

Imagining Environmental Justice

*Challenging Ethnocentric Visions in Zora
Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching
God and William Faulkner's Go Down,
Moses*

Johanna Berger



Master's Thesis in English Literature
Department of Literature, Area Studies and European
Languages
Faculty of Humanities

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Challenging Ethnocentric Visions in Zora Neale
Hurstons' *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and
William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*

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*Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board.*¹

– Zora Neale Hurston

¹ Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Virago Press LTD, 2018.

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1 Introduction

...great gains do not occur overnight; they take sometimes decades. I truly believe that environmental justice is the modern-day civil rights issue of our time.

-Anjali Waikar, NRDC

With this comment Anjali Waikar, staff attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), an organization that fights for environmental justice, engages in a highly topical debate. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), “Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” The environmental justice movement was started by individuals, primarily people of color, who sought to address the inequity of environmental protection in their communities (EPA).

As Kimberly K. Smith explains in “African American Environmental Thought: Foundations” (2007), the emergence of the environmental justice movement in the 1980s evolved from black environmental thought prominent from the early abolition movement to the Harlem Renaissance. According to her, African Americans are challenged to overcome the inheritance of slavery perhaps intrinsic to nature, as “the slave system forced slaves into an intimacy with the natural environment but also tended to alienate them from it” (10). Thus, the legacy of slavery had African Americans attached to nature and marked as nonhuman.

It can therefore be concluded that environmental justice evolved out of a need to dissolve the distance between the human and the nonhuman. Both of the primary theory schools involved in this thesis - ecocriticism and posthuman animal studies alike - question this notion of anthropocentrism, a hierarchical ‘subject-object-thinking’ which places the human in the center of everything and only reinforces the distinction between the human and nonhuman. This thesis’ focus of interest lies in imagining different relationships between various humans and landscapes, while its perspective stems from posthumanism, animal studies, and animality studies alike. In joining the discourse already situated in the theoretical landscape, the thesis attempts to find necessary approaches to overcome this dichotomy, and argues that, if one leaves behind the ethnocentric point of view, a relationship with the natural world can be built, thus developing empowering and reciprocal relationships with their social and natural environment. In other words, the ethnocentric ideology disrupts human/nature

relations, while a detachment from ethnocentrism can improve them. By imagining new relationships between various humans and various landscapes, I argue that a sense of environmental justice and responsibility can be conveyed.

This thesis takes two voices in particular into consideration that have contributed greatly to this debate and whose perspectives are based on different theory schools. These are Paul Outka, an associate professor at the University of Kansas who has made a major contribution to the fields of ecocriticism and race, and Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, an assistant professor of English at George Mason University. This thesis attempts to follow Jackson's idea based on what she terms "posthumanist animal studies." Outka, in drawing on theories of sublimity, trauma, and ecocriticism, sees no possibility for African Americans to escape the ethnocentric viewpoint that puts them on par with nature and their history of slavery intrinsic to it, while he explains that whites went into the wilderness to repress the trauma through their involvement in the history of slavery, leading to a "white flight." According to him, unlike for white Americans, a sublime and intimate encounter with nature will always end for black Americans in a trauma. From the basis of "posthuman animal studies," this thesis argues against Outka's suggestion of African Americans' impossibility to overcome an ethnocentric ideology. In contrast, posthuman animal studies calls for a cancelation of the concept of ethnocentrism to redefine the production of the "human", and thus for an emancipation of African Americans from the vicious cycle of environmental trauma. In taking this approach, this thesis attempts to find new ways and models of imagining trauma free relationships with the social and natural world that discards ethnocentrism, painting visions for environmental justice. This will be further elaborated on in "Theory, Methodology, and Terminology."

Various models of environmental justice (and injustice) can also be found in two books from 1937 and 1942: Nora Zeale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*. While the books have been written a few centuries ago, the visions of environmental justice contained in them are incredibly relevant. Firstly, in Hurston's *Their Eyes*, we experience a growing detachment of Janie – an African American woman who is both the protagonist of *Their Eyes* and chapter 1 of this thesis – from trauma, caused by an ethnocentric ideology that pervades the environment around her. Hence, I will argue that her approach to the environment is a good model for environmental justice. In order to arrive at this conclusion, I will look at the concept that leads to her detachment from an ethnocentric image of humankind. Although Janie has gone through various more or less ethnocentric seasons that all enforced the human/nonhuman dichotomy in different ways, she

is able to leave this ideology behind and understands her place, in distance from and proximity to – her social and natural environment. In fact, she turns her first sublime experience into a catalyst for her journey to self-realization and freedom. On the basis of Janie, we see that the human/nature relation is disrupted by the ethnographic way of thinking, while it can be restored through its cancelation. She overcomes the ethnocentric ideology by practicing forgiveness; and does not only forgive the people she has lived in close relationship with, but, what is more, lets go of the past that is haunting her.

Secondly, *Go Down* also provides further insights into the argument at hand that is, though different from Hurston, productive for imagining new ways of human/nature relationships based on environmental justice. I will argue for Faulkner's work that if a detachment from ethnocentric thinking is not given, a deliberate union with nature is not the best vision for restoring human/nature relationships. Others have recognized both Isaac McCaslin, the white and only heir of the McCaslin plantation, and Lucas Beauchamp, a black American tenant on the McCaslin plantation, as the most important figures in *Go Down*, who constitute – along with their respective relationship to nature – the foundation for this chapter. Their significance is to a certain extent dependent on Faulkner's discussion of their respective relations with the natural world. Despite or because of their disparate relationship with the land, they offer two sides of environmental ethics that are constructive to be looked at, considering that their moral principles are expressed through the ethnocentric discourse. While the wilderness is the place where mystical encounters with nature take place, the McCaslin farm serves as a place for sustainable development.

Unlike Janie, I argue that Isaac, the white heir to the McCaslin plantation, is far from being a good example of environmental justice. Left ashamed over his family's ethnocentric past as slave holders, he flees from his past by rejecting the inheritance of the family plantation. He takes refuge in a utopian world which he creates himself by sentimentalizing the wilderness. Hunting down sublime encounters in the wilderness, he attempts to live free from history, but only represses the trauma of slavery. He tries to detach himself from the ethnocentric thinking, and fails to do so, because he is unconscious of how deeply ingrained the white ideology is into him. And even though he goes into nature, he fails to restore a reciprocal relationship with his natural environment. Thus, the core issue is his embrace of ethnocentric thinking. This is in accordance with what Outka terms "white flight."

In contrast, Lucas detachment from ethnocentrism is successful. Lucas breaks away from the ethnocentric thinking, thus becoming reconciled with his past. As a result, his

proximity to nature is restored. Lucas' relationship to his environment is more reciprocal, as his marriage is relatively happy, and he reconciles himself with his past. In "Fire and The Hearth", being afflicted with gold-fever, Lucas follows for a short time in the footsteps of the dominant white culture, until his wife Molly helps him to realize that a more humble approach to life on the plantation is his best shot. Again, not the quest for natural proximity, but a break with ethnocentrism restores closeness and relationship to nature. Therefore, Lucas serves a positive example for this chapter's thesis, while Isaac serves as a negative example.

Ultimately, both Faulkner and Hurston depict promising though individual examples of environmental relationships that can help to find better ways of imagining relationships between various humans and various landscapes in their respective logical approaches. In order to enter deeper into the matter, theory schools, methodologies, and terminologies need to be explored.

1.1 Theory, Methodology, and Terminology

On the basis of what Jackson terms "posthumanist animal studies," this thesis aims to do a close-reading of the two novels by Faulkner and Hurston by engaging both of her articles "Outer Worlds: The Persistence of Race in Movement 'Beyond the Human'" and "Animal: New Directions in the Theorization of Race and Posthumanism." By combining posthumanism with animal studies, and/or animality studies, the thesis partially argues against a rather ecocritical approach by Outka and reflects on the characters in question both the potential of the novels for new productive life models in relation to environmental relationship, as well as more problematic approaches to imagining human relationships with the environment.

Outka's award-winning book *Race and Nature from Transcendentalism to the Harlem Renaissance* draws on theories of sublimity, trauma, and ecocriticism to outline the complex notions of the interconnectedness of nature and race in literature from transcendentalism to the Harlem Renaissance. He provides us with a thorough examination of the historically charged experiences of sublime nature and its connection to the formation of white and black racial identity and the notion of African Americans as being closer to nature, bridging race and ecocriticism. The sublime is that moment when the awe-inspiring beauty and wildness of nature is revealed and encountered. This experience involves feelings of awe, terror and danger. Outka writes that the importance of the sublime is the "moment in which the identities of self and world become energetically interpenetrative" (15). Furthermore, the sublime

celebrates the freedom of those who understand their environment in a new way, mainly whites, and implies the degradation of those who are unable to decipher the sublime experience in such a manner, mainly blacks. This moment of trauma further leaves the black subject unable to understand their social and natural surroundings. Moreover, while the sublime provides safety, the traumatic fails to do so, leaving the black subject emotionally numb. Hence, the traumatic turns “human subjects into natural objects, which then are available for exploitation” (25). Outka points out that

...this legacy – in which whites viewed black people as part of the natural world, and then proceeded to treat them with the same mixture of contempt, false reverence, and real exploitation that also marks American environmental history – inevitably makes the possibility of an uncomplicated union with the natural world less readily available to African Americans than it has been to whites who, by and large, have not suffered from such history. (3)

One explanation that whites do not suffer from the history of slavery is, as Outka suggests, the concept of “white flight.” According to him, white people romanticized the West, which led to a flight into the wilderness. The wilderness was perceived as a space where white identity could cultivate without having to face the traumatic past of slavery and racism (151). Outka makes an interesting argument in stating that the experience of the white sublime often repressed the trauma of slavery and Jim Crow in the national collective awareness. The white embrace of the “extrahistorical” Western wilderness occurred because it was a place where it was possible to live “outside of the entrapments of history, politics, racism, economics” (149). To him, the whites use the sublime to disappear “into the normative background while retaining [their] dominance, (...) closing the door for “other” races to enact a similar disappearance” (152). Based on this, this thesis will show that the flight into the sublime is not a productive solution for the restoration of reciprocal human/nature relations.

However, I disagree with him when he argues that there is no refuge in nature for African Americans, because, as he adds, the land is “always already saturated with the authority of slavery and the possibility of violent punishment” (p. 78). And while his thorough study bridges African-American Literature, critical race studies, ecocriticism, and trauma studies, I suggest that it would have profited also from posthumanism and animal studies, as it is subject to “human obligations toward the nonhuman world, the porousness or solidity of human-nonhuman border, and interspecies communication” (Buell, Heise, & Thornber).

In this regard, it is worthwhile considering Jackson's call for what she terms "posthumanist animal studies." In her article "Outer Wolds: The Persistence of Race in Movement 'Beyond the Human'" (2015), Jackson shows the possibilities of bridging animal studies with posthumanism for new ways of thinking about the ways we construct "the human". She is particularly critical of the appeal made by post-humanists to go "beyond the human", as it may risk reintroducing the "Eurocentric transcendentalism" that post-humanism "purports to disrupt, particularly with regard to the historical and ongoing distributive ordering of race" (215). Jackson directs our attention to an alternative movement, which is "posthumanist animal studies", that emphasizes the entanglement of judgement and viewpoint in any conception of humanity and/or race, breaking up the binaries in question. New conceptual approaches to human/animal, and/or nature/culture distinctions can change how constructive, on the one hand, or problematic, on the other hand, the two novels in question should be read in relation to improved ways of imagining relationships between various humans and various landscapes.

Jackson's framework contradicts common arguments about the necessity to move "beyond" race in the 21st century, as it does not follow through with a detachment from ethnocentrism. If we enter a new conception of what is deemed "human", we also have a new world view, as there exists a correlation between treatment of nature and treatment of humans, and through it, the relationship between a subject and his environment is redefined – more specifically, a subject's relationship to animals, to nature, and to other human beings. Redefining what is deemed human redefines a subject's relationship to nature, and hence can be connected to the theory of trauma: if the African American has always experienced trauma after the sublime, then it was because nature has always been defined through an integration into the white ideology of "the human", in which they once became slaves. A new definition of what is deemed "human" makes it possible for African Americans to build a trauma free relationship with nature.

The theory advocated by Outka – that African Americans cannot escape the cycle of sublime experience that automatically has them fall into trauma – can be resolved by turning away from the ethnocentric perspective and rearranging the human/natural understanding based on the posthumanist animal studies worldview of Jackson. In other words, a rearrangement of the understanding of the human-nature relationship via a detachment from an ethnocentric view can lead to African Americans developing relationships to nature without traumas. In doing so, I apply Jackson's concept of posthumanist animal studies to

Outka's concept of ecocriticism. Consulting the works by Faulkner and Hurston, when I look at the nature encounters of the characters examined in this thesis from the aspect of posthumanist animal studies, the degraded can be free from trauma if a differently defined image of the human is applied – one which is not based on eurocentrism. Ultimately, to Outka, the sublime experience is the moment that turns blacks into slaves. I argue, however, that there exist positive relationships to nature within the African American literary tradition that complicate the sublime/trauma dichotomy. Thus, I attempt to show that while Outka and ecocriticism have made productive steps into a new direction, “posthumanist animal studies” have the potential to reveal new productive ways of imagining human relationships with the environment by eliminating the ethnocentric gaze.

Dealing with the topic of ecocriticism, a short introduction, along with the terminology necessary to this thesis will be provided. In the course of the popularization of ecological thinking in the last third of the 20th and early 21st century, literary texts are increasingly devoted to the destruction of nature and environmental disasters. Both the increasingly public discourse about negative, irreversible ecological transformations and the literature reflecting this at the end of the twentieth century were addressed first by American, then by Anglophone literary and cultural studies through the establishment of Ecocriticism – short for Ecological Criticism. Despite its methodological multifaceted nature - with varying proximity to discourse analysis or deconstructionism, to phenomenology or gender and cultural studies - the studies under the wide umbrella of this label share at least the 'ecological' conviction of complex interdependencies between man/civilization and nature.

One forerunner of Ecocriticism is Lawrence Buell, who is currently a Powell M. Cabot Professor of American literature at Harvard University. According to Buell, “Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary movement committed not to any one methodology but to a particular subject: the subject of how literature and other media express environmental awareness and concern” (Fiedorczuk 7). Outka explains that, at least as an initial approach, ecocriticism started out with specific attention to American nature writing and a priority placed on the potential of wilderness experience (Galeano & Outka 11). And while the field of ecocriticism has by and large opened up to a number of different critiques, I will later argue that posthumanism and animal studies have not yet received enough attention.

With the arrival of posthumanist theory came a philosophy that was designed to rethink traditional concepts of the production of the “human.” In contrast to classical humanism, the special status of humankind is negated and, hence, more emphasis is put on the

nonhuman, whether it be animals, plants, technology, or other objects. One conclusion of this is that man has no right to destroy nature or to regard himself as ethically superior to it. While posthumanism rightly criticizes the subject/object distinction and the dominant culture's ideology, Jackson advocates a more critical investigation of posthumanism's theoretical structure. This would involve a detachment of posthumanism from the Eurocentric framework of logic and rationality that it claims to have already moved beyond, not allowing it to escape or deny the investigative challenges imposed by categories of race and gender. In "Outer Worlds", Jackson joins the discourse of post-humanism and challenges it by asking the question, "[w]hat and crucially whose conception of humanity are we moving beyond?" (215). An attempt to move beyond race (here: blackness) is not enough as it cannot be escaped. Jackson explains, in her review "Animal: New Directions in the Theorization of Race and Posthumanism", that "posthumanist animal studies" has politics of race at its core and challenges the exclusion of racial subjects ("Animal" 674). Scholars like Aimé Césaire, Sylvia Wynter, and Frantz Fanon seek to situate "Western humanism in a broader field of gendered, sexual, racial, and colonial relations" and claim "that the figure 'man' is not synonymous with 'the human,' but rather is a technology of slavery and colonialism" (670). The scholars' ideas mentioned by Jackson are fruitful because they reveal that posthumanism has engaged with rather than criticized "Western and specifically Eurocentric structures of rationality" (671), a remnant of humanism. That is to say, posthumanism has been decidedly persistent in following humanist reasoning – and "remained committed to its racial, gendered, and colonial hierarchies of 'Reason' and its 'absence'" (672). The aforementioned scholars aim to undermine this reasoning, as a result of which Jackson poses the question: "Might there be a (post)humanism that does not privilege European Man and its idiom?" (673). And, she asks, is it then "possible that the very subjects central to posthumanist inquiry—the binarisms of human/animal, nature/culture, animate/inanimate, organic/inorganic—find their relief outside of the epistemological locus of the West?" (673). By posing these and other questions, Jackson criticizes the divide between what the dominant culture deems "human" and, therefore, nonhuman. What she and others before her hope for is not that the "human" standard would enlarge its scope to grant admittance to the marginalized, but a transformation within posthumanism (672).

Animal Studies looks at how "the human" is understood in relation to animals, and how representations of animals shed light on our judgements of other species. One way for animal studies to do so is to examine the way humans anthropomorphize animals and attempt

to expose misjudgments of other creatures. According to Michael Lundblad, however, when it comes to further focusing on the cultural study of both animals and animality, the term “animal studies” is too limiting” (496) – hence the critique of “animality studies”. Animality studies is a rather new interdisciplinary critique, without – unlike animal studies – “an explicit call for nonhuman advocacy” (Lundblad 500). Lundblad further explains that “with incredibly rich and complex inquiries into the question of the animal, much of the recent work in animal studies has prompted fundamental reconsiderations of nonhuman and human difference, otherness, and subjectivity” (496). These are the theories that are important to understand for the reading of this thesis, the texts, and the novels in question. However, a number of terminologies need to be accounted for as well.

Another important term is that of the “pastoral.” Pastoral literature is a type of literature that traditionally focuses on the peaceful living of shepherds, far from the immoralities of urban life. The pastoral usually draws a picture that portrays something near-natural and peaceful operating in a rural setting. This is contrasted with an idyllic country and bourgeois city life. In other words, the pastoral literature describes the lives of rural people with all its difficulties, challenges, and blessings. Pastoral literature is an idyllic form of rural life. For this thesis, “pastoral” represents a type of the pastoral in literature that describes “the country with an implicit or explicit opposition to the urban” (Gifford 2).

Furthermore, I work with the term “environment” as rather all-encompassing, meaning “surroundings.” Firstly, the environment includes nature and its organic processes which all people are a part of. Nature is understood here to mean the entire inventory of life on earth, with all its biological, ecological, physical and chemical processes. It includes both the wilderness and the cultured land, both the Big Woods and the plantation, both storm tides and pear trees. Moreover, the environment includes the human modification of the natural environment: cultivated land – such as gardens, agriculture, or artificially built lakes and streams – residential and industrial areas – such as house, roads, and manufactures – as well as less tangible examples of environment, such as history, society, culture, and race. This is an important distinction, as different ways of imagining reciprocity between individuals and their environment as a whole pervades the novels in question. As Wendell Berry proposes in *The Unsettling of America*, reciprocity is not only an imaginary product but also a nature’s fact (22). The act of distancing itself from nature by overseeing, dominating, or through the destruction of the environment remains fruitless, as human culture cannot escape a sense of a dangerous proximity to nature, which will become clear in the following chapter. Therefore,

the relationship between the subjects inherent to the text studied here and their environment is never-ending. In calling attention to the notion of “environment”, as it may entail a presumed division and distance between an individual and its surroundings, Berry argues that the moment we recognize our environment as the mass surrounding us, we create a disconnection between ourselves and it (22). Another important factor in this thesis is the way in which proximity and distance to one’s surroundings is seen, as it not only shapes the way in which the individual understands their responsibility for those surroundings, but it can also demonstrate how the individual understands their relationship with other people of their culture as well as cultures in proximity to or in distance from – both spatial and social – themselves. Environment means everything that surrounds a person and is part of their – consciously or not – reality.

The environment specifically examined in this thesis is the Southern landscape. Faulkner and Hurston are deeply concerned with the Southern landscape and its history, and therefore its heritage is another topic that is picked up in the scope of this thesis. This particular environment, the South, is intertwined with its history; agriculture in the South is overshadowed by the history of plantations and the institution of slavery. Here, the past seems to always be present. This intertwinement of nature and history, and hence nature and race, is another reason to choose two novels that are based – culturally and geographically – in the South.

1.2 Novel Justification

Before looking at the structure of the thesis, an engagement with the criteria for choosing these novels is necessary. I base the content of my thesis on two novels that fall under the category of nature writing. Again, the two texts chosen are William Faulkner’s *Go Down*, and Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes*. At first glance, the novels do not seem to be the first books to turn to; however, I propose that the novels could and should be arranged under the rubric of animal studies, given the novels’ representation of ‘real’ animals, their characters’ closeness to them, and the human/nature relationships depicted. Theoretical approaches in animal studies, animality studies, and posthumanism lead to different interpretations from others who have looked at Faulkner and Hurston in relation to environmental and racial issues. I further draw on these novels because they were written on the basis of diverse cultural backgrounds and represent different characters and approaches to environmental relationships. The two writers examined in this thesis offer new ways of imagining and communicating the various

benefits and drawbacks of varying degrees of proximity and distance from the land and environment, envisioning different conceptions of environmental relationships. Their works engage with the South, revealing a fascination with the land and its human relationships and cultivating a closer connection with the environment, not only for the beneficiaries of societal privilege but for everyone, especially those who are often marginalized by the privileged culture. Thus, both novels are chosen on a basis of similarities.

However, there exist also specific reasons for choosing the two novels at hand. Firstly, through Hurston's reconceptualization of the pastoral, she develops differing views on the possibility of environmental justice. She thus ranks among a number of early African American writers' attempts to reconcile the African American's relationship with the land, and especially the South, after a history of slavery on the land, as *Their Eyes* explores various encounters of African Americans with nature. Secondly, Faulkner's *Go Down* provides a possibility to explore diverse approaches to the natural world, in some ways distinct from what we find in Hurston. His outlook on environmental relationships and belonging, of proximity to and distance from nature, and his interest in racial and social issues influences his ideas about environmental relationships, and points to the possibility that ecocriticism and "posthumanist animal studies" can operate simultaneously. All in all, both authors have individual explanations, and both are helpful and productive. The different relationships will be examined and used to reflect my thesis on. Finally, this introduction provides the scope and structure of the thesis.

1.3 Scope and Structure

Chapter 1 draws on Hurston's *Their Eyes*. It will follow Janie's journey to self-realization, but also her progressive detachment from the ideology of ethnocentrism. Throughout the novel she lives with people who commodify the land, which does not align with her understanding of the natural world and a life lived to its fullest. By juxtaposing her to her grandma that she grows up with and tracing her learning experience to maturity through her three marriages, this chapter attempts to focus on the ways Janie can help shed light on the question of environmental justice and, what is more, how she turns her learning experience into a tool to overcome an ethnocentric ideology that she is faced with throughout the novel. This chapter attempts to conclude that Janie exemplifies a productive model of a human/nature relationship, and thus imparts a sense of environmental responsibility and justice.

Chapter 2 focuses on William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*, and more specifically on two of its short stories; "The Bear" and "The Fire and the Hearth." Firstly, this thesis will focus on Isaac McCaslin's initiation into the wilderness, and his attempts to resolve this intimate encounter with nature. While Isaac's rather limited view on his environment is not unproblematic, it will serve to shed light on imagining reciprocal environmental relationships. All in all, this thesis attempts to show, that Isaac fails to leave his family's culture of ethnocentrism. Secondly, Lucas Beauchamp's story in "The Fire and the Hearth," follows his journey from a proud farmer to an exploiter of land as he is stricken with a gold fever, and to his conversion back to his old ways through the support of his wife. His reciprocal way of living regarding his social and natural environment will be examined and will present a positive example for the argument of this thesis. At the end of this chapter, both Isaac's and Lucas' approach to the environment will be investigated in regard to imagining a possible vision for environmental justice.

Both novels, I argue, display individual and social notions of environmental ownership, which generates a sense of responsibility and suggests both productive and problematic approaches to possible visions of environmental justice. These ideas will be finalized in the conclusion of this thesis. A close-reading of the two novels in question will be presented in two following chapters.

2 Forgiveness in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)

Zora Neale Hurston was a forerunner of her time, and when she died in 1960 her work had largely gone unnoticed. Author Alice Walker, however, saw the potential of Hurston's voice for representing the African-American community and Hurston's work finally received the attention it deserved. *Their Eyes* is Hurston's most famous novel that revolves around Janie, a African American woman who grew up with her grandmother and, throughout the novel, searches for more of life. The conflict between who she is and who others want her to be is a central theme in the novel.

The novel begins with Janie returning to Eatonville, the town she has lived in with her second husband. She is now in her 40s and has been married three times. She tells her story to her friend Pheoby. When Janie was only sixteen, her grandmother married her off to an older rich man named Logan Killicks to not have her become “de mule uh de world” (19), a metaphor she uses to refer to an African American woman. Janie is unhappy with Logan, and when she meets Joe Starks, who also goes by the name Jody, she becomes his wife and runs away with him. He takes her to Eatonville, a purely African American town where he buys land and becomes mayor. During Janie's first two marriages she unexpectedly finds herself restless and dissatisfied. She is not in love with Logan Killicks, who uses her as a work force, whereas Jody's calculating shuts her off from most of her natural and social environment. When Jody dies, Janie inherits his wealth and meets a younger man named Vergible Woods, also called Tea Cake. Janie falls in love with him. The couple gets married and moves to the Everglades. Despite some problems, Janie finally seems to have found happiness with Tea Cake. However, disaster strikes in the form of a hurricane. While they manage to escape, Tea Cake gets bitten and infected by a rabid dog. He falls into feverish jealousy, in the course of which Janie shoots him in self-defense. Janie finally returns to Eatonville and finds peace for her soul because of the still-present love she has found in Tea Cake and her newly found maturity.

With her eyes firmly on the horizon, Janie passes through three marriages that, along with her grandmother's and mother's traumatic experiences with the natural world, each serve as a milestone on her quest for self-fulfillment. These relationships help to explore distance from and proximity to nature, a detachment from trauma – and hence, as I argue ethnocentrism –, and a vision of environmental justice in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes*. In

contrast to Janie's original encounter with pastoral nature – the pear tree experience – Nanny sees the natural world as a place where cruelty and deepest wilderness reign. Still, her traumatic experience with nature makes further interpretations of a lasting impact of nature experience possible, and sheds light on how the individual understands his or her place within their social and natural environment by assuming their distance from and/or proximity to nature.

Experiencing communion with nature under the pear tree for the first time, Janie feels like “she had been summoned to behold a revelation” of passionate intimacy where tree, flower, and a “dust-bearing bee” celebrate “marriage” (15). Hurston uses the pear tree metaphor as the core image that bonds Janie to nature. The same can be said for Nanny and her mule metaphor. While the “blossoming pear tree” symbolizes Janie's *joie de vivre* and her search for a new and broadened horizon, the mule metaphor is a representation of Nanny's comparatively close horizon and her dwelling on a past that is long gone. The way Hurston makes use of both metaphors suggests that a person's individual reality is shaped and consumed by their proximity to nature, however, I argue that it is up to the person how they interpret that proximity. Janie's encounter with nature and the proximity it forms, provides a conventional approach to how individuals view their natural surroundings: nature as pure and giving rather than brutal and relentless. What Janie has yet to learn is to maintain the necessary distance so as not to lose herself in her own reality overpowered by nature. As a young girl, she experiences nature as the bearer of love, lust, romance and beauty, a concept that she chases as the novel progresses, however, by the end of the novel it has become clear she has learned that she cannot go back to her initial experience and innocence, but must hold on to maturity and forgiveness; and she understands that everything in nature is based on death and renewal. Throughout her life, Janie has to overcome both isolation from and dangerous proximity to nature – that is nature as dangerous, unrelenting, and threatening to human culture. She deals with it in a reflected way that helps her move towards a healthy distance to nature, representing a constructive vision for environmental justice.

Hurston further examines the entanglement of the respective relationship of each character to nature and their response to the contrary view. While Janie longs for proximity and closeness to nature, and to become a part of that idyll, she rejects the old woman's notion of nature. Nanny's intention, on the other hand, is to protect Janie from that proximity and immersion into the sensuous world and instead seeks to have Janie become part of the cultivated world where “de white man is de ruler of everything” (19). At the end of her

journey, after her world has been shaken by the elemental powers of the wilderness – the flood, rabies, etc. – Janie has learned that there is no separating barrier between the wilderness, the pastoral ideal, and civilization, but that they interlace; meanwhile, the ethnocentric view wants to see them being set apart and distanced from each other.

According to Outka, the landscape in the pear tree passage does not only symbolize Janie, but she also symbolizes it, with her epiphany being a “moment of alliance rather than simply projection” (190). This is the moment of intimate communion which Outka identifies as a sublime encounter that inevitably leads to the lingering bondage of trauma for African Americans. I counter that, while this might be true for other characters in the book, Janie is able to turn her first sublime experience into a stepping stone for her journey to self-realization and freedom.

Under the pear tree, Janie feels an intimate proximity to nature, burying her experience “in her flesh” (14). She absorbs the order around her from which she derives an environmental ideal for human relations. Janie feels spiritually drawn to commune with the natural world in her own garden: “She had been spending every minute that she could steal from her chores under that tree for the last three days. That was to say, ever since the first tiny bloom had opened. It had called her to come and gaze on a mystery.” (14). Janie is intimately close to her natural environment and “it stir[s] her tremendously” (14). Her senses are awakened as she experiences the ecological system of the pear tree for the first time in the story. Most of her senses are engaged, as she “gaze[s] on a mystery, hears a “flute song forgotten in another existence and remembered again”, smells that “the rose of the world was breathing out smell”, and feels that “it followed her through all her waking moments and caressed her in her sleep” (14). The encounter with the pear tree is a (breathtaking) portrayal of a flourishing ecosystem:

She was stretched on her back beneath the pear tree soaking in the alto chant of the visiting bees, the gold of the sun and the panting breath of the breeze when the inaudible voice of it all came to her. She saw a dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this was a marriage! (14-15)

The marriage within the ecosystem that Janie witnesses is not the marriage that Nanny wants for her. The latter is more likened to a business agreement and does not entail mutual love and surrender. As Janie processes her encounter under the pear tree, she associates herself with it

and wonders, “where were the singing bees for her?”. She realizes that “nothing on the place nor in her grandma’s house answered her” (15-16).

While the pear tree image is one of the leading metaphors in the novel, Hurston is no proponent for the simple pastoral. The initial pear tree experience has her kiss the first “bee to a blossom” she encounters. The pear-tree encounter loses its innocence when her grandmother catches her in the act of kissing a “glorious being” (16), a local boy named Johnny Taylor. The sight of her grandmother obscures Janie’s initial experience with nature and foreshadows the deadly hurricane towards the end of the novel: “Nanny’s head and face looked like the standing roots of some old tree that had been torn away by storm. Foundations of ancient power that no longer mattered” (16). Janie receives Nanny’s reaction as a violation of her relationship with the pastoral, but the simile indicates that Janie witnesses the decay of nature itself, as she in fact sees that “the cooling palma christi leaves” that she put on Nanny’s head as a remedy have “wilted down and become part and parcel of the woman” (17). What Janie understands here in more than just a literal sense is that Nanny has been consumed by the dangerous side of nature which brings about desolation and death.

Born into slavery, Nanny has worked her whole life for white people. Janie knows her by the name “Nanny”, as this is what she’s grown up to hear from the white children that Nanny has been looking after. Nanny’s own negative experience with wild nature shapes her reaction to Janie’s awakening sexuality. She gives her explanation as to why she is disillusioned, in form of her former experience in the wilderness, linked to her gender and sexuality. She, however, has to flee because of it. Her story begins near the end of the Civil War. Her owner and father of her newborn child leaves to fight in the war. His wife visits Nanny to meet her daughter and realizes the betrayal when she sees the baby’s lighter eyes and hair. The owner’s wife threatens Nanny with a beating and for her child to be sold off, so at night Nanny runs off with her baby girl named Leafy.

While Janie blossoms through her sensuous tree experience, Nanny associates nature with the fear and terror resulting from her womanhood. Although she is seeking protection in the swamp, her experience as an escaped slave leaves her traumatized after all.

Ah knowed de place was full of moccasins and other bitin’ snakes, but I was more skeered uh what was behind me. Ah hide in dere day and night and suckled de baby every time she start to cry, for fear somebody might hear her and Ah’d git found. Ah ain’t sayin’ uh friend or two didn’t feel mah care. And den de Good Lawd seen to it dat Ah wasn’t taken. Ah don’t see how come mah milk didn’t kill mah chile, wid me

so skeered and worried all de time. De noise uh de owls skeered me; de limbs of dem cypress trees took to crawlin' and movin' round after dark, and two three times Ah heered panthers prowlin' round. But nothin' never hurt me 'cause de Lawd knowed how it was. (18)

Nanny sees her sexuality and her situation as a black woman through the frightful experience in the swamp, when nature poses a threat for her and Leafy. Proximity to the swamp renders danger, and while she finds protection there, the dreadful and mystical powers of nature overpower her subjective reality. This experience of dangerously intimate proximity overwhelms Nanny, for she is not able to distance herself from the danger of the wilderness and reflect on the frightful experience she had there by disconnecting it from nature in general. As she looks at her natural surroundings through the lenses of trauma, she feels powerless when she witnesses Janie's fledgling sensuous relationship to nature and sexuality.

Ironically enough, she wraps her baby "up in moss and fixed her good in a tree" (25), for it is nature that offers her and her baby protection. Despite the fact that her first experience with nature is painted negative by Nanny, it leaves the possibility open that Leafy's understanding of the natural world is untarnished, and that she will reject the inheritance of the trauma. Nanny's reaction is based on a pattern of how both her natural and cultural surroundings react to sexual maturity. Unfortunately, her own brutal proximity to nature experiences are repeated in her daughter's life. Leafy's teacher takes her to the woods overnight to rape her. Once again, she experiences how the wild side of nature offers a place where violence and sexuality meet. Nanny had hoped the education of her daughter would give her the security she never had, yet it is her own teacher that abused her. Against this background, Nanny is left disillusioned. The cultural surroundings offer as little protection as the natural surroundings and confirm to Nanny that sexuality is a problem that needs to be attacked differently. This experience encourages Nanny in her beliefs and, as a result, a renewal of mind regarding nature is rendered difficult. Thus, Nanny is not able to find a healthy bond to nature, and is overcome by the bondage of trauma, reinforcing the human/nonhuman dichotomy and an ethnocentric ideology.

Where Nanny feels that she failed to guard her daughter from danger, she knows that this time she has to try different tactics to not have her granddaughter fall off the "highway through the wilderness" (16). This becomes urgent for her when Nanny witnesses Janie's sexuality blossoming in nature. For Nanny, the way to a better life is to liken herself to the ways of the dominant white culture, which she attempts to do by gaining power through land

ownership. Brigitte Fielder, an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin, suggests in her text “Animal Humanism: Race, Species, and Affective Kinship in Nineteenth-Century Abolitionism” that in order to overcome nineteenth-century racism, popular abolitionist theory oftentimes highlighted the humanity of black slaves by using mixed-race heroes and heroines that possess apparent similarities with “free white people” (489). She proposes a model of sympathy based on differences that did not merely echo racist theory but promoted interracial sympathy (488). By making use of animals as subjects of “familiar reference, in cross-species comparisons,” she explains that when animals are described to be in proximity to humans, and therefore familiar to them, or when they are used as objects of sympathy to convey sympathy between humans, the same “sympathy is figured across notions of difference, as both animal and human others are positioned as somehow proximate to, but not necessarily like, the sympathizer” (501).

Nanny, however, sticks to the ways of the dominant culture. She “raked and scraped and bought dis lil piece uh land so [Janie] wouldn’t have to stay in de white folks’ yard” and does not have her “feathers always crumpled by folks’ throwin’ up things in [her] face” (Hurstun 27). Nanny’s plan for a better life involves a domination over the natural world and buys into the white ideology. By marrying her off as soon as possible, she wants to give her granddaughter better prospects as she would move up the social ladder through access to land ownership. As dissuaded by Fielder, she tries to liken Janie to the ways of the dominant class, as she thinks this to be the best way to protect her.

Nanny wants to create a safe distance from nature for Janie, something she learned by looking to the ruling class. The distances she creates between her and nature is based on the power and control she executes over the land, fully disregarding reciprocity. In order to achieve that, Logan Killicks, a hard worker and the owner of the “often-mentioned sixty acres” (28), is the husband of her choice, as he seems to be well established within both the cultural and natural surroundings. Nanny wants to see her granddaughter grow up respectably and finds land ownership to be a method of providing her with that. As a slave fugitive and a mother, she was barred from these opportunities. For these reasons, Nanny’s perspective on human/natural relationships is insufficient. She treats nature as a commodity whose worth is determined by how much it can benefit the owner. For Janie, her grandmother’s ideas about lived relationship to land is not only outdated but, again, an attack on her newly blossomed relationship with the natural world. Her attempt to explain herself falls on deaf ears. Instead, Nanny blames her fears and doubts on her foolishness. She suspects Janie of wanting “some

dressed up dude”, whom Janie “can buy and sell such as dem” or “give ‘em away” through access to property, in her case “a house bought and paid for and sixty acres uh land right on de big road” (31). Nanny’s words are proof of how much she embraces the philosophy of the prevailing white class system.

Contrarily, Janie “ain’t takin’ dat ole land tuh heart” (31), indicating that her relationship to her natural surroundings are genuine, and not about what benefits she can get from access to land ownership. This is the background on which she enters into the marriage with Logan. After what she has experienced under the pear tree, she understands marriage to be a relationship where mutual love and care reign. She suspects that “she would love Logan after they were married” (21). However, it does not take Janie long to understand that Logan is not like the pear tree. As a result, she seeks advice at her grandmother’s house, connecting the shortcomings of her marriage to the pear tree experience: “Ah wants things sweet wid mah marriage lak when you sit under a pear tree and think” (32). The lesson that Janie learns here is that “marital relationships do not replicate the rhythmic and sacred patterns of the natural world” (Bealer 316). The emotional and verbal abuse that Janie suffers leads her to think of Logan as a “desecrati[on to] the pear tree” (Hurston 18-19). Janie’s understanding of marriage was birthed under the pear tree, while Logan’s understanding is based on his objectification of nature.

Hurston depicts Janie’s intimate relationship as strength, for Janie “knew things that nobody had ever told her. For instance, the words of the trees and the wind” (33). Her proximity to nature serves her well since she takes the lesson that she learns from it seriously. Janie benefits from her connectedness to and knowledge of nature. Her knowledge of nature goes deep as she not only learns from but communes with nature, for instance, “she often spoke to falling seeds (...) because she had heard seeds” encouraging each other (33).

On the contrary, this communal relationship is what Logan lacks in his physical proximity to nature. With “his often-mentioned sixty acres” (28) and a mule, Logan Killicks’s relationship to nature is based on the benefits he can reap. He treats his land as an object, the way he treats Janie as one. Shifting his mindset to see nature as something worth communing with – and not as a utilitarian object – would perhaps make him understand the importance of a well-balanced relationship with Janie, and retreat from ordering Janie around. Life with Logan disenchant Janie and she loosens her naïve and wide-eyed view on her natural environment. She finds her pear-tree experience being further tainted, as marriage does not necessarily generate mutual love: “she knew now that marriage did not make love. Janie’s

first dream was dead, so she became a woman” (34). And since Logan lives in “a lonesome place, like a stump in the middle of the woods” (29), her pear tree has become a shadow of its former glory. Her disillusionment, though, serves the purpose of understanding the inadequacies of a simple pastoral and gaining healthy distance from her natural environment. As a result, the marriage to Logan has her wise up and move closer to a new horizon. It is not long until Janie leaves Logan for another, more promising husband who guides her gaze towards new horizons.

Jody is represented as completely separated from nature. His labor does not take place in nature, as he owns a store and functions as the mayor of Eatonville. He embodies culture in a rather brutal way and he too falls short of Janie’s expectations that demand a marriage based on the ecologically balanced pear tree ideal. In the novel, Jody is the epitome of culture in the culture/nature dichotomy. The first time Janie meets him she sees “a citified, stylish dressed man with his hat set at an angle that didn’t belong in these parts. His coat was over his arm, but he didn’t need it to represent his clothes. The shirt with the silk sleeveholders was dazzling enough for the world” (37). Furthermore, when Jody tells her that he has been “workin’ for white folks all his life” (37), he is neither part of her romantic, simple pastoral where she lives in communion with nature, nor Logan’s harsher, laborious pastoral. His distance from nature becomes evident when he hears about the expectations Logan has of her regarding labor: “You ain’t got no business cuttin’ up no seed p’taters neither. A pretty doll-baby lak you is made to sit on de front porch and rock and fan yo’self and eat p’taters dat other folks plant just special for you” (39). A symbol for culture/nature dichotomy, Jody is far away from becoming a productive model for environmental justice.

He is not aware that Janie desires to stay close to nature; in fact, she looks at nature as her family and guide. On the other hand, Jody’s promise to her that “he would be a big ruler of things with her reaping the benefits” (39) sounds better than a life under Logan’s control. He provides for her the distance she seeks from her life with Logan; and while Janie understands that Jody “did not represent sun-up and pollen and blooming trees”, he nourishes her hopes of a somewhat ecologically balanced marriage by “[speaking] for far horizon, (...) for change and chance” (39). However, it is Jody’s disregard for nature and dedication to culture that provokes him to abuse Janie and use her for his own advantage. When Jody hears about Logan Killicks’ plan “tuh buy a mule fuh [Janie] tuh plow” (39), he is outraged, but although he promises to not treat Janie like a mule he objectifies her by treating her like “a pretty baby doll” who “is made to sit on de front porch” (39). By marrying Jody, Janie gets

herself just another husband who seeks to “take and make somethin’ outa [her]” (40) and does not take into consideration her dreams and wishes.

Marriage has Jody reveal his hunger for power and authority. When Jody and Janie arrive in Eatonville, a newer, exclusively black town, Jody learns that there is no mayor, so he steps up to occupy that role. He feels it is justified that he is the one building and ruling Eatonville. Eventually, this mindset has him turn into a tyrant, and being referred to as a white slaveholder. This becomes clear in the set-up of the town: “The rest of the town looked like servants’ quarters surrounding the ‘big house’” (47). This reveals his disinterest in putting an end to oppression, as he prefers to join in on it. Instead of fighting against the cultural norms, he legitimizes them and attempts to profit from them through money grabbing and land speculation. By taking part in the lifestyle of commodifying land and consenting to the power apparatus that land ownership brings forth, Jody supports inequality and the devaluation of human life. Working for white people his whole life has made him take over their ideology. Instead of letting go of his past, and doing things differently, he keeps his grip on the ethnocentric thinking of the dominant culture. By looking at the end of Jody’s life, it becomes visible how forgiveness plays a role in restoring social natural relationships.

In “Biblical Trees, Biblical Deliverance: Literary Landscapes of Zora Neale Hurston and Toni Morrison”, Glenda B. Weathers argues that “[Jody] covets the mayoral position, forges his authority from the subjection, fear, and awe of the citizens, and perpetuates his stronghold by parading his successes, one of which is Janie — ornament-wife, a notch on his sword” (204). The statement is concerned with Jody’s objectification of Janie for his own benefit. Jody is especially welcomed in Eatonville because he brought his “belov-ed wife, [his] store, [and his] land (Hurston 42). Here, Hurston connects ownership of land and objects to the ownership of people.

Jody told her to dress up and stand in the store all that evening. Everybody was coming sort of fixed up, and he didn’t mean for nobody else’s wife to rank with her. (...) So she put on one of her bought dresses and went up the new-cut road all dressed in wine-colored red.” (54-55)

The price that Janie has to pay for experiencing welcomed change is the loss of autonomy, and the deprivation of interaction with both her social and natural surroundings. “Janie loved the conversation and sometimes she thought up good stories on the mule, but Joe had forbidden her to indulge” (71). Janie is confined to the house and the store as Jody immobilizes her more and more in order to turn her into his trophy wife. For example, on the

day of the mule's funeral, Janie wants to participate in village life, while Jody tells her to "[s]het de door behind yuh, Janie." Thus "the carcass moved off with the town, and left Janie standing in the doorway" (80-81). Once again, Jody disregards her wants and needs, and slowly shatters Janie's hopes for a happy marriage. This becomes clear when Janie tells Jody about her dissatisfaction with her situation. "You'se always off talkin' and fixin' things, and Ah feels lak Ih'm jus' markin' time. Hope it soon gets over." "Over Janie? I god, Ah ain't even started good. Ah told you in de very first beginnin' dat Ah aimed tuh be uh big voice. You oughta be glad, 'cause dat makes uh big woman outa you." (62) Janie opens up to Jody and makes herself vulnerable in front of him, but Jody reacts in a way that keeps her small and bequeaths her with "a feeling of coldness and fear [that] took hold of her. She felt far away from things and lonely" (62). The objectification of Janie continues as Jodie orders her to tie up her locks; his motivation behind it is selfish:

One night [Jody] had caught Walter standing behind Janie and brushing the back of his hand back and forth across the loose end of her braid ever so lightly so as to enjoy the feel of it...That night he ordered Janie to tie up her hair around the store. (...) She was there in the store for *him* to look at, not those others. (73)

His rule about the hair shows his self-proclaimed role as Janie's owner. Unlike Janie, Jody does not dare to be vulnerable and keeps his selfish thoughts to himself, for he "never [says] things like that. It just wasn't in him." He is indifferent about her feelings and the trouble he causes for Janie through the "business of the head-rag" (73). Instead, he uses her to reassure him of his own authoritarian position as man.

The "the matter of the yellow mule" (73) is another example that signifies a connection between the manner in which Jody treats Janie and the way in which he treats Matt Bonner's "real" mule. When the men abuse the mule, it seems as if both Janie and Jody show compassion for the animal; he claims to have bought him "tuh let 'im rest" (77); but as the story progresses it is revealed that the kindness Jody shows towards the mule was not real. Due to her proximity to nature, however, the abuse of the mule causes pain in Janie.

Everybody was having fun at the mule-baiting. All but Janie.

She snatched her head away from the spectacle and began muttering to herself. "They oughta be shamed uh theyselves! Teasin' dat poor brute beast lak they id! Done been worked tuh death; done had his disposition ruint wid mistreatment, and now they got tuh finish devilin' 'im tuh death" a little war of defense for helpless things was going on inside her. (75)

Janie's compassion with the mule stems from her proximity to the natural world. Her disillusionment, as a result of her hopes for a faraway horizon deferred, makes her identify with the mule and align herself with her grandmother's metaphor. Both Jody and Logan had her labor for their own benefit and abused her (both physically and mentally). After the death of the mule, the people held a mock funeral outside the town where "they mocked everything human in death" (81). Jody outperforms the rest of the village by "[standing] on the distended belly of the mule for a platform and [making] gestures" (81). Not least because of the disrespect Jody displays he is situated at a distance from human and non-human creation, which finds its release in his mistreatment of both Janie and the mule.

The incident of the dead mule is a tipping point in the relationship between Janie and Jody. By humiliating her in front of the township, Jody seeks to maintain a position of authority by repeatedly belittling women's intelligence and realm of perception: "Somebody got to think for women and chillum and chickens and cows. I god, they sho don't think non theirselves" Janie attempts to defend herself: 'Ah knows uh few things, and womenfolks thinks sometimes too!' But Jody stays relentlessly brutal: 'Aw naw they don't. They just think they's thinkin'. When Ah see one thing Ah understands ten. You see ten things and don't understand one'" (95). His mental abuse of her eventually develops into physical abuse: One day, when dinner does not turn out as good as usual, "[h]e [slaps] Janie until she had a ringing around in her ears" (96). Life with Jody has Janie and her once vibrant senses slowly become numb. This incident stops her from being "petal open with him" (96). Janie "had no more blossomy openings dusting pollen over her man, neither any glistering young fruit where the petals used to be" (96). Janie's hope for the vision of the blossoming pear tree to become reality with Jody is deferred once again.

While "she found that she had a host of thoughts (...) and emotions she had never let Jody know about" (96), Janie does not lose hope for her future. Instead, "[s]he was saving up feelings for some man she had never seen" (96). Her horizon finally expands when Jody dies. Shortly thereafter the embodiment of her vision, Tea Cake, enters into Janie's life. He enters her domestic world by "making flower beds in Janie's yard and seeding the garden for her" (147). He expects the fruits of his labor to benefit her and by planting his seeds he foreshadows that he will not leave her. The distance from nature that has been forced upon Janie slowly decreases, as Tea Cake stands in the gap for her. In fact, he saves her from a cycle of abusive marriages. For example, Jody tells her to "go fetch me de checker-board *and* de checkers. Sam Watson, you'se mah fish'" (101). Contrary to Jody, Tea Cake asks her:

“playin’ (...) some checkers?” and tells her that she “looks hard tuh beat.” (128). As a result, Janie “found herself glowing inside. (...) Somebody thought it natural for her to play” (128). Tea Cake serves as the antidote and reverses what was stolen from her. By inviting her into a new world exclusively reserved for men, he opens up new possibilities on her horizon.

Playing Checkers and being an equal to her male playmate is a new experience for Janie. In “‘The Kiss of Memory’: The Problem of Love in Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*,” Tracy L. Bealer states that “Tea Cake’s desire for mutual enjoyment through play recalls the ‘natural’ space of pleasure and satisfaction Janie discovered under the pear tree” (320). He keeps providing support to her, as her insecurities are slowly disappearing: “Jody useter tell me Ah never would learn. It wuz too heavy fuh mah brains” (Hurston 129). Tea Cake, however, responds differently: ‘Folks is playin’ it wid sense and folks is playin’ it without. But you got good meat on yo’ head. You’ll learn’ (129) And Tea Cake continues to invest in her confidence. He advises her of new possibilities that could further enhance her horizon. Janie cultivates the bad seeds planted into her by Jody. Tea Cake, however, crushes these objectifying beliefs by re-inviting beliefs about self-worth, intelligence, and autonomy into her life that she was robbed of through ecologically unbalanced relations. He bestows life into the field of her visions that has lain abandoned for many years, as Tea Cake understands Janie as being equal to himself and deserving of a kind friend and/or lover.

As they grow closer, evidence for a reciprocal relationship becomes clearer. Tea Cake surprises Janie with “a string of fresh-caught trout for a present” and wants to “clean ‘em”, her to “fry ‘em”, and them to “eat [them]” (138). They are equals in labor and recreation. Another time, “Tea Cake went out to the lemon tree at the corner of the kitchen and picked some lemons and squeezed them for her. So they had lemonade too” (136). Here, it becomes clear that Tea Cake is in the relationship, first and foremost, to give. Furthermore, his devotion is real and his feelings sincere. While Jody had Janie put her hair up, Tea Cake openly admires it. One day, Janie wakes up with him “combing her hair and scratching the dandruff from her scalp” (138). Not used to this amount of affection, she is baffled as to why someone would want her the way she is. “Why, Tea Cake? Whut good do combin’ mah hair do *you*? It’s *mah* comfortable, not yourn” (138). Tea Cake’s answer is honoring of her and displays his deep affections once more: “It’s mine too. Ah ain’t been sleepin’ so good for more’n uh week cause Ah been wishin’ so bad tuh git mah hands in yo’ hair. It’s so pretty. It feels jus’ lak underneath a dove’s wing next to mah face” (138). Bealer elaborates further and states: “Tea Cake does not value Janie’s beauty for how it can benefit him in the sociopolitical

realm, but for the sensory pleasure it affords him, and more importantly, Janie herself” (320). Jody holds her womanhood captive in order to have it all to himself, but Tea Cake celebrates it. The way he treats her hair is beneficial to both. Unlike Jody, Tea Cake is concerned for her well-being and approaches her beauty rather humbly. Tea Cake sees her for who she is and recognizes the value that is intrinsic to her. He proves his love with the following statement: “De thought uh mah youngness don’t satisfy me lak yo’ presence do” (Hurstons 141). Janie, however, is not satisfied with his love confession and doubts his feelings for her, until Tea Cake impresses her with a tree analogy: “Look lak we done run our conversation from grass roots tuh pine trees” (142). When Tea Cake invites her to a picnic, Janie is still unsure about his intentions, but he takes away her worries and challenges her to reveal her true feelings: “Naw, it ain’t all right wid you. If it was you wouldn’t be sayin’ dat. Have de nerve tuh say what you mean” (146). Janie’s voice and feelings count. Tea Cake cares about her in a way no one has ever cared about her. Moreover, he offers to engage with her in a genuine and open dialogue at eye level, rather than putting condescending demands upon her.

The manner in which Tea Cake treats Janie is a sign of his proximity to nature. As the novel progresses, this becomes clearer and clearer. Tea Cake has Janie gradually open up to him, for she too puts the pear tree metaphor into action once again: “He could be a bee to a blossom—a pear tree blossom in the spring” (142). Then she continues: “He seemed to be crushing scent out of the world with his footsteps. Crushing aromatic herbs with every step he took, Spices hung about him. He was a glance from God” (142). The hesitation Janie displays reveals the strong insecurities implemented by both of her grandmother and her two husbands. The pear tree image is no longer the most prominent thought in her mind. Nevertheless, Tea Cake stays relentless in his pursuit of her, and mimics with his attitude the very vision that has Janie come alive and wanting more.

Janie and Tea Cake’s relationship is blossoming through mutual respect and understanding. In fact, she desires to follow through with different activities and enjoys the time with Tea Cake. Nothing happens without her consent. At one occasion, a friend asks her about the more active life she has led ever since she started to spend time with Tea Cake to provoke doubt in her about his suitability for her. But Janie keeps her cool and responds, “Tea Cake ain’t draggin’ me off nowhere Ah don’t want tuh go. Ah always want tuh git round uh whole heap, but Jody wouldn’t ’low me tuh” (150). She further explains her decision to move away with him: “Dis ain’t no business proposition, and no race after property and titles. Dis is uh love game. Ah done lived Grandma’s way, now Ah means tuh live mine” (152). Janie does

not try to assimilate into the white culture that has been forced upon her by Jody, but with the help of Tea Cake, she finds her way back to her roots and the pastoral, only this time as a woman.

Eventually, the couple decides to move to Jacksonville to get married and begin a new life. It is Tea Cake who asks her to try their luck on the muck in the everglades: “Oh down in de Everglades round Clewiston and Belle Glade where dey raise all dat cane and string-bean and tomatuhs. Folks don’t do nothin’ down dere but make money and fun and foolishness. We must go dere” (171). The way he talks about nature reaffirms his proximity to it. Laying eyes on the new home for the first time, Janie is overwhelmed by the grandeur of the Everglades as

...[e]verything in the Everglades was big and new. Big Lake Okechobee, big beans, big cane, big weeds, big everything. Weeds that did well to grow waist high up the state were eight and often ten feet tall down there. Ground so rich that everything went wild. Volunteer cane just taking the place. Dirt roads so rich and black that a half mile of it would have fertilized a Kansas wheat field. Wild cane on either side of the road hiding the rest of the world. People wild too. (173)

The wilderness moves her. Life with Tea Cake lets her be close to nature and feel freedom because of it. While Logan makes her exercise power over nature, and Jody isolates her from nature (and social life), Tea Cake offers her a life with agency and in proximity to nature. The abundance of the pear tree fantasy has its revival in the muck and the Everglades. Unlike Eatonville, where Jody regulated the benefits of the natural world, the muck possesses an abundance of natural resources where everyone appears to have access. The muck is a cosmos where pastoral life can blossom and serve as a safe haven from the troubles of the urban environment – a system built by the dominant group of the society that offers hardly any perspectives or a future worth living in. Contrastingly, if treated with responsibility, the presence of the muck in the story shifts another possible philosophy (in comparison to that of the dominant group) into an anti-ethnocentric focus: a personal and mutual relationship where proximity to nature counts more than authority over the environment and social economical gain.

The Everglades uncover more of Tea Cake’s proximity to nature and affection for Janie. Proximity to nature is illustrated by him working on the bean field. At work, he quickly begins to miss Janie, and surprises her at home: “Janie, Ah gits lonesome out dere all day ’thout yuh” (178). A solution is right around the corner: “After dis, you betta come git uh job

uh work out dere lak de rest uh de women—so Ah won't be losin' time comin' home" (178). Tea Cake's proposal is healing. He wants her to work alongside him with close proximity to nature. His new workplace becomes their common workplace. Janie accepts and "the very next morning" she [gets] ready to pick beans *along* with Tea Cake" (emphasis mine, 178). Instead of forcing her to get to work like Logan or forcing her to stay home by herself like Jody, Tea Cake speaks out an invitation to work alongside him in nature. They both enjoy the time on the field, and at home, and "Tea Cake would help get supper afterwards" (179), revealing a fair division of labor both on the field and at home.

Tea Cake's behavior is characterized by mutual respect and a less opposing attitude, which is like nothing Janie has ever experienced before. His motivation for what he does lies in a hope for the future demonstrated by his tendency to plant seeds, as he does not simply possess a hunger for instantaneous fruit and profit; unlike Nanny and Jody, he builds his future not for his social or financial benefit but rather to live life to the fullest, regardless of how well he does within the social and economic hierarchy. Through Tea Cake, the pastoral becomes even more appealing. Tea Cake, despite all his faults and weaknesses, seems to possess what it takes to both celebrate his fellow human beings and nature.

Yet, like in every relationship, difficulties arise. Janie and Tea Cake are suffering through and celebrating life together. They are "dancing, fighting, singing, crying, laughing, winning and losing love every hour." They "work all day for money, fight all night for love." Meanwhile, "the rich black earth [is] clinging to bodies and biting the skin like ants" (176). The muck also poses a threat to their functioning marriage. For example, when "[a] little chunky girl took to picking a play out of Tea Cake in the fields and in the quarters" (182), Janie has to learn what it feels like to be jealous. One day, Tea Cake and the girl are suddenly no longer in sight. Janie does not think, but "[acts] on feelings" as "she [rushes] around into the cane and about the fifth row down (...) [finds] Tea Cake and Nunkie struggling" (183). Janie interrupts their fight, and the girl flees. Tea Cake feels slightly embarrassed and defends himself: "'She grabbed mah workin' tickets outa mah shirt pocket and Ah run tuh git 'em back,' Tea Cake explained, showing the tickets considerably mauled about in the struggle" (183). Janie remains set on her accusation of him being unfaithful, but eventually they move towards each other and reconnect sexually. Despite the injustice committed by Tea Cake, Janie still chooses to give up her own selfish fears and insecurities and devotes her efforts to balance the marriage out. She forgives him as she values their relationship over the entitlement of her hurt feelings.

Tea Cake, on the other hand, acts on his jealousy in a way that indicates a kind of weakness of character. When Janie meets Mrs. Turner, a woman of mixed ethnicity, they become friends. The latter wants to pair Janie off with her brother, as she relates to Janie over their mixed heritage. She takes her brother to the muck and Tea Cake lets jealousy win over:

Tea Cake had a brainstorm. Before the week was over he had whipped Janie. Not because her behavior justified his jealousy, but it relieved that awful fear inside him. Being able to whip her reassured him in possession. No brutal beating at all. He just slapped her around a bit to show he was boss. (146)

There is another, rather faulty side to Tea Cake. He reacts out of fear as he exploits his relationship with Janie and claims a higher position on the hierarchical ladder for himself. According to Bealer, “Tea Cake’s reaction to the ‘awful fear’ that he will lose Janie leads him to enact the one hierarchical role in which his masculine power is secure” (322). Furthermore, I agree with Bealer when she states that “Tea Cake’s violence temporarily transforms the structure of his marriage from work and play between equals to domination by a male ‘boss’” (Bealer 322). Ultimately, his explanation does not put him in a better light: “Ah didn’t whup Janie ‘cause *she* done nothin’. Ah beat her tuh show dem Turners who is boss” (197-198). Ultimately, Tea Cake takes advantage of Janie to prove to others (and likely to himself) who the “boss” is in the relationship. He capitalizes on Janie to selfishly lessen the pain of his own insecurities. Despite his function as “a bee to (...) a pear tree blossom in the spring”, Tea Cake is evidently an afflicted character.

The violation of the delicate bond of a reciprocal marriage will not be without consequences and will end for Tea Cake in a trauma. Tea Cake resembles Logan when he desecrates the pear tree image he once was imitating. While Janie moves towards Tea Cake in her jealousy and lets go of it, Tea Cake holds onto it. Nature reacts to the disturbance caused by Tea Cake’s jealousy and beating of Janie in an otherwise reciprocal marriage and sends the hurricane and the rabid dog to restore environmental justice on the land. They receive several warnings to leave that Tea Cake chooses to ignore; these warnings come from both his social and natural environment. Janie sees “a band of Seminoles passing by” who “kept moving steadily” to reach safe and “high ground” (205-206). As the “morning came without motion”, rabbits, possums, snakes, “big animals like deer” and a panther followed towards the east (206-207). When a friend offers him a ride out of the danger zone, Tea Cake states that they “decided tuh stay” as “de money’s too good on the muck” (207). The friend cannot convince Tea Cake by making him aware of the knowledge of the Seminoles, who lived in communion

with the local environment long enough to read the signs of nature. Being led to believe that „Indians are dumb anyhow” (206), Tea Cake is convinced of the authority of those who built and possess the muck. The explanation he gives that the Seminoles “don’t know much uh nothin’, tuh tell de truth. Else dey’d own this country still.” And “de white folks ain’t gone nowhere. Dey oughta know if it’s dangerous” (208) reinforces this firm belief. Here, Tea Cake has yielded to the power and authority of the prevalent culture, knowingly ignoring the warnings of those in long existing proximity to the local natural world. Just like with Jody, his reaction springs from an embracement of an ethnocentric worldview.

By linking property rights and the power of the dominant class to knowledge of the natural world, this suggests that even though Tea Cake and Janie are pursuing a way of life that celebrates proximity to nature, they still live under the supremacy of the dominant class. Both Tea Cake and Janie themselves are blind to the injustice of the power system of the dominant class and the relentless commodification of land. Especially Tea Cake embraces the white ideology of ethnocentrism that positions the human in distance from the nonhuman, and thus, he embraces the trauma of his past. Tragically, this way, Tea Cake contributes to the catastrophe, as he blindly accepts and even celebrates a system that supports inequality, a system that he suffers from himself. During the hurricane, we learn that “the people in the big houses” feel “uncomfortable but safe because there were seawalls to chain the senseless monster in his bed” (210-211). Tea Cake’s lack of action is based on his trust in the people in the big houses and he lets them “do the thinking” (211). The deadly hurricane, however, is evidence that the “people” of the dominant white class have no more control over nature than Janie’s and Tea Cake’s “folks” – and still, they keep and control their social position.

In the end, it is Tea Cake’s egotism and lust after money that renders him deaf to wisdom, and ultimately, causes his fall. When the hurricane eventually hits them with great power, they are still at home. Nature, here, is personified: “A big burst of thunder and lightning that trampled over the house. (...) And the lake got madder and madder with only its dikes between them and him” (211-212; 215: “The sea was walking the earth with a heavy heel”). The alignment with human beings is deemed necessary to connect with the reader on an emotional level and recognize the ecosystem’s vulnerability. Nature reacts to balance out the injustice committed by Tea Cake, and the exploitation of the muck; firstly, because he uses the muck to make money, and secondly, because he embraces the white ideology of ethnocentrism that created the muck in the first place. When nature descends on him with

wrath, and “the wind came back with triple fury” (212), Tea Cake at last understands the danger they are in. And then they start running, behind them

...the lake. Under its multiplied roar could be heard a mighty sound of grinding rock and timber and a wail. (...) The monstrous beast had left his bed. (...) He seized hold of his dikes and ran forward until he met the quarters; uprooted them like grass and rushed on after his supposed-to-be conquerors, rolling the dikes, rolling the houses, rolling the people in the houses along with other timbers. The sea was walking the earth with a heavy heel. (215)

They manage to escape and lay down to rest. In an attempt to find something to cover the weakened Tea Cake with, she finds herself fighting for her life against the flood and, what is more, a rabid dog. Tea Cake comes to her rescue and tries to kill the dog. “[He] rose out of the water at the cow’s rump and seized the dog by the neck. But he was a powerful dog and Tea Cake was over-tired. So he didn’t kill the dog with one stroke as he had intended. (...) They fought and somehow he managed to bite Tea Cake high up on his cheek-bone” (221). The hurricane passes but another natural catastrophe waits around the corner: The dog is infected with rabies. What follows is Tea Cake’s infection with rabies when the dog bites him in a mortal combat.

The ironical tragedy is that proximity to nature can be as harmful as distance from it and can take possession over a person. This is foreshadowed by Nanny's escape into the wilderness. Here, the married couple and the two animals symbolize both the pastoral and the civilization. The torrential water that threatens to drown her, the death fight between Tea Cake and the dog, and the rabies that Tea Cake and the dog are infected with, symbolize the wilderness. The pastoral is a deceitful fantasy as nature is not only responsible for the pear tree but also for rabies and hurricanes. Furthermore, rabies, a deadly animal disease caused by a virus, is a suitable image for the extent to which humanity, indeed, is a part of nature and reveals its inability to control it. Being exposed to a rabies infection does not leave much room for agency, as it infects the brain and has the affected attack others, as is evident in Tea Cake's case.

For Tea Cake, the way jealousy can lead to an overall destructive state of mind if not tended to, so can rabies overcome goodness and lead to destruction. The disease indirectly kills Tea Cake, when Janie kills him in an attempt to protect herself from a hallucinating and dangerous Tea Cake. After the ordeal is over, “Janie held his head tightly to her breast and wept and thanked him wordlessly for giving her the change for loving service” (246-247). His

transgressions are forgiven, and Janie takes the chance to immortalize him through her memories and garden. Tea Cake can “never be dead” (259). Tea Cake’s lifestyle of proximity to nature and the beautiful parts of his soul remain vivid in Janie’s mind; and because Tea Cake violated his egalitarian relationship to Janie, Janie’s mind is the only place in which the goodness of Tea Cake can live on.

Janie remains thankful for her marriage with Tea Cake and holds no grudges. Upon returning home, Janie finds seeds left by Tea Cake: “The seeds reminded Janie of Tea Cake more than anything else because he was always planting things. (...) Now that she was home, she meant to plant them for remembrance” (256). Tea Cake’s desire to plant seeds was birthed from his former proximity to nature, which is mirrored in the healthy parts of his relationship with Janie. When Janie plants the seeds she found, she does so to remember Tea Cake in his pear tree like state; but because he violated the ecological well-being of his environment, “[Janie’s] mind is in fact the *only* place where such a love can endure” (Bealer 323). Janie, however, knows that “he wasn’t dead. He could never be dead until she herself had finished feeling and thinking. The kiss of his memory made picture of love and light against the wall” (259). Tea Cake’s memory remains not only alive in her heart, but his very presence is tangible in Janie’s bedroom so that she continues to savor the joy he brought into her life (259). I partially disagree with Bealer’s argument that “Janie (...) excises the unpleasant aspects of Tea Cake and only retains the version of her husband that reflects the pear-tree vision” (324). While she continues to cherish her husband’s proximity to nature, she does not simply discard the unpleasant aspect of Tea Cake’s character. Instead, she lets go of his trespasses, by learning from it, and turns the lessons into a better vision of reciprocal living. At the end of the novel, Janie stays hopeful and believes in beauty out of ashes. She has lived through the sublime and witnessed trauma yet overcomes her obstacles and finds her own vision of environmental justice. Life follows the laws of the nature, the eternal cycle of growth, where life and decay become tangible in every simple moment. She sees her own life “like a great tree in leaf with the things suffered, things enjoyed, things done and undone. Dawn and doom was in the branches” (Hurston 11). She has “been tuh de horizon and back” (257), and, at last, she “kin set (...) in [her] house and live by comparison” (257), for “here was peace” (259). Janie has found what she was looking for as a young girl having been awakened to the wonders of nature. Her quest for self-fulfillment has led her to see her balanced horizon become reality.

Employing the work of Jackson, Janie is a productive example of approaches to environmental relationships. She breaks up the human/animal and/or culture/nature dichotomy, and dares to reveal her difference to the world, in alignment with Fielder's argument of a difference-based model of sympathy. Janie's model should when analyzed from a posthuman standpoint, should be ultimately seen as a good model for the environmental and racial issues in question. Janie becomes almost posthuman and redefines newly what deems "human", because she is able to free herself from ethnocentrism. According to Outka, Janie is doomed to fall prey to her past, as her agency is limited. With this he takes the position of a posthuman perspective that Jackson criticizes. Contrarily, I suggest that while the book presents many characters that fail to take up agency and move past an ethnocentric view, Janie overcomes the obstacles that try to deprive her of her agency. The way Janie holds on to her bond to nature, first through child eyes of naïve innocent and then through the eyes of wisdom and forgiveness, reveals her process of maturity. Both her disenchantment with the pastoral and her approximation to civilization are crucial in her search for another horizon, and in fighting her way away from an ethnocentric ideology. In structure, plot, the grandmother, the characterization of Janie's three husbands, the frame tale, and in specific incidents – such as the pear tree, the mule, the rabid dog, the hurricane – Hurston's *Their Eyes* provides us with different models for environmental relationships. On her quest to self-fulfillment, she comes across animals that serve as another marker and teacher and meets different characters that shape her into the person she is. Nanny installs in her the thought, that proximity to nature is especially dangerous for the African American woman and likens her to the image of the mule. She marries her off to Logan, who turns her into the mule, that Nanny tries to protect Janie from. Her second husband, Jody, objectifies her, and separates her from nature and society. Having worked his whole life for white people, he takes the first chance he gets to become like them and exploits his position of power. Even though Tea Cake's presence is of short duration, is important for Janie's journey. He loves her with all of him, until she realizes that her journey to self-realization is a journey of forgiveness.

3 Flight and Ownership in William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* (1942)

Go Down, Moses is a collection of seven short stories about the McCaslin and Beauchamp families. At the center of the novel is the sin of the first white men of the country, passed down through the generations; the guilt of expropriating the Native Americans and enslaving the blacks. The fateful relationship between blacks and whites is for Faulkner the key to problems pertaining the American South. The stories take place in the course of almost a hundred years. The beginning of "Was" takes place in 1856, and the latest events in "The Fire and the Hearth," "Pantaloon in Black," "Delta Autumn" and "Go Down, Moses" take place between 1940 and 1941. Most of the stories take place on a plantation or in the increasingly retreating wilderness around the plantations. In fact, the wilderness retreats to such an extent that, in "Delta Autumn," Isaac needs to ride hours with a car into the Mississippi Delta, in order to access the wilderness he grew up with. With him is Roth Edmonds who is the youngest member of the McCaslin/Edmonds family in which "Old Carothers McCaslin" is a former patriarch. He becomes the owner of the family plantation after Isaac relinquishes his claim. In the wilderness, Isaac McCaslin mourns the man-made "progress" that replaces a sentimentalized nature.

This thesis focuses mainly on two of the stories. In the first story examined, "The Fire and the Hearth," Lucas goes on a gold hunt with a metal detector. His gold-fever has his wife Molly seek a divorce with the help of Roth Edmonds. Lucas recalls the time when Molly moved into the plantation's main house to live with Roth's father, Zack, to help take care of Roth after his mother died in childbirth. Lucas has a change of heart and decides to leave his treasure hunting behind because he realizes that his marriage is more important. The second short story that this thesis mainly draws on, "The Bear," is embedded in two short stories: "The Old People" and "Delta Autumn." In "The Old People," the young boy Isaac experiences his initiation into the wilderness, after killing his first deer. Later, Isaac is taken to the Big Woods by old Sam Fathers, the grandson of chief Ikkemotubbe and an unnamed African American slave woman, where they encounter the "phantom buck". He shares this experience with Cass Edmonds, who is both Isaac's sixteen-year older cousin and caretaker. In "The Bear," the story continues as Isaac McCaslin accompanies Sam Fathers, Cass and the rest of the hunting party into the woods every year. The hunting experiences center around

Old Ben, an old bear that has outwitted them for years. One year, the hunting party uses Lion, a huge, wild Airedale mix, to bring down Old Ben. They eventually kill Old Ben but have to mourn the deaths of Lion and Sam Fathers. Later in the story, Isaac renounces his inheritance of the McCaslin family plantation. Cass tries to change Isaac's mind, but Isaac's decision is firmly based on the discoveries he has made about the old sins of his great-grandfather, Carothers McCaslin, which, to Isaac, leaves the land and the plantation tainted with corruption. The two stories have been chosen as they follow the two main characters through important events in their lives.

At the end of "Delta Autumn" in *Go Down* old Isaac reflects on his relationship with the wilderness. Compared to the wilderness, he suffers a growing detachment from the hunting camp, the civilization, as he sees it as a "puny evanescent clutter of human sojourn" and believes it to be, after only one week, "completely healed, traceless in the unmarked solitude" (250). He is proud of his intimate knowledge of the land, "[b]ecause it was his land, although he never owned a foot of it. He had never wanted to, not even after he saw plain its ultimate doom, watching it retreat year by year before the onslaught of axe and saw and log-lines and then dynamite and tractor plows" (250). His relationship with nature appears to be somewhat misleading, as this section is laden with paradox. Isaac believes the wilderness to be healed in no time, yet also fundamentally doomed to destruction.

While Isaac's relationship to the wilderness, the hunting camp, and the southern landscape, helps to shed some light on negotiating relations with the natural environment, he is not the only character in the book worth considering for this thesis. Lucas, an African-American farmer who shares a white grandfather with Isaac, manifests another potential human-nature relationship. In the story "The Fire and the Hearth" in *Go Down*, Faulkner tells the reader about Lucas' relationship with the land. This relationship is comparable with Isaac's relationship with the wilderness, because the land that Lucas dwells on is "his own (...) though he neither owned it nor wanted to nor needed to. He had been cultivating it for forty-five years (...) plowing and planting and working it when and how he saw fit" (28). Faulkner describes Lucas' relationship to the land in terms of reciprocal ownership, as the land is being allotted to him, "a specific acreage to be farmed as he saw fit as long as he lived or remained on" the McCaslin plantation (82).

The wilderness and the plantation respectively are the places that Isaac and Lucas claim as their own. Place, here, has a complex meaning. Patricia Yaeger suggests that "place is never simply 'place' in southern writing, but always a site where trauma has been absorbed

into the landscape” (13). It becomes plausible to relate Yaeger’s claim to Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses* which repeatedly focuses on the different forms of communication between humans and a disordered natural world. In “Faulkner’s Ecological Disturbances” (2006), Matthew W. Sivil comments on Buell’s assertion that “for Faulkner, environmental issues were usually of a secondary concern,” and that *Go Down* is “more of a race book than (...) an environmental book” (*Writing for an Endangered* 189), explaining that “[Faulkner] often merged these concerns,” because “[f]or Faulkner, race poverty, class, and other social factors are environmental issues” (489). Buell’s argument divides the natural world and the wider surroundings, such as the social and cultural history of a dwelling area, and moreover, its biological and natural characteristics. Contrary to that, I suggest that race and the environment (in the South) are factors that can operate simultaneously. Faulkner’s awareness of the existence of a direct link between exploitation of black people and the exploitation of the land is well illustrated in *Go Down*, as well as the exploitation and interconnectedness of social and environmental elements.

The McCaslin plantation and the wilderness lay on the same property, however, Isaac repudiates the land on behalf of the perception and bond he developed with the natural world under Sam Father’s guidance in the wilderness, and further, to atone for his grandfather’s sins on that land. However, a duality marks the property. It is the tragic failing of Isaac to recognize the interconnectedness of the two landscapes that provides the reader with another glance into the human-nature relationship in Faulkner’s South. Isaac, however, not only refuses to accept his inheritance, but also all corresponding property rights and long-established Western ideas of the relationship between man and nature.

Isaac processes his ideas on the land and its heritage of slavery and devastation and explains his reasons for repudiating his heritage in a lengthy debate with his Cousin Cass. He does not want to take part in something that is inherently wrong and wants to live his life apart from it so that he can be at peace. While he wants the sins of the past to be eradicated, he does not want to take responsibility for his heritage. His reasoning stems from his believe that God

...created man to be overseer on earth and to hold suzerainty over the earth and the animals on it in His name, not to hold for himself and his descendants inviolable title for ever, generation after generation, to the oblongs and squares of the earth, but to hold the earth mutual and intact in the communal anonymity of brotherhood (183).

He does not believe that anyone has the explicit right to land, as it belongs to everyone, and everyone belongs to it. In other words, he believes that no one person or family can claim ownership of the land. Cass disagrees: “So let me say it: that nevertheless and notwithstanding old Carothers did own it. Bought it, got it, no matter' kept it, held it, no matter; bequeathed it: else why do you stand here relinquishing and repudiating?” (183-184). He tries to convince Isaac otherwise:

You, the direct male descendant of him (...), while I am not only four generations from old Carothers, I derived through a woman and the very McCaslin in my name is mine only by sufferance and courtesy and my grandmother's pride in what that man accomplished whose legacy and monument you think you can repudiate. (182)

Their discussion brims with references to Isaac’s understanding of ownership. So Isaac rejects the basic notion of his and others property rights, saying that even though old Carothers McCaslin has bought the land “with white man’s money from the wild men whose grandfathers without guns hunted it and (...) believed he had tamed and ordered”, while he and others after him knew all along “not even a fragment of it had been [theirs] to relinquish or sell” (181). Further, he states that the land

...was never [his] to repudiate. It was never Father’s and Uncle Buddy’s to bequeath me to repudiate because it was never Grandfather’s to bequeath them to bequeath me to repudiate because it was never old Ikkemotubbe’s to sell to Grandfather for bequeathment and repudiation [...] because on the instant when Ikkemotubbe discovered, realized, that he could sell it for money, on that instant it ceased ever to have been his forever. (183)

The confrontation between Isaac and Cass serves to focus the attention of the reader on different ideas of land and ownership. While Cass readily adopts a career as a plantation owner and understands the land’s purpose to be possessed by men, Isaac is apprehensive of the land as a place where the sins of the Old South are replaced by the New South, as slavery gets replaced by bondage through a debt system. Contrary to his cousin, he understands the land as an entity to which men belong. In taking Isaac’s side, General Compson criticizes Cass for having

...one foot straddled into a farm and the other foot straddled into a bank; you aint even got a good hand-hold where this boy was already an old man long before you damned Sartorises and Edmondses invented farms and banks to keep yourselves from having to find out what this boy was born knowing and fearing too maybe but without being

afraid, that can go ten miles on a compass because he wanted to look at a bear none of us had ever got near enough to put a bullet in and looked at the bear and came the ten miles back on the compass in the dark; maybe by God that's the why and wherefore of farms and banks. (178)

Moreover, he praises the young Isaac for his adeptness and dedication to the wilderness (178).

Isaac approaches the wilderness with “patience” and “humility” (139) and thinks of it primarily as “bigger and older than any recorded document” (135). In personifying the wilder, Faulkner describes it as watching Isaac as he matures.

Then suddenly he knew why he had never wanted to own any of [the land], arrest at least that much of what people called progress, measure his longevity at least against that much of its ultimate fate. It was because there was just exactly enough of it. He seemed to see the two of them--himself and the wilderness--as coevals. (250)

In repudiating his inheritance, he could not annihilate the sins of slavery, but he gives up all the benefits that come with ownership. However, he also gives up any responsibility of protecting the land he was meant to watch over according to his hereditary title. He finds peace through not participating in the “progress” of the civilization, yet he does not actively work against its destruction. Isaac, against all odds, feels he and his “coeval,” the wilderness, are on good terms.

Isaac believes that the land “belonged to no man. It belonged to all; they had only to use it well, humbly and with pride” (250). Just like he has been “humble and proud” when he sees himself as “worthy to be a part of it or even just to see it to” (160), his response is that of humbleness, yet pride, whenever he would come into contact with the wilderness. While Isaac is full of good intentions in repudiating his land, he also believes that humility and pride are incongruent when working a plantation. This is a flawed belief, as Lucas relationship with the land demonstrates it is possible. He uses the land allotted to him while he keeps a certain balance between humility and pride. While he has a sensitive approach to the sins of the past, Isaac refuses to take on responsibility. In denying his heritage that is the plantation, he denies his roots and loses an important part of his identity. He is at peace knowing that he does not profit from the ethnocentric ideology of his heritage.

Isaac's love for the wilderness is based on his initiation into the wilderness. One day, Sam takes him to shoot his first deer: “So the instant came. He pulled trigger and Sam Fathers marked his face with the hot blood which he had spilled and he ceased to be a child and became a hunter and a man” (127). Like Janie, Isaac experiences an initial intimate encounter

with nature. Unlike Janie, however, he believes that a moment can turn him into a man. While Janie responds to her sublime experience by going on a journey toward maturity, Isaac stays stuck in this moment of sublimity, and, through the course of his life, seeks to recreate it. He feels empowered by this moment and loses a sense of reality, sentimentalizing his experience.

There could have been (and were) other trophies in the wagon. But for him they did not exist, just as for all practical purposes he and Sam Fathers were still alone together as they had been that morning. The wagon wound and jolted between the slow and shifting yet constant walls from beyond and above which the wilderness watched them pass, less than inimical now and never to be inimical again (...); the wagon jolting and bouncing on, the moment of the buck, the shot, Sam Fathers and himself and the blood with which Sam had marked him for ever one with the wilderness which had accepted him since Sam said that he had done all right, when suddenly Sam reined back and stopped the wagon and they all heard the unmistakable and unforgettable sound of a deer breaking cover.

The deer he is about to witness, is the giant-spirit buck that not everyone can see, but he through the eyes of initiation. Isaac knows that “something has happened to him” (130). He immediately remembers the experience in the wilderness as the ultimate truth, as he keeps coming back to the place of the event. He feels overwhelmed by the proximity of nature and starts to shake.

But he could not stop the shaking. He did not try because he knew it would go away when he needed the steadiness – had not Sam Fathers already consecrated and absolved him from weakness and regret too? – not from love and pity for all which lived and ran and then ceased to live in a second in the very midst of splendour and speed, but from weakness and regret. (130)

The encounter with nature intensifies, until Isaac feels one with it. And then he “saw the buck” (131). Except Sam, none of the other men sees it, and at home, Isaac tells Cass about the experience, but is disappointed about his cousin’s answer.

Think of all that has happened here, on this earth. All the blood hot and strong for living, pleasuring, that has soaked back into it. For grieving and suffering too, of course, but still getting something out of it for all that, getting a lot out of it, because after all you don't have to continue to bear what you believe is suffering; you can always choose to stop that, put an end to that. And even suffering and grieving is

better than nothing; there is only one thing worse than not being alive, and that's shame (133)

It can be assumed that his initial intimate experience with nature, leaves Isaac changed and he rethinks his life on the plantation. By sentimentalizing his encounter, he feels the shame of the past lurking over the plantation, also indicated by his belief to be a man now. He feels different, both towards the wilderness and the plantation.

While Isaac's heart seems in the right place, the initial contact with Old Ben is not fully grasped by him. The tragedy of his life is based on misunderstanding the lesson given to him by the bear. He learns from Sam that if he wants to see Old Ben, he cannot take his gun. He follows Sam's instructions and gives up his rifle. When Isaac goes out into the woods by himself to contact Old Ben, he leaves his watch and compass on a log, knowing that this is what keeps him from further entering into the wilderness, and ends up being lost.

He stood for a moment – a child, alien and lost in the green and soaring gloom of the markless wilderness. Then he relinquished completely to it. It was the watch and the compass. He was still tainted. He removed the linked chain of the one and the looped thong of the other from his overalls and hung them on a bush and leaned the stick beside them and entered it. (147)

Upon realizing that he is lost, he sees Old Ben's paw print in a little swamp before him, "somewhere between earth and water" (147).

...seeing as he sat down on the log the crooked print, the warped indentation in the wet ground which while he looked at it continued to fill with water until it was level full and the water began to overflow and the sides of the print began to dissolve away. Even as he looked up he saw the next one, and, moving, the one beyond it. (147)

He follows the swamp trail until he loses the paw prints

and is lost forever himself, tireless, eager, without doubt or dread, panting a little above the strong rapid little hammer of his heart, emerging suddenly into a little glade and the wilderness coalesced. It rushed, soundless, and solidified—the tree, the bush, the compass and the watch glinting where a ray of sunlight touched them. Then he saw the bear. It did not emerge, appear: it was just there, immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon's hot dappling, not as big as he had dreamed it but as big as he had expected, bigger, dimensionless against the dappled obscurity, looking at him. (148)

The reader is compelled to take part in the moment, and shares in the experience of Isaac's proximity to the wilderness – to feeling the excitement of the hunt for the phantom buck,

while getting to know the unfamiliar woods. Isaac “needed to be lost in order to be found” (Kahn & Hasbach 210); and while he found himself in the wilderness, he himself does not truly belong to the wilderness; Old Ben only reveals himself to him after Isaac has fully surrendered to the wilderness and the invisible, hidden bear leads him back to his tokens of civilization. This suggests that his destiny is on the plantation what he fails to acknowledge. Isaac’s place is not the wilderness, but rather civilization, more specifically the plantation, where he can act as a bridge between the wilderness and the people of civilization; and while the wilderness offers a place where humanity can find answers to life’s substantial questions, it can hardly function as a home for humanity.

According to Bart Welling, Isaac’s “wilderness depends for its aura of inviolable sublimity on his sole imaginative possession of it, a kind of ownership based on its insulation from what he imagines to be the tainting blackness of his family/plantation” (488). This is what Outka terms “white flight.” Isaac’s escape into the wilderness is based on his desire to escape the past of his heritage, laden with racism. He seeks refuge from the trauma that is slavery, and yearns to become one with nature, restoring his relationship to nature. What he cannot see is that he acts within what Jackson criticizes as ethnocentric thinking. In order to truly negotiate his relations to nature, he needs to detach himself from ethnocentrism. As he fails to do so, he fails to find what he was looking for in the wilderness.

In the end Isaac not only loses the plantation, but his wife and the hope for an heir to his legacy; and what is more, he loses the wilderness that was never his in the first place. He ends up an old delusional man with barely any impact on neither nature nor culture. It must be admitted that Isaac’s relationship to nature is affectionate, when leaving aside the fact his beliefs exist within a frame of what Jackson criticizes as the ethnocentric gaze. Nevertheless, he sees the wilderness as something distinct from humanity and cannot bring his wilderness and, according to him, the troubled human culture together. In “Faulkner’s Ecological Disturbances,” Matthew W. Sivils suggests that Faulkner in indicating “that both the land and the African Americans depend upon each other to survive – they are joined by oppression – (...) risks falling prey to problematic racial complications that reside in linking African Americans with the environment” (492). I argue, however, that for Faulkner the healing of the land means the healing of the culture, as these processes are dependent on each other. According to Brooks, Faulkner sees “man’s attitude toward nature [as] a function of the health of his own nature” (270), and vice versa. There is no healing for Isaac McCaslin, who flees the land that could have reconciled him with his past and his environment as a whole.

However, in further following Jackson's argument, I argue that Isaac's idealization of nature is not unproblematic. His relationship with his social and natural environment presents itself as ethnocentric, and is therefore less productive: by sentimentalizing wilderness, he reinforces the thought of the white dominant culture. But disclaiming his heritage means losing his family, the one place where he is supposed to feel at home, and where he really belongs. His flight into the wilderness is doomed to fail, as he only represses the trauma of his past. He fails to interpret the lessons in the wilderness as invitation to leave behind ethnocentrism, for example by embracing his heritage.

Go Down is charged with situations where social matters are linked to environmental matters, given the element of family history, the interminable consequences of society's impact on the environment, and the interconnectedness of culture and environment. In "The Fire and the Hearth," Faulkner reveals the interconnectedness of race, culture, and the environment in the story of Lucas Beauchamp and indicates that in order for the South to make amends for environmental harm – which has brought forth the former – it has to provide access to land ownership. This is the land that Jackson refers to when she suggests that in order to create an effective movement "away from the human's direction," as it has been dangerously described and used in Western thought, any post-humanist movement must understand its historical and geographical place upon which it is found ("Outer Worlds" 217).

Lucas' affectionate treatment of the land and his past tied to it reveals his respectful and intimate approach to the environment. According to Christopher Rieger, "Lucas has an intimate knowledge of nature through labor, and Faulkner suggests that this gives him a truer ownership than a legal deed" (147). Indeed, Lucas' empowerment is not simply based on owning the land given to him to make amends for the transgressions of slavery and other sins attributable to Lucas' (and Isaac's) white grandfather but how he mixes his own identity with the land around him. There he seems to have a different approach than the dominant class and does not simply do what the culture expects of him. He really knows the land intimately: "He knew exactly where he intended to go, even in the darkness. He had been born on this land, twenty-five years before the Edmonds who now owned it" (Faulkner 29). It is his dwelling place. Not only that, but also the land that he dwells on becomes so much a part of him that it appears to form the basis of his identity. His environment is his subjective reality. Time does not mark certain events in his life, but the labor done on the land.

He had worked on it ever since he got big enough to hole a plough straight; he had hunted over every foot of it during his childhood and youth and his manhood too, up

to the time when he stopped hunting, not because he could no longer walk a day's or a night's hunt, but because he felt that the pursuit of rabbits and 'possums for meat was no longer commensurate with his status [...] as the oldest McCaslin descendant." (29) His exact age in these times remains hidden. What we do know is that his relationship to the country at those times. This shows all the more the intimate connection that Lukas has with his land. Moreover, Lucas likes farming. "[H]e approved of his fields and liked to work them, taking a solid pride in having good tools to use and using them well, scorning both inferior equipment and shoddy work just as he had bought the best kettle he could find when he set up his still" (33-34). Lucas treats the land with respect, as he finds himself empowered by the land allotted to him and uses it accordingly.

Faulkner shows that Lucas owns the land without actually owning it. Even Roth eventually acknowledges that the way Lucas owns the entirety of his surroundings is beyond reach for himself: "He is both heir and prototype simultaneously of all the geography and climate and biology which sired old Carothers and all the rest of us and our kind, myriad, countless, faceless, even nameless now except himself who fathered himself, intact and complete, contemptuous, as old Carothers must have been, of all blood black white yellow or red, including his own" (114). This passage illustrates how, to Roth, Lucas is considered a prototype. In Lucas, the interconnection of landscape and heritage, place and time, race and class come together and help to shed light on the idea of bioregionalism. This means that the history of the southern landscape is an integral part of the latter, especially concerning the culture and its impact on the environment, and vice versa. Roth admits that Lucas seems to possess a healthy indifference to skin colors or racial identities. Lucas does not make "capital of his white or even his McCaslin blood, but the contrary. (...) He resisted it simply by being the composite of the two races which made him" (101). By neither exploiting nor struggling with his identity, he owns and controls at least parts of his identity and environment. In consideration of the culture he lives in, it is fully reasonable that Lucas aims to possess his diverse heritage while developing a rather reciprocal relation with the land he "owns."

The ownership described in relation to Lucas does not mean that he has full possession over an object. "Owning" entails reciprocity where the distance between subject and object is relatively equal, while "possessing" emphasizes the distance between the subject and the object (Beilfuss 41). Although he later shows signs of greed after developing a gold fever and the desire to accumulate more wealth, it does not define his humanity as a whole. This becomes evident in Thadious M. Davis' argument, when he says that Molly reminds

“Lucas that the land is defiled by human exploitation, and she draws him away from the egocentric and destructive ways of his grandfather” (144). And Lucas does eventually come around, valuing his marriage over possessions. Striving to fulfill purely selfish wishes does not necessarily make Lucas, and/or humanity, inherently evil. In fact, the greed possesses him (similar to the rabid Tea Cake in *Their Eyes*), for it is what controls and rules him. I would conclude that Faulkner sees humanity not as inherently problematic, but vulnerable to certain “evil” actions in the respective environment. According to Cleanth Brooks, “when man loses his awe of nature through a purely efficient utilization of it, or when he ceases to love it and to carry on his contention with it in terms of some sort of code, then he not only risks destroying nature but risks bestializing his own nature” (270). While Lucas ultimately keeps his awe of nature, thus consciously choosing owning over possessing, he goes through a season where greed has a hold of him. Stricken with gold fever, Lucas disregards the relationships around him, displaying greed and selfishness that arises from his over-excessive desire to take possession, to execute power and to control.

It becomes clear in Faulkner’s *Go Down* that without ‘ownership’ a feeling of belonging to an environment may be accomplished by possession, an approach with little regard for the subjects and objects of that landscape and a more harmful impact. For example, despite Lucas’ trouble with gold fever – the moment of initiation being the moment he gives in to the dominant culture’s lifestyle of possession - it becomes evident that he is given power by a personal relationship to the land through an unrestricted access to and handling of the land, and the methods he uses to cultivate it. Taking into account the different approaches depicted by Faulkner in *Go Down*, the question raised by Jackson if posthumanists are willing to take into account “the knowledge production of those deemed primitive?” (“Animal” 681) might be another step in the right direction.

Furthermore, possession can be looked at from different angles. On the one hand, in the case of Lucas’ gold rush, possession is depicted as harmful. Lucas’ motivation for possession is solely based on selfish reasons, and it becomes his identity, as it possesses Lucas himself. On the other hand, possession can contribute to a healthy reciprocal ownership attitude. Lucas has older siblings who reject any possibility to possess their land and heritage and, thus, have to bear the consequences. His brother “James, the eldest, ran away before he became of age and didn't stop until he had crossed the Ohio River [...] shaking from his feet forever the very dust of the land where his white ancestor could acknowledge or repudiate him from one day to another” (Faulkner 78-79) By refusing to possess his two races, he loses all rights to

exercise power over land on the plantation. He runs away and is “never heard from (...) again at all--that is, his white kindred ever knew” (78-79) cutting the roots to his place of origin. Furthermore, Lucas’ older sister, Fonsiba, “married and went to Arkansas to live and never returned, though Lucas continued to hear from her until her death” (78), repudiating her family’s plantation. Isaac wants to give Fonsiba her portion of the McCaslin inheritance and seeks her out in “a single log edifice with a clay chimney which seemed in process of being flattened by the train to a nameless and valueless rubble of dissolution in that roadless and even pathless waste of unfenced fallow and wilderness jungle” (197) She is free (“I’m free” (200)), but at what cost?

The circumstances in which Isaac finds her and her husband seem depressing: “[T]he muddy waste fenceless and even pathless and without even a walled shed for stock to stand beneath[,] (...) the drafty, damp, heatless, negro-stale negro-rank sorry room – the empty fields without plow or seed to work them” (198-199). Their self-imposed freedom has a deceptive and hollow ring to it, which Isaac recognizes in objecting to the beliefs of Fonsiba’s husband about the former: “Freedom from what? From work?” (199). The environment compromises the freedom they live in. They disregard what they have, and instead of faithfully managing what was given to them and showing pride in it, they remain in a utopia-like landscape, detached from the social, cultural, and natural life around them. This scene of Fonsiba’s husband and the life they have to endure for the feeling of freedom, an existence beyond the bounds of human dignity, exemplifies the limited opportunities for African-Americans in the South. They adapt to the ideals or attitudes of whites, yet as a consequence have to bear the adverse impact that is laid up on African Americans for such a willingness to compromise – they are surrounded by decay and impoverishment, separated from the life around them. The possibilities they have are to either stay and/or return to their birthplace and work for the wellbeing of the same or to abandon it, with the latter defraying their existence as stateless. Lucas, therefore, is the only sibling embracing a sense of place.

What is more, Lucas sees himself also in regard to his heritage as a truer owner than Roth: “[I]t was his own field, though he neither owned it nor wanted to nor even needed to. He had been cultivating it for forty-five years, since before Carothers Edmonds was born even, ploughing and planting and working it” (28). Lucas thinks of himself as a rightful McCaslin heir, as he is “not only the oldest man but the oldest living person on the Edmonds plantation, the oldest McCaslin descendant even though in the world’s eye he descended not from McCaslins but from McCaslin slaves” (29). Lucas is obsessed with the McCaslin

patrimony and believes himself to have inherited their strength, as he is born to old Carothers' son instead of to his daughter, like for example the "woman-made" (43) Roth. According to him, this gives him more rights to the plantation.

Indeed, Roth is depicted as a powerless overseer. When Roth is "riding up on his mare maybe three times a week to look at the field, and maybe once during the season stopping long enough to give him advice about it", Lucas does not only completely ignore it "but the very voice which gave it, as though the other had not spoken even" (29). He refuses to conform to the submissive behavior expected of him. This is further seen in the way he treats Roth, as he does not call him by his title "Mister" and mocks/ridicules him by distilling moonshine on his land.

However, this conflict between Lucas and Roth suggests that Lucas can easily have his rights taken away. He has no legal rights to it: "It was not Lucas who paid taxes insurance and interest or owned anything which had to be kept ditched drained fenced and fertilized" (58). In undercutting Lucas' empowerment, Davis reveals something about the dynamics of a time where a black Lucas can only achieve a certain degree of justice, dictated by the dominant culture's philosophy (140). Ownership based on the notion of possession leaves any underprivileged person or group/people of lower classes in a fragile position. Unlike his siblings, Lucas chooses to stay a tenant farmer at the plantation where his family lived as slaves. He potentially has the authority to reject his ownership, like his brother James when he turned his back on "the land where his white ancestor could acknowledge or repudiate him from one day to another" (78-79), and he can use and live off his land, but possessing and managing the land is very unlikely. Roth Edmonds seeks control over Lucas and the labor he does on his allotted acreage by asserting his own property rights, until – at the end of the "Fire and the Hearth" – Roth' attitude becomes threatening. He instructs Lucas to give to his wife Molly "half [his] crop (...) every year as long as [he] stay[s] on [his, that is Roth's] place." Lucas, however, does not accept defeat. So he tells Roth that "Cass Edmonds give [him] that land to be [his] long as [he]—," "You heard me" (94). Edmonds interrupts him, but Lucas is adamant about his birthright and the rights that come with it passed onto him through Roth's grandfather. He does not simply cave, but moves in agency, and embraces his rights to ownership.

The conflict originates from Roth's unwillingness to acknowledge the fact that a multiracial tenant farmer, a social inferior, seems to have truer ownership over the plantation than himself. By giving a detailed description of Lucas' ownership of his environment,

Faulkner draws out one possible vision of environmental justice. Again, Berry's conception of human interconnectedness with their environment, where people live in intimacy and communion with the environment, finds its realization in Lucas. Faulkner merges Lucas into his natural environment as he describes the agricultural practices and land use of Lucas and his maturing process connected to his action on the land. While Lucas' ownership rights are built on sand, he finds ways to continue to have physical control over his land by not taking Roth's role as manager seriously, even treating him disrespectfully. Before the conflict escalates, Lucas has a change of mind and gives up on his gold finding plan. He understands that his marriage is of greater significance than the money. Lucas' story of ownership represents one important way of looking at the environment one is surrounded by. Though Lucas' empowerment through property remains somewhat questionable, as the culture he lives in would rather not have a man of black descendants in his position, his story is a happy one, particularly when compared to the final years of Isaac. He does not experience the separation from environment and the effects which Wendell Berry addresses. His story turns out to be a fair and suitable one; how he handles his marriage, his relation to his environment, and his own well-being.

As we can especially see with Faulkner, storytelling causes proximity and can be used to convey a sense of environmental justice and impart it to the reader. Faulkner, through storytelling, aims to create this heightened awareness among the reader, and gets him thinking. In order to achieve awareness for both the natural and cultural shortcomings, Faulkner associates in *Go Down* "the wilderness with plantation, the plantation with the past, the past with racial injustice, racial injustice with an instrumental relationship between a dominant culture and nature that links back to the exploitation of both nature and an oppressed culture" (Kellert 57). This humanistic and moral approach of the novel might help the reader to gain an understanding of environmental justice in order to be respectful towards nature and each other, and even towards the differences existing between people.

Faulkner disagrees with Isaac when he embraces the finality of change: "change must alter, must happen, and change is going to alter what was. That no matter how fine anything seems, it can't endure, because once it stops, abandons motion, it is dead" (FiU 277), and the loss of the wilderness. Faulkner asks for compassion of the latter:

...it's to have compassion for the anguish that the wilderness itself may have felt by being ruthlessly destroyed by axes, by men who simply wanted to make that earth grow

something they could sell for a profit, which brought into it a condition based on an evil like human bondage. (FiU 277)

Faulkner's comment on man and his relationship to wilderness reveals his concern for social and environmental justice. In *Lucas and Isaac*, Faulkner presents us with two alternatives. In every sense, they are opposites: black and white, proud and humble, plantation and wilderness, past and future. The characters in *Go Down* are dispossessed and in need of finding some authentic relation to their land and their past: what Isaac and Lucas seek is a sense of home in the world. This is the feeling that Faulkner seeks to convey. He makes room for the past amid a living present through storytelling (Schleifer 110).

What is it then that Faulkner offers for humanity's relationship to the environment based on environmental justice, when both Lucas and Isaac have different ways of owning their land with no legal rights to it? Like Janie, Lucas is a productive example for environmental ownership. While he goes through a season, where he exploits the land he ought to respect and protect, he ultimately embraces a place-based life and rejects other options that separate him from home and the land he "owns." By moving toward a reciprocal ethic of ownership, he succeeds in leaving behind his ethnocentric thinking. Based on Jackson's call to leave ethnocentrism behind, Isaac is a negative example as he idealizes nature and disregards culture. While it must be admitted that Isaac's relationship to nature is affectionate, when leaving aside that his beliefs exist within a frame of what Jackson criticizes as the ethnocentric gaze, he sees the wilderness as something distinct from humanity and cannot bring his wilderness and the, in his opinion, troubled human culture together. His response is to flee into the sublime to escape the trauma of slavery. However, the sublime turns trauma only into repressed trauma. Outka, explains that the repression of trauma only functions for the white community, and argues that there is no refuge in nature for African Americans. I, however, argue that both white and black people are capable of moving toward a restored relationship with nature, if they manage to escape from ethnological thinking. In both novels depicted, the dedication of two African American characters to leave the ethnocentric ideology pays off, and they establish new relations to their social and natural environment. Ultimately, it is not nature that separates Isaac from culture but an ethnocentric ideology he cannot break free from. Isaac's attempt to flee into nature backfires, as he only represses what he tries to escape. Ironically, neither Janie nor Lucas chase the (initial) experience of the sublime, but it is them who have their relationship to nature restored.

4 Conclusion

New perspectives in literature and criticism can help shed light on environmental justice, helping people reimagine their relations to the environment. Both Janie and Lucas, two positive examples of environmental justice, and Isaac, a negative example, confirm the thesis that the restoration of human/nature relationships are possible, if one can give up ethnocentrism. In conclusion, Janie and Lucas are a good example for visions of environmental justice because they succeed in leaving the ethnocentric thinking behind. They do so through different approaches: firstly, Janie manages to turn the transgressions against her into learning experience for life, as forgiveness is her greatest tool. By the end of her journey, trauma has no longer a hold of her, and she gains independency and self-realization. Secondly, Lucas's understanding of ownership leads to his reconciliation with his past, and with his family. Despite a turbulent development, Lucas leaves the ethnocentric thinking behind by the end of "The Fire and the Hearth," reimagining his environmental responsibility through a re-orientation towards an empowering concept of ownership. As a result of their detachment from ethnocentrism, Lucas and Janie alike have their relationship to nature restore. Contrarily, Isaac is a negative example for envisioning environmental justice, as he does not succeed in breaking away from ethnocentric thinking. He tries to escape his past through finding refuge in nature, in which he, I argue, fails. In fact, the causal link works inversely. Isaac cannot escape his past by negotiating his relationship with nature. He has to take the step of leaving ethnocentrism behind which generates the restoring of his relationship to nature. He, however, is stuck to his white ways and achieves no reconciliation with the land.

Again, the restoration of closeness and the relationship with nature is a consequence of the break from ethnocentrism. As we break away from it, visions of environmental justice come to life. Hence, this thesis attempted to demonstrate some ways to overcome ethnocentric thinking, such as forgiveness and ownership. Through storytelling, the author can overcome distance between the reader and the author, sharpening the reader's senses to experience the world of the novel. If the reader is able to dive into the characters' story, storytelling can impart to them the values of the novel's characters, thus encouraging a feeling of environmental justice. An atmosphere of social and environmental justice is evident in both Faulkner's and Hurston's novels in question respectively. The works discussed are not recent, but the topicality for analysis they provide remains, as the environmental situation has hardly

improved. Ecocritics and animal theorists alike must continue to search out their potential for imagining new ways of human/nature relationships. Accordingly, this thesis provides one approach how bringing a reading of ecocriticism and theory together. It is important to continue to examine and critique the different portrayals of human/nature relationships that help shed light on new visions of environmental justice, to develop sense of responsibility for our own surroundings, including plants, animals and other humans.

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