local department store, Rabbit needs the work. Rabbit's joy in nature revitalizes Mrs. Smith as Rabbit tends to her overgrown garden. In May, when Rabbit begins the job Updike describes the garden as a sexual entity. "The flowerbeds, bordered with bricks buried diagonally, are pierced by dull red spikes that will become peonies, and the earth itself, scumbled, stone-flecked, horny, raggedly patched with damp and dry, looks like the oldest and smells like the newest thing under Heaven" (Updike 117). Through this description, Updike connotes the sexual interpretation Rabbit has for the planting season. The phallic spikes of the peonies, the horniness of the earth, the damp, fecund smells, accentuate May as a month for earth's fertility.

According to many ancient traditions, May has been the time of festivals celebrating the coming of the summer and fertility of the earth. Many ancient tribes considered the coming of

spring to be part of the their cyclical blessing by the powers of the universe. Although the names of the feast day vary, the traditions of the celebration are similar in different parts of the world. In Greek tradition, May or Maia was associated with the Latin goddess of fertility, Bona Dea. May Day, known as Calan Mai in Wales, was originally a fertility feast; the Scots named this same festival, Ceitein. An equivalent festival, known by the Irish name of Beltane or by the Old Irish name of Belo-tenia, was dedicated to Belos, the sun god and commemorates the beginning of summer. Old Irish tradition also connected May Day to the Lord of the Forest and the May Queen, and celebrated the day with a festival honoring the sacred marriage between the God as the Lord of the Greenwood and the Goddess as the Earth Mother (Conway 80). Once these festivals became Christianized, May was dedicated to venerating Mary as the mother of God. Americans modernize this celebrative period by celebrating Mother's Day during this month. Accordingly, Rabbit has a revelation during the month of May as he works in Mrs. Smith's garden.

As Mrs. Smith gives Rabbit little packets of seeds to plant after he cleared her land, Rabbit beholds the seeds of each flower- nasturtiums, poppies, sweet peas, and petunias- as tiny miracles. "Sealed, they cease to be his. The simplicity. Getting rid of something by giving it to itself. God Himself folded into the tiny adamant structure, Self-destined to a succession of explosions, the great slow gathering out of water and air and silicon: this is felt without words in the turn of the round hoe-handle in his palms" (117). Through the action of digging in the dirt and watching the flowers grow, calmness begins to permeate Rabbit's thoughts.

> Busy one morning with a crescent-shaped edger, Harry [Rabbit] is caught in a tide of perfume, for behind him the breeze has turned and washes down through a thick sloping bank of acrid lily-of-the-valley leaves in which on that warm night a thousand bells have ripened, the high ones on the stem still the faint sherbet green of the cantaloupe rind. Apple trees and pear trees. Tulips. Those ugly purple

> tatters the iris. And at last, prefaced by azaleas, the rhododendrons themselves, with a profusion increasing through the last week of May. (118)

Rather than savoring every moment of this miracle of birth and growth, Rabbit is distracted by the prevalence of so many blossoms which eventually and remind him of "nothing so much as the hats worn by cheap girls to church on Easter" (118). Instead of likening himself to a seed and taking in all of the glory of the garden, his thoughts of Christianity taint his being with hateful memories of the holiest day of the Christian liturgical year. "Harry has often wanted and never had a girl like that, a little Catholic from a shabby house, dressed in flashy bargain clothes. In the swarthy leaves under the pert soft cap of five-petaled flowers he can fancy her face; he can almost smell her perfume" (118). Hate fills his heart and the window of opportunity for rebirth in the garden renders itself unavailable to Rabbit. Even though Rabbit persistently pursues to define his ideas of sacredness, he cannot burrow out of the obstacles that Christianity places on his concept of holy.

Another aspect of *Rabbit, Run* is the artistic chronotopes. Updike creates a time and space in which Rabbit functions and, in turn, these chronotopes influence Rabbit's development. In *The Dialogic Imagination* Mikhail Bakhtin develops the idea of chronotope in literature. After Bakhtin attended a mathematical lecture dealing with Einstein's Theory of Relativity he adapted the idea to explain the relationship of time and space in the novel. Bakhtin's definition of chronotope follows:

> In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. (84)

Bakhtin emphasizes the relevancy of the time and place of the novel and, in some aspects, maintains they actually foreshadow the outcome of the action. He also relies on the

intersecting points of the axes of time and space to reveal motivations of the characters. These intersections speak loudly in *Rabbit, Run* and accentuate the hopelessness of Rabbit's quest.

The beginning point of the novel is the vernal equinox. "The mountain brings dusk early to the town. Now, just a few minutes after six a day before the vernal equinox, all the houses and gravel-roofed factories and diagonal hillside streets are in the shadow…of the mountain" (Updike 18-19). This is the time that Rabbit leaves Janice to begin his pursuit for self-knowledge. In ancient times, the vernal equinox represented one of the holiest days of the year. Also known as the Spring Equinox, or as Alban Eiler by the Welch, or by the Christianized name, Lady Day, this holy day was celebrated in different forms around the world but always around March 21. This marks a time of the year when dark and light are equal but the light of day is growing longer. The seasonal ritual of giving red-colored eggs as gifts can be traced as far back as the Mesopotamian times. Since the rabbit was considered a goddess animal and associated with Hecate, the eggs are symbols of the cycle of life and rebirth (Conway 70). Christians associate this time of year with the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday, which in modern times takes place on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the vernal equinox. Thus, Updike places Rabbit's life-changing action, leaving his wife during the time chronotope of rebirth and resurrection. When Rabbit leaves Janice at 6:00 pm, the day before the actual equinox, he rides around all night trying to find the courage to leave Pennsylvania and head south. However, Rabbit cannot find the bravery to give up the only life he knows, so he turns the car around and heads back to Mt. Judge, looking for a place to sleep, and finds solace in his former basketball coach, Marty Tothero.

On the actual day of the vernal equinox, Rabbit finds Tothero in the parking lot of the Sunshine Athletic Association. Updike describes the space chronotope, as "a tall thin brick

building like a city tenement misplaced in this disordered alley of back sides and left-overs. The entrance is made ominous by a strange shed, the size of an outhouse, erected each winter across the door, to protect the bar from weather" (16). Tothero leads Rabbit to his attic apartment in the building. Updike writes:

> The space where Tothero lives merges easily with the rest of the attic, which is storage space, containing old pinochle tournament charts and pool tables and some lumber and metal barrels and broken chairs with cane bottoms and a roll of chicken wire and a rack of softball uniforms, hung on a pipe fixed between two slanting beams and blocking out the light from the window at the far end. (40)

While the time chronotope suggests Rabbit's leaving his wife to start a new life for himself seems well timed, the space chronotope of the run down tenement of Sunshine Athletic Association cancels the optimism of rebirth, resurrection, and the beginning of a fulfilling life for Rabbit. In addition, the fact that Tothero lives in such squalor reinforces the hopelessness of Rabbit's life changing for the better. The symbolism of the vernal equinox pales in comparison to the shabbiness and dirtiness of the Sunshine Athletic Association.

After sleeping off his night of wandering, Rabbit wakes up in Tothero's apartment wanting to get some sound advice from his former coach about his relationship with Janice. When Rabbit presses the issue after Tothero tries to evade the conversation, Tothero responds: "'Janice! Let's not talk about little mutts like Janice Springer. Harry boy. This is the night. This is no time for pity'" (48). Tothero then tells Rabbit that he has set him up on a date with Ruth, a friend of his own girlfriend, Margaret. The two couples meet for dinner and Tothero and Margaret depart in Rabbit's car, leaving Rabbit and Ruth at the restaurant. After a brief conversation, Rabbit deduces Ruth is a prostitute and offers her $15.00 for the night. When Ruth accepts, they walk together to her apartment that is located across the street from a church. In addition to the continuing irony of the time/space chronotope in this sequence of events, another

of Bakhtin's chronotopes emerges. Bakhtin writes: "The rogue, the clown and the fool create around themselves their own special little world, their own chronotope" (159).

Rabbit's behavior at Ruth's apartment borders on insanity. When entering the apartment he embraces her so fiercely, he almost knocks her over. He follows her into the bathroom to watch her urinate, and orders her not to wear any protective devices to prevent pregnancy. Then, he asks Ruth to marry him. Rabbit's fertility drive overtakes his senses; through ignorance of his inner nature, he is overcome by his sexual desire for this stranger and prostitute, and he recklessly spins out of control. Bakhtin explains this role in metaphorical terms when he writes:

> "[T]he very being of these figures [the rogue, clown, and fool] does not have a direct, but rather a metaphorical significance. Their very appearance, everything they do and say, cannot be understood in a direct and unmediated way but must be grasped metaphorically. Sometimes their significance can be reversed – but one cannot take them literally, because they are not what they seem. (159)

Rabbit, the man, becomes a rabbit, the animal, wearing the mask of a man. His human nature shifts to that of the rabbit and, metamorphically, through the stronger will of his animal nature, his rabbit totem emerges. He becomes an allegory of himself. "The healthy 'natural' functions of human nature are fulfilled, so to speak, only in ways that are contraband and savage" (162). Rabbit's extreme sexual desire for Ruth and their promiscuity remain a focal point for the remainder of the novel.

Ironically, the time/space chronotope enhances Rabbit's sexual urges towards Ruth, since her apartment building is located across the street from a church. When Rabbit enters Ruth's apartment, he realizes he can see the church from her bedroom window. This chronotope sets up increased feelings of guilt in Rabbit but later, the guilt intensifies his sexual drive. On the

first night of staying at Ruth's apartment, when he looks out the window for the first time: "There is only the church across the way, gray, grave, and mute" (70). After he stares at the church for a moment through Ruth's window: "He lowers the shade on it guiltily" (70). The next morning, Sunday morning, he and Ruth awaken to the church bells ringing. Rabbit looks out the window once again. This time, in the light of day:

> It [Mt. Judge] strikes a shadow down from the church steeple, a cool stumpy negative in which a few men with flowers in their lapels stand and gossip while the common sheep of the flock stream in, heads down. The thought of these people having the bold idea of leaving their homes to come here and pray pleases and reassures Rabbit, and moves him to close his own eyes and bow his head with a movement so tiny that Ruth won't notice. *Help me, Christ. Forgive me. Take me down the way. Bless Ruth, Janice, Nelson, my mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Springer, and the unborn baby. Forgive Tothero and all the others. Amen.* (78)

In this chronotope, Updike personifies Mt. Judge as it takes on the act of judging the church-goers by casting them in a dark, negative shadow. Within this shadow, the people, like sheep being led to slaughter, heads down, enter the church. Yet Rabbit, out of confusion and guilt, prays to God like a young child asking for forgiveness, help, and blessing for everyone he knows. In the next moment, however, Rabbit cancels his religious fervor with the following: "'Come here,' he asks. The idea of making it while the churches are full excites him" (79), and Rabbit and Ruth have a morning session of sex. Rabbit, the rogue, appears once again. Bakhtin explains this aggressive, rogue behavior as a cycle of farce, parody, and satire. On one side of his inner battle line, Rabbit looks for peace within the paradigm of Christianity yet on the other side, Rabbit now launches a battle against Christian falsehood.

> In a struggle against conventions, and against the inadequacy of all available life-slots to fit an authentic human being, these masks [the rogue, the clown, the fool] take on extraordinary significance. They grant the right *not* to understand, the right to confuse, to tease . . . and finally, the right to betray to the public a personal life, down to its most private and prurient little secrets. (Bakhtin 162-63)

Rabbit has given up being an authentic human being. He grants himself the right not to understand and to confuse others by his actions. He has rendered his power of omnipotent thought as useless and in the spirit of resignation has *almost* reconciled himself to an inner death, giving up on sparking his human spirit back to life.

In "The Bakhtinian Road to Ecological Insight" Michael J. McDowell interprets Bakhtin's theories in regard to ecocriticism of the novel. McDowell writes: "Bakhtin's theories might be seen as the literary equivalent of ecology, the science of relationships. The ideal form to represent reality, according to Bakhtin, is a dialogical form, one in which multiple voices or points of view interact" (372). Bakhtin suggests that the many voices within the novel achieve an "interplay of social voices and a variety of relationships among them" (372). These voices consist of, but are not limited to, the following: "authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, and the speech of characters" (372). Building on Bakhtin's ideas of dialogical forms in the novel, McDowell proposes that ecological criticism should also investigate how authors have explored the interaction of human and non-human voices in the landscape. When interjecting a human voice into a landscape, the writer must embrace the fact that both the spirit and the voice of nature are *unseen* while the effects of nature on the landscape, and the effects of people upon nature are a *seen* phenomenon.

Nature can be characterized as having a voice and a will to act upon the landscape and the people that live within its boundaries. Thus, a new dialogic emerges that can be examined in an ecocritical approach. With this new dialogic and the development of new articulations, the emphasis on the "authoritative monologic voice" of the narrator shifts to include those voices of nature as landscape. "We begin to hear characters and elements of the landscape that have been marginalized" (374). McDowell refers to these aspects as "character zones" or "speech zones"

and in an ecocritical approach to literary interpretation "we can analyze the interplay of these different languages for an understanding of the values associated with the characters and elements and for a sense of how characters and elements of the landscape influence each other" (374).

Another aspect of Bakhtin's theory that aligns with ecocriticism is the idea of "utterance." For Bakhtin, utterance is defined as the meaning found in any dialogue that relates to voices of texts from the past. Any articulation from a former dialogue can and should be considered in contemporary texts as well as texts that may still be written. An utterance has no limitation as to what type of criticism it may invoke in dialogues of the past, present, and future. McDowell refers to Bakhtin's theory of utterance as creating a rich web of intertextuality with multiple texts of multiple genres. In ecology, every creature is defined by its interconnection with other beings. In an ecocritical aspect, all literature can be related to other texts through the dialogues that each text suggests. Thus all texts have an open-endedness that should leave the door open for continuing dialogue. When space and time are combined as Bakhtin suggests in his theory of the chronotope, they come together to create an original utterance. This utterance begins an unfinished dialogue that explains the intricate connections within the narrative.

Updike builds both dissonance and tension that applies to the landscape of Mt. Judge and the time frame in which the novel occurs. The novel begins during the time of the vernal equinox that suggests a time for newness in life, new growth, and resurrection. Yet, Updike describes Rabbit's view of the city as follows:

> He comes into Brewer from the south, seeing it in the smoky shadow before dawn as a gradual multiplication of houses among the trees beside the road and then as a treeless waste of industry, shoe factories and bottling plants and company parking lots and knitting mills converted to electronics parts and elephantine gas tanks lifting above trash-filled swampland yet lower than the blue edge of the

> mountains from whose crest Brewer was a warm carpet woven around a single shade of brick. Above the mountain, stars fade. (35)

The landscape of Pennsylvania has been deforested to allow for houses and the building of industrial plants. Clouds are smoke filled because of the pollution from the factories. Rather than rolling hills of grassland or forest, Rabbit sees metal gas tanks and an endless amount of litter.

The disequilibrium that this time-space combination expresses begins to take on a voice of its own. Why does the reader feel the anticipation of new life through the suggestion of the vernal equinox only to be frustrated moments later by the deforested and trash ridden landscape? With this chronotope an ecological dialogue begins that includes ancient ideas of lunar cycles, current ideas about carbon emission and global temperature, to perhaps future contracts people will make in reference to safe depositories for industrial waste. Thus, the emphasis of the narrator's voice shifts to that of a dialogue between time and space as put forth in the chronotope of the novel. This begins because of the "utterance" of the time/space chronotope.

Updike continues the dialogism of chronotope theory when he places the beginning of Rabbit's extramarital relationship with Ruth on the Christian holy day of Palm Sunday. This New Testament celebration of Jesus' entering Jerusalem to the greetings and cheers of the crowd corresponds to the Jewish holy day of Passover. During these times of intense spiritual meaning for people of Judeo-Christian faith Rabbit leaves his pregnant wife and takes up a relationship with a prostitute. The juxtaposition of the sacred holy days as the time Rabbit chooses to begin an intense sexual encounter with another woman again suggests disharmony. When the novel ends during the summer solstice after Janice delivers a baby girl, Rebecca June, Rabbit moves back in with her, bargaining with God that he will be a good husband and father to his children. He even goes to work as a used car salesperson for Janice's father to prove to

himself that he can be a responsible person. Now, on the morning before the summer solstice: "He dresses in his new pale-gray suit to sell cars in and steps out at quarter of eleven into a broad blue Sunday morning a day before the summer solstice. He has always enjoyed those people parading into church across from Ruth's place and now he is one of them" (201).

Historically, summer solstice, also know as Midsummer, is the time when the sun stops its progression through the sky and seems to be standing still. The word solstice comes from the Latin, *sol*, sun, and *sistere*, to stand still. In ancient times, this day was noted as the death of the Sun God, Belos, and the hours of daylight become shorter until the winter solstice, or December 24 when the Sun God is reborn. Water was honored and celebrated, as another important symbol of Midsummer and people would bathe in rivers and streams flowing toward the sun to bring healing, protection, and good luck. Love relationships and marriage were thought to be especially blessed during Midsummer and were thought to be favorable for both ongoing love and child bearing because at this time of the year, flowers, trees, berries and most flowering plants are in full bloom. In America, June is the most popular month for weddings (Conway 80). Yet, the time/space chronotope of this day in Rabbit's life is far from corresponding to a midsummer night's love festival, and the disequilibrium of the action continues. When Rabbit lies down on the bed next to Janice and begins to rub her back and fondle her breasts, she resists his moves, saying she is too tired and sore for any physical relations. Rabbit persists by rubbing against her and begging her to "love him". "'You can do *some*thing,'" Rabbit pleads. Janice responds: "'No I can't. Even if I wasn't all tired and confused from Rebecca's crying all day I can't. Not for six weeks. You know that'" (212). When Janice asks: "'Why can't you try to imagine how I *feel*? I've just had a baby,'" Rabbit responds: "'I can.

I can but I don't want to. It's not the thing, the thing is how *I* feel. And I feel like getting out'" (213).

With that retort, Rabbit runs again, leaving Janice and both children. All Rabbit can think about is going back to Ruth. Janice begins to cry and eventually pours herself a drink. She stays up most of the night, drinking and nursing Rebecca June. When daylight comes after the shortened night brought on by the summer solstice, Janice decides to bathe Rebecca. However, rather than participating in the frivolous and spiritual cleansing ritual of the ancients, water now takes on the symbolism of death. Janice finds her physical coordination impaired because of her drinking; nonetheless, she proceeds to give Rebecca a bath. When the sleeves of her bathrobe get too heavy in the bathtub filled with water, baby Rebecca slips from her fingers and drowns in the tub. The "black clot" of Rabbit's guilt has come to fruition and God has failed him.

When Rabbit calls Eccles the next day to see if Janice has called the police to arrest him for desertion, Eccles breaks the news to him that Janice has accidentally drowned their newborn baby. Rabbit's immediate thoughts are as follows:

> He had gone to church and brought back this little flame and had nowhere to put it on the dark damp walls of the apartment, so it had flickered and gone out. And he realized he wouldn't always be able to produce this flame. What held him back all day was the feeling that somewhere there was something better for him than listening to babies cry and cheating people in used-car lots and it's this feeling he tries to kill. (232)

He takes a bus to the Springers' house where Janice is upstairs sleeping a sedated sleep. Rabbit spends a few minutes with his son, Nelson, who is also staying with Janice's parents, and then heads back to the apartment. He cannot decide whose fault it is that Rebecca June is dead.

"'Why am I me?'" (243). Rabbit decides he is no one. "[I]t is as if he stepped outside of his brain a moment to watch the engine run and stepped into nothingness" (243). The rogue

chronotope comes into the fore again, this time in the public square, or in this scene, the cemetery.

While all of the townspeople stand around and watch the small casket being lowered into the earth, Eccles conducts the closing of the burial ceremony by making a sign of the cross with dirt on the coffin's lid. Rabbit turns to Janice and shouts: "'Don't look at *me*,' he says. " I didn't kill her'" (253). Updike writes: "This comes out of his mouth clearly, in tune with the simplicity he feels now in everything. Heads talking softly snap around at a voice so sudden and cruel" (253). Once more, Rabbit takes off, running up the steep side of the cemetery's hill. His rabbit totem takes over and he runs like an animal into the dense thicket on the top of the ridge, whipping his head around frequently to see if anyone is following him. When he realizes no one follows behind, he slows his pace and follows the ridge to the top of Mt. Judge, comes down the side of the hill, and heads towards Ruth's apartment. Ruth is so mean to him, Rabbit senses there is more to her anger than he can imagine. When she tells him she is pregnant, he becomes insanely overjoyed and he screams: "'Please have the baby,' he says. ' You've got to have it'" (261). After some heated discussion, Rabbit tells Ruth he will go to the store and bring back some dinner for them. "'I'll be right back,' he says" (263). As soon as he hits the outside air, he knows he will never go back. Like a rabbit, he feels the wind on his ears and his feet hitting the pavements and he runs. "Ah: runs. Runs" (264). The book ends with Rabbit's not going back to Ruth to help her through her pregnancy or to Janice, to help her reconcile over the death of their baby, or to his son, Nelson, to help care for him. Rabbit runs out of panic, guilt, and the fact that no relationship, either human or spiritual, seen or unseen, can sustain him. His animal totem, the rabbit, dominates his rational thought and for the moment, that upholds him.

The present moment, the now, is all he has to go on and he takes advantage of his ability to escape.

Rabbit, the mock hero of the neo-pastoral, instead of trying to work out the situation leaves everyone behind. Because he is a rogue, he gives himself permission to walk out on the desperate situations he has created for others. Because of his Christian upbringing, he inherited a lineage of guilt and Rabbit makes wrong decisions at every turn of events. Although he receives a temporary insight by working in Mrs. Smith's garden, this chronotope was not enough to sustain the hope he felt momentarily. Even when Mrs. Smith tells him the reason she lived through the summer was the hope Rabbit had given her through the new life of her garden, Rabbit does not understand. The garden metaphor works as a negative influence in the novel because it reminds Rabbit of Easter, and cheap, flashy, women. Rabbit's work in the garden is situated between the chronotopes of the vernal equinox and the summer solstice further highlighting Rabbit's separation from the energy of nature in which he does not participate. Unable to define his vision of the unseen, all Rabbit sees is the city of Mt. Judge sitting in the shadow of his own judgment. Since Rabbit has given up his power of thought to Christianity, which he does not really understand, he feels small and meaningless in the spiritual environment of the unseen that he is unable to define. The neo-pastoral themes of time/space chronotopes sufficiently apply to *Rabbit, Run* because of the hypocrisy that infiltrates Rabbit's social environment, his guilt caused by Christianity, his continuous search for life's meaning, and his temporary, though futile, insight into a mind-set of hope. Ultimately, Rabbit cedes his omnipotence of power and his human spirit by running away.

The act of metaphor then was a thrust at the truth and a lie, depending where you were: inside, safe, or outside, lost. Oedipa did not know where she was.

Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*

How does it help us to say the Bible is the inherent word of God if in fact we don't have the words that God inerrantly inspired, but only the words copied by the scribes – sometimes correctly (many times!) incorrectly?

Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind who Changed the Bible and Why*

CHAPTER 2

AND THE WORD WAS MADE METAPHOR

OEDIPA'S RELIGIOUS INSTANT IN THOMAS PYNCHON'S *THE CRYING OF LOT 49*

In *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) Thomas Pynchon enacts the neo-pastoral theme of human search for spiritual fulfillment. For a brief moment in her journey, Oedipa Maas finds a glimpse of hope and redemption through the maze and haze of San Narciso's tangled environment. Oedipa represents humankind's encasement in a landscape that is disconnected from both the spiritual and sensual world. In *Lot 49*, Oedipa is on a quest to find the central meaning of the "word" as put forth in her late lover's will. Pierce Inverarity appointed Oedipa to be the executrix of his estate and in depicting Oedipa fulfilling this request, Pynchon sets the novel into action by placing Oedipa in post World War II, overbuilt, sprawling urban sections of California. Oedipa wonders why she is called upon for this task. Why did Inverarity, merely a former fling, choose her? She finds no sense or meaning in the connection but, nonetheless, heads out from her home in Kinneret to fulfill the mission.

In the opening scene, Oedipa returns from a Tupperware party and begins to cook dinner for her husband, Mucho (Wendell) Maas. Metaphorically, Oedipa represents the modern day Meliboeus gathering marjoram and sweet basil from her pastoral herb garden, as she prepares to leave her home in the small town of Kinneret to go on a journey into a big city, into the unknown. Mucho, who has recently begun working as a disk jockey for Radio Station KCUF, remains haunted by his former job as a used car salesman. Both of his jobs have made Mucho feel guilty and oversensitive because he feels like he cheats people by these professions. "'I don't believe in any of it, Oed,' he could usually get out. ' I try, I truly can't'" (4). Although she tells Mucho he is "too sensitive," Oedipa's own life-style plagues her, too. One day runs into the next, each day becoming the same "fat deckful of days which seemed (wouldn't she be the first to admit it?) more or less identical, or all pointing the same way subtly like a conjurer's deck, any odd one readily clear to a trained eye" (2). Oedipa's idea that a conjurer or spirit magic controls her life her makes her feel condemned to a senseless repetition of a cyclical life span in which she performs her daily tasks with no awareness, as if someone or something has her on remote control. Her life seems like just one card out of a deck of many, everything repeating in a dull, monotonous, and boring pattern.

In *Spell of the Sensuous*: *Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (1996), David Abram discusses the possible reasons for the sensations or lack of sensations that westerners like Oedipa experience in their daily lives. Abram recounts the lives of Indonesian and other Pacific cultures that feel a connection with all things, both alive and dead, human and non-human, through the regeneration of the body into dust after burial, and eventually becoming alive again through the continuation of the living landscape. This cyclical pattern of life and death connects them both physically and spirituality to "living ancestors."

Thus, they feel connected and rooted to place and community through the commonality of both living and dying. When they eat a crop that has been grown in their local soil, they feel rooted to their living history; when they drink water from a stream or eat a fish from a local river, they give thanks to the living spirit world for their gift of life-sustaining sources to them, the living representation of the life cycle. Abram writes, “Sadly, our culture’s relation to the earthly biosphere can in no way be considered a reciprocal or balanced one” (22). Rather than giving thanks both to and for the life sustaining forces of our bioregions, technologically processed Americans view nature as an abstraction and not related to their daily lives. They live outside of the physical gifts of nature rather than within them. Abram attributes the cause of psychological distress, immune dysfunctions, and the growing number of cancer cases to people’s disregard for the biosphere. He describes thousands of acres of nonregenerating forest disappearing every hour and hundreds of “our fellow species” becoming extinct each month “as a result of our civilization’s excesses” (22).

People in Western industrial cultures are trapped in the ideas of their technologies and themselves. Americans, in comparison to Pacific cultures, have “a limited sentience of other animals, no medium through which we and they might communicate with and reciprocate one another” (25). Abram argues that Americans cannot clearly see or focus on “anything outside the realm of human technology, or to hear as meaningful anything other than human speech” (27). Abram’s views on western society help to define and explain Oedipa’s boredom and discontent with her life. Every day is the same to Oedipa because she has no relationship to anything outside of her own mind and to the technologies around her. As she picks the marjoram and basil from her herb garden, Oedipa is not noticing the plant life, the pungent smells or the feel of the soil; she is reading reviews in *Scientific American* and thinking about fixing a drink for her

husband when he gets home from work. Oedipa is not participating in the pastoral of her own life, in her unfolding present, or as Abram writes, “to the sensuous presence of the world” (201).

The idea of removing herself from the routine of daily life takes Oedipa out of her tedium zone. Although she feels incapable of working her way through Inverarity’s complicated estate, a strange sense begins to envelop her. Before receiving the letter, Pynchon describes Oedipa’s life as, “there had hung this sense of buffering, insulation, she had noticed the absence of an intensity, as if watching a movie, just perceptibly out of focus, that the projectionist refused to fix” (10). This challenge will bring her life back into focus, thinks Oedipa, because “what really keeps her where she is magic, anonymous and malignant, visited on her from outside and for no reason at all” (12). Abram describes this sense of buffering and insulation as the result of the amount of technology in our lives. “Caught up in a mass of abstractions, our attention hypnotized by a host of human-made technologies that only reflect us back to ourselves, it is all too easy for us to forget our carnal inherence in a more-than-human matrix of sensations and sensibilities” (22). Abram argues that industrialization, especially that of the twentieth century, has robbed humankind of its ability to relate not only to spiritual needs and appetites but to human, physical qualities, as well. Machine-made objects “teach our senses” so that eventually nothing has the ability to stimulate us. The mass-production of the twentieth century “from milk cartons to washing machines to computers” pulls us into a cycle, or a “dance” that “endlessly reiterates itself *without variation*” (64). Both Oedipa and Mucho are part of the “dance” of tedium and constant reiteration of daily patterns with no meaning.

Although Mucho now works for a radio station as a broadcaster, he is still troubled from his past job as a used car salesman. He viewed the customers who brought in their used cars to sell as poor and

> motorized, metal extensions of themselves, of their families and what their whole lives must be like, out there so naked for anybody, a stranger like himself, to look at…inside smelling hopelessly of children, supermarket booze, two, sometimes three generations of smokers, or only of dust – and when the cars were swept out you had to look at the actual residue of these lives…trading stamps, pink flyers advertising specials at the markets, butts, tooth-shy combs, help-wanted ads, Yellow Pages torn from the phone book, rags of old underwear or dresses that already were period costumes…all the bits and pieces coated uniformly, like a salad of despair, in a gray dressing of ash, condensed exhaust, dust, body wastes – it made him sick to look, but he had to look. (5)

He had been away from the job as a used car salesman for five years, but he still comes home from work everyday feeling physically and spiritually defeated. Mucho's thoughts are filled with the memory of each car being an extension of the person who brought it in, filled with an endless amount of worthlessness. Each day he comes home and says to Oedipa "Today was another defeat" (3). The stream of customers was endless and even though he got used to the "unvarying gray sickness," Mucho could never accept the way human beings were physical and spiritual additions to the cars they owned, their inner essence the sum total of the worthless items they left behind. Mucho sees people as the featurelessness of their waste.

When Oedipa gets the call to execute Inverarity's will, she sees this as a chance to renew her life and perhaps find a way to refocus her humanity. Thus, Oedipa leaves her hometown of Kinneret-in-the-Pines, California, and heads south to San Narciso to meet with Mr. Metzger, the coexecutor of the will. Pynchon's description of the landscape parallels Oedipa's life, neither having a point or a focus:

> San Narciso lay further south, near L. A. Like many named places in California it was less an identifiable city than a grouping of concepts – census tracts, special purpose bond-issue districts, shopping nuclei, all overlaid with access roads to its own freeway. (13)

When she looks down at the city of San Narciso, she sees "a vast sprawl of houses which had grown up all together, like a well tended crop, from the dull brown earth . . . " (14). Oedipa

views the man-made landscape as if it is an organic system, growing out of its own cycle of creation. She has no ideas to explain or words to imagine a real row of plants or crops. The landscape filled with an "ordered swirl of houses and streets," reminds Oedipa of a tangled circuit card from the inside of her transistor radio. Oedipa believes every structure within her landscape is a natural outgrowth of industrialized society.

When John Brinkerhoff Jackson discusses the American landscape in *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time* (1994), he begins his consideration of the topic by saying many foreign visitors to the United States tell him American landscape is "monotonous." (151) Jackson explains the reason for the sense of monotony or sameness in American cities is due to the use of the "grid." Every town and city west of the Mississippi, "stretching from the Mississippi [River] and Ohio [River] to the Pacific, from the Rio Grande to the Canadian border, beyond which it extends in a slightly modified form well into the northern subarctic forest" (153). Jackson defines the grid as an emblem of America and claims, "it must be imprinted at the moment of conception on every American child, to remain throughout his or her life a way of calculating not only space but movement" (153). The grid is an American tradition and gave early settlers a way to organize "this monotonous sea of waving grass" (154).

According to Jackson, not only is it a practical and quick method for organizing space, but also it is a democratic method and eliminates any concept of the European monarchy tradition of claiming space as a God-given right as so frequently happened in European history. "A composition of identical spaces extending out of sight in every direction, ignoring all inherent differences, produced a landscape of empty, interchangeable divisions like the squares on a checkerboard" (154). This rectangular idea of planning, argues Jackson, represented freedom from European heritage and set forth a new tradition of owning not the land, but the space.

Houses were built on the rectangular sections but were not too lavish or ornate. Jackson's study of emigrant handbooks shows a tendency for a settler to build a sturdy, non-descript structure because the less extravagant the house, the easier it would be to sell. The settlers welcomed the grid system of land division because the system was a democratic way to buy space, live in it for a while, and then sell the space for a profit. Land developers continue spatial demarcation by grid into the twenty-first century. Oedipa sees the city as indefinable and Jackson remarks on this same idea in regard to city planning. Because of the use of the grid system, very few cities in the United States display any remarkable differences from one another, Jackson argues.

As Oedipa views the American democratic system of landscape organization when she arrives in San Narciso to begin her journey, tracts and grids divided into groupings of monotonous spaces continue to be the norm for city planners. Yet because of the configuration of the landscape, Oedipa feels as if a secret meaning is concealed in its patterns and that the rows of houses, drive-ins, office buildings, and miles of fence topped with barbed wire, were all trying to communicate something to her, like she was in the "centre of an odd, religious instant" (14). Abram reports in *The Spell of the Sensuous* that other cultures have a connection to the land on which they live because their ancestors were buried in the land. When their remains co-mingle with the earth, a living connection pervades their every day lives, surrounding them with sense of belonging to the land. Abram describes this concept as "a sense of place." Jackson also discusses this idea of sense of place or *genius loci.* "In classical times," writes Jackson, "it meant not so much the space itself as a guardian divinity of that place. It was believed that a locality – a space or a structure or a whole community – derived much of its unique quality from the presence or guardianship of a supernatural spirit" (157). Jackson describes the idea of a "benign" (157) presence was always acknowledged by the inhabitants as well as visitors to the community. In

Lot 49, as Oedipa gazes at the "smog thickened" (15) landscape, she feels that "words were being spoken" (14) and she "trembled" (14) as if she was about to undergo a spiritual revelation or a religious experience. This feeling that encompasses Oedipa suggests that her senses are trying to grasp a *genius loci* and thus she physically trembles with the expectancy. However, Oedipa cannot cognizantly explain the sensation because it is covered by not only her inability to experience the supernatural world but also because a veil of smog obscures it.

In this text, smog becomes a metaphor for Oedipa's inability to see beyond her limited empirical understanding. Throughout the novel, Oedipa intuitively senses the resolutions to her questions, but when she tries to put meaning to Inverarity's will in a logical pattern based on her application of reason, she fails to solve the mystery. Pynchon uses the idea of smog as a hazy, atmospheric divider, which separates Oedipa's experiential knowledge from her mental acumen. Smog, or ozone pollution, is a type of air pollution created by mixing together nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds. Power plants, vehicles, and industrial chemicals create these emissions. In addition to causing respiratory problems in people, smog harms plants and trees making it difficult for them to make and store food. Strong sunlight, which is typically present in moderate climates, exacerbates the density of smog ("Clean Air Markets"). When Oedipa arrives in San Narciso, not only does the smog literally envelop the city with a thick cover but it also figuratively veils Oedipa's mind from spiritual understanding. In ancient times, both women and men wore the veil as a means to cover and protect their faces from elements of the environment. In the Hebrew tabernacle, the veil was used to separate the sacrificial altar from the Holy of Holies. Only the highest-ranking Levite priest could walk through the opening in the veil to enter into the Holy of Holies. For anyone else to try to pass through the veil into the most sacred of spaces was an act punishable by death. Thus, the veil became a metaphor for the

separation of the mundane from the ethereal or the physical realm from the spiritual domain. During her travel through California, smog not only encases the cities of the west coast but also acts as a metaphor in the novel to cloak Oedipa's ability to perceive the supernatural.

While on the brink of this "religious instant," Oedipa wonders if her husband, Mucho, searches for spirituality through his work. Oedipa begins to understand the attitude Mucho has toward the used car lot and encountering the hopelessness of everyday people. Mucho tries so hard to find a spiritual fulfillment in a day's work. While playing the records for Radio KCUF, he wants to feel sacred, like a priest offering Mass with "movements stylized as the handling of chrism, censer, [and] chalice might be for a holy man" (14). Mucho does not believe in the music he plays at the radio station, its sounds, vibrations, and lyrics. He feels hypocritical representing the ideas put forth by the music he plays daily on his show.

Oedipa begins to draw closer to an understanding of Mucho's discontent when she identifies her mission of executing Inverarity's will as her only chance to take control over the realm of the "formless magic" (12) that directs her life. To put a form to the magic could relieve both Mucho and Oedipa from their unhappiness and disconnection with living. The concept of "formless magic" and the idea of priestly sacredness that both Oedipa and Mucho feel can be explored in terms of primitive belief systems of ancient peoples. Karen Armstrong explains in *A History of God* that ancient people believed unseen forces surrounded them and that the idea of *spiritual* or *holy* forces is a commonality for many primitive tribes. Some called the unseen force *mana* and perceived the experience as the presence of an unexplained energy field. The tribal chief or shaman had access to the spirit energy, but it was also present in plants, rocks, and animals. Armstrong writes:

> The Latins experienced *numina* (spirits) in sacred groves. Arabs felt that the landscape was populated by the *jinn*. Naturally people wanted to get in touch with this reality and make it work for them, but they also simply wanted to admire it. When they personalized the unseen forces and made them gods, associated with the wind, sun, sea and stars but possessing human characteristics, they were expressing their sense of affinity with the unseen and with the world around them. (4)

By taking part in the ritualistic worship of these forces, humans believed they were participating in divine life and thus, human life had meaning. Because human mortality was a mystery that could not be understood or controlled, people believed that everything had an origin in the divine and that the sacred world of the gods

> was not just an ideal toward which men and women should aspire, but was the prototype of human existence; it was the original pattern or archetype on which life here below had been molded. Everything on earth was thus believed to be a replica of something in the divine world, a perception that informed the mythology, ritual and social organization of most of the cultures of antiquity and continues to influence more traditional societies in our own day. (Armstrong 6)

The linking of the divine world with humanity gave life meaning, and death was a continuation of this pattern. All human actions were meaningful because of their association with a divine power. People would always be connected to the gods on earth and in the worlds beyond because all life was preordained by human-god spiritual relationships and, thus, seen by humankind as not only meaningful but ongoing. Oedipa and Mucho have no connection to a physical aspect of nature. All they know is that they seek the connection but have no way to find it. Modern life in American suburbia has no meaning for them because their connections to a divine pattern or original archetype are severed. They are cut off from aspirations of attachment to a sense of the divine because they surround themselves with technology and man-made environments and have no sense of place around them.

In the both Hebrew and Christian scripture, the chrism, the censer, and the chalice are objects used in sacred ceremonies of both Christians and Jews. Oedipa compares Mucho's

desire of “trying to believe in his job” (14) with these items. *Chrism*, oil used for anointing, is associated with the bestowing of holiness on a human being through the power of God. Many times, chrism can substitute for the blood of a sacrificial animal. Anointing a person by oil or blood was a physical sign that they were also connected to a spiritual empowerment and received special blessings and protection from God. The *censer* was used in ancient times for the burning of incense. When the Israelites wandered in the desert after leaving Egypt, Moses instructed them, through God’s word, to build the Ark of the Covenant. Incense was to be burned on the altar at all times. The ancient Hebrews had a deep respect for incense because it was so valuable in their culture. Special plants were grown and harvested for their oils, a process that took an exceedingly vast amount of physical labor. “Aaron [the brother of Moses] must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps. He must burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the Lord for generations to come” (Exodus 30: 7-8). Enormous amounts of incense were needed to keep a constant aroma rising heavenly toward God. This tradition of offering a holy, earthly-grown fragrance to the spiritual realm carried over to the Roman Catholic Church. Today, incense is burned in several censers at a time so that many priests can swing the censers from chains at various points in the church and the fragrance becomes more potent.

The *chalice* is probably the most well known of these three items connected to Oedipa’s religious moment. According to Jewish tradition, the Seder or Passover meal celebrates the Jew’s freedom from Egyptian slavery. This meal commemorates God’s directions to Moses telling each Hebrew family to kill a lamb or a goat and paint the lintel above their door with its blood. Thus, when the angel of the Lord “passed over” the houses of the city, those painted with blood were spared from the death of their firstborn male child. Today, during the commemorative

meal, four cups of wine are drunk at various intervals, each accompanied with special prayers that tell how God has bestowed blessings on the Jewish race. In the New Testament, Jesus uses the chalice at the Last Supper to foretell his death on the cross. “Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s kingdom’” (Matthew 26: 27-29). In the New Covenant, the life force of blood replaces the chalice of wine to foreshadow Christ’s death. Both the painting of blood on the lintels and the drinking of the blood from the chalice represent the connecting life force of human beings to an element of divine spiritual power.

These sacred artifacts, which manifest themselves in Oedipa’s “religious instant,” contain much of the same symbolism pointed out by Armstrong. In Hebrew tradition, spiritual articles were ordained by God to be used in a sacred and holy way. Symbolically, they are used to connect man to God. But Oedipa’s religious instant is merely an instant, interrupted. She almost connects to something significant, something that may take away the feeling that she is controlled by an unknown source. “As if, on some other frequency, or out of the eye of some whirlwind rotating too slow for her heated skin to even feel the centrifugal coolness of, words were being spoken” (14). Both in the Torah and Christian scriptures, these *words* relate to the sacred word of God, the creator of the world as described in Genesis and to Jesus, the word that “became flesh,” but for Oedipa they are merely words from another frequency, in passive voice. The whirlwind passes her by. She gains no concrete revelation or hope through the remembering of these holy symbols. She experiences no connection to God or an unseen power in her environment. Pynchon writes:

> She gave it up presently, as if a cloud had approached the sun or the smog thickened, and so broken the "religious instant," whatever it might have been; started up and proceeded at maybe 70 mph along the singing blacktop, onto a highway she thought went to Los Angeles, into a neighborhood that was little more than the road's skinny right-of-way. (15)

As Oedipa speeds along to San Narciso in search of the truth to Inverarity's will, she sees nothing but herself and her own problems. Pynchon's pun on narcissism/San Narcisco foreshadows Oedipa's inept attempts to interpret the words of the will, only dwelling on her own thoughts and ideas. However, the metaphor of the road joins together much of the action of the novel.

Jackson discuses the idea of the road in his studies of *odology* and chronicles his observations about America's fascination with the car. For Jackson, the word "road" is a substitute for the ancient word "way." "*Way* signifies not only a path, but also direction and by extension, intent and manner. We 'have our way,' we 'do things in a way,' we follow 'a way of life'" (*Discovering* 21). A "way" represents a passage through which a person tries to reach a goal or accomplishment and is often tied to a religious belief or action. "The Sacred Way (and its innumerable variants) was both a method of spiritual discipline and a road or path leading to a shrine or temple. In the mythical past of Greece the way as symbol and as reality were often indistinguishable" (21). As Armstrong points out, primitive humans acted out ceremonies and religious rituals as a re-enactment of a rite that was preordained in the sacred realm. Jackson's research correlates to Armstrong's on this idea. Jackson confirms that the work of the road builder in ancient Greece "was seen as dedicated to the gods and was sponsored by the priests" (21). People's physical labor of road building was considered a sacred endeavor providing people with a path that not only led to a holy shrine but in turn, the shrine represented a tie to the

divine realm. Thus, roads bring people together for social gatherings, for communal worship, for commerce, and roads take us home.

Driving along in freeway traffic in "exhaust, sweat, glare and ill-humor of a summer evening on an American freeway, Oedipa Maas pondered her…problem. All the silence of San Narciso…had not allowed her to think as leisurely as this freeway madness" (Pynchon 87). In her car, Oedipa becomes part of the public function of a road. While driving on the freeways of California, Oedipa is surrounded by buildings, strip centers, and housing developments. Yet while she remains inside of her car, Oedipa places herself in a private situation, one in which she is buffeted from the interconnection with the public by the protection of her car. The invention of the car gave Americans the ability to move from space to space, from grid to grid, in an almost anonymous manner. Inside the car, a person is free to situate himself or herself in a landscape without taking part in its public arena. Oedipa merely rolls up her windows and winds her way around California staying true to her narcissistic pattern of only thinking about her own problems. Everything in the public landscape becomes inconsequential to Oedipa. Her self-centered focus limits her involvement with ideas from outside her own mind. All of her thoughts must come from within her, and are never a reflection of any natural parts of her environment.

The landscape chronotope works together with the extended religious metaphor to establish the disconnect between the circumstances of Inverarity's will and Oedipa's inability to understand her findings. Pynchon compares Oedipa's research into Inverarity's estate to the human journey to discover truth in Scripture. When Oedipa meets Metzger, the coexecutor of the will, they drive to one of Inverarity's properties, a housing development named Fangoso Lagoons. In one sentence, Pynchon describes the primal call of the moon's gravitational force on

the waves of the largest ocean of the world, an experience that cannot be described but is picked up by brain current before human senses can actually see and hear the water. Pynchon writes:

> Somewhere beyond the battening, urged sweep of three-bedroom houses rushing by their thousands across all the dark beige hills, somehow implicit in an arrogance or bite to the smog the more inland somnolence of San Narciso did lack, lurked the sea, the unimaginable Pacific, the one to which all surfers, beach pads, sewage disposal schemes, tourist incursions, sunned homo-sexuality, chartered fishing are irrelevant, the hole left by the moon's tearing-free and monument to her exile; you could not hear or even smell this but it was there, something tidal began to reach feelers in past eyes and eardrums, perhaps to arouse fractions of brain current your most gossamer microelectrode is yet too gross for finding. (40-41)

In the Old Testament vast expanses of water exist before the creation of the world. The book of Genesis recounts the creation narrative of the earth: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters" (Genesis 1: 1-2). This "Spirit of God" relates to the idea of the "unseen energy" or the *mana* of which Armstrong writes. Some theologians attribute this spirit to female creative Wisdom, which accompanied God during the creation. Before the emergence of the scientific age, the ancients were much more aware of their surroundings and how they related to their environment. Without charter boats, tourists, surfers, and sewage, the Pacific Ocean represents spirit energy of unimaginable proportion. This expanse of water has no grid for demarcation and development. Pynchon writes that the Pacific flows in the hole left when the body of the moon separated from the earth in some early cataclysmic disaster when the moon became a monument to the power of this water.

In *The Spell of the Sensuous*, David Abram explores this phenomenon of *not seeing* the environment in his chapter "The Ecology of Magic." The ancient tribal chiefs or shamans, also discussed by Armstrong, contemplated nature for long, and sustained time periods. Their

knowledge of wild nature was transferred into curative methods for the overall prosperity of the tribe. In the developed world, writes Abram, "the source of stress lies in the relation *between* the human community and the natural landscape" (21). Oedipa suffers from the symptoms of this stress described by Abram. She is incapable of holding on to a redemptive or meaningful thought for a long period of time, or of following through with any of her ideas, because of her dissociation of the environment. There is no "wild nature" with which she can connect. While visiting Inverarity's housing development of Fangoso Lagoons, Oedipa comes into visual contact with the Pacific Ocean. Fangoso Lagoons lies adjacent to the shore of Lake Inverarity, a man-made lake. Rather than look into the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean and wonder about the size, shape, sea life, or other cultures that may live on remote islands far from the gridded paths of California, Oedipa's is drawn toward mechanical inventions. She "came in among earth-moving machines, a total absence of trees, the usual hieratic geometry, and eventually, shimmying for the sand roads, down in a helix to a sculptured body of water named Lake Inverarity" (41).

In Oedipa's world, only technology attracts her. In the neo-pastoral application of themes to this novel, Inverarity has developed the land according to his own ideological designs and not those suggested by the natural landscape around him. He deforested the surroundings, and created the lake. Moreover, out in the lake, "on a round island of fill among blue wavelets, squatted the social hall, a chunky, ogived and verdigrised, Art Nouveau reconstruction of some European pleasure-casino. Oedipa fell in love with it" (41). The community's social hall, "ogived" or built with tall, vaulted arches and "verdigrised" or painted to look as if the roof had aged to a dark green color, was made to look like a European Gothic cathedral. Inverarity constructed this building to mimic an antique, historical structure. Oedipa has no practical

understanding of nature, history, or religious ceremony to which she can relate. Abram explains this reaction: "Caught up in a mass of abstractions, our attention hypnotized by a host of human-made technologies that *only reflect us back to ourselves*, it is all too easy for us to forget our carnal inherence in a more-than-human matrix of sensations and sensibilities" (Abram 22, emphasis added). Oedipa, in her narcissistic inability to feel the power of the Pacific Ocean as a force of nature, demonstrates no "carnal inherence." She lives a somnolent existence in the realm of technology, and thus, all self- knowledge reflects her hypnotic state.

Before she left for San Narciso to execute the will, Oedipa visited her family lawyer, Roseman, to get some advice about the procedure. He gave her a long laundry list of all of the legal aspects of executing a will: " learn intimately the books and the business, go through probate, collect all debts, inventory the assets, get an appraisal of the estate, decide what to liquidate and what to hold on to, pay off claims, square away taxes, distribute legacies…" (10). When Oedipa meets with the coexecutor, Metzger, for the first time, he comes to her motel, Echo Courts, and immediately she begins a sexual relationship with him. To progress the pun of San Narciso, Pynchon uses Greek, woodland mythology to name the motel where Oedipa schedules her meeting with Metzger. In an attempt to explain natural forces in their environment, the Greeks invented an intricate system of mythology to shore up their relationships to the effects of nature and to the natural world.

According to Greek myth, Echo, a mountain nymph, was persuaded by Zeus to talk incessantly with his wife, Hera, so Hera could not spy on him. When Hera found out about this plan, she punished Echo by taking away her ability to speak. The only sound Echo could make for the rest of her life was to repeat or to echo the last syllable of every word she heard ("Echo"). Handsome Narcissus was the son of the river god. When Echo saw him she immediately fell in

love with him but was unable to speak to him. One day, Narcissus, lost in the woods, called out to his companions, “Is anybody here?” All Echo could reply is “Here. Here.” When Echo revealed herself to Narcissus, he rejected her love. She was so forlorn she hid in a cave, and subsequently died of a broken heart, and all that is left of her is her voice. To punish Narcissus for his cold-heartedness, the gods made him fall in love with his own face as it was reflected back to him in the river. Eventually, Narcissus died from his inability to find love in anything but his own image (“Narcissus”). Like Narcissus, Oedipa cannot find fulfillment in anything but the technology that reflects back to her own limited understanding of nature. In her conversation with Metzger, she cannot think of any original ideas; she merely echoes Metzger’s thoughts back to him. Overall, Metzger and Oedipa never establish any procedures of how to go about the task of executing the will; they demonstrate only a carnal relationship and Inverarity’s will is but an inconsequential sideline to their meeting.

To Oedipa, each facet of the will manifests itself as a riddle to be solved and not a legal feature of the estate. Oedipa does none of the things her lawyer, Roseman, told her to do. Before long, Oedipa has created such a complex, mysterious, mission, she admits to feeling like an epileptic during a seizure.

> Oedipa wondered whether, at the end of this (if it were supposed to end), she too might not be left with only compiled memories of clues, announcements, intimations, but never the central truth itself, which must somehow each time be too bright for her memory to hold; which must always blaze out, destroying its own message irreversibly, leaving an exposed blank when the ordinary world came back. (76)

On her day’s outing to Fangoso Lagoons, Oedipa discovers that at the bottom of Lake Inverarity are special effects to entertain scuba divers and snorkelers. Among these gimmicks are human bones of American soldiers who tragically froze to death at Lago de Pietá in Italy during

World War II. Some of the pot-smoking teenagers who loiter around Echo Courts overhear Oedipa telling Metzger about her discovery of the bones at the bottom of the lake and tell Oedipa that this sounds like a local play they just saw, *The Courier's Tragedy*. When Oedipa and Metzger attend the play the next night, "Oedipa found herself after five minutes sucked utterly into the landscape of evil Richard Wharfinger [the playwright] had fashioned for his 17th-century audiences, so preapocalyptic, death-wishful, sensually fatigued, unprepared, a little poignantly, for that abyss of civil war that had been waiting, cold and deep, only a few years ahead of them" (49). All of the information about underground mail systems, the misprint on the cancellation of the stamp, the Tristero, the Thurn and Taxis mail system, the horn symbol, the parallelism between the fictitious Faggian youth who all disappeared in the play, to the real American GI's whose bones were found at the bottom of Lago de Pietá in Italy, are all facts, presented by different characters of the novel, and are also presented as part of the plot of the play Oedipa watches. However, when all of the facts are strung together they remain meaningless in regards to the execution of Inverarity's will. Rather than actually execute the will of Pierce Inverarity, Oedipa tries to relate these facts to a "central truth" about her own life, which she concludes is impossible.

What does exist in Pynchon's structure of the novel is the extended metaphor of people's search for meaning in scriptural truth. When Oedipa questions Mike Fallopian about his postal conspiracy theories, he answers, "'Who cares?' Fallopian shrugged. 'We don't try to make scripture out of it'" (36). When Oedipa questions Randolph Driblette, the director of the play, *The Courier's Tragedy*, about the original script, he responds, "'Why,' Driblette said at last, 'is everybody so interested in texts?'" (61) In a heated conversation after the play, Driblette shouts angrily at Oedipa, "'You guys, you're like Puritans are about the Bible. So hung up with words,

words'" (62). Driblette shouts to Oedipa that only he represents the reality of the word and that he holds the ability to "give the spirit flesh." (62). When Oedipa tries to find the original source of *The Courier's Tragedy* she comes across an anthology, *Jacobean Revenge Plays.* At that point, Oedipa learns there are several variants in the lines and texts and some of the editions of the anthologies are not dated or signed. She cannot locate the lines of the stanza referring to the exact information she needs. All the evidence she gathers to support the theory of the postal fraud that Inverarity's will implies cannot be supported by factual, textual evidence.

Pynchon relates the idea of "the word" and Oedipa's experience of finding a central truth in the written text to the development of scripture in the New Testament. Large portions of both texts were handed down as oral tradition for centuries. As Karen Armstrong writes in *The Bible: A Biography*, "From the very beginning, people feared that a written scripture encouraged inflexibility and unrealistic, strident certainty" (3). In the book of Genesis from the Old Testament, God created the world by speaking oral commands. For instance "And God said, " 'Let there be light,' and there was light" (1: 3) or "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water'" (1: 6). According to Christian metaphor *Word* or *Logos* refers to Jesus as the son of God the father. In the New Testament, Jesus, the continuation of this "word" of God physically becomes the Word of God through the act of the incarnation, or the Virgin birth. According to the New Testament, God chose to make his word human flesh through the person of Jesus Christ. No written documentation to support these events was written down as they were occurring, and subsequently this belief was passed down through generations by oral tradition. Armstrong argues that once the oral traditions began to be written down, "biblical authors felt free to revise the texts they had inherited and give them an entirely different meaning" (4).

Scriptural exegetes wrote the Bible to be a "template for the problems of their time" (Armstrong 5). This theory relates to the historical figure of Jesus. The only evidence that Jesus existed is from the gospels or the "Good News" of the New Testament. Of the four gospel writers, Mark wrote in about 70 CE; Matthew and Luke in the late 80s; and John in the late 90s. Historically, Jesus' death has been recorded between 29 or 30 CE. Thus, the first written word of Jesus in the gospels was written forty to sixty years after his death. As Armstrong suggests, each writer used his gospel as a *template* to explore and demonstrate the problems and beliefs of his time. At first, the gospels were written and circulated in their *Greek* versions, and eventually other books were added so that by 397 CE, twenty-seven books made up the canon of the New Testament. In 410, Saint Jerome translated the Jewish scriptures and the New Testament into the *Latin* Vulgate Bible. Martin Luther translated both the Old and New Testaments into *German* by 1534. In 1611 King James I of England commissioned an *English* version and told scholars to return to the ancient Greek and Hebrew manuscripts that were available, and after several revisions, the King James Version was the most popular version of the Bible for over three hundred years. ("History of Bible") The most important fact that Armstrong and the biblical exegetes fail to point out is that Jesus spoke *Aramaic*, so even the first words that were written almost a half century after the death of Jesus were written in a different language from that which Jesus spoke. Thus, the logos, the word, or the *central truth* that Oedipa seeks, is as distant and attenuated from her reach as the actual words of Jesus or the spiritual word of Christian scripture.

The problem goes even deeper. Bart D. Ehrman in *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* describes the many alterations that were made to the New Testament texts before the final canonization of the twenty-seven books that make up this section

of the Christian Bible. In his training on "textual criticism," a technical term for the science of restoring the "original" words of a text from manuscripts that altered them, Ehrman questions the authenticity of what some biblical editions used as their primary manuscripts. Ehrman's study was guided by the basic query of

> how does it help us to say the Bible is the inerrant word of God if in fact we don't have the words that God inerrantly inspired, but only the words copied by the scribes – sometimes correctly (many times!) incorrectly? What good is it to say that the autographs (i.e., the originals) were inspired? We don't *have* the originals! We have only error ridden copies, and the vast majority of these are centuries removed from the originals and different from them, evidently, in thousands of ways. (7)

In the early days of the major contemporary Western religious movements, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, books "played virtually no role in the polytheistic religions of the ancient Western world" (19). Religion was acted out in corporate worship ceremonies honoring gods of locality through rituals of animal sacrifice, dancing, intonation, and other rites. Later, Moses wrote down his conversations with God when he wrote the five books of Torah or Law as God instructed him to do from Mount Sinai. The entire law of the Jews was written down, and constantly was referred to in its written form so that future generations could be sure they were following the words and laws of their God, YHWH. Since the Christian movement was formed from a Jewish sect, early Christians wanted to have their stories and laws written in manuscripts, as well. These manuscripts had to be copied by hand by scribes who may or may not have been literate or fluent in the language in which the manuscript was originally written. In addition to this, ancient writing had no punctuation marks, no system of capital letters, and no spaces between words. Ehrman refers to this type of writing as *scriptuo continua* and many times the scribes had to guess where the sentence and word breaks fit into the text. If a scribe made a

mistake while copying a manuscript, the error was passed onto the next scribe who copied the error in the document.

Since most people at the time of early Christianity could not read or write, the books or letters were read out loud in public meetings of worship. After an initial reading, the original copy would circulate among the group, and different people would copy the text. Very often, more mistakes were made in the transcription. Once a mistake was made, the error became permanent. When newer texts were made from an old and damaged original, often the primary text or autograph was destroyed. Thus, when future Bibles were written, more often than not, the writers were copying and working out translations from erroneous primary texts. In his concluding chapter, Ehrman writes:

> In many ways, being a textual critic is like doing detective work. There is a puzzle to be solved and evidence to be uncovered. The evidence is often ambiguous, capable of being interpreted in various ways, and a case has to be made for one solution of the problem over the other. (208)

Oedipa's search for a central truth about Inverarity's will is analogous to Ehrman's argument of the human search to find the true words of Jesus in the New Testament. Pynchon comments on metaphor by writing, "The act of metaphor then was a thrust at the truth and a lie, depending where you were: inside, safe, or outside, lost. Oedipa did not know where she was" (105). Oedipa's sense of self worth is wrapped up in the words of a will, which lead to a text of a play, which in turn leads to what she assumes is a fraudulent postal system, the Trystero. Moreover, there is no original or primary text or autograph to which Oedipa can compare her findings. She feels like a detective wandering disconsolately through the freeways of California on a search for truth to which there is no basis. Since Oedipa cannot find the true meaning of Inverarity's will, she remains "outside the metaphor." She cannot understand why Inverarity

would have such a convoluted way of embedding the truth of a secret postal system in his written will. Or, as Pynchon infers, was it all something Inverarity made up to keep his word alive after his death? The implication parallels the written word of the gospels to the written text of Inverarity's will; his will becomes a metaphor for human's search for scriptural truth. Ehrman argues the inerrant truth of Jesus' words are forever lost and people who search for the true words of Jesus will never find them. In turn, because of the errors and fraudulent copies of *The Courier's Tragedy*, Oedipa will never be able to find the central truth of Inverarity's will.

As Oedipa continues her quest, Genghis Cohen, calls her to review Inverarity's stamp collection. Cohen, a professional philatelist, advances Mike Fallopian's idea of postal fraud. Cohen informs her that most of the stamps are not authentically American printed. In fact, almost all of the stamps are forgeries. Pynchon implies that the metaphor points to canonical scripture as being forged to convey a central meaning of truth for the people of that specific time frame. As Oedipa begins to view the collection, she notices one of the stamps, "an old American stamp, bearing the device of a muted post horn, belly–up badger, and the motto: We Await Silent Tristero's Empire" (139). Oedipa now realizes what the word WASTE means that she found in the written message at the Scope Bar in one of her meetings with Mike Fallopian. The biblical metaphor for this turn of events is the apocalyptic promise in both Jewish and Christian faiths of a messiah coming to save the world. According to biblical tradition, at the moment the messiah appears in the skies, a trumpet/horn will sound, the earth will be returned to its original edenic garden, and all will live in peace. The irony of the acronym, however, is that to wait any longer is a waste of time for Oedipa because she cannot decode any religious symbolism. All she can think about in her narcissistic stupor is her own world, and she, like Driblette, is the center of her universe. Meaning exists in what she deems reality; her own thoughts have become the "closed

little universe" at the center of the stage in her congested, smog filled mind. Oedipa's thoughts continue to reflect, "monotone litanies of insult, filth, fantasy, love whose brute repetition must someday call into being the trigger for the unnamable act, the recognition, the *Word*" (149, emphasis added). Yet, the final futility of the situation is that for Oedipa, the Word cannot exist because of her narcissism, her inability to contemplate the unseen.

Eco-historian and theologian Thomas Berry discusses the idea of living within an artificial landscape with no connection to the ancient *genius loci* or numina to help people identify with a sense of place. "We should be clear about what happens when we destroy the living forms of this planet" (11), writes Berry. "The first consequence is that we destroy modes of divine presence" (11). Oedipa lives in an industrialized and technological world. Nothing around her reminds her of nature, and the divine presence that she almost realizes in her religious instant never becomes fulfilled. Pynchon's metaphor of making the original texts impossible to find enforces his idea that there are no originals and the search is merely a progression of clues with no solutions or answers. Oedipa has neither truth nor words in the cycle of her life. "If we have words to speak and think and commune, words for the inner experience of the divine, words for the intimacies of life, if we have words for telling stories . . . words which we can sing, it is again because of the impressions we have received from the variety of beings about us" (11). Oedipa has no variety of beings around her. She has plastic Tupperware, a work-defeated husband, and no words with which to express anything but her own echoed life experience. When Genghis Cohen invites her to the stamp auction, hoping to finally liquidate some of the assets in Inverarity's estate, he explains to her that Loren Passerine will be crying the sale. "'Will be what?' 'We say an auctioneer "cries" a sale,' Cohen said " (151). As Passerine begins the

auction, he spreads his arms in a “gesture that seemed to belong to the priesthood of some remote culture; perhaps to a descending angel” (152).

Pynchon describes the final metaphor, that of Passerine “crying” the auction as if the auctioneer is an ancient tribal chief, who represents a conduit of the power connecting the *genius loci* to the earth but his actions are unable to reach Oedipa. The religious instant Oedipa experienced in the beginning of her quest was just that, an instant, a flash in her thought pattern, never to return. She continues to wait in the smoggy chronotope of San Narciso and remains powerless to believe in anything beyond her own veil-shrouded reflection.

If you understand that man's mind is part of God, then you understand it as well as I. In that way you're free, if you're in the mind of God.

Yakov Bok in Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer*

For everything is done by the power of God. Indeed, because the power of nature is nothing other than God itself, it is certain that we fail to understand the power of God to the extent we are ignorant of natural causes.

Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*

Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!

God in The Book of Job, 38: 4-5

CHAPTER 3

NATURE, GOD, AND POLITICS: DEEP ECOLOGY IN BERNARD MALAMUD'S *THE FIXER*

Long before modern ideas of ecology entered into the realm of Western philosophy, Baruch de Spinoza wrote about the rights of every created being in nature. Believing in the sovereign rights of all creation, of both human and non-human beings, Spinoza wrote, "[E]ach individual thing has the sovereign right to do this, i.e. (as I said) to exist and to behave as it is naturally determined to behave" (196). Spinoza proposed that there is "no difference between human beings and other individual things of nature" and that "each thing does by the laws of its nature, that it does with sovereign right, since it is acting as it was determined to by nature and cannot do otherwise" (196). These words from Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise* written in 1670 have been revisited in the ideas of deep ecologists Thomas Berry, Gary Snyder, Arne Naess, and Lynn White, Jr., to name just a few who are involved in the ideas of the

Deep Ecology movement. This movement involves more than a consciousness of animal rights and extinction issues of the world's flora and fauna systems. Deep Ecology encompasses a theological, spiritual, and political approach to respect sovereignty for all life on the planet. Thomas Berry, an ecotheologian, writes:

> [S]ince the human survives only within this larger complex of ecosystems, any damage done to other species, or to other ecosystems, or to the planet itself, eventually affects the human not only in terms of physical well-being but also in every other phase of human intellectual understanding, aesthetic expression, and spiritual development. (11)

Berry, like Spinoza, discusses his worldview of human oppression and destruction through the ideas of religious and/or political superiority. People's inability to respect the rights of other human and non-human beings is evident in many models of world powers and governments. Much of this subjugation has been caused by religious fervor of the governing party to overpower and extinguish other religions. In *The Fixer* Malamud suggests that unless people learn to understand and accept the sovereignty of other individuals without resorting to governmental and political repression of minorities, then it follows that non-human beings will never have a chance to be respected by society at large. When people with varying religious beliefs clash with one another, wars are fought, humans are killed, and the ecosystem suffers. As Jonathan Safran Foer states in the Introduction to *The Fixer*, "The world is a broken thing" (xi).

The chronotope of Malamud's novel is the frozen, snow-covered landscape of Kiev and the surrounding countryside during the reign of Russia's last Czar, Nicholas II. The year is 1905 and Orthodox Catholicism is the official religion of the country. Anti-semitism flourishes as the Bolsheviks move closer to a revolution to overthrow the aristocracy. The aristocracy, looking for a way to keep the focus off a civil war, secretly sponsors pogroms against the Jews. In turn, many people are especially paranoid with respect to their personal

safety in the event of an all out revolution. Malamud places his novel during a tumultuous time and bases the novel on the factual event of a Catholic Russian boy who was found dead in a cave, his body drained of its blood. The Russian newspapers publish false stories describing how Jews had murdered the boy and how his blood had been used for ritual Jewish sacrifices.

Malamud's main character, Yakov Bok, by trade is a fixer. He earns his living in the shtetl, a form of a Jewish ghetto outside of Kiev, fixing anything that is broken. In return, he gets paid for his work with food. Bok had married Raisl, but after many years of marriage, they remain childless which, according to Jewish beliefs, signifies a doomed and broken marriage. At this point in his life, Bok begins to study Russian grammar and read from *Selections of Spinoza*. When Raisl becomes so frustrated with Bok for his lack of attention to her, she runs off with another man. This is the catalyst that Bok needs to leave the shtetl to move to Kiev and to try to find work that it more engaging and pays better. Thus, Bok takes on the significance of Virgil's Meliboeus, leaving his land of origin, his friends and relatives, and his family's religion and cultural beliefs to venture into the unknown. Shmuel, Raisl's father, represents Virgil's Tityrus and urges Bok not to go to Kiev, sighting the danger of the civil war that is emerging and the pogroms that are taking place there. Yet Bok, like Meliboeus, tells Shmuel that he has lost everything that was of value to him and must search for a new life. Shmuel reminds Bok that he is a Jew by blood and by faith and he should not forget the God of his ancestors as written in the Torah. Bok should always remember God has made an eternal covenant or promise with all living beings that he will not forget them in their time of need. Shmuel gives Bok a bag filled with phylacteries which are small leather boxes filled with scriptures written on tightly rolled scrolls, a prayer shawl and a book of Psalms and admonishes, "'Yakov,' said Shmuel passionately, 'don't forget your God!'" (17) Bok replies "'Who forgets who?' the fixer said

angrily. ‘ What do I get from him but a bang on the head and a stream of piss in my face.’” (17) Bok continues, “‘ We live in a world where the clock ticks fast while he’s on a timeless mountain staring in space. He doesn’t see us and he doesn’t care. Today I want my piece of bread, not in Paradise’” (17).

Bok represents the philosophy of Spinoza in his questioning of the Jewish belief that God contributes to human history as written in the books of Torah and Prophets. Bok believes man has invented stories that represent an *idea* of God as a participant in the outcomes of human events. As Bok heads towards Kiev, the chronotope of the broken shtetl reinforces the brokenness of both the land and society. People cause evil to occur in the world not a judgmental God who punishes humankind. Malamud writes, “The doors of some of the cottages hung loose, and where there were steps they sagged. Fences buckled and were about to collapse without apparent notice or response, irritating the fixer, who liked things in place and functioning” (15). People create and are solely responsible for the kind of world in which they live. Political practices, religious misunderstanding and suspicion, cause prejudice and racism. The chronotope of the disorderly and run down homes enriches Malamud’s agreement with Spinozan philosophy. When people cannot govern themselves according to individual needs, they are not living within the sovereignty of Nature’s creation.

The fixer had been in Kiev only a short time when a young Christian Russian boy is found dead and drained of his blood. The people of the community immediately blame the crime on Bok because he is not only a newcomer to the city, but also does not have the appropriate identification to be living in the working district of Kiev. When it is discovered that Bok is a Jew living and working in a Christian section of the city, he is thrown into jail and charged with the murder of the young boy. Bok spends a long time in jail before the investigating

magistrate, B. A. Bibikov, comes to see him and an indictment is issued. During this time, Bok reflects on the writings of Spinoza. When Bibikov finally visits him in his cell, he tells Bok that his books on Spinoza were taken from his apartment by the police to be used as evidence against him. Bibikov asks Bok to explain to him why he reads Spinoza and how the Jewish philosopher Spinoza has influenced him. In the most beautifully written dialogue in the text, Bibikov and Bok discuss the philosophies of Spinoza on the most basic level of Bok's understanding. However, the simplicity of his remarks actually take the philosophy from the pages of Spinoza's work and place them into the actual living out of his philosophy by poor, broken people. The following recounts Bok's response to Bibikov:

> Maybe it's that God and nature are one and the same, and so is man, or some such thing, whether he's poor or rich. If you understand that man's mind is part of God, then you understand it as well as I. In that way you're free, if you're in the mind of God. If you're there and you know it. At the same time the trouble is that you are bound down by nature, though that's not true for God who is Nature anyway. There's also something called Necessity, which is always there though nobody wants it, that one has to push against. In the shtetl God goes running around with the Law in both hands, but this other God, though he fills up more space, has less to do altogether. Whoever you end up believing in, nothing has changed much in the world if you're without work. So much for Necessity. I also figure it means that life is life and there's no sense kicking it into the grave. Either that or I don't understand it as well as it's said. (76-7)

Since Bok did not have his books with him in his cell, he was explaining his overall idea of Spinoza's writing. Since Malamud does not recount the exact books that Bok had been reading before his arrest, this discussion will examine ideas from Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise* and his *Ethics* in an attempt to explain Bok's ideas about God and Nature.

Torah, according to Jewish scholars, means the Law of God as given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Considered by the Jews to be the greatest prophet, Moses actually spoke with God to receive the books in the Torah that explicate the Law the Jews were to follow for all time.

Spinoza attests "that the prophets perceived things revealed by God by way of their imagination, that is via words or visions which may have been either real or imaginary (*Theological* 25). Because of this idea, that people perceive the word of God through the use of imagination, Spinoza was ousted from the synagogue and considered dead to all practicing Jews because he refused to recant his "heretical beliefs." For Spinoza to espouse that Moses did not actually speak to God on Mount Sinai was a huge departure from fundamental Jewish belief. Spinoza continues his treatise by saying, "For everything is done by the power of God. Indeed, because the power of *nature* is nothing other than God itself, it is certain that we fail to understand the power of God to the extent that we are ignorant of natural causes (25, emphasis added). To Spinoza, the concept of God is indefinable because man cannot fathom the complete ideas of the complexity of natural causes in the universe. Spinoza writes, "Therefore it is foolish to have recourse to this same power of God when we are ignorant of the natural cause of some thing, which is precisely, the power of God" (25). According to Spinoza, God is the natural power and the cause of all Nature; God is nature and has always been in motion to create and recreate itself. Spinoza disputes the canonical role of both Judaism and Christianity when he claims that God does not enter into the history of humankind any other way than through nature.

God is natural law and created every creature, both human and non-human, to possess and perform its life within the realm of its sovereign self. "Indeed, because the power of nature," Spinoza writes, "is nothing other than the power of God itself, it is certain that we fail to understand the power of God to the extent that we are ignorant of natural causes" (*Theological* 25). People's ability to reason is part of natural law and thus akin to a God-like quality. If a person uses this ability to think, or as Spinoza writes, "to perfect the intellect, or reason, as far as we can, [then] the highest happiness or blessedness for mankind consists in this alone" (*Ethics*,

Part IV, Appendix # 4, 139). If people strive to use their rational powers, they will come closer to understanding the attributes and actions of God "that follow from the *necessity* of his [God's] nature" (139, emphasis added). Bok, in his understanding of Spinozan philosophy, defines human freedom as being able to follow the path of perfecting rational thinking to acquire knowledge. Since God is the culmination of perfect intelligence through Nature, the more people understand natural law, the more they will respect, and even show reverence for it, thus, the happier and freer people will become. Through the reverence of natural law, people will both honor and revere the idea of God as Nature. People become more blessed and more capable of creating wholeness and well being in their lives. God's *necessity* is creating and recreating Nature in perfection and harmony with natural law. Humankind's *necessity*, "which is always there though nobody wants it, that one has to push against" (Malamud 76), is to examine the power of society and its natural rights.

When people come together to form a society, they must give up some of their rights to the sovereign power of the state so that law and order can exist for the good of all persons. In return, since the choice to give up some rights is done on a rational level, it is the duty of the sovereign of the state, i.e., the government, to "avoid the follies of appetite and as much as possible to bring men within the limits of reason, so that they may dwell in peace and harmony" (*Theological* 201). If the government creates disharmony among its constituents, then by *necessity* man must "push against it" because the ruling party is acting against the laws of nature. This, according to Spinoza is the definition of evil. Spinoza writes, "Those things only do we call evil which hinder a man's capacity to perfect reason and to enjoy a rational life" (*Ethics, Part IV, Appendix #5,* 139). If government allows people to pursue rational thought and behavior then all is well. Evil can only befall people if they are somehow hindered from following natural law. "A

man is bound to be a part of Nature and to follow its universal order; but if he dwells among individuals who are in harmony with man's nature, by that very fact his power of activity will be assisted and fostered" (*Ethics* 139).

When Bok speaks about not being able to find work, he is summing up the prejudicial czarist system that existed in Russia. Jews were limited to where they could live, and thus, working for a living was limited to jobs that could be found in ghettos and shtetls. When Bok begins to work outside of these contained areas, he makes more money and is then able to buy books to better educate himself. For the government to deny Bok the right to work is to deny Bok the right to pursue his natural right to perfect his intellect. This violates the laws of nature, according to Spinoza's philosophy. Spinoza writes: "Whatsoever in nature we deem evil, that is, capable of hindering us from being able to exist and to enjoy a rational life, it is permissible for us to remove in whatever seems a safer way" (*Ethics* 139). In the hope of uniting in common good and religion, people created the monarchial government under which Bok lives. When the czars initiated power to control those outside of their own religious beliefs, natural law was violated. Bok becomes a victim of this violation simply because of his race. He does not believe in the God of the Torah who "goes running around with the Law in both hands" (Malamud 76). Bok's God was the "other" God who "fills up more space" because God is Nature and Nature is God.

Rebecca Goldstein, a prominent author and expert on Spinoza's theories, explains Spinoza's God/Nature idea that begins to form an ecological base even though she does not formally enter the ecological discussion. Yet, there is no denying that Spinoza's philosophies can be seen and interpreted as a major discussion point in the ecology and Deep Ecology movements. Goldstein relates Spinoza's main ideas by writing, "Nothing outside of the world - no

transcendent God, in other words - explains the world. Its explanation is immanent within itself" (53). Goldstein explicates this statement by adding that Spinoza wanted to defuse the religious idea that a force or being outside of the world is responsible for the history of the world and an excuse for humans' treatment of Nature. Because the human mind is not all knowing, people will never know the infinite realities of the natural world. Goldstein writes that people should think of the earth as an infinite cause that maintains awareness of its own explanation (54). Because the world continues to recreate itself through nature, then the earth is sovereign, or exists by its own power and not through the historical intervention of God. "To know what is true in *this* world, we must make contact with it through experience" (55). The main downfall of society begins with people assuming they are the ultimate development both of and in nature. People must expand their ideas "to take in more of the world, and thus the exhilarating sense of one's own outward expansiveness into the world, is, in itself, a sort of love, only now with the explanation of the world - which is the world- as its object" (188). This is what Bok meant when he said "man's mind is part of God" because man is part of nature yet consistently takes charge of nature. Once humankind takes on this loving stance towards nature, people become one with nature and with God. Goldstein argues that people must learn to see themselves both from the outside and in perspective with the inestimable possibilities of the universe. Freedom consists of each person developing his or her own natural abilities. People have the right to learn and develop into rational beings within nature. If the leaders of the society prevent such development, and people are forced to live under contrived beliefs put forth by a political system, then by *necessity* the people have the right to overthrow the government that impedes their ability to learn, to study, and to develop.

Yakov Bok, Bernard Malamud's main character in *The Fixer*, represents a disenfranchised citizen leaving his homeland to find better opportunities for work and education. In this sense, Bok becomes Virgil's pastoral Meliboeus, working against the unknown forces that await him on his journey, the unknown counterforce of the neo-pastoral novel. During the reign of the last czar of Russia, Nicholas II, the religious oppression enforced by his government instigated human suspicion and hatred for one another. In terms of Bakhtinian chronotope theory, Yakov Bok enters the time/space relationship of religious hatred set into a political frenzy fostered by Czar Nicholas' government. Bok cannot understand the forces that work against him because he is an outsider to the community and hated for his religious heritage, even though he does not take part in those religious beliefs. Bok's reality remains constant: the sadness he has experienced in all areas of his life. His father was not part of his life and his mother was killed in a pogrom. He works hard all of his life just to keep food on his table. Even though Bok keeps his marriage vow after years of a childless union, his wife runs off with another man because she is desperate and frustrated. Bok does not believe in Jewish customs and claims he is a "free thinker." Malamud creates a picture of an honorable man who tries to educate himself, work for a living, and contribute to society by "fixing things." Yet, the society in which he lives makes this impossible. Bok must eventually decide if he will let the society keep him from obtaining his goals or whether he will "push against" the governmental forces and rebel so that he can develop into the rational and loving creature he was created to be.

The Deep Ecology movement revisits the ideas of Spinoza's philosophy in the concept of uniting both humans and non-humans in loving and respectful relationships across the planet. In *Deep Ecology: Living as If Nature Mattered*, Bill DeVall and George Sessions define deep ecology as follows:

> Deep ecology is emerging as a way of developing a new balance and harmony between individuals, communities, and all of Nature. It can potentially satisfy our deepest yearnings: faith and trust in our most basic institutions; courage to take direct action; joyous confidence to dance with the sensuous harmonies discovered through spontaneous, playful intercourse with the rhythms of our bodies, the rhythms of flowing water, changes in the weather and seasons, and the overall process of life on earth. (7)

Poet Gary Snyder defines the Deep Ecology movement as "the real work" or "the work of looking at ourselves, of becoming more real" (7). Malamud created his character Yakov Bok to demonstrate the Spinozan concept of a human who is blocked from doing "real work" on himself because of governmental injustice. DeVall and Sessions discuss an alternative to this governmental scenario, "minority tradition."

As opposed to the "dominant position" of government where a centralized authority polices the citizens of the state, a minority tradition calls for a decentralized, nonhierarchical, democratic government. (DeVall and Sessions 18). This type of democracy suggests that humans can be self-regulating and live in smaller systems of government like small communal farms, monastic groups, or simply household economies where individuals rely on backyard farming, barter, trade, and bargaining with other households. Another way to organize government under the minority tradition is by "bioregion." Known to be "the animating cultural principle through ninety-nine percent of human history and at least as old as consciousness," bioregion communities would help individuals understand natural systems and better understand the idea of "self." (21). DeVall and Sessions support their idea of bioregion communities by referring to biologist Barry Commoner who ran for president of the United States in 1980 on the platform of changing federal environmental policies. Commoner's "laws" of ecology are, in brief:

1. Everything is connected to everything else.

2. Everything must go somewhere.
3. Nature knows best.
4. There is no free lunch. (87)

Thus, the Deep Ecology movement suggests different ways of organizing humans in ways that would benefit humankind and not, as in the case of the fixer, prevent individuals from doing the "real work" of becoming more human, contributing to their bioregions, and in turn, strengthening their connection to nature.

According to DeVall and Sessions, Deep Ecology ideology takes on spiritual aspects, as well as social. They suggest The Old Testament "Book of Job" is the place to begin a dialogue about Deep Ecology and Christianity. L. Lamar Nisly in *Impossible to Say: Representing Religious Mystery in Fiction by Malamud, Percy, Ozick, and O'Connor* discusses the character of Yakov Bok in terms of the "Book of Job," as well. Clearly, many ecological and sociological theories can be traced to this ancient Judeo-Christian book believed to have been written between 2000 – 1000 BCE. In the book, Satan appears before God and remarks that Job would not be such a God-fearing person, here meaning good and holy, if God would take away all of his wealth. God accepts the challenge of Satan and tells Satan that he can take everything away from Job but not to kill him.

The scene of the story then shifts to Job's life on earth where messengers come to tell him that all of his sons and daughters were killed by an enemy tribe, all of his livestock have been killed or carried off by the enemy, and all of his servants have been put to death. Satan then inflicts a physical disease on Job that shows up on his body in large sores from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. Throughout all of this tragedy, Job never turns away from his belief in God. Job curses the day he was born and asks God to end his life, to just let him die since his

life is no longer worth living, yet he never loses his trust and belief in a power greater than himself. However, Job does question the justice of God, since Job considers himself to be a good man. He wonders why God would let him suffer so many afflictions. The "wrestling with God motif "continues throughout the book. Job questions why God prolongs his life through such pain and suffering and begs God to let him die.

Throughout Job's sorrowful laments, he begins to understand the extraordinary role of nature. He comes to believe that wisdom and truth can be found by observing animals, birds, and fish. "'Ask the animals, and they will teach you, / or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; / or speak to the earth, and it will teach you; /or let the fish of the sea inform you. / Which of all these does not know / that the hand of the Lord has done this?'" (12: 7-9) Job understands that non-human life is sovereign and that it has been created by the same ultimate source that created humans. It is the will of the force that keeps him and all of nature alive. Through nature, God is forever giving birth and allowing new life to emerge. When the persona of God speaks to Job, he uses the womb metaphor several times. In "Job" 38: 8, He asks Job: "'Who shut up the sea behind doors / when it burst forth from the womb?'" This metaphor refers to Genesis when God separates the seas from the earth and thus allows biological diversity in the complexities of nature. Since water does not entirely cover the earth, the writer of "Job" imagines that God created a wall to retain its force so that the two separate realms of creation remain sovereign. In 38: 29 God asks Job, "'From whose womb comes the ice? / Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens / when the waters become hard as stone, / when the surface of the deep is frozen?'" The author of "Job" imagines God as having both masculine and feminine powers of creation since he uses masculine pronouns to refer to God's creation but allows the concept of God as having a womb.

The persona of God remarks that the ostrich does not have the same wisdom as the mighty stork. The ostrich lays her eggs out in the open and then leaves them "unmindful that a foot may crush them, / that some wild animal may trample them" (39: 15). God wants Job to know that every creature on earth, both human and non-human, has been given natural gifts and "God did not endow her [the ostrich] with wisdom / or give her a share of good sense. / Yet when she spreads her feathers to run, she laughs at horse and rider" (39: 17-18). Even though the ostrich lays her eggs on open ground, she can defend her young by running incredibly fast to scare away her predators. The writer wants Job to know that all beings should use their natural abilities and that there is a purpose to their biological form. The ostrich may not be "intelligent" but her speed compensates for what she lacks. By studying nature humans can learn to use their individual roles to add to the diversity of all creation.

God created the leviathan to be the force that is unconquerable by humans. Although in reality the leviathan may have been a crocodile, the author of "Job" uses it as a metaphor for a force of nature that will never be subdued. The persona of God questions: "'Can you pull in the leviathan with a fishhook / Or tie down his tongue with a rope?'" (41: 1) The leviathan has strength that cannot be restrained by the human energy. The hunter cannot put a cord through his nose, pierce his jaw with a hook, fill his hide with harpoons, or pierce his head with fishing spears. The leviathan is a power created for humans to realize they will never have total control over nature. "'If you lay a hand on him, / you will remember the struggle and never do it again!" (41: 8) By fighting the leviathan, humans will begin to understand that "'Nothing on earth is his equal – a creature without fear. / He looks down on all that are haughty; / he is king over all that are proud.'" (41: 33-34) This natural being does not fear human strength; nothing will prevent the leviathan from defeating those who try to kill him. When the hunters feel pride from all of

their accomplishments, the leviathan lives on reminding people that there are mightier forces in nature than their own human will.

In the end of "Job," God appears to Job and tells him to brace himself "like a man." In one of the longest soliloquies of the Bible and possibly the longest speech given by God in both Hebrew and Christian scripture, God asks Job, "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? / Tell me if you understand. / Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!" (Job 38: 4-5) God not only challenges Job to stand up and face his hardships but also to consider the complexity of creation. Since neither Job nor humankind is capable of displaying or understanding such majestic power of creation how can Job ask God to take his life away, much less question God's justice? Job makes his peace with God and God restores all of his prior wealth. In addition, Job has more children and when he dies he has many sons and three daughters. Because he looks at both his sons and daughters as blessings from God, he includes his three daughters in his will. In ancient times, male family members typically inherit their father's wealth. Since Job left a portion of his riches to his daughters, he shows that he has come to appreciate all beings for their abilities and that both sons and daughters are gifts from God.

The God persona from "Job" recounts the connectivity and the infinite relationships that all non-human creatures have with the earth. DeVall and Sessions refer to "Job" as "a celebratory deep ecology, drawing from Scripture" (91). An example of God's speech is as follows:

> Do you know when the mountain goat gives birth?
>
> Do you watch when the doe bears her fawn?
>
> Do you count the months till they bear?
>
> They crouch down and bring forth their young;
>
> Their labor pains are ended.

Their young thrive and grow strong in the wilds;

They leave and do not return. (39: 1-4)

The author of "Job" tells the reader of all the complexities of the seasons of the year, the weather, the plants, and animals of the earth, and Job/humans need to realize they are but a part of this creation. Job's questioning God about justice raises the question, Is there order in the universe? The author of "Job" responds with a resounding *yes*. Since humans are part of God's creation, they are connected to the natural law as part of that same creation. Spinozan philosophy as spoken by Yakov Bok suggests that when humans realize they are a part of God's creation then they are "in the mind of God" (Malamud 77).

Like Job, Bok is angry with God and thus rejects his Jewish background. In doing this, he rejects all of Scripture and all Jewish covenantal history. While he is imprisoned on the trumped up charges of killing the Russian Christian boy, Bok has a lot of time to examine his life and his beliefs. He tells the authorities when they arrest him that he is a Jew only by nationality and not by religious practice. When the prison guards give him a New Testament to read, Bok identifies with Jesus on a personal level, reasoning that God was not able to save Jesus anymore than God would be able to save Bok from death in prison. Like Spinoza, Bok does not believe that God can step in and out of history to change the course of humankind. When his father-in law, Shmuel, visits him in prison Bok insists that the God of the Jews is a fairy tale. He tells Shmuel, "To win a lousy bet with the devil he killed off all the servants and innocent children of Job. For that alone I hate him, not to mention ten thousand pogroms. Ach, why do you make me talk fairy tales? Job is an invention and so is God. Let's let it go at that" (Malamud 258). Although Bok suffers terrible misfortune, in a spiritual sense he is not a job-like character. Job never says he hates God or does not believe in God. Yakov Bok does both. Bok denounces his

historic past as a Jew and tries to create a new reality for himself through the philosophy of Spinoza.

In *Impossible to Say*, Nisly writes, “Although Yakov admires Spinoza’s movement away from a traditional Jewish idea of God standing apart from nature and acting in history, he is unable to create a God through his reasoning as Spinoza did” (55). Job never questions the idea of God or denounces God because of his inflictions; Bok insists the idea of God is a fairy tale. Nisly evaluates the developments of Bok’s ideology as he languishes in prison. When his accusers tell him they will set him free if he blames other Jews for the death of the young boy, Bok refuses to do so claiming that they too are innocent of this boy’s life and blood. By accusing them, he would be causing more people to die and as a human being, he feels solidarity with other people. Nisly writes, “Yakov’s spiritual change is shown through his moral commitment to his community. No longer is Yakov thinking only of himself; he is able to move from being trapped in his own suffering to finding meaning as he suffers for someone else” (57). At this point *The Fixer* becomes a treatise to the Deep Ecology movement as expressed through Spinozan philosophy. Since everything is connected to everything else, Bok proclaims that he is connected to other people and through this solidarity to them, he wills himself to stay alive until he is brought to trial. Malamud writes, “He tells himself he mustn’t die. Why should I take from myself what they are destroying me to take? Why should I help them kill me? (273). Thus, Bok makes a covenantal promise with himself, “If God’s not a man he [Bok] has to be. Therefore he must endure to the trial and let them confirm his innocence by their lies. He has no future but to hold on, wait it out” (Malamud 274). As the fixer realizes his close connections to the Jewish population, he becomes more intense on saving his own life. The Russian Jews will bear no

repercussions from his actions and Bok can achieve some level of inner peace through this altruistic choice of action.

The Fixer represents the neo-pastoral novel in several ways. First, since the Russian government as controlled by Czar Nicholas II does not respect diversity in human beings, it disregards the rights of humankind. When fear of losing your life violently through war or a pogrom enters into a human's thought pattern, little else can be accomplished but focusing on saving your own life. War not only ruins people's lives but destroys non-human life as well. If a government truly cares about its constituency, those in leadership roles should consider both human and non-human rights. After Bok reads the New Testament while he languishes in prison, he asks one of his guards, "How can anyone love Christ and keep an innocent man suffering in prison?" (Malamud 233) The Russian government of this time was supposed to represent Catholicism with such standards as" love your neighbor as yourself," or "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Bok could see the falsity in the governance of the Czar's regime and wills himself to live long enough so he could show the citizens of Kiev that no government could coerce him to lie against his fellow Jews. When a government does not let its citizens develop themselves to their fullest potential, the world becomes a broken place for both humans and non-humans.

The second aspect of the neo-pastoral novel found in *The Fixer* involves Bok's search for meaning in his world. When he leaves his shtetl and ventures into Kiev, Bok's journey represents an inner need of both religious and philosophical completion. For Bok, life becomes impossible to live in the shtetl. He is not tied to the land; he has no sacred affiliations to those around him; his work is not a life force for him. By moving on, he thinks he will find new meaning in life both through work and education. He is a lonely individual with no spiritual or ecological

connections. In his book, *The Dream of the Earth*, Thomas Berry writes, "We cannot discover ourselves without first discovering the universe, the earth, the imperatives of our own being. Each of these has a creative power and a vision far beyond any rational thought or cultural creation of which we are capable"(195). Malamud's characterization of Bok requires the reader to view a lonely human being with no ties or connections to an ecosystem. His parents have been killed through the actions of a violent government; the Jews have no land under the current governing system in Russia; he has no children; his wife has left him; he is alone in Kiev. The primary cause of his loneliness is the corrupt and inhumane government and the effects of their brutality not only impede Bok's intellectual growth but his aesthetic and spiritual development, as well. Bok cannot know the earth or the universe because his attempt to find the knowledge is thwarted at every step on his journey. Malamud sums up Bok's despicable situation and laments:

> Where's reason? Where's justice? What does Spinoza say – that it's the purpose of the state to preserve a man's peace and security so he can do a day's work. To help him live out his few poor years, against circumstance, sickness, the frights of the universe . . . But the Russian State denies Yakov Bok the most elemental justice, and to show it's fear and contempt of humankind, has chained him to the wall like an animal. (Malamud 275)

The "frights of the universe" which in this situation depicts the evils of the Russian State deny Bok his ability to "discover himself" as Thomas Berry suggests. Bok's spiritual journey remains untraveled.

No discussion of Deep Ecology could be complete without a mention of Arne Naess. In "The Deep Ecology Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects," Naess lays out the eight points of his ecological platform. While all eight of them do not apply directly to this discussion, his seventh point coincides with the ideas of DeVall's and Sessions' concept of minority tradition as well as Spinoza's theory of individual self-government. Naess writes, "The ideological change

[of governments] will be mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between bigness and greatness" (68). To explicate this point, Naess explains, "Some economists criticize the term 'quality of life' because it is supposedly vague. But, on close inspection, what they consider to be vague is actually the nonquantifiable nature of the term. One cannot quantify adequately what is important for the quality of life as discussed her, and there is no need to do so" (70).

While analyzing *The Fixer* according to Deep Ecology, Bok never lived in a situation of "inherent value." Further, Bok was not valued by anyone in his community. His father-in-law, Shmuel, considers Bok primarily as a conversion challenge. Even though he continues to preach to Bok on the justice of God when he visits Bok in jail, Shmuel does not begin to understand the sufferings of Bok as a human being. Shmuel sees Bok as another Jew suffering for the sake of the nation of Judaism. Naess points out that one individual cannot define quality of life for another being, either human or non-human. Nor, as Malamud demonstrates in Shmuel's relationship with Bok, can one individual dictate what another individual should believe. As Spinoza suggests, all life forms aspire to achieve their "sovereign" being, as they were created by Nature's God to perform and to thrive. Naess accurately notes that "bigness" of government does not necessarily connote "greatness." A big governmental system does not guarantee quality of life to all people within its territory. Because everything is connected to everything else, as Malamud demonstrates in *The Fixer*, when a large government tries to ruin the life of one person, the hypocrisy of the situation prevents the entire community from developing to its fullest potential.

Who has made the decision that sets in motion these chains of poisonings, this ever-widening wave of death that spreads out like ripples when a pebble is dropped into a still pond?

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

I visited the canal area [Love Canal] at that time. Corroding waste-disposal drums could be seen breaking up through the grounds of the backyards.

Eckardt Beck, Environmental Protection Agency

Fire and explosion were not inherent dangers here. This death would penetrate, seep into the genes, show itself in bodies not yet born.

Don DeLillo, *White Noise*

CHAPTER 4

APOCALYPSE VISITED: TOXIC CONSCIOUSNESS IN DON DELILLO'S *WHITE NOISE*

Cynthia Deitering describes an "ontological transformation" that took place in the 1980's. She defines the transformation as a "toxic consciousness" because people began to view themselves in relationship to pollution and waste brought on by major toxic catastrophes. In "The Post Natural Novel: Toxic Consciousness in Fiction of the 1980s," Deitering suggests that at some point during the Reagan-Bush administrations "something happened, some boundary was crossed beyond which American's perceived themselves differently in their relation to the natural world and the ecosystems of the American empire" (197). Deitering continues:

> What happened, I believe, is that we came to perceive, perhaps inchoately, our own complicity in postindustrial ecosystems, both personal and national, which are predicated on pollution and waste. My premise is that during the 1980s we

> began to perceive ourselves as inhabitants of a culture defined by its waste, and that a number of American novels written during this period reflect this ontological transformation. (197)

Thus, in the late twentieth century because of people's accumulation of their own waste and the newly realized consequences of pollution, people's perception of their relationship to the earth was forever changed. The "ontological transformation" Deitering describes is far reaching. People began to see their relationship to the natural world as broken and wondered whether or not this connection could ever be contained or reversed. Where did this toxicity begin, and more importantly when and how will it end? In *White Noise* (1985) Don DeLillo addresses the situations that befall human beings when one part of an ecological equation dies.

Linda Lear mirrors the idea of ontological transformation by looking at human existence in the introduction of the 2002 edition of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), which, most students of ecology agree, launched the environmental movement. Lear writes: "Carson's writing initiated a transformation in the relationship between humans and the natural world and stirred an awakening of public environmental consciousness" (x). Looking back from the twenty-first century at this historic frame of history, some may find it difficult to understand the groundbreaking thesis Carson presents. Carson describes the production of synthetic substances by the United States for the purpose of chemical warfare during World War II. Many of these solutions have the capabilities of killing not only humans but also plants and insects as well. Because of the insecticidal properties of these chemicals, American industries continued with their production after the end of the war to help farmers grow better crops. With the ending of WW II, the government retained a surplus of airplanes that could be converted into crop dusting aircraft. Thus, the stage was set for the massive use of chemical pesticides.

The most widely used chemical, commonly known as DDT, was thought only to kill insects. Carson gathered enough scientific study on DDT to prove that this chemical crosses a penetrable boundary and enters the human body through absorption by the skin, or by a person's breathing in the vapors, or by eating plant or wildlife that has come into contact with the substance. In turn, the human body stores DDT in body organs and fat cells. "Once it has entered the body it is stored largely in organs rich in fatty substances . . . such as the adrenals, testes, or thyroid. Relatively large amounts are deposited in the liver, kidneys, and the fat of the large, protective mesenteries that enfold the intestines" (21). Other insecticides, such as heptachlor, dieldrin, aldrin, and endrin, all derivatives of DDT, are extremely toxic to plant, animal, and human life. Another group of toxins was produced by American industry at the same time. The alkyl phosphates "are the most poisonous chemicals in the world" (27). This same group of chemicals, also known as "nerve gas" was also developed and used by the Germans during WW II to exterminate the Jews during the Holocaust.

Aside from the vast scientific research Carson puts forth on the use of pesticides, *Silent Spring* also promotes many ideas in ecological doctrine, which at the time were revolutionary. Carson writes in scientific terms about cross contamination of insects, weeds, soil, and wildlife by the chemical toxins and sums up her hypothesis with, "Here again we are reminded that in nature nothing exists alone" (51). She describes in incredible detail the suffering these poisons inflict on wildlife. While dying of toxic poisoning birds continue to flap their wings and clutch the ground with their "toes." Squirrels found dead from the poison had dirt in their mouths, which suggests they had been biting the ground in pain. (99-100) Carson's identification with the suffering of non-human beings mirrors Virgil's Meliboeus who worries about his flocks and their suffering on his trek into the unknown. Moreover, Carson equates

chemical manufacturers who deny the facts presented to them about the overwhelming toxicity of DDT to biblical scripture. “Like the priest and the Levite in the biblical story, they choose to pass by on the other side and see nothing. Even if we charitably explain their denials as due to the short sighted specialist and the man with a [personal] interest this does not mean we must accept them as qualified witnesses” (86). Carson delves into the controversial question that continues to plague twenty-first century society: who has the right to decide that poisons can be released into the environment while residents of the biosphere are unaware of the harm being done to them until it is too late to react? Carson describes the woman who ran out to cover her back yard garden to prevent it from being dusted by a government issued spray of herbicide; the DDT soaked the woman in her own yard. Carson tells about a man who inadvertently put his hand into a chemical drum to fix a leaking hose and died two days later. “In each of these situations, one turns away to ponder the questions: Who has made the decision that sets in motion these chains of poisonings, this ever-widening wave of death that spreads out like ripples when a pebble is dropped into a still pond?” (127) Although this question continues to be discussed today, Carson’s words prefigure the ongoing debate between industrialists and environmentalists.

Rachel Carson pleads with her readers to listen when she asks, “Who has decided – who has the *right* to decide – for the countless legions of people who were not consulted that the supreme value is a world without insects, even though it be also a sterile world ungraced by the curving wing of a bird in flight?” (127) Like Spinoza, Carson acknowledges that all life, both human and non-human is a miracle “beyond our comprehension, and we should reverence it” (275). Today scientists know that no matter how much pesticide is applied, the insects will become resistant, the weeds will grow back, and the virus will form another strain. Nature will

always fight against human attack to control it. Nature, according to Carson, will continue to be "miraculously tough and resilient, and capable of striking back in unexpected ways" (297). Humankind needs to make a choice whether or not such a fight to control nature is ultimately worth the destruction of all life on the planet.

DeLillo's *White Noise* mirrors the environmental crises that took place in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) *Journal* of January 1978 documents an amazing environmental catastrophe known as The Love Canal Tragedy. In the early twentieth century, William T. Love, a land developer, wanted to dig a short canal between the upper and lower Niagara Rivers in New York state to generate power in what he hoped would be a model city. By 1910, due to economic reasons, Love abandoned his project and all that was left was a ditch where he had begun his canal. By 1920, the land was being used as an industrial chemical dumpsite and in 1953, the Hooker Chemical Company, which then owned the property, covered the landfill site with dirt and sold it to the city for one dollar. Eventually, about 100 homes were built on this property and life went on. Yet as Carson suggests in *Silent Spring* nature has many unexpected ways to fight back against poisoning. By August of 1978, an unusual amount of rain had fallen in this area. Eckardt Beck, an administrator who observed and recorded the Love Canal Tragedy for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recorded the following:

> I visited the canal area at that time. Corroding waste-disposal drums could be seen breaking up through the grounds of the backyards. Trees and gardens were turning black and dying. One entire swimming pool has been popped up from its foundation, afloat now on a small sea of chemicals. Puddles of noxious substances were pointed out to me by the residents. Some of these puddles were in their yards, some were in their basements, others yet were on the school grounds. Everywhere the air had a faint, choking smell. Children returned from play with burns on their hands and faces. And then there were the birth defects. (Beck)

By August 7, 1978, President Jimmy Carter declared the area a “disaster area” and approved emergency funding for the families to evacuate. A total of 221 families had moved and the state of New York began the process of purchasing the homes from the evacuees. A plan was set into motion to remove the chemicals from the Love Canal but, Beck writes, “It is a difficult procedure, and we are keeping our fingers crossed that it will yield some degree of success” (“Fact Sheet”). Rachel Carson would probably argue that “some degree of success” is negligible in a case like the Love Canal. Who has the right to dump chemical waste into the ground, to cover it up, and to sell the property to unsuspecting homebuyers? Who has the right to qualify what is “safe” when disposing chemical waste? Although the EPA has standards of safety, Beck describes what he calls a “missing link.” The missing link refers to the liability regarding accidents of chemical wastes. Beck asks the following questions in regard to chemical usage and accidents:

1. What are we as a people willing to spend to correct the situation?
2. How much risk are we willing to accept?
3. Who’s going to pick up the tab?

While Rachel Carson was not willing to accept the inappropriate use of chemicals to kill plants and non-human life, the EPA administrator Eckardt Beck poses the questions whether or not people are willing to accept risk in the use and disposal of chemicals. By asking these questions, Beck presupposes that Americans are willing to use *some* amounts of chemicals and to adopt a “wait and see” kind of attitude. He assumes that the Americans are willing to permit people to die over a given period of time and, if *enough* people die, then the risk was too vast. This missing link seems like a game of Russian roulette and as Carson suggests in *Silent Spring* when any amount of change occurs in a bioregion, the entire population, both human and non-

human, suffers. In the case of the Love Canal tragedy, the EPA documentation suggests that the American people are willing to remain silent and let portions of their environment be destroyed while standing by "to see what happens." This ideology fully demonstrates the ideology of the "toxic consciousness" of the 1980s.

In DeLillo's *White Noise*, the main character, Jack Gladney, is a professor of Hitler Studies at College-on-the-Hill in small town Blacksmith, USA. DeLillo never mentions the name of the state in which the novel takes place, merely the name of the college and the town. Because he does not identify the bioregion in which the action is set, he suggests that the chemical catastrophe described in the novel could take place anywhere in the United States. This approach makes the problem more universal and the reader avoids a political attachment or an historical reference to a region. Jack is married to Babette and they live with four of their children, all from previous marriages. Throughout the book, background noise remains a constant, assaulting both the characters in the novel and the readers as well. As the title *White Noise* suggests, sounds coming out of all types of technological equipment barrage the characters of the novel continually. When all of the individual sounds blur together, they can no longer be distinguished from one another, and hence become "white noise." Because so much noise occurs, the reader, like the novel's characters, eventually becomes indifferent to the plethora of sounds. Sometimes the noise occurs as part of the narrative, "The smoke alarm went off in the hallway upstairs, either to let us know the battery had just died or because the house was on fire. We finished our lunch in silence" (8). Although smoke detectors are installed in houses to detect a possible fire, this scene suggests many people just ignore the alarm if they are too involved in some other task of daily life. The alarm is merely noise.

Other times, the noise takes on a line by itself, interjected between lines of narrative. For example, during a compelling portion of the narrative, Gladney confesses that both he and Babette have a great fear of dying. Not only do they fear death, but also, they continue a constant dialogue of wondering which one will die first. One night, while Gladney waits for his wife to complete her workout at a local high school outdoor stadium, he becomes lost in thought about death. “Sometimes I think our love is inexperienced. The question of dying becomes a wise reminder. It cures us of our innocence of the future. Simple things are doomed, or is that a superstition?” (15) The next stand alone paragraph reads, “The Airport Marriott, the Downtown Travelodge, the Sheraton Inn and Conference Center” (15). Then, without any explanation, the narrative continues, “On the way home I said, ‘Bee wants to visit at Christmas’” (15). DeLillo inserts the list of hotel lodgings to create a disconnection from the flow of the narrative, an interruption of thought, much the same way any noise would disrupt a person’s thinking. The presentation of noise in the novel symbolizes the toxic consciousness, which Deitering describes as an attribute of America -- a “nation that has fouled its own nest” (202).

The novel’s major action occurs in the section “The Airborne Toxic Event.” Heinrich, the oldest child in the mixture of Jack’s and Babette’s children, tells his father what he has seen while standing on the window ledge of their house: “‘The radio said a tank car derailed. But I don’t think it derailed from what I could see. I think it got rammed and something punched a hole in it. There’s a lot of smoke and I don’t like the looks of it’” (110). DeLillo depicts the onset of the toxic event as a result of a train accident, tying it to the American metaphor and cultural symbol of “train” as put forth by Leo Marx in *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. Marx depicts Nathaniel Hawthorne’s 1844 outing in the Concord, Massachusetts’s woods to describe his impressions of nature. Hawthorne, as cited by

Marx, illustrates the pastoral setting of his surroundings: the beauty of the season, the thriving of the Indian corn, and the woods, which surround him. Marx portrays Hawthorne as " a man in almost perfect repose" (12). Yet, without warning, a train's whistle blasts through Hawthorne's moment of quiet relaxation. The distinguishable "noise" interrupts Hawthorne's sojourn into the woods of Sleepy Hollow and he reacts as following:

> But, hark! There is the whistle of the locomotive – the long shriek, harsh, above all other harshness, for the space of a mile cannot mollify it into harmony. It tells a story of busy men, citizens, from the hot street, who have come to spend a day in a country village, men of business; in short of all unquietness; and no wonder that it gives such a startling shriek, since it brings the noisy world into the midst of our slumberous peace. As our thoughts repose again, after this interruption, we find ourselves gazing up at the leaves, and comparing their different aspect, the beautiful diversity of green. (13-14)

Hawthorne does not condemn the interruption of his thoughts by the noise of the train or even the fact that the train brings a crowd of strangers into his environment to trample his solitude. By adjusting so quickly to the interruption as he immediately falls back into his reverie, Hawthorne shows that he does not besmirch the idea of the train as an invasion of his solace and does not foresee a time when the train will become a negative cultural symbol for the American industrial revolution.

Henry David Thoreau writes of the train in several sections of his 1854 book, *Walden*. In chapter 4, "Sounds," Thoreau writes, "The Fitchburg Railroad touches the pond about a hundred rods south of where I dwell. I usually go to the village along its causeway, and am, as it were, related to society by this link" (56). When the measurement of a "rod" is converted into modern measure, Thoreau lived about 3.1 miles from where the railroad passed his property. He used the tracks as a kind of lifeline to make his way into Concord for supplies. He describes the whistle of the train "sounding like the scream of a hawk sailing over some

farmer's yard, informing me that many restless city merchants are arriving within the circle of the town, or adventurous country traders from the other side" (56-57). Thoreau uses the simile "like a hawk" which assigns a bird-like quality to the train and thus pastorally, the train fits into the scene. He also describes the steam coming out of the train engine "like a banner streaming behind in golden and silver wreaths, like many a drowsy cloud I have seen, high in the heavens, unfolding its masses to the light" (57). Here, the train engine's steam takes on a cloud-like beauty as the sunlight turns the vapor into gold and silver hues. Again, the train does not seem like a misfit in the pastoral setting of Walden Pond. He praises the rail workers for their continuous efforts of keeping the tracks clear of snow and other debris so the train can enter the city on time to bring goods to the consumers of Concord. To Thoreau this type of commerce is "confident and serene, alert, adventurous, and unwearied. It is very natural in its methods, withal, far more so than many fantastic enterprises and sentimental experiments, and hence its singular success" (58). Thoreau seems to praise the train and the hard work that it takes to keep the train moving in and out of the city on scheduled intervals.

Thoreau is fascinated with the industry and methods of the invention of the train. He admits, "I am refreshed and expanded when the freight train rattles past me, and I smell the stores which go dispensing their odors all the way from Long Wharf to Lake Champlain" (58). To Thoreau, the train exhibits factors associated with sensory experience. He *hears* the whistle of the train on a set schedule of his day reminding him of the cry of a hawk; he *smells* new fragrances the train brings to his locale; he likes the *sight* of the workmen "covered with snow and rime;" he likes to walk on the tracks to and from the city (*touch*); and, as he discusses the salted fish which, if "be put in a pot and boiled, will come out an excellent dun-fish for Saturday's dinner" (59) he seems ready to partake in a good meal (*taste*). Like Hawthorne,

Thoreau seems comfortable with the idea of the "iron horse" entering his pastoral place of respite.

According to Marx, American pastoral can be separated into two distinct groups, one of which is the popular, sentimental trope where people long for a "withdrawal from society to an idealized landscape" (Marx 10). "Withdrawal from society" is not what Hawthorne and Thoreau suggest in their writings. The train is merely an "interruption" of Hawthorne's thought process and Thoreau is fascinated with the "idea" of the train. The cultural symbol of the train in these two American pastoral examples represents a "shaping" of a more complex American pastoral. In the second kind of pastoral, the "imaginative and complex," Marx argues that it is quite difficult to "locate the point of divergence between these two modes of consciousness" but the writings of Thoreau and Hawthorne suggest an entry point of the pastoral changing from sentimental nostalgia to one of complex imagination. The "machine" or the train is not in opposition to the "tranquility and order located in the landscape" (18). The machine both supports and conforms to the order of nature. The machine/train is merely "a variation upon the contrast between two worlds, one identifies with rural peace and simplicity, the other with urban power and sophistication" (19). Moreover, the machine connects the two worlds, rural and urban, and allows people to "visit" another world for a few hours, merely to explore, not to escape. This idea is the starting point of "the machine in the garden, " a brief interruption of reverie.

By 1985, when DeLillo wrote *White Noise*, America defines itself by its toxic waste (Deitering 202). The machine has changed from a mere "interruption" to an "ontological rupture" (Deitering 197). When Heinrich describes the toxic accident, he states that a train car may have derailed. Then he says the train car got "rammed" and "something punched a hole in it." This symbol of a train car with a hole in it, leaking out poisonous gas, takes the cultural

symbol of train to another level. The machines that fascinated Thoreau through sensory perception are now polluting the rural environment of Blacksmith, USA. Blacksmith becomes the new Concord and as the black mass enters the consciousness of the residents of the city, it also infiltrates their bodies. This invasion is not a little interruption of sound or thought. This is a life-changing situation for the Gladney family as they are forced to evacuate their home and spend ten nights in evacuation facilities. As DeLillo writes about the explosion he echoes the words of Rachel Carson, “Fire and explosion were not inherent dangers here. This death would penetrate, seep into the genes, show itself in bodies not yet born” (116).

This fictional event mirrors a real accident that happened at Three Mile Island Unit 2 (TMI-2), on March 28, 1979. The TMI nuclear power plant located in Middletown, Pennsylvania, experienced a failure in the secondary, non-nuclear section of the plant (“Fact Sheet”). This caused the nuclear section of the plant to undergo an increase in pressure and a valve located at the top of the nuclear pressurizer opened. Although the valve should have closed when the pressure decreased, in this case, the controls malfunctioned and the valve remained open. Cooling water escaped out of the stuck valve and the core reactor overheated. Because adequate cooling was not present in the reactor, the nuclear fuel overheated to the point where the tubes that contained the nuclear fuel pellets ruptured and began to melt.

About one half of the core melted during this accident. Fortunately, the melting of the fuel was controlled and the walls of the containment building were not breached but the concern about small releases of radioactive gas became a potential threat to the surrounding population of Middletown. Government response teams were notified immediately and TMI’s owner, General Public Utilities Nuclear, hired helicopters to sample the atmosphere. The governor of Pennsylvania and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission chairperson advised “members of society

most vulnerable to radiation" to evacuate the area ("Fact Sheet"). Within a short time, a large hydrogen bubble formed in the nuclear reactor, and experts worried that the bubble might burst, rupture the core, and breach the containment walls. Four days later, the crisis ended when the workers finally reduced the size of the bubble and closed the release valve.

The disaster at Three Mile Island caused the worst kind of threat from nuclear meltdown ever imaginable to humankind. When thinking about the possibilities nuclear energy could bring, people's imaginations return to this incident and the possibility of total annihilation of the planet becomes a reality, not just a scenario. In the March 15, 2009, edition of *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* the article "Nuclear Waste: Where to Now?" cites recent developments in the development of nuclear power in the southern United States. "Thousands of tons of highly radio-active waste are sitting in enclosed pools and concrete casks in Georgia, waiting for a final resting place" (Newkirk). The Obama administration cut funding for a federal waste depository under Yucca Mountain in Nevada. "For now, the waste can stay safely stored at the plants that create it, a spokeswoman Amoi Geter said: 'Southern Nuclear has safe, reliable on-site options to store the used fuel at all of our nuclear plants'" (Newkirk). The Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI), an industry trade group, concurs with this assessment: "'We can safely store it for a century plus more,' NEI spokesman Mitchell said" (Newkirk). In 1982, Congress made the federal government responsible for the disposal of all of the radioactive spent fuel rods that nuclear power production generates. Their idea was to drill tunnels under Yucca Mountain where the fuel rods could be stored for thousands of years. When this action was blocked by litigation in 1998, eight nuclear facilities across the Unites States brokered a deal with a Utah Indian tribe for "private interim storage of spent fuel" (Newkirk). However, the negotiations fell through in 2005. Currently, dozens of new nuclear power sites are on the drawing board nationwide,

including some sponsored by Georgia Power. As the building of these new plants is underway, no one is addressing the problem of waste containment other than that of on site property storage. Eckardt Beck began the discussion of how the United States was going to pay for the clean up of the Love Canal tragedy. Now, the discussion continues with the nuclear waste disposal problem. The National Association of Utility Regulators reports that in the southern US, Georgia Power customers have paid $678.9 million for a permanent solution to nuclear waste disposal. Yet, to date, no solutions have been forthcoming. Again, as Beck queried in the events that followed the tragedy at Love Canal, New York, how much risk is the American public prepared to take? The answer remains that the disposal of spent nuclear fuel under Yucca Mountain has many risks. When Rachel Carson describes how Mother Nature will ultimately fight against people depositing chemicals in the earth, she could probably imagine a scenario of an earthquake rupturing the nuclear storage casks under Yucca Mountain and the fuel leaking into the water system. The toxic consciousness issues of the 1980s continue in the debate over nuclear waste disposal.

Along with the idea of nuclear accidents co-exists the idea of the total annihilation of the planet in what both theological ecologists and environmentalists call an *apocalypse*. To understand the impetus this word conveys to human imagination a look at what scriptural analysis brings to the term becomes necessary. In both Jewish and Christian tradition, a supreme being created the world: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). In both mainstream traditions God and nature are connected by and through this creative act. Thus, the earth and both human and non-human beings have a “beginning” point in creation. By suggesting that historical time has a *beginning* moment, human imagination also envisions that the earth could also have an *ending* point. Scripture often suggests this ending point will occur

because of human inability to follow God's commands of caring for one another. When things become so horrible in human relationships and people no longer connect to God through their fellow human beings, this same God will bring an end to the earth. Literally, the word *apocalypse* means to "uncover or to reveal." Biblical apocalyptic literature appears in several books of scripture: Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Micah, and Malachi in the Hebrew canon and in the book of Revelation in the Christian canon. In these scriptures, a description of the end of time is revealed. These scriptures all have one major commonality: scriptural canonic laws tell people how to morally relate to the earth and to other human beings. When these laws are broken, when people become immoral, their connection to God will be severed and the creator will destroy the earth.

Lawrence Buell looks at the idea of apocalyptic implications in American history in *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture.* Buell argues that American apocalyptical tradition has its roots in two major developments during the seventeenth century. The first ideas to impact apocalyptical ideologies were the Copernican and Newtonian "revolutions on Christian cosmology, threatening the belief that the world must end in a divinely ordained catastrophe" (296). The second apocalyptical idea begins in the roots of American Puritanism, which held the belief that God ordained the New World, America, and that an apocalyptic ending for society rested on the relationship between the sociopolitical environment of the age, and its relationship to God's will. This sociopolitical idea re-emerged during the Civil War when American Protestants believed the dissolution of the American union would end in apocalyptic catastrophe. Buell also argues that Enlightenment theory undermines the "credibility of Christian sacred history" (299). Along with this idea of a

diminished sacred history follows the idea that the end of the world becomes a secular issue based on humankind's inability to preserve peace with nature.

The issue of a secular apocalypse has become more prevalent in the aftermath of not only World War II but also since the onset of the idea of "toxic consciousness." Secular apocalypticism is demonstrated in Rachel Carson's work, in the Love Canal tragedy, and in the Three Mile Island nuclear plant malfunction. No longer is a supreme creator necessary to destroy the earth because of the consequences of immorality. People now have the ability to destroy single bioregions through chemical pollutants, or to destroy the entire ecosystem of earth through nuclear fallout. When Buell discusses the "pastoral logic that undergirds environmental apocalypse" he refers to a time and place in historic past "when humankind was not at war with nature in the way that prevails now" (300-01). Buell suggests the idea of an ecocatastrophe is currently present in all forms of American art: fiction, film, sculptures, painting, dance, etc., in "unprecedented, mind-haunting ways" (308).

Even though the secular, or manmade apocalypse deletes a divine creator as its cause, in *White Noise* Jack Gladney observes the toxic cloud above him with a sense of awe. People have always linked unexplainable natural events as acts created by forces outside of human control and assign a supernatural reason for their occurrence. Things that cannot be explained by science are sometimes explained through people's belief in extra natural powers. As Jack evacuates his home, gathers the family in his car, and flees to public shelter, he watches the cloud as he drives. Because Jack cannot control or explain the toxic cloud, he describes his feelings in a way that equates this inability to a religious experience. "Our fear was accompanied by a sense of awe that bordered on the religious. It is surely possible to be awed by a thing that threatens your life, to see a cosmic force, so much larger than yourself, more powerful, created by elemental and

willful rhythms" (127). DeLillo uses the word "awe" twice in describing Jack's emotion. When a person experiences awe, he or she feels a mixture of sensations that include reverence, dread, amazement, and powerlessness. In viewing the poisonous, inexplicable cloud, Jack feels an intrinsic connection to natural, seasonal, cosmic rhythms. He feels amazement by his own lack of knowledge to explain the airborne toxic event and witnesses it "as some seasonal perversity of the earth like a flood or tornado, something not subject to control" (127). This very idea of the awe that Jack experiences adds another dimension to the idea of apocalyptic experience. Since people have created the toxic cloud, now people can stand in awe of their own disastrous creations. The machine in the garden as experienced by Hawthorne and Thoreau as a brief, annoying interruption of thought becomes the bearer of an ecocrisis beyond human capacity to control or define. People can now create disaster so magnificent that it awes their imaginative abilities. These inventions do not continue the creation process that exists in the natural world but destroy the very substance of life on earth.

The toxic cloud not only covers the bioregion with pollutants but permeates into Jack's body, which, he later learns, may shorten his life expectancy. Jack inadvertently exposes himself to the pollutants when he stops during the family's forced evacuation to fill the car with gas. When Jack arrives at the shelter, he gives a brief medical history to an attendant who enters the information into a computer. After several minutes, the attendant tells Jack that his computer cannot give him any real information and that Jack needs to see his doctor. With this scant information, Jack becomes obsessed with dying from toxic poisoning. As soon as possible, he goes to his physician, Dr. Sundar Chakravarty. After several appointments, Chakravarty refers Jack to Autumn Harvest Farms to have a more thorough examination. The doctor's name presents an interesting pun on the idea of healing through the ancient Hindu practice of opening

the body's system of chakras. The word *chakra* is a Sanskrit word that means "wheel of light." In ancient Hindu writings, the seven chakras are described as spinning wheels of light that are contained in the body of every living person; minerals and crystals contain one chakra; and animals have up to three chakras. The laws of physics teach that sound raised to a higher vibration becomes color. Each of the seven chakras of the body has an individual color to represent the base sound. When a person works on opening his or her chakras, the base, or seed sound either chanted or heard by the person, helps to conduct a flow of energy to the specific chakra. Each chakra has an exact location in the human body that connects the internal energy of a particular system within the body to the energy field outside of the body know as an *aura* ("Brief History of the Chakra System").

The chakra system of healing maintains that all life is energetic and spiritual and that human beings are inseparable from the energy of the earth. Each chakra, or center of energy, links to an element of the earth. For example, the Root Chakra connects people to the actual ground or soil of the earth. This chakra, red in color and located at the base of the spine, sends energy to the hips, legs, and feet; its sound is the musical note C. The Sacral Chakra, located near the sacrum, is orange in color and connects people to the element of water; its sound is the musical note E. The remaining five chakras continue up the spine towards the center of the body and include the Solar Plexus Chakra, colored yellow, which links people to the element of fire; the Heart Chakra, colored green, links people to air; the Throat Chakra, colored turquoise, links people to all electro-magnetic forces in the atmosphere; the Brow Chakra, indigo, links people to the outer cosmos; and the Crown Chakra, violet, links people to all universal life. Each chakra connects a person to an element of nature, but also controls the inner bodily functions as well as life issues, quality of life, and spiritual well being (Wauters). To attain physical health through

chakra healing, a person must study each chakra and determine what colors, sounds, fragrances, myths, earthly locations, plants, and astrological locations will stimulate the chakra in order for it to remain open and spinning. If all chakras are fully functioning, a person will be in the highest state of physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

Neither the attendant at the evacuee center nor Dr. Chakravarty give Jack any useful advice. They merely scare him into thinking that his death by toxic poisoning is imminent. When he seeks the advice of the specialists at the Autumn Harvest Farms, they merely explain to him that they will take body samples and give them to Jack for Dr. Chakravarty to analyze. Thus, Jack experiences even more anxiety about not only his death but about the type of death he will undergo. When leaving the center, Jack reflects on the amount of "bodily emissions" he carries with him in both specimen bottles and plastic bags.

> Alone in the glove compartment rode an ominous plastic locket, which I'd reverently enclosed in three interlocking Baggies, successively twist tied. Here was a daub of the most solemn waste of all, certain to be looked upon by technicians on duty with mingled deference, awe and dread we have come to associate with exotic religions of the world. (275)

Again, Jack compares the unknowns of science to a spiritual realm. He "reverently" encloses his own body secretion into "interlocking" plastic bags as if to suggest a labyrinth of sacredness the technicians will feel when opening the package. Also, he describes the specimen as "solemn" which evokes an attitude of ceremony associated with religious celebration. The word "awe" enters his thoughts again; he combines the word with "exotic religions" as if the lab technicians will feel an awakening of sensations as they examine the ejected material from Jack's body.

Rather than look for answers to his health and anxiety issues through his own inner ideas of spirituality, Jack refers to the doctors in his community, who continue to tell him

the results of his tests are inconclusive. He cannot feel any intrinsic strength from his own system of beliefs. The idea of the chakras, as suggested by his doctor's name, relates the idea that other "exotic religions" have developed alternate sources of healing that are not associated with going to an outside, scientific source. With this pun as well as the use of the "noise" in the title, DeLillo seems to suggest that the scientific method may not have the answers for Jack. Since the laws of physics hold that a high frequency of sound produces color, Jack never experiences any colorful, meaningful sounds. Every noise that Jack hears is white noise. When Jack goes to the doctor, Chakravarty enters all of Jack's medical information and major life events into a computer database. Jack believes that the use of this technology will help the doctors to determine the outcome of his toxic exposure. Yet, the opposite happens; the doctors have only more *information* about Jack and his bodily functions and still cannot advise Jack on any course of action.

DeLillo suggests that too much scientific knowledge actually diverts the route that Jack should follow. In the age of computer technology, anything that can be stored in a database is considered to be readable, knowable information, or knowledge. Yet oftentimes, more information does not improve the state of affairs; more information merely adds to the confusion of the situation. To Jack, the prognosis of his medical problems is not knowledge; it is merely noise. In this instance, noise can be defined as meaningless information or non-knowledge. Since Jack has no inner strength or spirituality, the doctor's words harken to static-filled, indiscernible meaning. Nothing is determined or solved. The doctor's voices are only more "white noise" in Jack's life.

Like Jack, his wife, Babette, fears dying. When Babette finds out about an experimental drug called Dylar that will erase her fear of dying, she goes to a run-down motel

and has sexual relations with Willie Mink, the man who sells the drug. Mink will sell her Dylar only in exchange for sex. At home, Babette sneaks taking the drug but eventually her children find the bottles around the house and report their findings to Jack. At one point, Jack sees Babette taking a pill; she lies and says she is chewing on a Lifesaver. Eventually, Babette confesses the entire situation to Jack. Babette's infidelity coupled with the fact of her taking a drug that has had no long-term studies sends him over the edge of sanity. One night, Jack takes his handgun and goes to the motel court where Babette tells him she met with Mink to get the Dylar. Mink personifies the idea of white noise. He incoherently babbles to Jack about nothing. He cannot even answer a direct question. When Jack shoots him, Jack immediately feels his own human remorse for his deed. So he loads Mink in the car and rushes to the nearest emergency room he can find. Jack tells, "We came to a place with a neon cross over the entrance" (315). The cross connotes that a religious sect, who Jack soon learns is a group of German speaking Catholic nuns, maintains the clinic.

While Jack sits in the waiting room he notices a picture of Pope John XXIII shaking hands with President John F. Kennedy within a heavenly background, surrounded by clouds. Since both men are deceased, Jack perceives the ideology the painting suggests is that the pope and the president are meeting in heaven, experiencing life after death. When a nun appears to tell him Mink's prognosis, Jack tells her how comforted he feels to be in the hands of women of God. Jack looks at the nun in an adoring manner and asks her, "'What does the Church say about heaven today? Is it still the old heaven, like that, in the sky?'" (317) He dreamily regards the picture as the nun responds, "'Do you think we're stupid?'" (317). She goes on to lecture Jack saying he has a "head so dumb;" the nuns are at the clinic to take care of the sick and wounded, that is all. Jack continues pressing his questions on the old nun, questions concerning the

Catholic belief of heaven and hell, the infallibility of the Pope, that God created the world in six days, and that hell is filled with burning lakes and winged demons. The nun looks at him sternly and retorts, "'You would come in bleeding from the street and tell me six days it took to make a universe?'" (318) Jack is now so frustrated with this conversation he almost starts shouting at the nun. She senses his frustration and screams at him: "'Why not armies that would fight in the sky at the end of the world?'" (318) Here, the nun refers to the New Testament book of Revelation, the only book of the Christian New Testament devoted entirely to revealing and foretelling the events Christians believe will occur at the ending point of creation.

Biblical scholars suggest that Revelation was written during a time of Roman persecution of the early Christians. The book's purpose was to give hope to the early Christian churches in the face of this advancing threat. Using deeply obscure symbolism, the book describes a struggle between good and evil. People who were living by a code of morality would continue to be threatened and harmed by people of the world who professed evil. No human forces of good are able to overcome those purporting evil deeds. John, the writer of the book, foretells that God, the creator of the earth and the natural world, would cause natural phenomenon to occur to bring the people of the world to their knees. These events include celestial bodies falling from the sky, fires, erupting volcanoes, and people running around in confusion.

> I [John] looked when He [the Lamb] opened the sixth seal, and behold there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops it late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the world, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the Face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! (Rev 6:12-17)

After a time of even more earthly disasters, a great battle will be fought at a place called Armageddon. This battle will be the decisive battle between good and evil. The nun in *White Noise* wearing the habit of Catholic belief, the rosary beads hanging from her waist, scoffs at the idea of the world ending and this great battle being fought. Jack, who does not profess a belief in any religion, and who looks at man-made disasters with awe and wonder, cannot accept that these Catholic nuns do not believe in Christian scriptural prophesies either. The nun tells him that their sole purpose in life is to attend to the emergencies of the sick and dying in the slums. They only pretend to believe. The nun tells Jack, "'It is our task in the world to believe things no one else takes seriously. To abandon such belief completely, the human race would die'" (318).

The theological ideology contained in this passage suggests that the nuns consider the spiritual ideas connected to formal religion are dead. They profess that no one really believes that God lives in a heaven up in the sky or that the world was created in six days or that the earth will end through an act of God. However, people must have their myths to lean on, to shore them up against hard times and the Bible is the place to find these myths. While Jack has not had any formal religion in his life, he still believes that "it" still exists somewhere in the world. Now, after his conversation with the Catholic nun, he suffers an extreme sense of loss. If *they* do not believe in scriptural truth, than who does believe? Moreover, if no one believes, then will he have to listen to his own ideas and establish his own beliefs? The idea of having to create his own truth becomes an overwhelming concept for Jack. Somewhere in the toxic consciousness of the 1980s, Jack Gladney will have to block out the accumulation of all the empty voices and sounds, the white noise of his existence, and connect to his inner-self by listening to his own knowledge.

Europeans were like their first parents, Adam and Eve, wandering aimlessly because the insane God who had sired them had abandoned them.

Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*

Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny – that is, by religion.

Lynn White, Jr., "Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis"

Parts of speech are metaphors because the whole of nature is a metaphor for the human mind.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*

CHAPTER 5

RE-WEAVING MASTER METAPHORS IN LESLIE MARMON SILKO'S *ALMANAC OF THE DEAD*

In *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), Leslie Marmon Silko describes a world knit together by origin myths. Although Silko delves into origin narratives of people from many different races, she nonetheless links common belief systems about earth and its sacredness by weaving the threads of the myths together in a manner that cannot be untangled. There are no main characters in the novel yet there are main spiritual ideologies that take over the narrative. Each of the groups of people she describes has its own almanacs, manuscripts, and written histories that substantiate its past and gives it connections to the earth in present time. The manuscripts represent histories of cultures outside the United States, from points of view that stand in direct opposition to Judeo-Christian canon. The metaphors Silko uses in her representation of the beliefs of the characters in *Almanac* are different voices and histories of

those represented through the canonical voices of American literary traditions. Native American origin stories differ from Euro-American ideas of historical time. The master metaphors from each become a powerful way to contrast ideas, which represents the people whose stories it tells. Metaphors can define a culture. In an oral storytelling tradition such as Silko's, metaphors act as cornerstones to the timeless stories that are told. An entire tribal memory can be recreated by the mention of just one metaphor. Thus, master metaphors help people retain and return to their basic belief systems and origins even without a complete written history. Myth and legend revolve around the use of metaphors, and in *Almanac* Silko forces the readers to reexamine their use.

As Silko shows different oral, literary, and scriptural belief systems in *Almanac*, her ideology mirrors the American transcendentalist theory of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Merton M. Sealts, Jr. and Alfred R. Ferguson refer to Emerson's *Nature* by discussing, "how wide the divergence has been over how to read such a work—whether as doctrine or mysticism, philosophy or poetry" (In *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* 1106). This same statement can be applied to Silko's *Almanac*. When Emerson wrote *Nature* (1836), one of his main objectives was to establish new metaphors for history, religion, and criticism. He states, "The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes" (1106). Emerson argues that people cannot forever sustain themselves religiously through scriptural canon that was revealed to humankind thousands of years ago. People must search out their own philosophy, their own canon. Emerson strives to establish, or re-establish, an original human relationship to both nature and religion. "Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs?" (1106-07). He continues, "Why

should we grope among dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? The sun shines today also" (1107). In *Almanac* Silko uses philosophy and mysticism, religion and poetry to create a base from which its readers can look at master metaphors that shape present identities and separate them from the "faded wardrobes" of age-old philosophies.

Lawrence Buell discusses the idea of master metaphors in *The Environmental Imagination*. "In western culture, the order of nature has been variously imagined as, for example, an economy, (from the Greek *oikos*, household), a chain or scale of being, a balance, a web, an organism, a mind, a flux, a machine" (280). Buell argues that the meaning of these master metaphors goes back centuries and sometimes even millennia. "We cannot begin to talk or even think about the nature of nature without resorting to them, whether or not we believe they are true; and our choice of metaphors can have major consequence" (281). "The nature of nature" as suggested by Buell includes a sense of place that cannot be described without referring to these master metaphors. Because of human modification of nature and place, ideas are in a constant state of change. To take a master metaphor as a "central point of reference" (281) is to risk "perpetuating an old-fashioned picture" (281) of both nature and humanity.

> Even though we may recognize great differences in place-sense according to whether we live as indigenes or settlers, and even though those differences obviously point to a pattern of human destabilization of the environment that modernization has intensified, the persistence of *some* sort of place-sense as an inevitable aspect of human experience can convey a lulling impression of physical environment as eternal constant and the natural order of balance. (281)

To an extent, Buell and Emerson profess the same doctrine. Why should people who live centuries, perhaps even millennia, after a master metaphor has been established continue to let the metaphor have power over their perception of nature, place, religion, and spirituality?

As Emerson suggests each person must establish his or her relationship to the universe regardless of what metaphors are in place that prohibit or encourage certain beliefs. Buell accepts that both indigenes and settlers are experiencing a breakdown of master metaphors and thus are experiencing a destabilization within their natural environments. Moreover, modernization through technology has opened lines of communications so that both indigenes and settlers can have knowledge of the stories and histories of one another. Silko establishes the breakdown of master metaphors on both sides of the border of which she writes. She creates a setting in which Native Americans criticize the Eurocentric cultures that have subdued their voices for centuries. In *Almanac*, Silko breaks through the barriers of master metaphor to realign spirituality and history. Because she aligns her narrative voice with that of the indigenous American, she breaks down Eurocentric metaphors, which cannot be reestablished within the context of this novel.

When Silko writes *Almanac of the Dead* she establishes myth, religion, and textuality through ideologies very diverse from the American literary canon. In doing so, Silko forces American readers revise their perception of their own culture, spirituality, and ideas of nature. Since Silko comes from a Native American background, her characters grow out of and are informed by her indigenous beliefs. Most characters in *Almanac* refer to white Americans as "Europeans" who are orphans living in a land where they do not belong. By using the master metaphors of *memory, time, blood, woman*, and *ecology* in ways to portray her spirituality and her connections to nature, Silko forces the reader to compare American canon with indigenous Native American canon to perhaps redefine or reorganize Eurocentric origin beliefs. The story line of the novel is relatively flat. None of the characters takes over the plot to become the main focus of the novel. There is no hero or heroine, no climax, no denouement. Yet all of the characters are entangled in the master metaphors. The involvement of the characters through

chance meetings is what causes the novel's action to progress. As the novel unfolds, the American literary and spiritual canon is seen as the "other" as Silko creates her own system of theology, religion, and history.

The singular event that sets the interconnections of the characters into play is the reappearance of the Great Snake at the Pueblo on Laguna tribal land north of Tucson, Arizona. The character around whom this event evolves is Sterling, a 59-year-old Laguna native. Sterling had recently returned from many years of working as a laborer for the railroad, and was summarily appointed by the Tribal Council to be the tribal film commissioner. A group of Hollywood filmmakers had asked permission from the tribe to make a film on tribal land and Sterling's job was to keep them away from the sacred places on the reservation. Somehow, the members of the crew found out that a "giant stone snake" had recently "appeared" near the tailings of an old uranium mine. According to the novel's setting, in 1949 the United States went into the Laguna Pueblo and mined the uranium for the Cold War effort. Even though the tribal elders were against the action, the government paid them a great deal to extract the mineral from their land. "They became the first of the Pueblo to realize wealth from something terrible done to the earth" (34). Years later, after the uranium mine was closed, the giant snake appeared in an outcropping of sandstone. The old women of the tribe remembered an ancient legend that one night, many years ago, members of a jealous tribe smashed open the lake that had given the Laguna tribe its name. When the lake had been stolen, the water snake that had always lived there loving and caring for the tribe went away and had not been seen since this recent reappearance at the closed uranium mine.

When the Hollywood film crews heard about the stone snake, they rushed to the site to film it. This was a sacrilege to the Laguna people and it had been Sterling's duty to keep

the film crews away from this sacred place. Moreover, the crews were using vast amounts of cocaine while filming this production and the local police received a tip that the cocaine was delivered in film canisters every day to the Laguna reservation. The scandal was horrendous. Members of the crews were arrested and the media swarmed all over the sacred property so they could make a news story out of the drug busts. As a result, Sterling was ousted by the Tribal Council for not living up to his duties as film commissioner and for not keeping the sacred places on the reservation unmolested by outsiders. When he leaves the reservation, he finds a job working as a gardener in a drug smuggler's compound. Thus, the action of the novel begins spinning around Sterling's exile from the Laguna Pueblo ands sets the entanglement of the novel's characters into motion.

The Laguna tribe revered the snake as a protector and love-giver. When the snake disappeared from their land, they blamed any harm that came to them on the fact that the snake was no longer in their presence to protect and love them. This idea of the snake as love and protection is quite different from the Judeo-Christian concept of the snake. In Genesis the snake is capable of speech and carries on a conversation with Eve, the first woman created by God. In the text of Genesis, the snake is not called the devil or Satan; he is merely a creature created by God that speaks to Eve. Also, God did not directly tell Eve not to eat the fruit of the tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden; he told Adam. The reader must assume that Adam relayed the information to Eve. The snake begins his conversation with Eve by asking her, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"' (Gen 3:1). When Eve explains to the snake that God said they were not to eat of one particular tree or even touch it or they will die, the snake replies to Eve, "'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'" (Gen 3:5). When Eve

approaches the tree she sees that the fruit is edible, and a "tree desirable to make one wise." She eats a piece of fruit from the tree and then gives Adam the fruit to eat, as well. When they hear the sound of God's footsteps as he walks in the garden in the cool of the day, they hide from God. When God asks why they are hiding, Adam answers and says he did not want God to look at them because they are naked. Adam then tells God the woman told him to eat the fruit from the tree; then Eve says that the snake told her to eat from the tree. Then God tells the snake that it will be cursed more than cattle or every beast of the field and that God will put "enmity / Between you and the woman, / Between your seed and her Seed; / He shall bruise your head, / And you shall bruise His heel'" (Gen. 3:15).

Clearly, this origin story gives an entirely different representation of the snake than that depicted through the legends of the Laguna tribe. For Eurocentric American Christians and Jews the snake began the avalanche of evil that began with Adam and Eve and continues to today. Because of this sin, Christians still believe that humans are inherently evil and are born with "original sin" that must be cleansed away through the sacrament of baptism. Even though the fruit of the tree can take on all types of metaphoric values, the end result of this story in Genesis is that Eve had a conversation with a snake that talked her into doing something she knew was forbidden. The "seed" in God's curse refers to the descendants of Eve, who is the mother of all persons; the word "Seed," spelled with an upper case *S*, designates the first Judaic perception of the messianic vision. The messiah will bruise the head of the snake, and the snake will bite the heel of the messiah. This metaphor creates a type of circle, with the foot of the messiah touching the snake's head and the snake circling around to touch the heel of the man. In this sense of the myth, the snake and the man represent the cycle of life and death, or the beginning and ending of life on earth. In the frame of the pre-lapsed Garden, i.e., before the sin, man and woman were

promised full happiness and only light work. “Then the Lord God took man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend it and keep it” (Gen. 2:15).

After their transgression, now they would have to work extremely hard to bring forth food, shelter, and clothing products from the earth. Because of Eve’s giving in to the temptation posed by the snake, God cursed the ground he created and told Adam that even though he would toil as hard as possible the earth would still only “bring forth thorns and thistles” (Gen 3:18). What motivated the snake to tempt Eve or why the writer of the text chose a snake as a metaphor for temptation is purely speculation. The point is that God created the earth for man and woman to enjoy and because they disobeyed the word of God, they no longer had the right to live in harmony with the earth. Now, post-lapse, man and woman are cursed to toil and labor; woman is doubly cursed because not only must she toil and labor right along with man but she will long for her husband who will “rule over her” and she will bring forth children in “pain.” (Gen. 3:16). God has thus cursed all of his creation: nature, man, and woman. Nothing escaped from the wrath of God because of the sin.

This origin myth is quite different from the Laguna myth about the snake. Rather than the snake being a loving protector of the people, the Eurocentric myth proclaims the snake as a trickster and God as one who both creates humankind and nature and then curses his own creation. In *Almanac*, Menardo, a wealthy Indian who tries to pass for a European, remains conflicted over the stories his father has told him and the stories the Europeans believe. Menardo’s father, known only as “the old man” reminisces about the tales handed down to him for generations.

> He thought about what the ancestors had called Europeans: their God had created them but was soon furious with them, throwing them out of their birthplace, driving them away. The ancestors had called Europeans “the orphan people” and

> had noted that as with orphans taken in by selfish or coldhearted clanspeople, few Europeans had remained whole. They failed to recognize the earth was their mother. Europeans were like their first parents, Adam and Eve, wandering aimlessly because the insane God who had sired them had abandoned them. (Silko 258)

In her previous novel, *Ceremony*, Silko relates that Spiderwoman, or Thought, spun the entire world, humans, plants, animals, and all of creation into being. Humans were a *part* of the creation of Spiderwoman. Fellow creatures, such as the snake, played roles of protector and caregiver over humans as equals in creation. Man and woman were not meant to toil *over* nature; they were created as a *part* of nature and non-human beings cared for man and woman. Humans were not thrown out of a place of origin because of a creator; they were to remain in their places of origin to worship the spirit creators. When indigenous tribes did re-locate, as in the narrative of *Almanac*, it was because of an apocalyptic event that had to do with the changing currents of time and dueling between spirit forces of evil, which had been foretold by the "true gods" all along. "The only true gods were all the days of Long Count, and no single epoch or time of a world was vast enough or deep enough to call itself God alone. All ancestors had understood nothing stayed fixed in the universe" (257-8). In Christian ideology, both God and time remain constant. The earth was created at a point of beginning and will end at a certain point in time. Thus, time takes on a linear pattern. In this discussion of Genesis the idea of a messiah, or savior, is foretold through the creator God in the word "Seed." The coming of this person foreshadows the beginning of a time that marks an end time in the future. From the days of the early Christian church, Jesus' followers thought he was coming back to save them from Roman oppression within their lifetimes. When this did not happen, the focus of the Christian church was to wait for the savior to arrive at a point in the future. Evil will be destroyed in the great battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:16) and the Kingdom of God will forever reign.

On the contrary, in *Almanac*, Silko's picture of time differs from the Christian linear approach. Everything and everyone is a part of nature since she is self-created; earth is the Great Mother of all creation. Frames of time may change from evil or good brought about by different natural alignments, but earth as Mother will never end or be destroyed. The indigenous Indians in *Almanac* live within five worlds of time, each going on simultaneously. When the motions or movements in one world cause a shift or imbalance, another world will feel the consequences. This is precisely the case in *Almanac*:

> "Dead-Eye Dog" or "The Reign of Fire-Eye Macaw" is the name of the present age. During this time the sun will burn with deadly light, and the heat of this burning eye looking down on all the wretched humans and plants and animals had caused the earth to speed up too – the way the heat makes turtles shiver in a last frenzy of futile effort to reach shade. (257)

The sun's rising temperature and the turtle's shivering are signs that portend the coming of an evil cycle of earthly time, not the end of time. The "invisible ones" predict this time in the Long Count of days. Yet, this cycle will pass, since everything in nature lives and dies, and the time of "Dead-Eye Dog" will go away and leave the people in peace once again. Since the ancestors have predicted this cycle of nature, they have told the indigenous people what changes to look for and where to go to wait out this expanse of evil. But it will pass and goodness on earth will be restored. Life will go on and Mother Earth will never be destroyed. In the Christian tradition, earth will be destroyed after the Battle of Armageddon and there will be "a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea" (Rev. 21:1).

The Christian tradition has two types of time, linear, earthly time, and sacred, eternal time. Linear, earthly time will continue until God the creator of earth decides to end the world because people have become immoral. God will appear on a throne from the skies and his

reign in eternal time will have no end. The Indians of *Almanac* have no such time frame. All time, which is either male or female, is sacred time and always in the present. (136) Since epochs of time are either masculine or feminine, Dead-Eye Dog time is masculine and therefore " somewhat weak and very cruel" (221). The Destroyers, who are the evil ones from any civilization on earth, come together during the time of Dead-Eye Dog and "would become obsessed with hungers and impulses commonly seen in wild dogs" (221). El Feo, one of the Indians who would later begin the march north to the United States, has extensive daydreams about "Mother Earth," who

> loved all her children, all living beings. Those past times were not lost. The days, the months, and years were living beings who roamed the starry universe until they came around again. In the Americas the white man never referred to the past but only to the future. The white man didn't seem to understand he had no future here because he had no past, no spirits of ancestors here. (313)

To indigenous Indians in *Almanac*, frames of time would come and go; time is a sacred, living being; and time was cyclical. Because the European invaders of the Americas had no spiritual ancestral ties to the land, their future was not going to be connected to the Americas. They would have to return to their European spiritual roots. There simply was no place for the "lost orphans" in the Americas. The spirit god of the macaws, the Wacah, warns the natives of the Americas always to be prepared for the changes which might require another hundred years, but eventually the Europeans would be outnumbered and the Indians would peacefully retake the land. The spirits would protect the Indians and they would need no weapons; they would simply outnumber the Europeans, and that would be enough to reclaim the land. In Christian theology, the creator God not only curses the nature he creates, but also destroys the earth and makes a new earth. Christians are always to look to the future time in which this will happen. Once the new earth arrives, both God's reign and the new earth will last forever.

At the end of the novel, when Sterling returns to the reservation and visits the stone snake, he realizes the Destroyers are the ones who blast the earth and rip her open to mine for minerals or water. Once they have depleted the supply of these precious items they move on to another location, with no respect for any of the land or lives they have demolished in their wake. Destroyers can come from any culture but they will not live forever. In the case of the uranium the whites were the Destroyers who had taken from their land, and the "humans had desecrated only themselves with the mine, not the earth. Burned and radioactive, with all humans dead, the earth would still be sacred. Man was too insignificant to desecrate her" (762). Both time and earth are connected for the Native Americans in *Almanac*; both will go on forever.

In Silko's rendering of the Native American metaphor of time, she establishes a new stage of comparison on which the people of earth can view time. As Emerson suggests in *Nature*, when people live out their lives under the assumptions and beliefs handed down to them from the past, they are not really living their lives in full. Emerson writes, "We are now so far from the road to truth, that religious teachers dispute and hate each other, and speculative men are esteemed unsound and frivolous" (1107). Rather than try to dispute Christian beliefs, Silko shows another belief system that she has formed through her Native American ties. By demonstrating this system in narrative form, she does not become a "teacher." Through story telling, she shows how another belief system works and by doing so sets up a stark contrast to the master metaphor of *time* in Christian beliefs. To the indigenous cultures, Eurocentric religion has an "insane" God who abandoned his people and will eventually destroy the earth. This indigenous American narrative creates a contrasting message to the canonical voice of American literature.

Another master metaphor Silko explores in *Almanac* is that of *blood.* As the life force of both human and some non-human beings, blood sacrifices have been used throughout the ages as people show honor to the spirit realm. In Judaism, God required blood sacrifices from bulls, sheep, goats, lambs, or pigeons for atonement of sin or as thanksgiving for bounty. The Levite priests would sprinkle the blood of these offerings around the altar in the Ark of the Covenant or later, the altar in the temple at Jerusalem. God told the Levite priests how to build the fires on the altar so that the offering made by fire would become "a sweet aroma to the Lord" (Lev. 1:9).

In *Almanac*, blood is not a holy or sacred way for people to relate to the spirit realm. Blood becomes a symbol of abomination for both Eurocentric and indigenous Americans. The Indian Tacho tells Menardo many things about blood: that blood fed life; blood always comes first, because at birth there is blood; blood was powerful and dangerous; human sacrificers were among the worldwide network of the Destroyers who fed off of the energy from blood letting during raids of villages. "Those who went North refused to feed the spirits blood anymore" (336). Blood offered to the spirits in sacrifice had to be the blood of royals because the blood of peasants would not appease the spirits. General J., a weapons dealer for Menardo's company, Universal Insurance, tells Menardo that bloodshed dominates the natural world and "those inhibited by blood would in time have been greatly outnumbered by those who were excited by blood. Blood was everywhere, all around humans all day long. There was always their own blood pumping constantly" (337).

Another character, David, photographs his acquaintance, Eric, after Eric had committed suicide by shooting himself in the head. After he develops the pictures, David realizes that because of his photographic depiction of blood these pictures represent a new form of realism.

Soon David convinces an art dealer to display this work and people flock to the showing. Blood also becomes a synonym for status. Serlo, another friend of David's, has great disdain for anyone who does not represent a European blueblood line. Menardo despises the fact that he does not have *sangre limpia*, or clean blood lines because he is part Indian. Trigg, a Tucson businessperson, uses a blood donation center as a front to deal illicit body organs stolen from homeless persons he murders. Blood no longer represents a revered energy force that sustains life and at times acts as a conduit to a sacred realm. In *Almanac* blood becomes a commodity that attracts attention, makes money for the capitalist, and justifies hierarchical structures of class systems.

Silko places equal responsibility on both indigenous natives and Euro-Americans for the commidification of blood. White males take part in the sale of photographs containing the blood of dead victims, and drain blood out of helpless indigents to be used as organ donors; the Indian cultures relish in blood letting through pornography as a silencing mechanism to exploit the helpless. This idea of "money for blood" relates to all cultures that take pleasure in the idea of capitalism and use blood for profit. Both Indian and European cultures, both men and women, use the idea of pure blood, *sangre pura*, or blood as human hierarchy as a means to gain agency in society. Menardo always feels that he is in a "lower" class than his wife, Iliana, because he is part Indian. Serlo will not have sex with anyone because no sex partner could reproduce his high lines of race; he regularly donates his sperm for future use in the propagation of a royal European line from which he descends. This major metaphor of blood departs from the idea of blood sacrifice as used in both indigenous cultures and Judeo-Christian scripture. Blood takes on a commidification for all cultures that exploit the sacred energy force that connects humans to a sacred realm.

Another master metaphor Silko examines in *Almanac* is the role of woman. Silko places her female characters in roles of aggression as she examines the idea of woman as subservient to the male in a patriarchal society. The idea of woman in Judeo-Christian scripture portrays her in a submissive role to man. Male patriarchy can be traced through scriptural law in which women cannot inherit land or divorce a husband. In Christian scriptures, since women could not divorce their husbands, they were often thrown out of their homes and forced into prostitution to earn a living. The ideology of woman being beneath man began when God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden. God cursed Eve by saying, "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and conception; / In pain you shall bring forth children; / Your desire shall be for you husband, / And he shall rule over you" (Gen. 3:16). In the Christian New Testament, an angel appears to Mary and tells her God has chosen her to be the mother of the messiah. When Mary tells the angel that she does not know a man, the angel says that the Holy Spirit will "come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you" (Luke 1: 35). Thus Mary becomes a "maidservant of the Lord" and accepts her fate accordingly. In the Christian tradition, Mary is revered throughout the world. She is the model to follow as a woman and the mother of God. In *Almanac*, Silko creates an entirely different category of women who take part in drug smuggling, illicit sexual activity, and falsification of documents to get ahead within their social stratification.

Lecha and Zeta are twin granddaughters of the Yaqui Indian, Yoeme, and a Spanish soldier, known only as the "old white man." Zeta lives on a ranch that she has fenced in and uses guard dogs to patrol the compound since she began her smuggling business. At first Zeta had worked for Mexico Tours with Mr. Coco. When Zeta decided she wanted to get ahead in the tour business she had sex with him. "Zeta thought she should feel some revulsion, but she did not. She felt sweaty and her legs were cramped, but nothing about the scene was remarkable. She had

not expected it would be any different" (Silko 126). Lecha, Zeta's twin sister, has the ancient almanacs that have survived the march of the ancestors from the south to the north of Mexico. Her grandmother, Yoeme, had given her the almanacs to transcribe and also the gift of finding bodies of the dead. Lecha goes on a television circuit to help solve the mysteries of persons who have been abducted but their bodies have never been found. This occupation begins to give her severe headaches and eventually she cannot function without the aid of Demerol and cocaine. She gets around in a wheel chair and tells people she has cancer, when in truth, she cannot walk sometimes because of the effect of the drugs. Leah, an American businessperson and the wife of drug dealer Max Blue, decides to build a model city outside of Tucson, Arizona. She names the city "Venice" because she envisions canals filled with water taking the residents to and from their homes and businesses. To accomplish her vision, Leah bribes an Arizona judge, Judge Arne, to grant her the water rights to all the underground wells surrounding Venice. Leah knows that within a few years all of the cities around Venice will be drained of their water supplies, but Leah's bribes are too lucrative for him to resist.

Silko characterizes these women as both egocentric. They disregard those around them to fortify their goals and to expand their monetary wealth. Zeta secures weaponry from illegal sources to arm a revolution even though the cause of the strife does not motivate her; Lecha abandons her son during infancy to follow her path of spirituality; Leah undermines the legality of the use of water in the arid southwestern United States to build up a vast real estate fortune. These three women have no emotional connections with anyone around them. In fact as one critical review cites, "Deformed by grotesque familial relationships and debauched by sexual perversion, its [*Almanac*] characters are incapable of love. Even more chillingly, they seem . . . incapable of hatred. *Almanac* reveals an utterly amoral and atomized society in which each

isolated member is indifferent to everything but the gratifications of his [or her] own enervated passions" (St. Clair). Silko creates these female characters to break down the stereotype that in a patriarchal society only men are capable of corruption. Since women are the child bearing human, traditionally they are thought to be closer to the earth and thus capable of earth protection rather than earth destruction. In *Almanac* these roles become not reversed but intermingled. While Max and Trigg are incapable of completing the sex act because of prior accidents, Leah, Lecha, and Zeta are capable of destroying the earth and/or deserting the role of motherhood. Through this enactment, Silko demonstrates that both patriarchal versus matriarchal metaphors need to be reexamined because of the danger of stereotyping all persons.

Silko's "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination" recounts many of the myths that storytellers from her tribe pass on about their ancestors. Silko writes, "The ancient Pueblo people buried the dead in vacant rooms or partially collapsed rooms adjacent to the main living quarters" (264). She does not say a person is buried in the adjacent living quarters if they followed the rules of the Pueblo tribes or if their tribal elders revered them. She says when a person dies, any person, he or she is buried in a room near the main room of the living quarters. This idea implies that even if a person was not good in this lifetime, i.e., if a person committed evil deeds that separated him or her from the tribe's good graces, that person could still be given full funeral rites. "They [the deceased person] should rest with the bones and rinds where they all may benefit living creatures – small rodents and insects – until their return is completed" (265). Because of Pueblo ideas of the afterlife, all persons are treated with respect. Since the Pueblo believe all creatures contain both spirit and being, this idea of re-joining the element of the earth remains a part of their living philosophy. "The remains of things – animals and plants, the clay and the stones – were treated with respect. Because for the ancient people all these things had

spirit and being" (265). In this same retrospective of Pueblo beliefs, Silko tells about her Native American tribe's ideas about life and death. "The dead become dust, and in this becoming they are once more joined with the mother. The ancient Pueblo people called the earth the Mother Creator of all things in this world" (265). Mother Creator originated all life in the four worlds below and when the earth became habitable the Pueblo emerged into the Fifth World. Following this line of belief and applying it to *Almanac*, since all life generates from Mother Creator, all beings have a role to play in the interrelationships of not only the Pueblo people but also life in the Fifth World. Lecha, Zeta, and Leah occupy a place in the Fifth World. Even though these women do not display positive qualities of life giving force, their journey in the Fifth World may be to show others the interrelatedness of all beings. These women's actions may destroy the balance of life on earth, yet Silko does not end *Almanac* with final destruction. In fact Silko writes:

> The earth would have its ups and downs; but humans had been raping and killing their own nestlings at such a rate . . . humans might not survive. The humans would not be a great loss to the earth. The energy . . . of a being's spirit was not extinguished by death; it was set free from the flesh . . . the energy of the spirit was never lost. (719)

Thus Silko demonstrates that human life on earth is not the end goal of Mother Creator. If humans desecrate themselves, the earth "would go on, the earth would outlast anything man did to it, including the atomic bomb. Yoeme used to laugh at the numbers, the thousands of years before the earth would be purified, but eventually even the radiation from a nuclear war would fade out" (718).

When viewed in this paradigm, Mother Earth or Mother Creator does not need human life to continue its own creation. Silko changes the focus of the master metaphor of humans destroying the earth, to one of the planet not needing humans to continue its own

patterns of recreation. Even if an environmental or nuclear holocaust occurs, the earth could purify itself and would continue to exist without human life. This extensive shift in master metaphor breaks down the facade of canonical Judeo-Christian scripture: that man must rule over the creatures of the earth, or that the earth exists only to serve humankind. Lynn White, Jr., identifies a similar belief in "Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." White writes, "Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny – that is, by religion" (9). White believes that our daily habits are deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian teleology. He asks the question "What did Christianity tell people about their relations with the environment?" (9) God created Adam and by letting him name the animals, he would thus have dominance over them. All of earth, in fact, was created for Adam's use. Even though Adam's body was made from earth, God made Adam in his image. Because of this origin story, all of Christianity has become anthropocentric, i.e., human centered. Unlike the Pueblo Indian belief that every being of creation shares equality with all creatures and that all beings must help one another in times of need, the Christian dogma proposes that humanity transcends nature because Adam was made in the image of God and that God gave him dominion over all nature. For the sake of this discussion of reexamining master metaphors I would like point out that there are two creation stories in Genesis and White takes his statement from only one of those stories. It is not that his conclusion is incorrect but that more information can be added to his hypothesis.

Since canonical scripture was based primarily on oral tradition, biblical scholars suggest the idea of "The Documentary Hypothesis." This hypothesis posits that four different traditions comprise the first five books of the Bible known in Greek as the Pentateuch -- **J** for the Yahwist or Jahwist, **E** for the Elohist, **D** for the Deuteronomist, and **P** for the Priestly Code. These four traditions developed independently of one another and in different time frames, **J**

being the oldest, **E** written later, **D** written or rewritten during the restoration of the temple in Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile, and **P** written entirely during postexilic times (*Archaeological Bible)*. When these four documents were put together, some of the writings repeated or overlapped as is often seen when several sources of oral tales are transcribed. Silko mentions the same idea when she recounts the art of storytelling among her tribe. The stories about creation of human beings and animals are retold each year for four days and four nights during the winter solstice. "The 'humma-hah' stories relate events from the time long ago when human beings were still able to communicate with animals and other living things" ("Landscape" 268). Silko tells that every person, from the youngest to the oldest, is able to recount a portion of a tale, and when they are put together they form an entire story. "Thus the remembering and the retelling is a communal process" (269). Listeners who gather around to hear the stories are encouraged to speak up if someone makes a mistake or changes the story. "Implicit in the Pueblo oral tradition was the awareness that loyalties, grudges, and kinship, must always influence the narrator's choices as she emphasizes to listeners this is the way *she* has always heard the story" (269). Silko maintains that truth to the Pueblo is a communal truth and is contained within the "web" of the differing versions. This same ideology could explain the difference between the two different creation stories in Genesis.

Genesis 1:1 to 2:4 is identified as authored by **P,** or the Priestly code version**.** The account of the creation of man and woman is as follows:

> Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our own likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the creatures that move along the ground.
> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Gen 1:26)

God then blessed them and told them “to be fruitful and increase in number” thus blessing the sex act, but then, “fill the earth and subdue it.” (Gen. 1: 28). In addition God says “Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature on the ground” (Gen 1: 28). In God’s next statement he tells the couple what they are to use for food, what they are to eat: “I give you every seed bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food” and repeats, yet a third time, “and to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground – anything that has breath of life in it –I give every green plant for food: (Gen. 1: 29-30). Repetition is a key element in oral tradition. Without means of reading to follow along with a tale, the teller would repeat the same lines, often in a rhythmic pattern or cadence, to create a way for the listeners to retain the words of the story. In the Priestly version of the creation story of Genesis, the same phrase is repeated three times, once in terms of what the couple is to subdue and twice in terms of what the couple will eat. Perhaps the priestly figure telling this story meant that Adam and Eve would have to subdue or restrain some of the animals if they were going to use them for food.

God does not use the word “kill” when he tells Adam and Eve what to eat. If people eat fruit from a tree or harvest a seed crop the plant life has the God-given ability to recreate itself. If people kill an animal for food, the animal dies and cannot be reborn or recreate itself. This is not God’s pattern for creation. Perhaps the intention of the storyteller is that Adam and Eve would have to hunt and kill some wild animals if they were going to use them for food and thus “subdue” them. Since God is making a gift to them of such abundance, perhaps this is a caveat that if they are to eat meat, it will be more difficult for them to hunt wild beasts than to eat fruits and vegetables. Or, perhaps the storyteller did not want to admit that God gives Adam and Eve

direct permission to kill his creation. By using the word “subdue” or by giving “dominion” God suggests that Adam and Eve may use what they need of animal life for food but fighting a wild beast will be much more difficult than picking fruit from a tree. God gives them permission to kill animals for food in an indirect way and makes a vegan lifestyle seem a safer choice.

In Genesis 2:7, believed to have been written much earlier by **J** or a Yahwist storyteller, God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils to give him life. After some time, God said, “It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Gen. 1:18). God brought all of the beasts of the field to be companions to Adam and he named each one, much as household pets are named today. God felt that none of these companions were suitable for Adam’s needs so God put Adam into a deep sleep, and while he was asleep he took a rib out of his side and formed woman. Adam says to the woman “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gen. 1: 23). There is no blessing from God to multiply and fill the earth with descendents, or no information on what to eat. The Yahwist relates that God made man first and that he was alone, perhaps lonely. When none of the animals is “suitable” for Adam, God created woman. In White’s argument he states, “Finally, God had created Adam and, as an after thought, Eve to keep man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them” (White 9). White is referring to the **J** creation story. When White writes, “And although man’s body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God’s image” he is combining or perhaps confusing the **J** and **P** creation traditions. In **P** God makes both male and female in his image but does not use clay or dirt from the earth. In **J** man is created alone and God brings the animals to him for companionship. Adam gives them all names perhaps to personify or to identify them. In fact, after they are expelled from the Garden, Adam names Eve to mean “mother of all the living.”

Adam is not responsible for the disequilibrium between man and woman. This was God's curse to Eve. Further, it is in **J** that God makes Adam out of dust or clay from the earth and breathes life into his nostrils but **J** does not say that Adam is created in God's image. White continues, "Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen" (9).

When comparing the Pueblo storytelling tradition to the Documentary Hypothesis of the Bible, we see many similarities. Perhaps the **J** tradition and the **P** tradition are meant to compliment one another. If we take the **P** tradition alone, man and woman were created at the same time, both in the image of the creator. Moreover, all the plants and animals of the earth were theirs to use for food, but they would have to have a way to suppress or restrain the animals and the growth of plants. In the **J** tradition God makes man out of the dust of the earth and breathes into him to give him life. Perhaps this storyteller is saying that humans contain the breath of their creator, or that they can be co-creators through procreation or that they are to be caretakers of God's creation. Perhaps the breath of the creator is a metaphor for God's giving humankind the power to create their own gardens and to live in community with non-human life as God was doing. Adam gives names to the animals when he is alone, looking for a companion. That seems to be a very human act -- to classify or to label something means that you can identify that thing, or know it by its name.

When Silko recounts the storytelling tradition of the Pueblo, she says the truths of the tales are in the consensus. Even if one person tells a story that presents partiality or bias the listener may choose to correct the storyteller. Oral myth takes on multiple aspects because of the many storytellers that have handed the tale over to many listeners, many times. However, the sum total of all the stories together tells the truth of the Pueblo history. When the terms of master

metaphors become truth rather than a way to spin a yarn they have the ability to skew the narrative. Loyalties, grudges, and kinship will always influence and shape the way a person tells a story. Silko wants to challenge the reader to listen for each one and then to confront the storyteller.

Towards the end of *Almanac*, Zeta and Lecha attend the Holistic Convention at which the Green Vengeance eco-warriors are guest speakers. During their appearance they show a film where six of the eco-warriors repel down the walls of Glen Canyon Dam and become suicide bombers. When the dynamite explodes, the structural security of the dam is compromised and it collapses. As they show the film at the convention the people are on their feet cheering. " 'Your government lies to you because it fears you. They don't want you to know that six eco-warriors gave their lives to free the mighty Colorado!' The audience cheered" (728). Green Vengeance is determined to destroy the infrastructure of the United States. "They were determined to destroy all interstate high-voltage transmission lines, power generating plants, and hydroelectric dams across the United States simultaneously" (729). Silko suggests the fight to save the earth evolves into eco-terrorist attacks and thus the plan is self-defeating. Rather than working behind the scenes, ecologists now don ski masks and strap dynamite to their backs to blow up steel and concrete structures. This suggestion leads to the conclusion that ecologists become so lost in their own metaphors that they destroy themselves in the process of "going green." By examining the ecological metaphor in this war like way, Silko collapses the metaphor against itself demonstrating the foolishness of destroying the earth to prove that the earth is being destroyed. Thus the reality of the quest gets lost in the expansion of the metaphor.

White asks the question, "What did Christianity tell people about their relations with the environment?" (9). White answers the question that people destroy nature because they have

authority from their creator to do so. White writes, “Man shares, in great measure, God’s transcendence of nature. Christianity . . . not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends” (10). In *Nature* Emerson writes, “Have mountains, and waves, and skies no significance, when we employ them as emblems of our thought? The world is emblematic. Parts of speech are metaphors because the whole of nature is a metaphor for the human mind. The laws of moral nature answer to those of matter as face to face in a glass” (1117). White’s beliefs see humankind inventing a metaphor through scriptural interpretation and then living with the invention of its own creation. Emerson promotes the idea that people should look at nature and invent new metaphors for creation stories and spirituality. People are capable of showing reverence for the earth any new direct, original ways not simply through dictated, worn metaphors from an ancient canon. White argues, “By revelation God has given man the Bible, the Book of Scripture” (11). Yet White does not delve into the master metaphors that drive the interpretations. People compiled the Bible from thousands of years of collected oral histories. Perhaps the master metaphors of scripture have become larger than the reality they represent. Thus people’s inability to change the metaphor is the construct that destroys the environment. Emerson suggests that the human mind examines nature and thus the mind should continue to create its own metaphors. By showing diversity in the idea of master metaphors, Silko illustrates that the metaphor should not control our beliefs. Metaphor is an invention of human imagination and humankind is capable of changing its owns inventions.

The liberation of all human relations from the false polarities of masculinity and femininity must also shape a new relationship of humanity to nature.

Rosemary Radford Ruether

New Women, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation

From my own experience of Neo-Pagan rituals, I have come to feel that they have another purpose – to end, for a time, our sense of human alienation from nature and from each other.

Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon*

But they were just women, and what they said was easily ignored by good brave men on their way to Paradise.

Toni Morrison, *Paradise*

CHAPTER 6

INTERLOCKING PILLARS OF OPPRESSION

ECOFEMINIST THEOLOGY IN TONI MORRISON'S *PARADISE*

Joan L. Griscom's "On Healing the Nature/History Split in Feminist Thought" describes various ideas of emergent ecofeminist beliefs. She points out that ecofeminists link four distinct types of oppression to a patriarchal dominant society: the oppression of nature, women, race, and class (271). All four forms of oppression are "thematically" and "historically" interwoven. Woman, race, and class domination are fairly clear concepts, according to Griscom but she writes, "There is no one word that expresses the oppression of nature." Ecofeminist theory maintains that current ecological problems have ensued because of the patriarchal claim that humans are superior to non-human groups. Nature domination also includes specieism, the belief that people are superior to animals and that the mind, which is associated to humanity, is

superior to the body, which is associated to animals (272). Because of western culture's idea of dualism, this mode of thought divides reality in halves. "Patriarchal western thought is pervaded with 'hierarchical dualism,' the tendency not only to divide reality but to assign higher value to one half. This concept can typically be expressed in the primordial duality of Self and Other." In *Paradise* Toni Morrison demonstrates that patriarchy, which connects these four "interlocking pillars," leads to continuing coercion of the Other and ultimately to the loss of life. Griscom argues that dualistic thought patterns are the base for sexist domination and social domination in general (274). Thus, patriarchal tyranny remains the most "powerful conceptual link between the four modes of oppression" (274). All of the characters in *Paradise* suffer from oppression in various ways. This discussion takes a close look at how patriarchal ecostructure leads to the marginalization and destruction of the social environment. Moreover, *Paradise* demonstrates that when patriarchy determines that only one culture of society should develop in an ecostructure, the lack of diversity within a society cause it to decline and destroy itself.

The dualism in *Paradise* begins in two very different settings: in one location, a small, all black community of Ruby, Oklahoma, and in the other location, a convent 17 miles outside of Ruby. In the setting of Ruby the residents are very religious; there are three denominations of Protestant churches within this small community and life revolves around churchgoing activities. The citizens purposely cut themselves off from the outside world by setting up their own economic and political structure thus securing both autonomy and anonymity in their lives. The other setting consists of a group of women who have established an all female group in a convent that used to be school for Native American girls.

The time is 1973 and the women who live at the convent have come from different areas of the United States where they have experienced race riots, drugs, and crime along with

physical and sexual abuse. They arrive at the convent demoralized, hungry, and without the means to cope with the individual experiences that have rendered them hopeless. Even though the plot of the novel revolves around two diverse and polarized communities, Morrison suggests that the lives of the women in both locations are marginalized. Griscom would describe the cause of the problems that grip both settings as the "interlocking pillars of oppression." The patriarchal structure supported by Christianity has suppressed the roles and voices of women in the two locales. In both the town of Ruby and the Convent on the outskirts, women withhold their thoughts and feelings so as not to be targeted and demeaned by the authoritative and superior voices of the men. Yet, by the end of the novel, no woman remains unharmed by the violent actions of Ruby's founding fathers. Morrison shows that these women have no power in which to exercise their options. Due to the patriarchal environment of the Christian belief system that controls the landscape, the women are contained by the interlocking oppressions.

According to ecofeminist ideology, a strong link exists not only between nature and culture and but also between "the forms of exploitation of nature and the forms of the oppression of women" (Murphy 24). In "The Women Are Speaking: Contemporary Literature as Theoretical Critique" Patrick Murphy delves into the interconnectedness between cultural and natural diversity as they relate to environmental multiculturalism. Murphy suggests that in a rich ecosystem various forms of life function at high levels because of the interplay among all of the inhabitants of the environment. Each entity of the ecostructure contributes a necessary element to the whole. If one increment becomes harmed or eliminated, the disruption affects the entire system. The more diverse an ecosystem becomes, the better chances that system has for growth and survival. Likewise, cultural diversity in a social environment brings benefits to all members. Ecofeminists "emphasize the relationship of cultural diversity and natural diversity, or what

might be termed as ecological multiculturality" (24). When one section of a society is harmed or eliminated, the entire social environment suffers. Each member of a society contributes a special and necessary function to the diversity of the group. In addition, Murphy points out that ecofeminist criticism relates the "specificity of place" (24) as a formative factor that influences a person's social behavior. Thus, the landscape has the ability to extend the dominance of cultural ideologies and to further control the actions and beliefs of the society that lives within its borders.

Prior to the Civil War, the grandfathers of Ruby's founding fathers had been slaves. After the Emancipation, they moved through the South looking for a place to live in community with others. One hundred and fifty-eight freed men traveled across Mississippi and Louisiana but were not accepted in any communities. "Turned away by rich Choctaw and poor whites, chased by yard dogs, jeered at by camp prostitutes and their children, they were nevertheless unprepared for the aggressive discouragement they received from Negro towns already being built" (Morrison 13). This group finally found a place in Oklahoma that had been part of the "unassigned land" (14) that the United States government had taken away from the Native Americans.

In *New Women, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* Rosemary Radford Ruether analyzes the impact of American slavery on all people living in the United States both then and now. Ruether asserts: "American slavery depended not only on a rigidly racist anthropology that denied the humanity of black people, but also on a destruction of the black family and the structuring of black women into a system of white male sexual dominance, with all its pathological results for black-white sexual-racial relations" (117). The institution of slavery in the American south deconstructed the family system for blacks. Marriage was not

considered a binding agreement between a black male and female but more of a temporary union to produce children. The black males could be sold off at any time to other plantation owners and the females could be chosen by the white master as concubines. Children of slaves who were born into slavery were considered property of the plantation owner and could also be taken from their parents and sold. Ruether writes: “The black male could not earn respect as a father or householder, his sexual rights to his wife could be violated at any time, and the whole family disrupted at will by the slaveowner” (117).

Ruether labels the violence against the black female by the white male as sexism and the degradation of the black male as property as racism. Where Griscom defines the four pillars of oppression as “interlocking” Ruether argues: “This *interstructuring* [italics added] of oppression by sex, race, and also class, creates intermediate tensions and alienations – between white women and black women, between black men and white women, and even between black men and black women. Each group tends to suppress the experience of its racial and sexual counterparts” (116). The interstructured tension created by these oppressions causes gender hatred and race hatred that can be perpetuated for generations. Ruether adds:

> The liberation of all human relations from the false polarities of masculinity and femininity must also shape a new relationship of *humanity to nature* [italics added]. The project of human life must cease to be seen as one of “domination of nature,” or exploitation of a bodily reality which is outside and other than ourselves. Rather we have to find a new language of ecological responsiveness, a reciprocity between consciousness and the world systems . . . . Our final mandate is to redeem our sister, the earth, from her bondage to destruction, recognizing her as our partner in the creation of that new world where all things can be “very good.” (83)

The patriarchal system of slavery alienated genders, races, and classes. As some people destroyed others for several hundred years, the landscape was not a consideration, and thus it too became a victim. Ruether describes today’s mission as one of healing the wounds from the past

and considering the sacred web of life to which all people belong. Ecofeminists call for consideration of the earth as “our sister” and by respecting her rights, people can begin to live in partnership with one another.

After a drought in 1934, nine families from Haven decide to strike out on their own to find a place where they would not be dependent on cotton as their sole livelihood. When the founding group of black families set out on a journey that will lead them to establish a new *genius loci*, the men disassemble an oven, pack it up, brick by brick, carefully including the letters of a plaque that adorn the front of the structure. The Oven, a large brick, out-door stove that had been built in Haven to be a central meeting place once stood for the resistance that the grandfathers had taken against the whites who had wanted to make them subservient through their dominance of race and culture. When the grandfathers first built the Oven, it was a place of respite, where the black community could assemble to cook their food and share common stories of both the good times and the bad. The wives of the founding fathers resent their husbands’ attention to the Oven. “The women nodded when the men took the Oven apart, packed, moved and reassembled it. But privately they resented the truck space given over to it – rather than a few more sacks of seed, rather than shoats or even a child’s crib” (Morrison 103).

From an ecofeminist viewpoint, the Oven represents the patriarchal dominance of the husbands. Morrison infers that what is important to the men of Ruby is not important to the women. Rather than focusing on seed or baby cribs, the men focus on rebuilding a brick structure that represents their past lives and the lives of their fathers and grandfathers. The women do not voice their opinions out loud; they simply nod and keep their thoughts to themselves. The idea of moving the Oven represents the continuance of patriarchy that the men of Ruby constantly use to reinforce their ideas of structure and order when all the while the women hope to grow new

gardens and bring forth new life. One of the women, Patricia Fleet, when reflecting on the move, wonders why the women were not more vocal when the men spent so much time on moving their pastoral metaphor of resentment and pride to the new town. She acquiesces when she says: “But they were just women, and what they said was easily ignored by good brave men on their way to Paradise” (201-02). Through the naming of the streets and the rebuilding of the Oven the founding fathers of Ruby force a false sense of center on the women. To the women, the landscape as dominated by the Oven becomes a constant reminder of the patriarchal Christian structures that form the basis of their daily lives.

Morrison’s use of the word “Paradise” metaphorically refers to Ruby, Oklahoma, the place the black families sought to isolate themselves from racism and discrimination. Because of the racial prejudice, the founding fathers of Ruby want their children to be isolated from the bigotry to which their fathers and grandfathers had been subjected. They refer to anywhere outside Ruby as “Out There” and refuse to have television, big business, hospitals, or state agencies in their town. The men refer to themselves as “8-rock” a dark, black coal color. They will not let anyone live in Ruby or marry into the families unless they have this same dark black skin. The Oven continues to remind the residents of the town that the “8-rocks” built the oven and only those with the deepest color of black skin are welcome in Ruby. Thus, Morrison further develops the controversy surrounding the Oven as a metaphor for the founding father’s rejection of any person into their town who does not have the same dark skin color. As their grandfathers were discriminated against on their march across the south, the founders of Ruby continue to foster the duality of racism within their community by not accepting diversity among their ranks.

"Beware the Furrow of His Brow" was the inscription Grandfather Morgan had placed on the Oven, or at least this is what his twin sons Deacon and Steward Morgan remember. Grandfather Morgan wanted anyone who furthered the institution of slavery or participated in racial discrimination in any way to be warned that racism is against God's law. If a person advanced the idea of racism, God would look at him or her and frown. The act of God's frowning would cause a "furrow" or a wrinkle on God's forehead. However, some of the letters that had been nailed to the plaque to form this motto had gotten lost in the move from Haven to Ruby. When the townspeople meet at one of the local churches to discuss what the original motto had been so that the men could reinstall the plaque, a heated argument ensues. Deacon and Steward Morgan, the town leaders, insist the plaque should read, "Beware the Furrow of His Brow." During the meeting, the women would not dare speak out about what they thought the plaque should read. The men are the leaders of Ruby and the women consider themselves to be secondary citizens, never to have a voice or to express an opinion of any kind. A good Christian woman stands behind her husband's word as the word of God.

The only letters that are found in the packing crate form the words, "The Furrow of His Brow." Deacon and Steward told the gathering that they were positive the word "Beware" had been lost in the move. The young people want to compromise and say they would like the plaque to read, "Be the Furrow of His Brow." Steward Morgan stated the final words of the meeting, "'If you, any one of you, ignore, change, take away, or add to the words in the mouth of that Oven, I will blow your head off just like you was a hood-eye snake'" (87). No woman of Ruby utters a word for fear her husband would berate her. Thus, the men install the Oven in the town center with the plaque reading "Beware the Furrow of His Brow." To the women the pronoun "His" represents both God and their husbands. They follow the Christian belief that women

should not speak in public and that women are to obey their husband's authority as if it is the authority of God. As part of the landscape, the Oven represents a repressive factor to the women and stands as a constant reminder of their secondary place in society. To Steward, Deacon, and the other men of Ruby, the Oven has become a living monument to their fathers and grandfathers and to the lasting hegemony of Christianity. Through the argument at the town meeting, Morrison further demonstrates the Oven as a metaphor for God's word and the patriarchal face of Christianity that represents the word of God. Moreover, the Oven represents the hatred the grandfathers felt toward the people who had turned them away as they wandered for hundreds of miles looking for a new home. The founding fathers of Ruby continue to propagate their grandfather's hate of the Others through the rededication of the Oven.

In the landscape of Ruby, the streets are laid out in a grid-like pattern. The founders name the principal streets after the four evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They decide on these names so the people of the town would live in a constant reminder of their Christian heritage. Since the only people who live in Ruby are the members of the first families who had settled there, the men feel that they have created a safe place for their women. Morrison writes:

> Unique and isolated, [this] was a town justifiably pleased with itself. It neither had nor needed a jail . . . . The one or two people who acted up, humiliated their families or threatened the town's view of itself were taken good care of. Certainly there wasn't a slack or sloven woman anywhere in the town and the reasons…were clear. From the beginning its people were free and protected. (8)

The founding fathers of Ruby are the law of the town. They are the ones to decide who has committed a crime and then the outspoken persons "were taken good care of" which probably refers to a beating or death. The women who live under this form of "protection" are safe from criminality that breeds "Out There" but they must conduct themselves according to the strict rules of their husbands or they, too, will suffer the consequences. The patriarchal rulers of

Ruby set up strict boundaries in accordance to their Christian beliefs and the living memory of their grandfathers' hatred of the evil "Out There."

The ecofeminist idea of patriarchy as the main force that supports the four pillars of oppression appears in Mary Daly's *The Church and the Second Sex*. Through the structures of Christian scriptures and teachings, Daly traces patriarchal history in the Christian tradition. Daly writes:

> Christian authors through the centuries have made much of the Genesis accounts of the Creation of Eve and the geographical location of the rib. This, together with her role as temptress in the story of the Fall, supposedly established beyond a doubt woman's immutable inferiority, which was not merely physical but also intellectual and moral. So pervasive was this interpretation that through the ages the antifeminist tradition has justified itself on the basis of the origin and activities of the "first mother" of all mankind. In a somewhat more sophisticated and disguised vein this is continued, even today, particularly by preachers and theologians who are unaware of developments in modern biblical scholarship. Such misunderstanding of the Old Testament has caused immeasurable harm. (76-77)

New Testament scripture continues this tradition of "woman's immutable inferiority" in many instances. One example is in Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus. Paul writes:

> Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the Church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. (Eph. 5:22-24)

This scripture clearly states that according to Christianity, God is at the top of the hierarchy, then man, and then woman. Not only does this passage suggest a hierarchy of being but also it presupposes that all women must be married to be a part of the church. Thus, Daly argues, both the Old and New Testaments demonstrate patriarchal structure and relegate the place of woman to one below man.

In *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Woman's Liberation*, Daly challenges the polarization of male and female and uses the word "diarchal" to suggest the idea that all persons, both man and woman, need to question their beliefs and values in search for new models for canonical meaning. Because of the structures of patriarchy, human beings have been stereotyped into sex roles that are hindering the development of all persons. Daly argues that "God" as a patriarch has suppressed the female consciousness. When looking to the future, patriarchal dominance will radically limit the development of humankind. When women cannot fully develop their minds and express their thoughts without fear, a large part of society suffers. In an ecofeminist viewpoint, the marginalization of women contributes to class, race, and nature oppression. For both man and woman to fully develop, Daly promotes the idea of "existential" change. "This becoming who we really are," Daly argues, "requires existential courage to confront the experience of nothingness. All human beings are threatened by non-being. I am suggesting at this point in history women are in a unique sense called to be the bearers of existential courage in society" (59). Daly believes the act of male suppression damages female hope of ontological revolution (62). If woman's role continues along this pathway of inhibition, the world at large suffers the consequences. "The rising consciousness that women are experiencing of our dehumanized situation has the power to turn attention around from the projections of our culture to the radically threatened human condition" (62).

In *Paradise* the women of Ruby have thoughts that counter the male opinions yet they do not express them in either public or private arenas. After the meeting at the church to discuss the plaque for the Oven, the women express their inner thoughts but only in their own minds. Dovey Morgan, Steward's wife, has her own opinion about the motto on the plaque. After her husband's outburst in the church meeting, she feels even more compelled to keep her thoughts to herself for

fear she will be shot "like a snake." In her mind she continues the argument with, "'Furrow of His Brow' alone was enough for any age or generation. Specifying it, particularizing it, nailing its meaning down was futile. The only nailing needing to be done had already taken place. On the Cross. Wasn't that so?" (93) The term "futile" denotes that Dovey judges the entire discussion as pointless. Gathering with the community to have the men discuss events was part of her existence, yet Dovey inwardly determines that these meetings waste her time. Rather than put her own opinion forward, she keeps it to herself because this was the Christian way, was it not? This question, at the end of her thought sequence implies Dovey may not be sure about her Christianity. According to Mary Daly, this idea of non-being suggests the beginning of an existential journey to discard the role that patriarchal Christianity plays in a woman's life. For Dovey to reestablish her religious core beliefs would be impossible in her present stage of development. She is so ensconced in the "woman's role" she has become fearful of expressing her views, even to her own husband. As Daly suggests, when women take on this role their lives take on a state of "non-being." Because Dovey subsists in a non-being state, she becomes unable to define a valid place for herself within her marriage and within her community.

Daly expands the idea of full development and recognition of female ontological being in her book *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Daly suggests that at some point during its development canonical scripture had been rewritten to elevate male god superiority. Daly suggests that civilization began as gynocentric and thus, all mythical and magical worship ritual expressed goddess hierarchy rather than androcentric symbolism. Subsequently, however, all matriarchal myth was stolen and modified to express the male being as more powerful. Many women are schooled in this misinformation, writes Daly, and now is the time for all persons to reconsider these myths:

> For women to re-consider our earlier paternally prescribed tendencies, deceptively mis-named "decisions," is nothing less than daring to see, name and reach for the stars. It is reclaiming our original movement, our Prehistoric questing power which has been held down by the inner/outer artificial ceilings/sealings of the State of Servitude. (55)

In *Gyn/Ecology* Daly discusses the idea of male fetal identification syndrome. During pregnancy the development and growth of the fetus is maintained through the woman's body and man loses his "role of controller, possessor, [and] inhabitor of women" (59). Since every person, both man and woman must be given life through the woman, "it is the condition of *all* males to be childless, and there is evidence that this condition is experienced as disturbing to those [males] who are obsessed with reproduction of the male self" (59). As a result, men view their immortality as out of their hegemony. Where Freudian theory expresses the idea of females' "penis envy," Daly counters that idea with her own concept of males' "womb envy." Because men envy the procreative power of women, they rely on scriptural and canonical support to usurp female creative energy.

The men of Ruby have set up their own economic and political structures that exclude women; male ministers govern the three churches. Because males are not biologically capable of childbearing, they compensate for their feeling of powerlessness by disparaging Ruby's two midwives. Morrison describes the relationship between the men and the midwives Lone and Fairy in the following:

> Don't mistake the fathers "thanks," Fairy had warned her [Lone]. "Men scared of us, always will be. To them we're death's handmaiden standing as between them and the children their wives carry." During those times, Fairy said, the midwife is the interference, the one giving orders, on whose secret skill so much depended, and the dependency irritated them. Especially here in this place where they had come to multiply in peace. (272)

Through this passage Morison asserts that because men cannot give birth, they resent both the midwives and their wives for rendering them powerless in this realm. The midwives, as

their title suggests, stand between the process of birth and death and this process is out of man's control. Both Daly and Morrison assert that when a man feels his power has been usurped, he becomes hopeless, afraid, and often strikes out to extinguish the factors that take away his power. When the man is not the one giving the orders he must face his own sense of dependency on the woman and this reliance makes him feel weakened. The patriarchal system has taught man to view his hegemony as dominant and the woman usurps his authority and gains supremacy when she gives birth.

In the interpretation of scripture the early Catholic Church poses and then supports the idea that because women bear children they are tied to the earth and because men do not they are superior beings and capable of a higher spiritual relationship with God. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the example the Church holds up to women as the perfect example of women's role in the birth process. As Daly examines the scriptures, she argues that the physical acts of intercourse and childbirth are human rites, which are marginalized and demeaned in the Bible. Women who participate in these act cannot be extolled or fully participate in the life of the Church.

Daly continues this line of scriptural interpretation when she discusses the nativity of Jesus. Canonically, Mary, the mother of Jesus does not have sexual relations with her husband, Joseph, before giving birth. Daly points out that Mary had no participatory role in the conception and birth of Jesus. In the biblical scene, during the Annunciation an angel appears to Mary and tells her she has been chosen by God to give birth to God's son, Jesus. Daly suggests Mary had already been impregnated by the Holy Spirit and had experienced the "Immaculate Conception" prior to her consent. "Physical rape is not necessary when the mind/will/spirit has already been invaded" (*Gyn* 85). Also, during the nativity, scripture does not depict any birth process. Jesus

appears in the manger to the chorus of angels. Thus, the entire feminine ontological form is eliminated from the scripture. Because God the father did not need woman to participate in the procreative act, her stature is diminished through the canon. Both the sex act and the birth process are not associated with the veneration of Mary and her role in scripture. She becomes holy because she did *not* partake of these physical aspects of nature. Marian tribute emerges from the idea of her being a woman without fully participating in her human, biological nature, which would have made her unholy.

When Christianity eliminates the "ontological form" of the female and depicts the biological acts of intercourse and giving birth as non-acts, the functions of the female body become trivialized and insignificant. In an ecofeminist point of view, when a part of the natural ecostructure becomes marginalized, the diversity of the region grows weaker and faces destruction. By celebrating the vast diversities of multiculturality an environment grows stronger and becomes less subject to decay. Both Daly and Morrison propose the idea that when men and women diminish the natural sacredness of the female biological process, societal structures begin to decline. The richer the ecostructure the more strength and longevity it projects.

Patriarchy and its guilt-producing Christian constructs are evident in the other location of *Paradise*. Seventeen miles outside the city of Ruby an embezzler had built a mansion to hide his illegal dealings from the United States government. Eventually, he was discovered and summarily arrested and imprisoned. The State of Oklahoma gave the mansion and its grounds over to four nuns who taught local Native American girls the Catholic religion and English. Morrison extends the Christian concept of hiding human sexuality when she places nuns in the mansion with a bacchanalian décor they inherited by the former tenant. The nuns work very hard to cover up the banality of the décor. Morrison sets up a dichotomy in the decorating motif used

by the original owner of the mansion to the work done by the nuns in what is now a “Convent” to change or cover up the original decorative theme.

The candelabra are designed with naked female torsos to hold the candles or light bulbs. Curls of hair wind through vines and across plaster female faces. Nursing cherubim decorate the wallpaper in the foyer. Fabric used for decorating contains prints of “layabouts half naked in old-timey clothes, drinking and fondling each other” (72). The doorknobs are nipple tipped. The metal bathroom faucets are made to look like a penis and the knobs to the water faucets are designed to resemble testicles that need to be turned to start the flow of water. The game room is lined with alabaster vaginas that could be used as ashtrays. In the basement level of the mansion a vast wine cellar and hidden rooms among the wine racks complete the decor. The embezzler’s plans to host large parties were dashed when he was arrested, yet this lavish decorating theme suggests he was planning Bacchus-like parties. The nude statuary that lines the hallways is reminiscent of ancient Greek forms that filled the Parthenon on the Athenian Acropolis. The vine-covered statuary and the vast wine cellar also suggest a connection to the Greek god Dionysus or to his Roman counterpart, Bacchus.

Greek mythology embodies a different view of human sexuality than Christian scripture. During the Middle Ages the Roman Catholic Church fostered the idea that women’s sexuality was evil. Unless a woman was using her biological functions in marriage for reproduction the only way she could strive to be on the same spiritual plane as a male is through celibacy. By the denial of her sexuality, a woman could become more like a man and in turn more like God. The mythical legend of Bacchus reminiscent in the decorating motif of the convent recounts a different view of human sexuality. In Greek myth Bacchus had two births. His father, the god Zeus impregnated a mortal, Semele, but when Bacchus is growing in her womb Zeus kills

Semele with lightening bolts and removes Bacchus. This removal is his first birth. Then Zeus places the embryonic Bacchus in his thigh. Bacchus grows to full term and is born again through the life force of Zeus. At this point, Zeus turns him over to nymphs who live on a desolate island and there Bacchus invents wine.

Because he experienced birth from both the female and male body, Bacchus becomes associated with the crossing of sexual boundaries. Also, he is known as the god of wine, drunkenness, agriculture, fertility of nature, and the patron god of the Greek stage (Gross). However, he is also known as the god of mystic ecstasy and orgiastic excess. “His original cult appealed mainly to women, and followers abandoned their homes to wander in bands over the mountains. The ritual climax of his worship involved the ripping apart and raw consumption of an animal such as a deer, calf, goat, or occasionally even a human, held to represent the god himself” (“Bacchus”). The exegesis of this Greek myth examines the possibility of both male and female sharing in the birth process. Moreover, revelry and orgiastic experience are part of the human experience and are to be enjoyed and perhaps honored as human events. In contrast to the Roman Catholic idea of marginalization of female sexuality, this myth explores basic concepts of natural, human urges.

The nuns take down or cover up as much of the suggestive décor as possible, diligently hanging pictures of saints on the walls and painting over the offending wallpaper. Yet the bacchanalian theme remains visible to anyone who enters the convent. In spite of the nuns’ conscientious attempts to hide the bacchanalia, the dualism of the décor continues to show through as a reminder of the spiritual polarization between Greek and Christian beliefs. Morrison thus plays on the idea that revelry and sexuality are available to both male and female. Through the act of covering up the bacchanalia in the convent the nuns reinforce the Christian theme of

covering or denying human sexuality. This covering not only suggests the Christian idea that both male and female sexuality need to be hidden away, but also implies that sexual differences must be veiled or concealed. Human sexuality takes on a double standard, not to be seen openly, or discussed honestly. To strive for God-like spirituality women must cover their bodies. Thus, the nuns live in the state of celibacy, but the bacchanalian decor continues to suggest the underlying pattern of human behavior. Morrison extends the metaphor of sexual repression by describing the Catholic nuns in their long, heavy habits covering their female shapes while whitewashing as much of the sexual paraphernalia as possible, and hiding the rest away to be covered and forgotten.

Throughout the novel, several women live in the convent as well as a few Native American girls who run away early on. Again, Morrison demonstrates one of the pillars of oppression as she explains the plight of the young Native American women. They have been taken from their homes on the American Indian reservations of Oklahoma and placed in the convent to learn about the Christian God and the American ideals of history and language. They are not permitted to speak their native language or dress in traditional Native American fashion. As soon as possible they run away from the convent and return to their homes. Although this is not a main focal point of the novel, Morrison alludes to the repression that Native Americans endured through the white male aggression that accompanied the founding the United States. Many Native Americans were taken from their homes and forced to live in ways that were contrary to their beliefs. When Europeans came to the “New World” they rationalized the oppression of the indigenous peoples as gaining more souls for the glory of God. Christian dominance through patriarchy is an ongoing story in the ecofeminist view of racial oppression.

As the novel begins, the "Mother" or the Mother Superior lies dying. Consolata, or Connie, a woman the nuns had rescued on a trip to Portugal, remains in the convent because as an orphan she has no other home or family. The other nuns who lived with the Mother Superior move to teaching positions and Mother remains the only nun left at the convent. Because of aging and illness Mother's health begins to fade and Connie takes care of her. Soon, four wandering women come to the convent, all of them traumatized by life altering events. They have nothing in common with each other but arriving at the convent searching for shelter. Mavis, the first to appear, is hiding from her sexually abusive husband. Seneca, Gigi, and Pallas, the other three women, find the convent under similar circumstances: Seneca, running from foster home abuse; Gigi, looking for more from life than visiting an abusive boy friend in prison; and Pallas, trying to forget the shocking experience of her mother's seduction of her boyfriend. All find respite at the Convent. After Mother dies, Connie and the four women who are fleeing from hardship and oppression form an all female group and eventually begin a healing process.

When Mavis arrives at the convent, she is mentally shaken from the trauma in her life. Connie asks her if she wants a drink. "' You a drinking woman?'" Connie asks Mavis "'No, I'm not,'" Mavis answers. Connie retorts, "'Lies not allowed in this place. In this place every true thing is okay'" (Morrison 38). Connie's emphasis on the truth reveals that she accepts nature as it is. Mavis' marriage is filled with lies and deceit since she is married to an abusive alcoholic. To keep from being beaten, Mavis has adopted lying as a coping mechanism. Connie senses that Mavis is not at ease speaking her truth so Connie encourages Mavis to reply with honesty even though the reality may not be picturesque. When Pallas arrives at the convent she immediately feels a sense of calm surrounding her. "The whole house felt permeated with a blessed *malelessness* [italics added], like a protected domain, free of hunters but exciting, too. As though

she might meet herself here – an unbridled, authentic self, but which she thought of as a 'cool' self – in one of the house's many rooms" (Morrison 176). Pallas feels free of male suppression and responds in a positive way to the "malelessness" of the convent. Like the youth of Ruby who have been cut off from the outside world, Connie too has not experienced life outside the convent. She has been in the sole company of nuns for her entire upbringing and she realizes that these four women have never been in a situation where they have been outside of a male centered world. According to Mary Daly, the only way a woman can find her authentic self is to search out other women and to openly discuss her issues with them. Daly writes:

> It would also be naïve to think that healing can take place in isolation. The individual's sense of reality depends upon some kind of communal consent. It would be absurd to think that singly a woman can win the struggle to psychic wholeness. The sense of reality that such an individual is trying to sustain would be pitted against a system with enormous resources for persuading her of her error, sinfulness, or mental illness. (*Beyond God* 50)

Daly goes on to say that "women are plagued with insecurity and guilt feelings over opposing men" (21) and that these feelings are propagated through Christianity's idea of "original sin" as being the fault of the female. Women learn to cope with feelings of alienation by resigning themselves to being inferior to men and by taking on roles that are deemed by males to be "feminine." Another reason for female alienation is feminine antifeminism. Daly defines the antifeminist woman as one who identifies with the male power structure and "looks upon a woman who threatens that structure as a threat. Thus, she expresses disapproval and hostility. This divisiveness among women is an extension of the duality existing within the female self" (52).

When they arrive at the convent the women begin to live outside of the male centered realm. At first this results in some dissension among them but as time passes, the women learn to

speak truth to one another without hesitation and to accept veracity as it is and not as a personal attack on each other's integrity. On the other side of the spectrum, the women in Ruby live in separate households and are alienated from one another. They have no chance to bond in women's groups or other organizations. Living secluded from other women, the Ruby women view the women at the convent as strange, mysterious, or harmful. Only a few women of Ruby travel the 17-mile road to the convent to see what goes on in an all woman environment. When they cross over into a realm of female truth, their lives change drastically. However, the new knowledge brings them pain when they return to their sheltered situations where they must act like Christian women at all times or endure the punishment ordained by the patriarchy.

Methodist minister and theologian Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite discusses this "climate of violence" in "Every Two Minutes: Battered Women and Feminist Interpretation." Thistlethwaite asserts, "All women live with violence." A survey conducted by the National Division of the United Methodist Church's Program of Ministries with Women in Crisis shows that one in every 27 United Methodist women had been raped; one in every 13 had been abused by her husband; one in every four had been verbally or emotionally abused (302). Thistlethwaite acknowledges that the authors of the study are "aware of the limitations of their survey, as a random sampling of Protestants [yet] the survey seems to indicate that even scratching the surface of women's lives reveals the daily presence of violence" (302). Her main argument asserts that western culture has been shaped by biblical canon and that the canon has been shaped by patriarchal culture. She has been asked repeatedly why she relates spousal abuse to biblical canon and she says that women bring their Christian beliefs to the process of "working through a battering relationship" (303). Women with strong religious backgrounds often have the most guilt breaking away from abusive relationships. They have been taught that women are inferior

because God ordered the world in this way. Also, many women believe that men have absolute authority in the household and that if their husband beats them they deserve the abuse.

An example of this situation is presented in *Paradise* when Arnette Fleetwood tells K. D. Morgan that she is pregnant with his child. One day, as they were standing by the Oven in the center of town, the 15-year-old Arnette tries to find out what K. D. wants to do about the pregnancy. Simultaneously Gigi gets off the bus, heading for the convent and K. D. looks away from Arnette to watch Gigi with no concern whatsoever about Arnette. Screaming in a loud voice with the local townspeople watching, Arnette yells, "'If that's the kind of tramp you want, hop to it, nigger'" (54). K. D. assesses the situation and Morrison writes, "K. D. looked from Arnette's neat shirtwaist dress to the bangs across her forehead and then into her face – sullen, nagging, accusatory – and slapped it. The change in her expression was well worth it" (55). With Arnette's honor in contention, the Morgans and the Fleetwoods met that night to discuss the public slapping. The Morgans know that Arnette Fleetwood is pregnant and that K. D Morgan fathered her baby. Yet when they tell K. D. they want him to stay away from Arnette, K. D. smiles deviously and says he agrees with the mandate. Thus, he feels the patriarchy has spoken and he is not responsible for Arnette or the baby.

Later, Arnette goes out to the convent and begs Connie to give her a concoction of powders and herbs so that she can abort the baby. When Connie refuses, Arnette takes a mop handle and abuses herself until she aborts the baby. Years later, K. D. marries Arnette to unite the Morgan and Fleetwood money. Arnette has denied and suppressed her anger or inner truth for so long that she goes temporarily insane on her wedding night. She is so confused that she stumbles out to the convent and asks Connie to give her the long ago aborted baby. Connie tries to comfort her but Arnette leaves, bewildered and crying. K. D. has reigned superior over

Arnette by impregnating her and then humiliating her in public. Arnette feels helpless to defend herself against the patriarchal system that did not come to her rescue but instead told K. D. to stay away from her. Thus, Arnette was given an unspoken message to fend for herself because the men were in solidarity against her. Alone, Arnette carries the burden of having the baby. She rejects the real source of her anger, which, is the guilt and humiliation she feels from the public slapping, and the men of Ruby ignoring her pregnancy. Because of the patriarchal solidarity, Arnette feels marginalized, helpless, and ashamed. Thus she treats herself cruelly. She succumbs to the final abuse and marries K. D. to further punish herself for getting pregnant outside of marriage.

As Thistlethwaite suggests, when women are abused they often rationalize or deny their situation. Since none of the women of Ruby offer to support one another Arnette has no options and no friends. No one comes to her rescue and in her anger she strikes back at K.D., his uncles, her father, and her brother, by aborting the baby. By abusing herself and denying the new life that grows within her, Arnette falls victim to patriarchal dominance. Since she does not have the mental or physical strength to fight against the men of Ruby, she “takes care” of the “problem” so as not to garner attention or public shame. In doing so Arnette takes her baby’s life out of the ecostructure of Ruby’s society and disavows her female gift to bring a life into the world. Because of this self-degradation Arnette marginalizes her inner being and suffers an internal death. When this pattern is repeated countless times in American ecostructures an incalculable number of children are taken away from the multiculturality of society. Moreover, when a woman does not strive to fulfill her goals as an individual within society because of an overarching patriarchal system, the entire ecosystem suffers.

Many ecofeminist theologians argue that the meaning of biblical canon must be revisited if women are to fully understand themselves in spite of a patriarchal society. In "Heretics and Outsiders: The Struggle over Female Power in Western Religion," Carol P. Christ suggests, "the existence of a canon or a canonical tradition implies the existence of outsiders and heretics" (*Soundings*). Thus, texts that have been adopted as the final word on the subject must have gone through a judgment of opposing texts before the "true" textual evidence was established. According to Christ's theory, a struggle in the Jewish and Christian canonical traditions "engaged in ideological struggles with competing religious traditions in the course of which female symbolism and female power were actively suppressed" (*Soundings*). In the adoption of male-centered religious canon, a pattern of the containment of female symbolism and power continued. Christ supports her ideas with research on baalism and fetishism, which frequently were synonymous to goddess worship. "Yahweh-alone" groups became prominent only after the Babylonian exile because the Israelites who returned to Jerusalem needed to demonstrate to all nations that their God was victorious. "The 'Yahweh-alone' groups edited and rewrote the texts which became biblical canon to make them conform to their own view that the worship of Yahweh alone was the true religion of ancient Israel and Judah from the beginning and that worship of gods and goddesses other than Yahweh constituted heretical deviation" (*Soundings*). The main consequence of rewriting these historic texts was the exclusion of goddess worship and initiating the idea that female power is evil.

One of the examples Christ gives in her discussion of this topic is that of Queen Jezebel in the Jewish scripture of 1 and 2 Kings. Ahab, the King of Israel, had married a foreign woman, Jezebel, and made her the queen of Israel. Jezebel was a princess in a neighboring country that practiced nature worship of baals, gods, and goddesses. During her reign in Israel, she began to

kill all of the Jewish prophets who preached against baal/goddess worship. Elijah, a prophet of Israel, challenged Jezebel's priests to a show of superiority. When the god of Elijah won out, Elijah slaughtered them, one by one, by slitting their throats. "So Jezebel sent her messenger to Elijah to say, 'May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like one of them'" (1 Kings 19:2). Considering this threat and the power of Jezebel, Elijah ran away and hid in a mountain cave. Jezebel continued to show her governing strength and to use her position to try to make Ahab a stronger ruler. Her efforts were in vain. Ahab dies from a "random" wound during battle (1 Kings 22:34). Later, several eunuchs throw Jezebel out of the palace window and "some of her blood spattered the wall and the horses as they trampled her underfoot" (2 Kings 9:33). The story goes on to say that dogs ate her body and all that remained to bury was her skull, her feet, and her hands (2 Kings 9:35).

The reason for Christ's use of this example is clear: in Hebraic-Christian scripture, when women challenged the patriarchal structure by exerting political power, they came to disastrous ends. The canon supported patriarchal dominance and Yahweh worship. When a woman worshipped the goddess and challenged this dominance, she is portrayed as evil, sinful, and immoral. Just as Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, so Jezebel sinned as the Queen of Israel. In "Spiritual Quest and Women's Experience," Christ asserts that women cannot fully experience life because of these patriarchal myths. Mary, the mother of Jesus in the New Testament, accepts her fate of being pregnant without having had sexual intercourse as a matter of obedience to her God/Father. Luke, the gospel writer states, "But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). Christ writes:

> Her *word* never became flesh and dwelt among us. Perhaps no one ever asked her what she was thinking. Perhaps she never heard stories [positive stories with

> female heroines], which could give her words for her own experience. Perhaps the man who wrote the gospel narrative simply could not imagine what it felt like to be in her position. Whatever the reason, her experience, and the experiences of other women have not shaped the sacred stories of the Bible. (230)

In "Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections," Christ compares the persona of Eve to the persona of Mary. Because of the story of Eve, Christ argues, religious symbols have always focused around male images, which suggests the idea that "female power can never be fully legitimate or wholly beneficent. This message need never be explicitly stated (as for example, it is in the story of Eve) for its effect to be felt" (275). Christ emphasizes that because of patriarchal dominance in Western culture, males are trained to assert their will, while a woman with an assertive will is considered evil. "Patriarchal religion has enforced the view that female initiative and will are evil through the juxtaposition of Eve and Mary. Eve caused the fall by asserting her will against the command of God, while Mary began the new age with her response to God's initiative, 'Let it be done to me according to thy word'" (Luke 1:38). Christ concludes that the only way for women to fully realize their life experience and participate completely in history is to rewrite the canon to include a Goddess-centered context. Only then will women be capable of hearing their own stories of female power and relate to wisdom and achievements thus being able " *to know her will, to believe that her will is valid, and to believe that her will can be achieved in the world*" (284). Within this three-fold creed, women will not accept subordination to male hierarchy.

Ecofeminists argue that for women to hear their own stories of assertion and power, they must experience themselves as whole humans, not in opposition to men, but within their own ontological form. Sue Monk Kidd voices her search for wholeness and self- acceptance as a "conversion experience." After a long spiritual journey of trying to understand the role females must play for societal structures to advance Kidd describes the healing of her "feminine wound"

in *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*. (1996) Kidd's husband is a Baptist minister and Kidd dutifully attends church services every Sunday and Wednesday night for as long a she can remember. She sees herself as a good Christian woman leading a life in a secondary role to her husband's leadership and authority. Her own ideas and beliefs take a back seat to those of her husband. Moreover, she teaches the concept of women's subservience position in society to her daughter.

One day, Monk enters a drugstore where her daughter works. Her daughter is stocking items on a lower shelf as two men walk by. They smile to one another and one of them remarks, "'Now that's how I like to see a woman – on her knees.' The other man laughed" (7). This brief situation unlocks deep-rooted pain for Kidd as she remembers her own childhood and teenage years. She was always taught that God was a man who took his place on top of the hierarchy. Women were created by God to play a supportive role in a man's life. Kidd writes:

> I mean, if this were true, then women, girls, me – we were not at all what I thought. At eight I couldn't have expressed it fully, but on some level I knew what this meant. That we were less than males and that we were going to spend the rest of our lives obeying and asking permission or worrying if we didn't. (17)

Kidd expresses her sense of victimization when women shut their eyes to the social, physical, psychological, and spiritual violence done to women throughout history. (31) Kidd admits, "For me, opening my eyes to the *feminine wound* [emphasis added] was rather like getting hit by a stun gun. I felt knocked down by the force of it, and for a short while I didn't get up" (31). As both Christ and Kidd contend, women need stories and histories of strong women, in both their personal lives and in their cultural surroundings. When there are no stories or models of feminine will assertion or *word*, women are wounded by having to admit their secondary status in society. In turn, the human ecosystem loses female contribution through

Christian patriarchy because women are taught that they are not capable of participating in society in a political or contributive level.

At some point during her soul searching for her source of inner will, Kidd tries to paint pictures of her feminine self and of the picture she thought she presented to the world. After Kidd spent several days on this, she looks at the paintings taped on the walls of her study and realizes that the women she painted in the pictures have no mouth, hands, or feet. When Jezebel was thrown from the palace window all that remained of her to be buried were her head, hands and feet. Through the use of this imagery, both Christ and Kidd suggest that women feel disembodied once they realize that their will often goes unacknowledged in social situations. Because women are women, often they are looked upon by men as having no voice or relevant ideas. Kidd also suggests the imbalance in values that women and men have for society. "Feminine" values are connected to body, flesh, sensuality, earth, and nature where "masculine" values are connected to spirit, heaven, and transcendence over nature. (64) Kidd writes:

> The perception may have arisen from women's closeness to fertility, procreation, and the rhythms of nature. Women are tied to these cycles in a way men are not. Women go through the monthly cycle of menstruation, just as the moon goes through a monthly cycle of waxing and waning. Through pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing we grow life inside our bodies. It has also been left to women to care for other bodies, tending the young, sick, and dying. (64)

As Kidd and Daly suggest, women need to enter a state of "non-being" to find their source of inner strength. This is not an easy task since women are engrained by Western culture and scriptural canon to act in a prescribed way as mothers, wives, and caregivers. Both Kidd and Daly suggest that women need to play an active part in the ecostructure of society by attending conferences about women's topics, joining organizations that promote women's health and welfare, and to taking an active role in communities to advance women's issues. Daly writes:

> This may mean participation in a discussion group or a consciousness-raising group, standing up to challenge a speaker who has expressed biased opinions about women, writing an article, a 'letter to the editor' or simply a letter to a friend, expressing new insights . . . . Whatever the action chosen, it can open the way to a new pattern of activity that engenders hope. (*Beyond* 52)

After much searching, research, and journal writing, Kidd begins to hear an inner voice, which she claims is the voice of the Sacred Feminine, the Divine Feminine, or the Goddess. For Kidd this realization becomes a life altering experience. She was on a spiritual retreat, alone in San Francisco and visiting the Mercy Center in Burlingame where she saw the replica of Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the *Cartoon of St. Anne*. The picture shows both Mary and Jesus seated in the lap of a "flashing-eyed woman" (99). Kidd considers this a religious moment and conveys the feeling by writing, "I felt I was looking at an image of the Divine Feminine, the Great Mother, for the woman in the picture seemed to birth, contain, and encompass everything. I felt a deep, magnetic awareness of her" (99).

Afterwards, Kidd begins to meet with other women who shared her same ideas. Together they formulate original rituals that reinforce their personal identity with a Divine Feminine or the Goddess. Although each ritual that Kidd performs brings her closer to her new spiritual understanding of the Divine Feminine, the rituals also become a healing process for the "feminine wound" and all of the times she was made to feel like "the Other" in a patriarchal world. During these times, she learns to forgive herself for not beginning to walk her spiritual path sooner, for living life feeling wounded and incomplete. She even forgives herself for not working more closely with her daughter to explain to her different ways of looking at spiritual journeys and beliefs. To Kidd, feminine spiritual rituals are the best way to unite with other women to share and to express beliefs about the breaking away from patriarchal structures and to reinforce the avoidance of those stereotypical pitfalls.

In *Paradise* Morrison demonstrates the use of rituals to help the women of the convent heal their feminine wounds. When the Mother dies and the other four women arrive Consolata/Connie begins to understand that on some level the women need to heal themselves from the trauma they have experienced. For Connie, Sister Mary Magna's, or the Mother's death becomes a metaphor for the death of the old religion and a time to begin a new spiritual journey. Connie goes down to the dark cellar and sleeps for days in one of the hidden rooms located among the wine racks. At some point, Connie realizes that the other women in the convent need her to watch over them and to help them spiritually heal. After having a vision of her healed self in the convent's garden, Connie establishes several rituals that foster a recovery for the other four women.

Connie knows she has a healing power within her. One time, Lone the midwife from Ruby, came to visit her at the convent. During their visit, Lone senses an accident and a death in a nearby field. The two women run out of the Convent, Connie following Lone to a ditch where a car was overturned and two young boys were crying over their dead friend. When Lone tells Connie to use her power to bring the dead boy back to life, Connie knows immediately what to do. She holds the dead boy in her arms and finds a point within him that she can enter with her will. "Inside the boy she saw a pinpoint of light receding. Pulling up energy that felt like fear, she stared at it until it widened. Then more, more, so air could come seeping, at first, then rushing, rushing in" (Morrison 245). Holding back and denying her power, Consolata had told Lone that she did not believe in magic or healing others and it would be against God's will to delve into such practices. Lone replies to Consolata, "'You need what we all need: earth, air, water. Don't separate God from his elements. He created it all. You stuck on dividing Him from His works. Don't unbalance His word'" (244).

Listening to Lone's advice, Connie comes to believe that her powers are a part of her total self and that she should use them to help the wounded. Through Lone's influence Connie begins a spiritual journey of self-recognition. She accepts Lone's idea that God and nature are both part of her spirituality. For the first time in her life she gives herself permission to acknowledge her healing powers and begins to use them to help others. Permitting herself to use her inner strength, Connie brings the young man in the accident back to life. By ignoring her inner powers, the ecostructure misses out on the fullness of Connie's power. When she finally appreciates the quality of her inner strength, everyone in her environment benefits. This concept is at the core of ecofeminism. When one organism in an ecosystem becomes oppressed by another life force and therefore denies itself full empowerment, the entire community faces the loss of that power. When this happens to a multitude of beings the society becomes weak and cannot function to its fullest potential.

After she rises up from her own healing period in the wine cellar, Connie begins anew with her everyday routine and then begins to work with the women. First, she cooks them an extravagant meal. During the meal she says to them, "'If you have a place . . . that you should be in and somebody who loves you waiting there, then go. If not stay here and follow me. Someone could want to meet you" (262). This someone is the spirit of her healed self that she had envisioned in the garden. Next she tells them to scrub the floor of the cellar and then to encircle the place with candles. Consolata then orders each woman to get undressed and to lie on the floor in any position they choose. After ordering them to remain still, Consolata walks among them and paints each one's body silhouette on the cellar floor. Once the outlines are complete, Connie orders them to remain quietly on the floor in the candlelight. She begins to speak of her past and of her spiritual beliefs. She tells them how much she loved the Mother and how difficult it was

for her to watch her die. Holding the Mother and rocking her while life ebbed away from her became a ritual, life affirming action for Connie. Although Connie tried to keep the Mother alive by entering her with her own life force, she finally had to let her go. "'So I wondering where is the spirit lost in this? It is true. It is good, like bones. One sweet, one bitter. Where is it lost? Hear me, listen. Never break them in two. Never put one over the other. Eve is Mary's mother. Mary is the daughter of Eve'" (263).

Through this prayer-like soliloquy, Morrison suggests Connie's magic powers resonate with both spirit and nature. As Lone suggests some people have the ability to see there is no difference between the two. Although one is sweet and one bitter, they are intrinsically enjoined and complement each other. Likewise, women have both spirit and nature within them. Eve, the embodiment of nature, earth, and sin works together with Mary who represents spirit, soul, and sinlessness. Women contain both of these divergent elements within them. Unless women recognize that they are both spiritual and fully human, they will remain imbalanced and wounded. To heal, the convent women must use their intellect and will to define and defend their authentic selves. They must only speak truth and not stay in denial or a state of non-being because they are too paralyzed from their injuries.

The next part of the ritual was to paint or draw symbols within or around their body's silhouettes. With each symbol drawn on the floor, the women set the healing process into motion; their feminine wounds begin to heal. They begin to understand how they were victimized yet also how they had allowed themselves to become victims. Connie directs the healing rituals when they talk about their pasts and forge new bonds as empowered women, sharing their ideas for a future. One night during a long awaited rain shower, the women go outside and dance. Morrison writes, "There are great rivers in the world and on their banks and

the edges of the oceans children thrill to water. In places where rain is light the thrill is almost erotic. But those sensations bow to the rapture of holy women dancing in hot sweet rain. They would have laughed had enchantment not been so deep" (283).

In Oklahoma, where rainfall is generally light and the climate dry, the woman become more aware of the need for rain, or the power of the rain when it comes. When water is used in rituals generally it represents healing, cleansing, and renewal. At this stage in their curative journey, the women are ready to wash away their pasts by letting go of their anger and pain. Also, the rain becomes a metaphor for the growing relationships among the women and their newfound abilities to speak their own truths. Thus, the act of dancing touches an inner celebratory spirit and helps the women to rejoice over their resiliency. Through their healing, these women become "holy women" dancing erotically in the "hot sweet rain." Again, these images suggest that for the women to become fully accepting of their feminine nature, which includes the combination of spirit and humanity, they must embrace both parts of the self. Through the water ritual, the women gain a sense of spiritual veracity and at the same time they embrace their human drive for physical gratification. In this way, they have become both more like Eve, and more like Mary.

Morrison plays on the women's rituals as a way in which a woman can find her own voice and her own authority. Bonding with other women through this type of feminine ritual represents the pre-Christian tradition of Goddess worship that was practiced for centuries before the arrival of Christianity. These forms of ancient Pagan and Neo-Pagan religion are re-emerging in the United States on a rapid basis. On April 13, 2009, *Newsweek* published "The End of Christian America." Jon Meacham reports that not only has the percentage of self-identified Christians fallen 10 percentage points in the past two decades but also the number of Americans

who claim no religious affiliation has nearly doubled since 1990. In the article, R. Albert Mohler, Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary admits, "A remarkable culture shift has taken place among us . . . the most basic contours of American culture have been radically altered. The so-called Judeo-Christian consensus of the last millennium has given way to a post modern, post-Christian, post-Western cultural crisis which threatens the very heart of our culture" (Meacham 34).

Margot Adler, who travels the world interviewing people who practice Neo-Paganism, writes in the preface to her 2006 edition of *Drawing Down the Moon*:

> At least several hundred thousand people in the United States call themselves Pagans or Neo-Pagans today, and they use the word *pagan* in a very different way. These people – the subject of this book – consider themselves part of a religious movement that antedates Christianity and monotheism. By *pagan* they usually mean the pre-Christian nature religions of the West, and their own attempts to revive them or to re-create them in new forms. (xiv)

Adler's fieldwork documents the growing number of Neo-Pagans in the United States that see themselves as "spiritual" but not affiliated to any authoritative religion. In the *Newsweek* discussion, Meacham establishes the definition "post-Christian" as the historical concept of the Christian concept, i.e., God playing a diminished role in political or cultural identity. Mohler, a Southern Baptist conservative, states, "The post-Christian narrative is radically different; it offers spirituality, however defined, without binding authority. It is based on an understanding of history that presumes a less tolerant past and a more tolerant future, with the present as an important transitional step" (36). Meacham adds his own commentary to Mohler's remark, "The present, in this sense, is less about the death of God and more about the birth of many gods" (36). Margot Adler expresses her view about the "birth of many gods" in the following explanation:

> Just as the health of a forest or fragrant meadow can be measured by the number of different insects and plants and creatures that successfully make it their home,

> so only by an extraordinary abundance of disparate spiritual and philosophic paths will human beings navigate a pathway through the dark and swirling storms that mark our current era. (ix)

When examining the spread of Christianity of the past and comparing it to present statistics, the ideas of Meacham, Mohler, and Alder suggest a changing trend in spirituality in the Unites States. The trend seems to look to antiquity, before the rise of Christianity to create other ways to express spirituality. Mary Daly's opinion also coincides with this suggestion. Daly posits that when formal patriarchal religion was born all ideas of nature worship stopped. She attests the cause was the massive amount of witch burnings between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. This era is known to many as "The Burning Time," "The Witchcraze," or as "The Gynocide." Daly points out that for thousands of years women were the healers and the midwives of their communities. Before the rise of city centers, women acted in roles of physicians and counselors. As documented in the film *The Burning Times* women of the medieval era worshipped gods connected to nature to grant them bountiful harvests of herbs and other elements used in their medicines. Many of the pharmaceuticals used today are a result of this ancient knowledge.

These women represented the healing power of the human spirit by ministering natural medicines to the people in their communities. In fact, most pre-Christian religions give honor to the role of these women whose services benefited the lives of people within their small groups (*Burning*). Yet beginning in the fifteenth century, the Catholic Church began an Inquisition against the women who practiced nature rituals and healings. The Catholic Church banned any worship of Mother Earth and condemned the Goddess tradition of the ancients. In the small peasant societies of fifteenth-century Europe, pagan ceremonies or rituals were a way of life. They were *actions* of a physical nature recognizing a person's connection to the rhythms of the

earth. The people in the various European locales depended on farming and raising small herds as a way of life. Their respect for nature was not represented in an intellectualized *dogma* but rather in the physical performance of the rituals. Through the physical actions of singing, chanting, and dancing they celebrated the changing of the seasons, bountiful harvests, or the birth of a child. They imagined themselves as part of nature and not separate from cyclical time.

Patriarchal Christianity was in direct opposition to these rituals and was often suspicious of the women who knew about pharmacology. Church dogma looked upon these healers as satanic demons who threatened the knowledge and sanctification of Christian beliefs. Furthermore, these women had no male oversight in their behaviors, which was a contemptuous undertaking for fifteenth-century Europe. Midwives who could ease the pain of labor were considered especially abhorrent because canonical tradition espoused that woman should bring forth their children in "pain and suffering." Any alleviation of birth pain would directly oppose God's word. Thus women were forced to stop practicing the rituals and medicinal treatment of others and those who did not were accused of witchcraft and burned at the stake. The authority of the Catholic Church as well as the Protestant Church was absolute. Anyone who dared stand against the dogmatic authority of God as represented on earth by the priests and ministers were tortured and put to death. When epidemics like the Black Plague spread throughout Europe the church told congregants that this was punishment for their sins. If crops failed or herds of goats died from disease, women became the scapegoats of the Church and all the blame was placed on them.

Women's sexuality also came into play as a reason for the gynocide. In 1486 two Dominican priests, Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, published a manifesto, *Malleus Maleficarum* or *The Hammer of Witches*. This manual defended the prosecution of women based

on their sex because they "turn men into beasts, copulate with devils, [and] raise and stir up hailstorms and tempests" (qtd. in *Gyn* 188). Although there is no absolute accounting of the number of deaths, Donna Read in *The Burning Times* suggests that between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries hundred of thousands of women were tortured and killed perhaps up to nine million.

Current surveys show people turning away from authoritarian religions and returning to creeds that offer a non-authoritarian "feeling of spirituality." This facet also suggests people are denouncing a patriarchal ruler or dictator of religious dogma and are searching for a personal belief system based on the idea of pantheism or as Meacham remarks the idea of "many gods." Adler writes:

> From my own experience of Neo-Pagan rituals, I have come to feel that they have another purpose – to end, for a time, our sense of human alienation from nature and from each other. Accepting the idea of the "psychic sea," [Jung] and of human beings as isolated islands within that sea, we can say that, although we are always connected, our most common experience is one of estrangement. Ritual seems to be one method of reintegrating individuals and groups into the cosmos, and to tie in the activities of daily life with their ever present, often forgotten, significance. It allows us to feel biological connections with ancestors who regulated their lives and activities according to seasonal observances. Just as ecological theory explains how we are interrelated with all other forms of life, rituals allow us to re-create that unity in an explosive, non-abstract, gut level way. Rituals have the power to reset the terms of our universe until we find ourselves suddenly and truly "at home." (164-65)

Mavis, Gigi, Seneca, and Pallas, the women from the Convent, begin connecting to each other thus ending their human sense of alienation. They no longer feel like "isolated islands" in a "psychic sea." Through the use of physical ritual they reintegrate themselves into the human experience and gain awareness that their daily lives are meaningful and significant. Connie intuitively knows how to use healing rituals. By utilizing her inner power to bring the dead back to life she becomes a conduit for healing. Lone, the hated and feared mid-wife from Ruby,

recognizes Connie's power and encourages her to use it for the greater good thus connecting her spiritual essence to the natural world.

When visitors from Ruby go to the Convent to buy their pepper barbeque sauce or their baked goods, they begin to sense a change in the women and become suspicious. The antifeminists among them mention their apprehensions to their husbands. Soon, the men of Ruby blame everything bad that has happened in the town on the women of the Convent. Rather than discuss the town's problems rationally, the men hold the women of the Convent responsible for Arnette's abortion, the Flood family's sick children, and all of the mistakes the men had made in their lives. "'Bitches. More like witches,'" the men tell each other. Further, "'These here sluts out there by themselves never step foot in church and I bet you a dollar to a fat nickel they ain't thinking about one either. They don't need men and they don't need God. Can't say they haven't been warned'" (276). Because the men have no reasonable explanation to explain several tragic events that have occurred in Ruby, they feel they are losing their control over the town. They must place blame on some one or something and destroy it so they may regain their position of power.

Arming themselves with guns and rope, the founding fathers of Ruby raid the Convent taking the women by surprise. Steward Morgan opens fire and kills Connie and another woman. Three other women run out through the fields surrounding the Convent while the men open full rifle fire on them. Lone had gathered a few friends from neighboring farms and tries to warn the women but she did not arrive in time. Morrison explains the action of the attack in third person limited narrative view. In the confusion of the attack, the reader does not know who was shot and who ran away. Morrison does not reveal if the shots fired at the women who are running away through the open fields kills them. In the mass confusion of the "witch hunt" no one is sure of

who is dead and who gets away. Afterward, the men stand around and make excuses for their actions. K. D. claims they stormed the convent out of self-defense. The wives who have been alerted by Lone's friends arrive at the convent in time to lay out the bodies of the two dead women. The men never notify police or law enforcement authorities and show no sense of remorse over what they have done. Thus, by killing the women of the Convent the men of Ruby have put an end to the "witches" or the unexplained events in their lives that are out of their control. At the same time, their actions serve as a warning to their wives as to what would happen if they ever try to live a life without male involvement. In turn, the ecostructure has lost a chance to diversify and thus becomes weakened when it looses a chance to expand its multiculturality through the improved lives of the Convent women.

In ecofeminist thought, if patriarchy links four types of oppression together: race, gender, class, and nature, then non-authoritarian spirituality supports the idea self-realization for all humans. When all people recognize their self worth then they will enter into a participatory agreement with one another to protect life on the planet through mutual respect for one another. In "Rethinking Theology and Nature" Christ says that calling for this change in thinking requires a deconstruction of current thought patterns and a reconstruction of spirituality. "For me the divine/Goddess/God/Earth/Life/It symbolizes the whole of which we are a part" (320). Christ calls for a moving away from societal control by ideas of dualism and hierarchy to a world of "pluralism" and "diversity." (269) The threat of destruction to all life comes out of the inharmonious divisions between genders, races, and classes and in the distinction between God and nature. In *Paradise* Morrison shows the suffering that takes place in a patriarchal society where hierarchy, dualism, and division drive the life force of people into taking on roles of aggression and non-being. Ecofeminist theology supports the idea that all humans are part of a

larger life force. Every being on earth both human and non-human participates in the energy that connects all life. Ecofeminist theology challenges all people to admit that there are no hierarchies in earthly existence. The intrinsic value of every life force deserves mutual value and respect to enhance multiculturality and to strengthen the earth's chance for future survival.

Slumping along. Filthy, ragged, hopeless. He'd stop and lean on the cart and the boy would go on and then stop and look back and he would raise his weeping eyes and see him standing there in the road looking back at him from some unimaginable future, glowing in that waste like a tabernacle.

Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*

Only a sensibility that accepts our intrinsic interdependence not only with all people but also with the earth will be able to create the conditions necessary to help bring about the fulfillment of all as salvation for our time.

Sally McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*

The Lord created me the first of his works long ago, before all else was made. I was formed in the earliest times, at the beginning before earth itself . . . when He set the heavens in place I was there . . .at His side each day…his darling and delight . . . playing over his whole world, while my delight was in mankind.

Sophia's Song, Proverbs 8: 22-31

CHAPTER 7

SOPHIA'S TABLE AND NUCLEAR NARRATIVE IN CORMAC MCCARTHY'S *THE ROAD*

Puritanical religious foundations continue to be a strong influence on the literary history of the United States. In the current wave of ecological criticism, American novels seem to be exploring Judeo-Christian symbolism in their narratives to consider the connection of people's relationships to nature and to God. In neo-pastoral terms *The Road*, by Cormac McCarthy, demonstrates many of the eight threads, which are woven through current neo-pastoral novels. McCarthy suggests that the charred landscape in *The Road* speaks to people of the unheeded warnings that were issued by ecologists, scientists, and theologians in regard to

nuclear proliferation. Thus in spite of its demise the landscape continues a dialogue with humankind. People continue to search for philosophical meaning through their environment even though in the chronotope of the novel most of the human and non-human population of the earth has been destroyed. The ash-covered contours of the land reflect the barrenness of the spirituality that remains among many of the survivors. The rendering of the desolate, corpse-ridden landscape expresses sadness because people of the planet have finally succumbed to the overextension of industrialization, technology, and the inability to negotiate and compromise at governmental levels. The main characters, the boy and his father who remain unnamed throughout the novel, both seem heroic at times, but their attitudinal differences in opinion about the choices they make on their journey frequently clash. By contrasting their differences of opinion on "the right thing to do" McCarthy leads the way to further dialogue about what moral attitudes reflect a true hero. Also, McCarthy suggests people's need to remythologize their religious concepts and to come to terms with the use of nuclear technology on a global scale.

The man and his pregnant wife live outside a main city center when the disaster occurs. "The clocks stopped at 1:17. A long shear of light and then a series of low concussions. He got up and went to the window. What is it? She said. He didn't answer" (McCarthy 52). Somehow the man and his wife survive the fallout of the blast, and they remain in good enough health for the man to assist the woman to deliver her baby, a son. "A few nights later she gave birth in their bed by the light of a drycell lamp. Gloves meant for dishwashing. The improbable appearance of the small crown of the head . . . .Beyond the window just gathering cold, the fires on the horizon" (59). McCarthy does not relay exact time frames or the exact cause of the catastrophe, which places the reader in the unfamiliar and unknowing mood of the novel. Yet at some time, the man, the wife, and the son begin a journey south hoping to find survivors.

McCarthy not only leaves out the time referent, but also he omits geographical locations. The readers, like the characters, are left to assume the general directions of the journey. After the boy's birth, the father wonders how he will explain the world to him, since the ecosphere as the man knew it no longer exists. "Sometimes the child would ask him questions about the world that for him was not even a memory. He thought hard how to answer. There is no past . . . . But he stopped making things up because the telling made him feel bad" (54).

At some point after the man, wife, and son begin the expedition to the south, the wife expresses to the man how frightened she is about the journey. They have to scavenge for food and marauders roam the country killing the weak and eating them. The man and woman will not resort to cannibalism, though they seem to be in a minority. Trust in fellow wanderers becomes a major theme at this point in the novel. The man has a gun with a limited number of bullets. When they see people about, the man and his family hide because they do not know if they will be attacked and used as food by other people. How can they know when it is safe to befriend another person? McCarthy suggests that all people are making choices about how to survive. Some choose to cannibalize; some choose to die rather than harm another person. Herein lies one of the basic dialogues of the text. McCarthy shows the bleak set of circumstances that all of the survivors face and questions whether or not choosing death is an appropriate choice. The woman becomes so fearful that she begins to talk to her husband about death. Should he use the bullets to kill her and their son and then kill himself? The man refuses; as long as there is a chance they can reach the south and find others who share their same beliefs, he will not give up. The woman feels differently. "Sooner or later they will catch us and they will kill us. They will rape me. They'll rape him. They are going to rape us and kill us and eat us and you wont face it. Youd rather wait for it to happen. But I cant. I cant" (56).

The woman begins to visualize death as a lover. She tells her husband to think of her as a "faithless slut" with a "new lover" but she will not let the man use a bullet that could be used to defend the boy to kill her. Thus, she wanders off one night and kills herself. Through this scenario, McCarthy suggests another dialogue. Are men and women different in their approaches to life, family and parenting, and if so how are they different? The woman as a mother wants the boy to have every chance to live and does not assume the man can protect both of them. She reasons that the man may be able to protect the boy, even if it means killing him if they are attacked. Through her suicide, the woman gives her life to protect her son and leaves her husband to be both father and mother to the child.

In *Earthcare* (1996) Carolyn Merchant discusses ecofeminism in terms of biology and reverence for life. She references Charlene Spretnak's remythologizing of Gaia, the ancient earth mother who gives birth to the world and all life forms. Later, Spretnak incorporated Gaia into an ecofeminist movement with both the earth and the female as related in the struggle against patriarchal constructions (3-4). Working from Spretnak's idea, James Lovelock developed the concept of Gaia as the entire realm of earth, which should be regarded as one living organism. Lovelock promoted his idea of Gaia as a new way to think of Mother Earth. "Together, the two approaches of feminist spirituality and scientific theology recast Gaia as a compelling metaphor for a new understanding of reverence for life on earth" (4). Merchant, however, discusses a negative aspect of this new metaphor of earth and female connection. Merchant states that in a family the mother is the one that gives birth to the children, stays with the children on a daily basis, and cleans up after them. Thus, in application of this metaphor, when Gaia's children make a mess of the earth, will Mother Earth step in to clean it up? Merchant thinks the Gaia hypothesis may not be a good one to describe nature's relationship to

the mother image. Through the suicide of the mother in *The Road*, McCarthy suggests that woman as associated with nature and reproduction has given up and will no longer be around to administer her healing strength. Although she reasons that she is giving her son a better chance to survive, she takes her own restorative abilities away from her child.

In the fictive world of *The Road*, people are reduced to such hunter-gatherer standards as were present in ancient societies. "Women and men perform different tasks and have different roles, but each is essential to the survival of the group as a whole and neither is devalued. The society is geared to the production of use values (food, clothing, heating, shelter, etc.) as the material basis for sustaining life" (Merchant 145). When the mother refuses to carry on, she puts the sole responsibility for "production of values" to the father, and many times he has to leave the son alone while he verifies the safety of their surroundings. Thus, the father has to teach the boy how to put the gun in his mouth and kill himself if he is attacked when he is alone. This makes the boy realize the *absolute* peril of the situation. Perhaps the mother could have given more protection to her son by living rather than taking her own life. She felt that her role in the hunter-gatherer society was devalued and she was nothing more than a food supply or a future rape victim. When the mother gives up, the family suffers; when the earth cannot give nurture to the inhabitants, humankind suffers. Merchant's and McCarthy's views converge on this metaphor of earth as mother.

Another aspect of Merchant's discussion in *Earthcare* is the ecofeminist movement against nuclear proliferation. Whether for energy purposes or weaponry, ecofeminists take an active role against nuclear development. Merchant sees a connection between feminism and ecology as they both imply common policy goals and interacting languages. She proposes four tenets of common ground. The first, *All parts of a system have equal value*, reviews the idea

that all organic and inorganic components in the ecosystem should be given equivalent consideration when looking at long term decisions and their consequences. The second, *The earth is a home*, evaluates the importance of people knowing what chemicals are in foods and household cleaners that could be potentially dangerous. The third tenet, *Process is primary*, conveys that the life force within the earth is limited, and cannot be withdrawn without a discussion of all alternatives in which every member of earth's household is informed and represented. The fourth, which echoes Barry Commoner's idea, *There is no free lunch*, references the thermodynamic theory of the earth and that technologies cannot take more out of the planet than they return. That which is taken from nature must be given back through recycling of goods, sharing of services, and replacing or renewing earth resources (Merchant 148- 49). During the 1970s and the 1980s Helen Caldicott's *Nuclear Madness* put these propositions into action. As the tenets suggest, Caldicott argued that there is a direct connection "between women's concern for life and the deadly effects of technology" (152). In the event of a nuclear war, "target areas would be demolished within 20 minutes, and within 30 days, 90 percent of all Americans would be dead. Because of massive damage to the ozone layer all birds and mammals would die, leaving a few insect species better able to withstand radiation than other living organisms" (152). Caldicott proposed that women have "a special responsibility to mobilize men and the whole human race against nuclear weapons" (154). Clearly, Caldicott calls on women to be passionate for this cause because women are the mothers of the world. Further, Caldicott admits that she had come to terms with her own death, realizing the enormous potential of destruction in nuclear technology. Once she recognized the fact that she might die because of nuclear extinction, she had a greater appreciation for not only her own life but also for all of nature as well. Merchant foretells the future of nuclear development when she states:

> Unless the home is liberated from its status as "women's sphere" to that of "human habitat," the feminist movement cannot succeed. Unless the Earth is liberated from overkill of certain kinds of high technologies and renovated with low-impact "appropriate technologies," the environmental movement will not succeed. (166)

For the father and his son in *The Road* this warning comes to fruition. Because of a nuclear disaster, their planet is destroyed. McCarthy suggests that the continuation of life on the earth seems bleak and perhaps entirely without hope.

In *Gaia and God* (1992) Rosemary Radford Ruether considers the idea of destruction of the earth through industrialization as "the lost paradise." Ruether notes that there are two major roots to the idea of lost paradise in western thought. The first, the biblical story of the Garden of Eden and the second, the story of Prometheus who carried the forbidden fire from the realm of the gods to humans on the earth. In the biblical account, the first man and wife live in an idyllic garden where they have access to all the food that the plant life produces except for one tree in the center of the garden which bears the "forbidden" fruit. Because Adam and Eve eat from the forbidden tree that their God had set off limits, they are expelled from the garden. No longer will plant and animal life be abundant for them; they will have to work the ground in order to produce food and thus sustain their lives. In the Greek myth, as told by the poet Hesiod, Prometheus steals fire from the gods and carries it to earth. As a result of having the gift of fire, humans invent technology. Zeus punishes humankind by sending Pandora, who opens her box and release diseases that change the course of human life on earth. When comparing the two accounts Ruether draws the conclusion that both myths are "shaped by males to blame women, especially as wives, for all the troubles of hard labor and physical illness" (144). Ruether adds that "woman-blaming for the lost paradise may have psycho-familial roots, roots that go back to primal human social patterns" (145).

The “original matriarchy” theory, which Ruether discusses, suggests that there may have been an historical time prior to patriarchal rule when women controlled the governance. Although this hypothesis gained success in popular nineteenth-century anthropology, this theory also posits that during the time of matriarchal rule the human spirit was controlled by what Ruether refers to as “dark forces” (145). On the other hand, the rule of patriarchy characterizes a rule of the “transcendent Spirit” which triumphs over nature. Current ecofeminists are reviving the theme of original matriarchal rule and see this era of history not as a dark and primitive time but as a time when the concepts of women, family, religion, and society were in ascendancy. The main deity was the Mother Goddess and represented what Ruether calls “the benevolent female rule” (145). When patriarchy became the predominant form of social rule, women were no longer in control of their own lives. Yet another aspect of women losing control of governmental rule is that women were no longer in control of the nonhuman world or of the ecosystem at large. Ruether builds on ideas from Mary Daly’s *The Church and the Second Sex*, which supports the original matriarchal theory. Ruether recounts and agrees with Daly’s work as follows:

> Women have the capacity for true life that is vigorous, and in dynamic communion with animals, earth, and stars. Males lack such capacity. They are by “nature” parasitic, feeding off the true-life bearers and creators, setting up necrophilic mummeries of real life and insight. This spurious, parasitic maleness is the source of evil, the basis for generating a fallacious world of delusion that reverses all true principles and life and spreads a network of death over the fabric of life. (148)

Although Ruether claims that perhaps Daly goes too far in negating males as fellow humans she does look to those pre-patriarchal societies where women had control of resources as a model for an egalitarian society today. In these societies, males worked for the united good of gathering and parenting, which limited aggressive male behavior through hunting. Ruether

maintains that both men and women "must share fully the parenting of children from birth and the domestic work associated with daily life" (171).

In the setting of *The Road* all of earth has been destroyed, "a network of death" has spread over "the fabric of life." Since the boy has no mother, the father must be the parent, the hunter, and the gatherer. The father has such a strong survival instinct, for both himself and the boy, that sometimes the boy feels his father becomes too aggressive with people they meet on the road. In one instance, a stranger approaches them and urges the boy and the father to join his group. While the stranger is speaking, he grabs the boy and puts a knife to his throat. In a swift movement, the father drops down to his knees, and shoots the man squarely in the forehead. Because this all happens so fast, the boy cannot immediately grasp that his father killed a man. When he does, the boy goes into shock, begins shaking violently and is unable to speak. The father, hiding in the woods and listening for the sounds of other attackers, wraps the boy in a blanket and rocks him back and forth replaying the words of his dead wife in his mind, "You will not face the truth. You will not" (68). When they get to a place where the father thinks it is safe to stop for the night, he takes the boy into a cold creek bed and washes the dead man's remains from his hair. "This is my child, he said. I wash a dead man's brains out of his hair. That is my job. Then he wrapped him in the blanket and carried him to the fire" (74).

Although the man questions whether or not he is doing the right thing by putting the boy through the experience of seeing another man killed, he still feels that life will continue for the better if he can get to the south and find other "good guys" or others who will not kill people for food. Even if the boy physically survives the journey, McCarthy shows how the violent events on the road affect the boy both mentally and spiritually. While the man rocks the boy by the fire, drying his hair from the events of the day, he thinks to himself, "All this like some ancient

anointing. So be it. Evoke the forms. Where you've nothing else construct ceremonies out of the air and breathe upon them" (74). The man has no training for the task he has undertaken. Both mother and father, hunter and gatherer, defender and protector, the man fights for his own life and the life of his son. He knows the boy has no memories of anything but the absence of his mother, the ashen landscape, and the constant trudging down the road. Now, the first person that has spoken to them in over a year, he killed to save the boy. The man knows he has nothing else; there is nothing left but trying to survive. Thus, he decides to "evoke forms" and "construct ceremonies" so the boy will have something positive to build upon when they reach their destination. The ceremonies and forms are not matriarchal or patriarchal, they are recreations of ancient myth that give the boy something to believe in other than the violence of the continuing journey.

Several times in the story, the man tells the boy that they "carry the fire." In the beginning of the journey south, this was a story the father tells the boy. Towards the end of the novel, the boy begins to believe that are carrying a real fire to others. Yet, he does not understand where it is or what this means. The fire metaphor is reminiscent of the Greek legend of Prometheus. In the myth the Titan gods fought against the Olympian gods led by Zeus/Jupiter, and when they were defeated Jupiter sent them in chains to the Lower World. However, two brothers, children of the Titans, Prometheus and Epimetheus, were spared from imprisonment. Prometheus, which means forethought in Greek, was always thinking of the future. True to his name, Prometheus wants to devise a plan to better the human world. While traveling within the human realm Prometheus realizes the people live in wretched conditions. They live in caves, dying from cold and starvation. The worst part of the human situation, thinks Prometheus, is that they have no fire. "'If they only had fire,' said Prometheus to himself, 'they could at least warm

themselves and cook their food; and after a while they could learn to make tools and build themselves houses. Without fire they are worse off than the beasts'" (Baldwin). When he begged Jupiter to give man the gift of fire, Jupiter refuses on the premise that if humans had fire they would become stronger and more godlike. If humankind remains at a certain level of degradation, then the gods could be even higher in their realms, thus sustaining the hierarchy that exists between humans and gods.

Prometheus was saddened at Jupiter's response and while pondering what he might do to carry the fire to humans he came upon a stalk of fennel. He saw that the hollow center of the stalk was filled with a dry, inner substance. If only he could get a spark of fire from the sun, he could take the spark to earth. He journeyed for days, finally reaching the sun's flames and the dry fennel stalk caught on fire and slowly burned. When Prometheus returned to earth he called the people from their caves and built huge fires for them, showing them how to warm themselves around the glowing coals. Soon, people began to cook food and were glad because this new life had been given to them; they were not like beasts anymore. Prometheus taught them many other things: how to build houses, to tame sheep, to teach cattle to plow, how to mine for copper and iron, and how to hammer ore to make tools and weapons.

One day Jupiter looked down to earth and saw the fires burning and people living in houses. He knew at once that Prometheus had disobeyed his directive so he sought to not only punish Prometheus but also to make humankind miserable. So Jupiter formed Pandora and each god and goddess gave her a gift so that she was the most beautiful creature in the entire world. When Pandora arrived on earth, she carried her golden casket of precious things. Athena had told her never to open it or to even look inside. Jupiter gave Pandora to Prometheus's brother, Epimetheus to be his wife. One day, she peeked inside the golden casket and "out flew ten

thousand strange creatures with death-like faces and gaunt and dreadful forms" (Baldwin). These creatures found dwelling-places in the people's homes and remained there. "They were diseases and cares; for up to that time mankind had not had any kind of sickness, nor felt any troubles of the mind, nor worried about what the morrow might bring forth" (Baldwin). Jupiter then ordered his servants to capture Prometheus and carry him to the top of the Caucasus Mountains and to bind him in iron chains so he could not move. "And so the great friend of men, who had given them fire and lifted them out of their wretchedness and shown them how to live, was chained to the mountain peak; and there he hung, with the storm-winds whistling always around him…and fierce eagles shrieking in his ears and tearing his body with their cruel claws" (Baldwin). Eventually, however, Prometheus is rescued and continues to fight for the people of the earth.

To find a connection between myth and reality, Mircea Eliade asserts that myth "narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the 'beginnings'" (*Myth* 5). Eliade relates that in its original context, myth was believed to be a true story that exemplified the actions of the gods. To ancient societies, myth was a sacred model for human behavior. To understand human activity, ecologists and theologians should view all human pursuits as a reenactment of god or goddess behavior and not as "instinctual behavior, bestiality, or sheer childishness" (*Myth* 3*)*. Myth explains how reality came into existence. "Myth tells only of that which *really* happened, which manifested itself completely. The actors in myths are Supernatural Beings" (6). Eliade pursues this idea by giving various examples of societal myths from around the world. In each case, the myth was the true history of the reality and thus, human activity is a recreation of this truth. Through ritual reenactment, societies demonstrate their understanding of reality through the reliving of sacred stories. "If the World *exists*, if man *exists*, it is because Supernatural Beings exercised creative powers in the

'beginning.' But after the cosmogony and the creation of man other events occurred, and man *as he is today* is the direct result of those mythical events, *he is constituted by those events*" (*Myth* 11).

According to Eliade, the rituals of humankind are based on the repetition of sacred history. Because sacred history is real, reenactment of the events connects people to the sacred realm. The connection to Supernatural Beings gives both man and woman power to overcome the physical obstacles on earth. Also, through the reenactment of the event, people connect to the original time in which the event was performed. "To re-experience that time, to re-enact it as often as possible, to witness the spectacle of the divine works, to meet with the Supernaturals and relearn their creative lesson is the desire that runs like a pattern through all ritual reiterations of myths" (19). Not only does myth give connection to the time origin of a society, the reenactments of the events, or the rituals give power to people, sometimes considered as magical powers. By returning to origins of both creation and time, people connect with the primary experience and hence feel a sense of renewal. The strength of the recreation of the origin myth gives people a strong sense of connection to the sacred and thus enhanced feelings of strength and hope.

In *The Road* the man and the boy talk about carrying the fire on their journey south. At first the man tells the boy about his own history, but since the boy has no memory of earth as it was for the man, he began to retell more ancient myth that connected both the boy and him to a sacred time origin. When the boy asks, "'We're going to be okay, arnt we Papa'" (83) the man replies yes, they were going to be okay because they were carrying the fire. And the boy repeats, "Yes. Because we're carrying the fire'" (83). The boy has no indication of what this means. He repeats the words over, after his father, in the same sense the words of a myth are

repeated, in the same manner and order. Later, they add a phrase to the myth, "'Because we're the good guys.'" Then they continue with the repetition, "And we're carrying the fire'" (129). When the father becomes very ill and thinks he is near death, the boy wants to enter death with him. The father says, "'You cant. You have to carry the fire'" (278). Pleading, the boy responds "'I don't know how to'" and then he asks his father, "'Is it real? The fire?'" (278) The father says yes, the fire is very real and it is inside the boy and has been all along. "'It's inside you. It was always there. I can see it'" (279). By reinventing the Promethean myth the father gives strength to his son and conveys a sense of the supernatural, i.e., the fire is inside him. The recitation of the phrase, "We carry the fire" provides the boy with a feeling of power and bestows him with a sense of mission and a connection to a past he cannot know. Yet in *The Road* the reader must examine the Promethean myth to understand the ominous sense of connection the fire brings to the boy's current situation.

The younger deities, the Olympians, overthrow the Titans the primary gods and goddesses. Zeus/Jupiter throws the rebellious Titans into the underworld prison. Prometheus, the son of a Titan, knows Jupiter as the reigning god has the power to deny his request to carry the fire to humans. Jupiter wants to keep the Olympic god hierarchy intact so, he refuses to let Prometheus carry the fire to earth. Prometheus disobeys Jupiter's order and not only shows humans how to build fires, but also how to mine minerals from the earth and how to forge weapons from the ore. Carrying the fire is a risk Prometheus takes to help people become better than beasts even though it eventually leads to human aggression.

McCarthy uses the myth as a way for the father and the son to connect through a commonality and thus create their own connection to original time and sacredness. The boy reaches a level of understanding needed to carry on the reenactment of the ceremonial

relationship to the sacred. Before the creation of the fire myth, the boy has no connection to the sacred, no understanding of a past with common origin stories. At the end of the novel, when the boy meets another man wandering on the road, he asks the man if he is carrying the fire. The man looks at him despondently and replies, "'Am I what?'" (283). The new person the boy meets connects no value to this origin myth or the common power the boy and his father share in the repetition of the carrying the fire ritual. Then the wandering man says to the boy, "'You're kind of weirded out, aren't you?'" (283) suggesting that the boy shows signs of stress and fatigue. But the boy will not give up on the myth and he presses the newcomer into admitting that in fact he does carry the fire. Thus the boy continues the tradition of the myth and creates his own sense of connection with his father who to the boy represents original time and the sacredness of his own origin story. In addition, "carrying the fire" becomes synonymous to being "the good guys" or those who do not kill people for food. McCarthy may have chosen this particular myth to show the development of the boy's explanations for reality. For the boy, his *own* father began the reality that carrying the fire represents those you can trust. If the new wanderer carries the fire, then he becomes a "good guy" in the boy's view, i.e., one the boy can trust. Eliade writes:

> The man of the societies in which myth is a living thing lives in a World that, though "in cipher" and mysterious, is "open." The world "speaks" to man, and to understand its language he needs only to know the myths and decipher the symbols . . . .The World is no longer an opaque mass of objects arbitrarily thrown together, it is a living Cosmos, articulated and meaningful. In the last analysis, *the World reveals itself as language*. It speaks to man through its own mode of being, through its structures and its rhythms. (141)

The world McCarthy creates in *The Road* manifests no growth of new organisms, no plant life, no warmth. The planet has become a monochromatic expanse of ash that covers the landscape. The boy knows nothing of plant and animal life, of Greek origin myth, of the history of humankind. He knows he trusts his father and that he and his father are the "good guys" who

"carry the fire." The father tells the boy that the fire is inside him and that it is visible. Although the boy does not totally understand his father's symbolism, he has faith in his father to tell him the truth of the "World," and to speak to him with meaningful honesty. By continuing to relate the myth of fire to others he meets, the boy will be capable of building trusting relationships with other people by reenacting the origin myth his father has instilled in him. For the boy, the "World is no longer an opaque mass of objects arbitrarily thrown together." When he repeats the words of his father, that they "carry the fire," he connects with the sacred ceremony his father has instilled in him, which brings hope to the boy.

McCarthy uses not only Greek mythology to reestablish sacred time but also uses Judeo-Christian allusion as well. While "fire" connects the boy to the sacred time and order that also connects him to his father, fire also is used extensively in both Hebrew and Christian scripture to connote the presence of God. In *The Road* McCarthy shows the father trudging along on his journey looking at the boy and pondering his future. "Slumping along. Filthy, ragged, hopeless. He'd stop and lean on the cart and the boy would go on and then stop and look back and he would raise his weeping eyes and see him standing there in the road looking back at him from some unimaginable future, glowing in that waste like a tabernacle" (273). Later, when the father sleeps on the beach, the boy brings him a cup of water. "He watched him come through the grass and kneel with the cup of water he'd fetched. There was light all about him. He took the cup and drank and lay back" (277). In Hebrew scripture, God manifests himself through fire on many occasions. In Genesis 3: 24, He becomes like "a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life." In Exodus, 3: 2, He appears to Moses "in flames of fire from within a bush." On Mt. Sinai, when He gives Moses the stone tablets, He looks "like a consuming fire on top of the mountain." God gives Moses very explicit plans on the structure of

the tabernacle that contains the Ark of the Covenant, or the chest that contains the written word of God. The tabernacle ranks as the most important structure of the early Jews as they form the base of their religious culture. According to Hebrew scripture, the tabernacle contains supernatural powers for those who come into contact with it. The Ark as well as the entire tabernacle is constructed with rings and poles so that the structures could be carried throughout their journey in the Sinai Dessert. When Joshua finally leads the Israelites across the Jordan River into the Promised Land, one member from each of the twelve tribes carries the Ark into the Jordan to part the river so that thousands of Jews can cross into the land that God has promised them (Joshua 3). When the Philistines capture the Ark of the Covenant, many of the enemy become ill, begin to grow tumors, or die when they come into contact with the Ark (1 Sam. 6:19). Some Israelites are struck down for merely looking inside of the Ark. When David first brings the tabernacle into his realm, he fears that he may be struck down because of the power connected not only to the tabernacle but also to the entirety of its furnishings.

The only history the boy knows is what his father has told him. Also, the father has told him that to be safe, they need to stay away from the strangers on the road. The boy, however, does not have the same opinion as his father. When the boy and the father see others on the road, they are usually sick and starving. The man insists they cannot give anything to these people because most of the time they have too little to give away. Often, the boy pleads with his father to stop the journey long enough to feed a person, or to try to avoid places where people may be living because they cannot help anyone. The boy seems to intrinsically care for the sick and the dying and wants to do whatever it takes to give them aid. The boy and his father have an ongoing conversation about what should be done but usually the father wins the debate because he convinces the boy they will probably be attacked for food. In one instance, while they were

camping on the beach a thief steals all of their scavenged food, clothes, and blankets. The man and the boy track the thief and recoup their possessions. Yet, for safety precautions, the father tells the thief to take off his clothes so he will be incapacitated and thus, less likely to steal from them again. The boy begs his father to return the clothes to the thief so he will not die of hypothermia. The father recants and they take the clothes back to the road for the naked thief.

In another situation, they encounter an old man and the boy begs his father to give him some of their food. At first, the father is reluctant, saying they will not have enough food to keep themselves alive. However, the boy argues that the old man will die if they cannot come to his immediate rescue. Again, the father takes the boy's advice and they give several cans of food to the old man. In addition, they let him sleep by the warmth of their fire. In the morning the father says to the old man, "You should thank him you know" (170). When the old man asks the father why the boy was so insistent on helping him the father replies, "You wouldn't understand, he said. I'm not sure I do" (170). The old man replies, "Maybe he believes in God" (171) and his father answers, "I don't know what he believes in" (171). The stranger remarks that when he first saw the boy he could not believe his eyes because he never thought he would see a child again. The father replies, "What if I said he's a god?" (172). The old man replies, "I'm past all that now. Have been for years . . . .So I hope that's not true what you said because to be on the road with the last god would be a terrible thing so I hope it's not true" (172). The old man has totally lost his faith and even though the boy shares his food with him, he is incapable of gratitude even if the boy is a god. The boy does not care that the man has lost hope; he is just glad he was able to give him something to eat.

McCarthy suggests that even though the boy has seen nothing but destruction of the earth and the death of many people on the road, he continues to help others. Even though he

knows the peril of their own journey and the unlikely possibility they will be able to find enough food, the boy does not seem to give in to his fears. He tells his father that they do not help *enough* people and that he worries about what will happen to the people they cannot save. McCarthy's characterization of the boy suggests a goodness like that displayed by Jesus in the Christian New Testament. Although McCarthy does not use the name of Jesus in the text, the father says at the onset of the journey that the boy is the word of God. "If he is not the word of God God never spoke" (5). After one of their discussions about helping people the man tells the boy, "My job is to take care of you. I was appointed to do that by God. I will kill anyone who touches you. Do you understand?" (77). In the Gospel of John in the New Testament the evangelist writes, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning" (John 1: 1-2). In Christian understanding, Jesus is God and was present with God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, when the world was created. They are not separate persons but are considered to be one God in the form of the Trinity, the third person being the Holy Spirit. When Jesus comes to earth, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1: 14). Jesus becomes the Word of God in the flesh that lives as a person on the earth. The main thrust of His ministry is to care for the poor, give to the needy and to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22: 39).

To his followers, Jesus required that they take no food or clothes with them when they travel on preaching missions because they should be able to live off of the generosity of those who listen and believe in the Word of God. In one of the parables, Jesus talks to the apostles about worry. He tells the apostles they should not be concerned about their daily food and clothing because God loves them so much that he will take care of them. "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you eat or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more

than food and the body is more than clothes" (Luke 12: 22-23). Jesus continues, "Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these" (Luke 12: 27). Jesus makes the point that if the non-human beings of nature have no worries for the future and God supplies them with all of their needs, then people should not worry about their future needs. Jesus does not say to be careless about the future, but in this parable, he addresses the idea of needless worry and the stress it plays in the lives of people. "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?" (Luke 12: 25-26) As the Word of God, Jesus confirms to his followers that the right thing to do is to give to the poor and the needy and the rest will take care of itself.

The boy in *The Road* seems to embody the Word of God without knowing about canonized Christian teachings. The boy feels a sense of interconnectedness with the people they meet on the road. He understands the concept that by helping them they may, in turn, either help his father and him or possibly another person. Yet only through this sense of interdependence on one another will good actions be reestablished in the world. Doing good to and for others seems to be inherent in his character. The father tells the old man that the boy may be an angel or a god. Also, his father calls him the word of God, and refers to the boy's goodness as the light of the tabernacle. When the boy gives his father a drink of water he kneels in reverential devotion. McCarthy uses the words of the Last Supper, "and he took the cup and drank." The allusion of the boy as Jesus or as having the supernatural power of the tabernacle directs the imagery of *The Road*. McCarthy suggests a dialogue about human nature and the consideration of what is the right thing to do to establish interconnections with one another and to reestablish connections to the earth. For the father, God has told him to take the boy to safety. To complete this task, the

man must kill and ignore the needy so that the boy will be safe. For him, the right thing to do revolves around total protection of his son. To the boy, the right thing to do is to care for others along the road. He performs his acts of mercy out of his genuine drive to care for others. The boy does not worry about how much he and his father will have to eat or where they will find food. He does not worry about his death or the death of his father. His life's drive is based on the inherent need to do good for others, "to carry the fire," and to be one of the "good guys." Thus, the boy becomes a continuing typology for the tabernacle and the Word of God. In the face of the total destruction of the planet McCarthy suggests that a sacred force remains through the boy's feeling of interconnections with others.

Sally McFague expresses people's interconnections in her views of nuclear ecological theology in *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*. McFague argues that the threat of nuclear destruction that people face today calls for remythologizing the metaphors that represent the relationship between God and the world. As Eliade discusses the idea that myths are metaphors that people reenact to form a sacred relationship to supernatural time and being, McFague analyzes that the current nuclear age of science and technology calls for new types of metaphors in which humans may consider a sacred presence. To illustrate her ideas, she refers to Nietzsche's comments on metaphors. Since human beings create connections to the sacred through myth and metaphor, people seem trapped in the strict interpretation of the same ideas over thousands of years. Nietzsche writes:

> What is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymics, anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which become poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage, seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding; truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they *are* illusions; worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses, coins which have their obverse effaced and now are no longer of account as coins but merely as metal. (In McFague 5)

Nietzsche criticizes people for binding themselves with the structures of their own metaphors. McFague agrees with this idea. “Nietzsche is saying not only that we construct the worlds we inhabit but also that we forget we have done so. The works of the imagination, the world views in which we live, were once valuable for the conduct of life” (6). As world-views change over time, the constructions of theology need to reflect the changes. Theology is a construct of human imagination and theologians are duty bound to reconstruct theology for the nuclear age. With new models of sacred being, people may be able to reconnect to sacred time and supernatural relationships to prevent nuclear disaster. The importance of remythologizing God becomes necessary “for our time” because of people’s current ability to “diminish if not destroy life through nuclear energy” (13). As McCarthy depicts in *The Road*, worldwide destruction caused by a nuclear explosion would annihilate ecosystems and human life patterns that exist today. McFague explores concerns of what she calls “the nuclear nightmare.” Because we now live in the nuclear age, we live with the knowledge that we can destroy ourselves and other forms of life at any given moment. This knowledge raises doubts about our future and what can be done in both eastern and western cultures to divert nuclear catastrophe. McFague suggests the most important activity that theologians can contribute to the nuclear narrative is to remythologize canonical biblical metaphors.

The problem exists in the construction of the metaphors that Judeo-Christian canon uses to relay the God-world relationship. McFague writes:

> An ecological sensibility that cares for the earth that “cares for us” must accompany a vision of social, political, economic justice if that vision is to become anything other than rhetoric. Only a sensibility that accepts our intrinsic interdependence not only with all people but also with the earth will be able to create the conditions necessary to help bring about the fulfillment of all as salvation for our time. (52)

The “salvation for our time” would be for all people to realize that the recognition of interdependence becomes a necessity when dealing with the concepts of nuclear proliferation. When people become sensitive to the needs of others both human and non-human life then the idea of caring for the earth will implicitly involve caring for one another.

In the early Christian church and throughout Christian history, the idea that Jesus is a representative person who stands for the salvation of all peoples may have made sense in Platonic or Aristotelian philosophies. However, according to McFague, this no longer holds meaning for people living in nuclear times. The view that Jesus came to earth as a human being to redeem humankind for the sin of Adam and Eve, and thus all sin since the Garden of Eden, seems too remote now that scientific discovery has made people both co-creators and co-destroyers of life. People now have the ability to create life through various chemical productions such as in-vitro fertilization and cloning. Through nuclear energy, people have the power to destroy life on earth in a matter of minutes.

McFague describes models or metaphors for God that began in early Christianity that seem divisive today in the growing ecological awareness of the importance of all life. The most poignant model of God that McFague wants to diminish is the *monarchial model*. When people view God as a monarch, God becomes distant from the earth. God as supreme monarch reigns over the earth from His heavenly kingdom that is not part of the ecosystem. “In this picture God is worldless and the world is Godless: the world is empty of God’s presence, for it is too lowly to be the royal abode” (65). Following this model, when a person takes care of the world or shows connection to the world the importance of the act becomes insignificant because the earth remains a temporary home for humankind. The ultimate reward for good living is in heaven with

God and not here on earth among God's natural creation. Thus, making any strong connections to earth's fecundity becomes meaningless since we are just passing through.

The idea of caring for the planet is not important because as servants of the monarch our main duty is reverence to God and not to the earth. In the hierarchy of creation, people would be far better rewarded by worshipping the all mighty Lord than by taking care of an endangered species. Earth becomes a temporal habitat, and the end of the world could be in our lifetime. Hence, sustaining plant and animal life becomes futile when taken into the context that Armageddon may come tomorrow. In the monarchial model God has no connections to the cosmos or the non-human world. "The hegemony of the monarchial model means that its blankness concerning what lies outside the human sphere is a major problem" (66). When Christians speak about the word of God, they do not take into consideration any being outside the human realm that does not speak in human words, i.e., "creatures that cannot hear and obey" (66).

McFague argues, however, that it is "simplistic" to blame Judeo-Christian ideology for the ecological crisis but the model of God as monarch "supports attitudes of control and use toward the nonhuman world" (68). The natural world can, in fact, wreak much harm on humankind through tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, and droughts. Although these events can be devastating, they cannot totally destroy humankind. On the other hand, people have the power to destroy everything in nature including themselves. "Extinction of species by nature is in a different dimension from extinction by design, which only we can bring about" (68). Thus, the monarchial model is "dangerous in our time" (69). Because God does not live here in our world, He can be distant and passive. As long as Christians believe there is another world, perfect and

resplendent, then harm to nature's structures can be justified because in the end, God will destroy nature, too.

McFague proposes several metaphors to remythologize God symbols; the most supportive for the theological explication of *The Road* is that of "God as Mother." McCarthy presents two symbols for the death of the planet. The first is the suicide of the boy's mother. This action emphasizes the loss of the parental care and protection the boy needs through both mother and father. When the father remains as the only parent, he becomes mother and father, nurturer and protector for the boy. The mother as protector and caregiver removes herself from the boy's life. Through this absence the boy must receive all care and attention from one parent, which according to McFague's methodology represents an unbalanced parental model. Although McFague does not say the scriptures were changed to support patriarchal dominance, as do Christ and Daly, she states that Western theology "has been deeply infected by both a fear and a fascination with female sexuality" (97-98). Hebraic scripture has historically distanced itself from goddess religions. Since the canon of Torah masked male sexual imagery in paternal maleness, the traditional language of God is nonsexual. To consider God in terms of female imagery is unconventional in view of the fact that most canonical female imagery has sexual overtones. However, McFague considers the idea of a female God as a maternal metaphor rather than a sexual one. A metaphor change would shift the imaginative picture from woman as seductress to Mother/God as nurturer.

In McFague's terms the boy's father becomes a metaphor for Father-Mother God through agapic love, creation, and justice. Agapic or parental love wills the creation and the continuance of life. This is a quality that both male and female possess. This does not mean that the man's status becomes reduced because there is no hierarchy or dualism in mother/father/parental love.

McFague insists that Christianity has forgotten that God is neither male nor female and that He is a supernatural being beyond the limits of personal pronoun usage. “If we refuse to use any pronouns for God, we court the possibility of concealing androcentric assumptions . . . . that in so doing we are not attributing passive and nurturing qualities to God any more than we are attributing active qualities . . .we are attributing human qualities: we are imagining God on analogy with human beings” (99).

In this metaphor, or agapic, parental love, God would be conceptualized as inclusive of both male and female, both mother and father in a nonhierarchical structure. Moreover, McFague asserts that this type of love would be concerned with all species, not just human, and would nurture and fulfill all forms of life in the universe. McFague writes:

> If the heart of Christian faith for an ecological, nuclear age must be profound awareness of the preciousness and vulnerability of life as a gift we receive and pass on, with appreciation for its value and desire for its fulfillment, it is difficult to think of any metaphors more apt than a parental one. (104)

Subsequently, a model of God’s love as parental would remythologize the Hebraic-Christian creation account. The imaginative picture would change from God’s creating the world “as an intellectual, aesthetic ‘act’ of God, accomplished through God’s word,” but the creation act would involve imagery “gestation, giving birth, and lactation” which in turn involves blood, water, and breath (106). Creation love involves nurturing in the very sense of the term, as a mother of any species would care for her young. In turn, nurturing love would be unconditional and just, “without calculating the return, that wills the existence and fulfillment of other beings” (121).

While McFague’s discussion includes two additional models of God, God as lover or erotic love and God as friend or philial love, the section of her discussion that best relates to *The*

Road is the one that involves her ideas of good and evil. Although human beings are responsible for much of the sin in the world, McFague posits that their sin alone cannot be the reason for the profoundly tragic character of human existence. “The magnitude of human evil both private and public is enormous, but that it occurs in a situation so flawed . . . .one feels as much victim as perpetrator” (137). McCarthy shares this sentiment when he figuratively describes the aftermath of the nuclear nightmare in *The Road*:

> By day the banished sun circles the earth like a grieving mother with a lamp. People sitting on the sidewalk smoking in the dawn half immolate and smoking in their clothes. Others would come to help them. Within a year there were fires on the ridges and deranged chanting. The screams of the murdered. By day the dead impaled on spikes along the road. What had they done? He thought that in the history of the world it might even be that there was more punishment than crime but he took small comfort from it. (32-33)

McCarthy’s use of the word “immolate” suggests that a god required the burning of these people as an offering to appease his anger. The sun, which in Greek mythology is usually masculine suggesting the power of war and masculine aggression, now becomes like a wounded mother looking for her lost children, holding only a small lamp to scour what remains of the earth. When the man asks, “What had they done?” the pronoun “they” is ambiguous. He could be naming the people who caused the disaster; he could be expressing his horror of people turning into cannibals and then putting the remains of the dead on spikes in the road; or he could be thinking of Adam and Eve and the first sin that through its evolution had brought people beyond the point of nuclear disaster. The “tragic character of human existence” of which McFague writes encapsulates her theory of human life: to look at the history of human survival on the planet can be heartbreaking; to look at the sin and crime people have committed against nature can be heartrending; to look at the punishment that all life will incur through nuclear disaster is incomprehensible.

McFague, too, recognizes the nuclear narrative in the ecological context. “To live permanently with nuclear knowledge, with the knowledge forever of how to destroy ourselves and other life, is to go beyond the temptation the serpent in the Garden of Eden offered human beings” (138). “Nuclear knowledge” is the “special serpent of our times” and tempts us to be God-like, the “un-creators of life in inverted imitation of our creator” (138). To use nuclear knowledge to destroy human life would be recreating the sin in the Garden because it would be an attempt for people to strive to be more like God, controlling not only good and evil but also life and death. Nuclear sin would be turning away from the recognition that all things are interdependent and every created object depends on another created object for its life force. “Sin is the turning-away not from a transcendent power but from interdependence with all other beings, including the matrix of being from whom all life comes” (139). The definition of nuclear sin is the refusal to admit the connection between all living things and to be so self-centered that willingness to prove a point would involve the obliteration of life on earth.

At the end of the novel, the father dies and the boy meets a family who takes him in. His “new” mother tells the boy “that the breath of God was his breath” and that it would “pass from man to man through all time” (286). At this point McCarthy suggests that the boy has come full circle. His father had represented both the male and female model of parental love. Now his new mother talks to him about God and tells him that the breath of God is passed from man to man. She does not say person to person or woman to man. McCarthy asserts that God as mother-father no longer exists and that theology reverts to God breathing his breath into man only. If this is the case, McCarthy leaves the dialogue open to consider if theology will again be patriarchal to the exclusion of women as participants. Moreover, since in the text the world has experienced a nuclear disaster while the world was based on outdated metaphors of God, what new metaphors

will the survivors use to bind their faith to a world that no longer exists? In the face of all that the last remaining people have witnessed a mother that tells the boy only men experience the breath of God seems to engage in the circular concept that the world will recycle itself into continuous nuclear sin.

In Proverbs, which is one of the Hebrew books of Wisdom, the idea of "wisdom" is personified into a female being, which in Greek is *Sophia*. In Proverbs 8: 22-31 Wisdom or Sophia sings that God created her in the beginning, before the earth was made. "The Lord created me the first of his works long ago, before all else was made. I was formed in the earliest times, at the beginning before earth itself…when He set the heavens in place I was there…at His side each day…his darling and delight…playing over his whole world, while my delight was in mankind." Thomas Schipflinger discusses the development of this personification in *Sophia – Maria: A Holistic Vision of Creation*. Schpflinger writes:

> Holy Wisdom…or Sophia…was generally understood as the key to happiness and soon came to be viewed as a virtue and capacity given by God for recognizing what leads to happiness and achieving it. Gradually Wisdom begins to be revealed as a mysterious being in God, created before all time, who works together in the creation and counseled God, sharing the throne as God's Beloved….Because of her role in creation she mediates between God and the world, coming from God and leading back from God. (11-12)

In New Testament writings, "some Church Fathers understood Her as Logos [Jesus] and some the Holy Spirit" (13). In Proverbs 9: 1-18 Wisdom builds her home on earth and furnishes her table with meat and wine. Then she and her maidens go out into the streets and invite anyone who hears the invitation to come to her table. "Come, eat of my bread / And drink of the wine I have mixed. / Forsake foolishness and live, / And go in the way of understanding." Thus, Sophia opens the doors to her house and invites anyone who wants to gain understanding to her table.

In Hebrew tradition, strict rules applied as to what foods were clean and unclean, and what type of people could sit at the same dinner table for fellowship. During the time of Jesus, these same rules were still applicable. In the gospels, Jesus was chastised because he sat at the dinner table with Gentiles, prostitutes, tax collectors, and others who lived on the "outskirts" of the everyday norms. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza in "The Sophia-God of Jesus and the Discipleship of Women" describes the people with whom Jesus shared meals as "religiously deficient" and "social underdogs." However, Jesus, like Sophia, shared meals with anyone who invited Him to their table in the understanding that this was the way to tell everyone that the table of God is all-inclusive. In the New Testament Matthew tells a similar tale in the Parable of the Wedding Feast. In this story, a king's son was getting married and he sent his servants to invite all of the important people of the town. When they reply that they are too busy to attend the feast, he says to his servants, "Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding. So the servants went out to the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding ball was filled with guests" (22: 9-10). Like Sophia, Jesus implies in this parable that the table of God is open for anyone. Fiorenza asserts that Jesus' parable astounds his hearers because God's goodness creates equality among all. This concept was not established in the Jewish tradition at the time of Jesus and this was a most radical approach to ethical living.

From the early days of Jewish prophetic theology all pagan gods were to be abandoned and exchanged for the worship of Israel's God, Yahweh. However, the God of Israel was not necessarily considered male. "Although Jewish (and Christian) theology speaks about God in male language and images, it nevertheless insists that such language and images are not adequate 'pictures' of the divine, and that human language and experience are not capable of

beholding or expressing God's reality" (263). Accordingly, Fiorenza claims that the earliest Jesus movements in Palestine believed that Jesus was God in woman's *Gestalt* [body] and represented the divine Sophia or messenger of Wisdom. "It was possible to understand Jesus' ministry and death in terms of God-Sophia, because Jesus probably understood himself as the prophet and child of Sophia" (265). Moreover, Jesus understood his ministry as a messenger of Sophia who stands in succession of the prophets. Thus, the death of Jesus is not willed by God but is the result of Jesus' breaking of Jewish law by His all-inclusive ideology. Fiorenza's argument poses the concept of God as an androgynous being.

This image encompasses not only the "father" ideology of God and thus the patriarchal scriptural ideal but also the Sophia-God of "sisters, wives, mothers, and daughters." Patriarchal theological rendering of God constructs a dualism, which successively leads to a polarization of divine reality. If the pre-Jesus Jewish belief was that God was neither male nor female, Fiorenza transforms this hypothesis into one that confirms God has always been both. In the view of Sophia's unlimited wisdom and vision, all are invited to share in an alternative "ethos." Fiorenza describes the joy that the downtrodden experienced when they broke bread with Jesus. "They were without a future, but now they had hope again; they were the 'outcast' and marginal people in their society, but now they had community again" (267)

Perhaps McCarthy's spiritual language in *The Road* challenges the reader to examine the metaphors that brought the fictive world to a nuclear disaster. Obviously, in the space of time that precedes the frame of the novel, nothing had been accomplished to successfully avert such a tragedy. The reader remains wondering what could have caused such a disaster? Since the spiritual language of the novel leads to examining both Greek myth and Judeo-Christian canonical scripture, the trap of unchanging metaphors and the limitations this

imposes on scriptural metaphor places humankind in a dangerous situation. The boy strongly believes that he carries the fire within him and perhaps this message is the most positive implication in the novel. With no memory of his birth mother and with his new mother telling him only men carry the breath of God the all-inclusive table fellowship theory of society becomes obscured for the boy. The new mother expresses both metaphorical and hierarchal limitations in human relationships, a position that returns theology to excluding some from Sophia's table. With exclusion and devaluation of others the interrelatedness of humans and non-human beings regresses and nuclear sin becomes a repeating reality.

CONCLUSION

Cheryll Glotfelty published her anthology *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996) to define and characterize ecology as a field of criticism within the American literary tradition. Prior to its publication, Glotfelty questioned why she picked up the newspapers every day and read about oil spills, species extinction, protests about nuclear waste storage sites, global warming, and damage to the earth's ozone layer yet her field of American literature was not writing about any of these events much less their effect on people. "The absence of any sign of an environmental perspective in contemporary literary studies would seem to suggest that despite its 'revisionist energies,' scholarship remains *academic* in the sense of 'scholarly to the point of being unaware of the outside world' (*American Heritage Dictionary)*" (xv). Yet many scholars had been writing about the connection between literature and ecology for years; the connections and terms within the field, however, were yet to be anthologized and defined. Glotfelty set out to publish a text that unites ecological commentary and criticism that had been around for twenty-five years or more. According to Glotfelty, the defining essay for ecocriticism was Glen Love's "Revaluing Nature: Toward an Ecological Criticism" published in 1990.

Love's essay considers the differences between "ego-consciousness" and "eco-consciousness" as basic to the work of ecocritics in English departments at the university level. He expresses concern that English professors have not developed a relationship between "literature and the issues of the degradation of the earth" (227). American university English departments have not accepted ecological commentary on the value of both human and non-human life as an important consideration within their curricula. "In our thinking," observes Love, "the challenge that faces us in these terms is to outgrow our notion that human beings are so

special that the earth exists for our comfort and disposal alone" (229). He cites "ego-consciousness as the "supreme evidence of literary and critical achievement" and those works which involve "eco-consciousness" have been passed over because they do not respond to anthropocentric methodologies or are too nature-oriented for the university to consider as serious literature. Society is what deserves the attention not nature. "Literature in which nature plays a significant role is, by definition, irrelevant and inconsequential" (230).

At this point in his discussion, Love considers the role of the pastoral in American literature. Love argues that the green or natural world of the American pastoral is the place to which "sophisticated urbanites withdraw in search of the lessons of simplicity which only nature can teach" (231). Thus, the pastoral represents a temporary and perhaps "ephemeral" release from the urban environment, which suggests an anthropocentric representation of nature. Love considers that because people have always been drawn back to their natural origins pastoral literature has remained a force in American literature. People's search for an "instinctive or mythic sense of ourselves as creatures of natural origins" demands that the pastoral element of literature be redefined as the reality of world destruction as it intrudes upon the human centered ego-consciousness. Love states that Leo Marx does not go far enough in considering the pastoral as a means of describing an ecological catastrophe. Also, Love argues that because Lawrence Buell considers the pastoral as an expression of the imminent ecological holocaust that he "increases the importance of pastoralism as a literary and cultural force of our future" (234). Love posits that the pastoral needs to redefined into a concept of a "new pastoral" that acknowledges the world of nature as more than a temporary respite for urbanites to escape the stress of their everyday lives. Love summarizes his ideas of the pastoral in the following argument:

> A reasonable observer must conclude that either through some ecological catastrophe of massive proportions or through a genuinely enlightened new sense of environmental awareness, our profession must soon direct its attention to that literature which recognizes and dramatizes that integration of human with natural cycle of life. (235)

When Leo Marx examines Virgil's pastoral poem "The Dispossessed," Marx shows that the pastoral has not only been about urbanites transitioning for a momentary repose in the countryside. He shows that Meliboeus must leave his homeland because the Roman government has claimed his homestead for their war veterans. When Meliboeus trudges past Tityrus' home he calls out to him, "Tityrus, who is this god of yours?" Meliboeus has no place to go, no destination, no place of respite, or a *genius loci* to reunite him to the gods of nature. He feels that perhaps he has been worshipping the wrong gods and through their disfavor he has been expunged from his land. His life and the natural cycle of his existence have been disrupted because he has lost his land and his connection to the sacred. The neo-pastoral literature threads that are woven into the literature of this discussion are fueled by the idea that pastoral literature is about the search for reconnection to the sacred. The authors included in my discussion are aware of the natural cycles of life and the spiritual consequences people suffer when they are not connected to nature.

Updike shows the decay of the landscape and Rabbit's alienation from both nature and humanity because of the decaying condition of Mt. Judge. Rabbit prays to the moon and feels the natural cycles of life but cannot explain his pull towards them because has no words or cognition of his place within the spiritual pastoral. Malamud emphasizes Spinoza's idea that nature is God and God is nature. Deep ecologists use Spinozan theory to examine ideas of smaller biotic-based government. Thomas Pynchon poses Oedipa on the verge of a religious moment because she cannot define the metaphor of her search for meaning. She is drawn to

technology, which gives her no natural or spiritual structure on which to base her decisions. DeLillo's Jack Gladney experiences an airborne toxic event and because of this experience comes to realize that religious dogma has become a myth within the toxic consciousness of modern society. Silko shows through her web of characters that master metaphors are dangerous beliefs for humankind now living on the verge of an ecocatastrophe. Only by breaking down the metaphoric structures can people establish interrelatedness with nature and with one another. Morrison examines the link between all forms of oppressive behavior and shows women returning to self-discovery through nature-based physical rituals. These novels show an intensity of humankind's search for a *genius loci* in the natural world, a search that includes both a natural and spiritual prospective.

People's disconnection from nature has been a major consideration in American literature from 1960 to the present time. The authors in my discussion are aware of the longing for a pastoral presence in the lives of their characters, but because of people's disengagement from nature through the modern landscape they have not been able to fulfill this need. Nonetheless, the need has never gone away from thematic scope in the American novel. When McCarthy writes of his characters' post-Armageddon experiences, he considers the death of nature and the human struggle to survive within a dead ecostructure. The next step in the literary ecological dialogue may be the consideration that Silko suggests in *Almanac of the Dead*. Native American ideology suggests that the world will survive long after human beings destroy one another. Nature will always have the capability to purge the toxins from the earth's mantle and begin recreating life forms once again. Alan Weisman discusses this concept in *The World Without Us* (2007). According to his concept, nature's procreative energy is the strongest life force present on the planet. No matter what people do to destroy the ecostructure including the vast release of

nuclear toxins into the atmosphere, nature will always have the capacity to cleanse itself from these poisons and begin again. People are only a small part of the biota, and once they accept the reality that nature will continue long after their lives have terminated then perhaps their anthropocentric structuring of life will end and respect for the procreative life energy on earth will begin.

As Love suggests American literature needs to be a focal point in the dialogue to lead this discussion. Neo-pastoral literature presents an ecological approach to examining the voice of the landscape and its relationship to the voices of humanity. Ecocritical examination of the novel may help people explain their disconnection to nature and their cognition of this loss. The American novel will continue to relay the possibilities for these connections.

WORKS CITED

Abram, David. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. New York: Vintage, 1997.

Adler, Margot. *Drawing Down the Moon*: *Witches, Druid, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America*. New York: Penguin, 1986.

Andrews, Ted. "Dictionary of Animal Totems." *Animal Speak: The Spiritual and Magical Powers of Creatures Great and Small*. Woodberry, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1993. 239-325.

Archaeological Study Bible: *An Illustrated Walk Through Biblical History and Culture*. Grand Rapids, MI, 1984.

Armstrong, Karen. *A History of God: The 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. New York: Gramercy, 1993.

----. *The Bible: A Biography*. New York: Atlantic Monthly P, 2007.

"Bacchus." *Bacchus Mythology*. 17 July 2009. <http://encyclopedia.farlex.com/Bacchus>.

Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, U of Texas P, 1981.

Baldwin, James. "The Story of Prometheus." *Old Greek Stories*. 26 July 2009. <http://www.authorama.com/old-greek-stories-5.html>.

Beck, Eckardt C. "The Love Canal Tragedy." *EPA Journal*. 24 May 2009. <http://www.epa.gov/history/topics/lovecanal/01.htm>.

Berry, Thomas. *The Dream of the Earth*. San Francisco: Sierra Book Club, 1988.

"Brief History of the Chakra System." *History of the Chakra System*. 29 June 2009. <http://home.comcast.net/~chakra_system/chakra.html>.

Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1995.

The Burning Times. Dir. Donna Read. 1990. 13 Oct. 2009. <http://nfb.ca/film/burning_times)/>.

Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. 1962. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

Christ, Carol P. "Heretics and Outsiders: The Struggle over Female Power in Western Religion." *Soundings* 61 (1978): 260-80.

---. "Rethinking Theology and Nature" *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*. Eds. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ. San Francisco: Harper, 1989. 314-325.

---. "Spiritual Quest and Women's Experience." *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*. Eds. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992. 228-45.

---. "Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections." *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*. Eds. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992. 273-87.

Christ, Carol P. and Judith Plaskow, eds., *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992.

"Clean Air Markets." *United States Environmental Protection Agency*. 14 Apr. 2009. 13 Oct. 2009. <http://www.epa.gov>.

Conway, D. J. *Wicca: The Complete Craft*. Berkeley: Crossing P, 2001.

Coupe, Laurence, ed. *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*. 2000. London: Routledge, 2004.

Daly, Mary. *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Woman's Liberation*. Boston: Beacon P, 1973.

---. *The Church and the Second Sex*. Boston: Beacon P, 1985.

---. *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. 1978. Boston: Beacon P, 1990.

DeVall, Bill and George Sessions, eds. *Deep Ecology: Living as If Nature Mattered*. Salt Lake City: Peregrine, 1985.

Deitering, Cynthia. "The Postnatural Novel: Toxic Consciousness in Fiction of the 1980's." *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Eds. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1996. 196-203.

DeLillo, Don. *White Noise*. New York: Penguin, 1985.

Doner, Dean. "Rabbit Angstrom's Unseen World." *New World Writing*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co, 1962. 58-75.

"Echo." *MSN Encarta.* 11 Jun. 2009. <http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_(mythology).html>.

Eliade, Mircea. *The Myth of the Eternal Return*. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1954.

----. *Myth and Reality*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. Long Grove, IL: Waveland P, 1963.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Nature." *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. 6th ed. Vol. B. Ed. Nina Baym. New York: Norton, 2003. 1106-34.

Ehrman, Bart D. *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Change the Bible and Why*. New York: Harper, 2005.

"Fact Sheet on the Three Mile Island Accident." *United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission*. 24 May 2009. 9 Mar. 2009. <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/fact-sheets/3mile-isle.html>.

Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schussler. “The Sophia-God of Jesus and the Discipleship of Women” *Women’s Spirituality*. Ed. Joann Wolski Conn. New York: Paulist P, 1986. 261-73.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*. 1938. Trans. A. A. Brill. New York: Random House, 1995. 775-898.

Gaard, Greta and Patrick Murphy, eds., *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1998.

Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism: The New Critical Idiom*. 2004. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Gifford, Terry. *Pastoral*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Glotfelty, Cheryll and Harold Fromm, eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1996.

Goldstein, Rebecca. *Betraying Spinoza: The Renegade Jew Who Gave Us Modernity*. New York: Random House, 2006.

Griscom, Joan L. “On Healing the Nature/History Split in Feminist Thought.” *Feminist Theological Ethics: A Reader*. Ed. Lois K. Daly. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox P, 1994. 271-81.

Gross, Rachel and Dale Grote. “Dionysus.” *Encyclopedia Mythica*. 18 Jan. 2007. 17 July 2009. <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/d/dionysus.html>.

How We Got the Bible. Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing Co, 2006.

Holquist, Michael. *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Jackson, J. B. *A Sense of Time, A Sense of Place*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1970.

Kidd, Sue Monk. *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter: A Woman’s Journey from Christian Traditions to the Sacred Feminine*. San Francisco: Harper, 1996.

Lear, Linda. Introduction. *Silent Spring*. By Rachel Carson. 1962. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002. x-xix.

Love, Glen. "Revaluing Nature: Toward an Ecological Criticism" *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1996. 225-40.

Malamud, Bernard. *The Fixer*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1966.

Malamud, Randy. *Poetic Animals and Animal Souls*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1964.

McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*. New York: Vintage, 2006.

McDowell, Michael, J. "The Bakhtinian Road to Ecological Insight." *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Eds. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1996. 371-391.

McFague, Sallie. *Models of God*: *Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*. Philadelphia: Fortress P, 1987.

Meacham, Jon. "The End of Christian America." *Newsweek*. 13 Apr. 2009: 34-38.

Merchant, Carolyn. *Earthcare: Women and the Environment*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Morley, Catherine. *The Quest for Epic in Contemporary American Fiction*: *John Updike, Philip Roth, and Don DeLillo*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Morrison, Toni. *Paradise*. New York: Plume, 1997.

Murphy, Patrick. "The Women Are Speaking: Contemporary Literature as Theoretical Critique." *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*. Eds. Greta Gaard and Patrick Murphy. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1998. 23-48.

Naess, Arne. “The Deep Ecology Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects.” *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*. Ed. George Sessions. Boston: Shambhala, 1995.

“Narcissus.” *Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia 2009*. 11 Jun. 2009. <http://encarta.msn.com/text__0/Narcissis_(mythology).html>.

Newkirk, Margaret. “Nuclear Waste – Where to Now?” *Atlanta Journal – Constitution*. 15 Mar. 2009: D1.

Nisly, L. Lamar. *Impossible to Say: Representing Religious Mystery in Fiction, by Percy, Ozick, and O’Connor*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood P, 1968.

Phillips, Dana. *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003.

Pynchon, Thomas. *The Crying of Lot 49*. 1965. New York: Harper Collins, 1999.

Rosendale, Steven, ed. *The Greening of Literary Scholarship: Literature, Theory and the Environment*. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2002.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*. New York: Harper, 1992.

---. *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation*. Boston: Beacon, 1995.

St. Clair, Janet. “Death of Love/Love of Death: Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*.” *MELUS* 21 (2006): 141-56. *MLA International Bibliography*. EBSCOhost. Georgia State U, Atlanta, GA. 7 Mar. 2009 <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/delivery?vid=22&hid>.

Sessions, George. *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century: Readings on the Philosophy and Practice of the New Environmentalism*. Boston: Shambhala, 1995.

Schipflinger, Thomas. *Sophia – Maria: A Holistic Vision of Creation*. Trans. James Morgante. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc, 1998.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Almanac of the Dead*. New York: Penguin, 1991.

---. "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination." *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Eds. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, GA: U of Georgia P. 1996. 264-75.

Spinoza, Benedict de. *Theological-Political Treatise*. Ed. Jonathan Israel. Trans. Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007.

----. *The Essential Spinoza: Ethics and Related Writings*. Ed. Michael L, Morgan. Trans. Samuel Shirley. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006.

Thistlethwaite, Susan Brooks. "Every Two Minutes: Battered Women and Feminist Interpretation." *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*. Eds. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ. San Francisco: Harper, 1989. 302-13.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*. Stillwell, KS: Digireads.com Publishing, 2005.

Updike, John. *Rabbit, Run*. New York: Fawcett, 1960.

Virgil. *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid 1-6*. Trans. H. Rushton Fairclough. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999.

Wauters, Ambika. *The Book of Chakras*. London: Quarto, 2002.

Weisman, Alan. *The World Without Us*. New York: St. Martin's P, 2007.

White, Lynn, Jr. "Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Eds. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Athens, GA: U of Georgia P. 1996. 3-14.