



Uio • University of Oslo

Other-Worldly Storytelling

in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

and *The Temple of My Familiar*

Iris Knapperholen Rønning

A Master's Thesis Presented to

The Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages

The Faculty of Humanities

University of Oslo

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the

MA Degree in English Literature

30 points

Spring 2020

Abstract

This thesis is dedicated to exploring ecofeminist themes in two novels by Alice Walker. Ecofeminism here refers to the theoretical framework that recognizes the interlocking and intersectional nature of oppression. The aim of ecofeminism is to end all oppression by dismantling the systems that uphold it. Ecofeminism believes that this can only be achieved through reconstructing the relationship between the human and nonhuman world. An integral part of this work involves challenging origin stories and creating alternative narratives of the world that acknowledge the interconnectedness of all forms of life on earth. Central to this thesis is the concept of ‘other-worlding’ from Donna Haraway, which is about reconceptualizing the relationship between the human and nonhuman world. Through a close reading of *The Color Purple* and its sequel *The Temple of My Familiar* this thesis argues that Alice Walker makes visible other-worlding through literary encounters in which she challenges and rewrites creation stories that have served to justify the oppression of women, nature and animals. By reconstructing the experience of the ‘other’ and challenging an anthropocentric and androcentric worldview, this thesis sees Walker’s novels as contributing to the ecofeminist principle of social transformation by offering alternative stories upon which a new and better world can be created.

Acknowledgments

I owe much gratitude to my supervisor, Associate Professor Ann-Sofie Lönngren; for interesting and insightful conversations which among other things introduced me to the concept 'other-worlding', and for being so patient and understanding throughout the process.

To my sister Lea for introducing me to the vegan lifestyle several years ago, which opened my eyes to the related topics of animal rights and environmental protection, and ultimately inspired my choice of literature.

To Tora for her enduring, unconditional and loving support through ups and downs. I am so grateful for our friendship and that I got to share this journey with you.

And lastly to Stevie, for making me laugh, for taking my mind off the project and for always telling me to get back to work.

Contents

Introduction..... 5

Alice Walker: writer and activist 7

The texts 9

Theoretical approach..... 11

Ecofeminism 11

Criticism 13

The role of fiction in the ecofeminist movement 14

Other-worlding 17

Analysis..... 21

The Color Purple..... 21

Rejection of God 22

Reconceptualizing women’s connection to nature 26

The Temple of My Familiar..... 30

Re-envisioning Darwin 30

Rewriting The Fall 33

Constructing a new origin story 35

Conclusion..... 38

Bibliography..... 39

Introduction

This thesis is dedicated to exploring ecofeminist themes in three texts by the American author and activist Alice Walker. Ecofeminism is an umbrella term which captures a variety of different perspectives on the intersections between feminism and ecology. Ecofeminism as it is understood in this thesis refers to the social movement and theoretical framework that recognizes the interlocking and intersectional nature of oppression. While there is no single definition of ecofeminism, for the sake of setting the parameters for my discussion, I offer Greta Gaard's summary from *Ecofeminism* (1993:1), which captures the ecofeminism's fundamental principles and intents:

Drawing on the insights of ecology, feminism, and socialism, ecofeminism's basic premise is that the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature. Ecofeminism calls for an end to all oppressions, arguing that no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature.

The central aim of ecofeminism is to end all oppression by dismantling the structures that uphold it. Unlike feminism, which works for equality within the current system, ecofeminism believes that this system is fundamentally flawed and needs replacing. Ecofeminists do not separate the work towards ending oppression from the work towards saving the earth from environmental degradation but believe that these issues must be addressed simultaneously. Mending the relationship between humans and the natural world is of crucial importance in this process. This relationship has traditionally been one of separation and disconnect. The roots of this separation can be traced back to what is a fundamental feature of all human societies and cultures, namely the construction of stories and storytelling (Catherine Parry, 2017:1). Storytelling is the practice of presenting a narrative, that is an account of events, experiences etc., either orally or through writing. Humans construct stories as a way of making sense of the world and their place in it. The large, powerful narratives that describe how the world came to be, humanity's role in it and their relation to the nonhuman world are commonly referred to as creation stories or myths or origin stories. The feminist theologian, Rosemary Radford Ruether (1992:15) argues that these stories or myths of creation:

not only reflect current science, that is, the assumptions about the nature of the world, physical processes, and their relationships; but they are also blueprints for society. They reflect the assumptions about how the divine and the mortal, the mental and the physical, humans and other humans, male and

female, humans, plants, animals, land, waters, and stars are related to each other. They both reflect the worldview of the culture and mandates that worldview to its ongoing heirs.

In other words, these stories or myths hold significant power in society because they form the basis of all knowledge about the world. Ecofeminists believe that creation stories and myths serve to justify and sustain oppression in society. Considering how deep-rooted and pervasive these stories and myths are in society, ecofeminism calls for radical social transformation to repair humans' relationship to each other and the natural world. An integral part of the work towards social transformation is therefore dedicated to challenging these origin stories and formulating alternative narratives that acknowledge the interconnectedness and interdependency of all forms of life on earth. This is where literature and moreover the arts, fit into the ecofeminist movement.

Central to this thesis is the concept of 'other-worlding', from the feminist scholar Donna Haraway, which is about reconceptualizing the relationship between the human and nonhuman world. This thesis sees other-worlding as a process that may or may not be underway in literary works and intends to use it as a tool for analyzing ecofeminist themes in Alice Walker's fiction. The main argument of this thesis is that Alice Walker makes visible other-worlding in *The Color Purple*¹ (1982) and *The Temple of My Familiar*² (1989) through literary encounters in which she challenges and rewrites creation stories that have served to justify the oppression of women, nature and animals. By reconstructing the experience of the 'other' and challenging an anthropocentric and androcentric worldview, this thesis sees Walker's novels as contributing to the ecofeminist principle of social transformation by offering alternative stories upon which a new and better world can be created.

The thesis will be organized as follows. The introduction will continue with a section on Alice Walker and a brief presentation of the texts and their critical reception. The thesis will then move on to discussing the theoretical framework of ecofeminism and other-worlding. The analysis will be conducted on each novel separately starting with *The Color Purple* before moving on to *The Temple of My Familiar*. The conclusion aims to summarize the key findings of my analysis and place them in a larger perspective.

¹ Abbreviated to *TCP*.

² Abbreviated to *TMF*.

Alice Walker: writer and activist

We must begin to develop the consciousness that everything has equal rights because existence itself is equal. In other words, we are all here: trees, people, snakes, alike.

Alice Walker, from 'Everything Is a Human Being' in *Living by the Word* (1988:148)

Alice Walker, born 1944, in Eatonton, Georgia, is an American poet, essayist and novelist. She is both an internationally celebrated writer and an outspoken activist. Throughout her adult life Walker has been dedicated to exposing and eliminating oppression in many forms, particularly in terms of gender, race, sexuality and class, but also in terms of nonhuman animals and nature. From working in the civil rights movement, to fighting female genital mutilation, protesting apartheid in South Africa, and taking part in the BDS (boycott, divest, sanction) movement to show her solidarity with Palestine, Walker has continuously used her position and influence to speak on behalf of the oppressed (Maria Lauret, 2000:7). Writing has been the primary form of Walker's activism and her social justice mission is prevalent both in her fiction and non-fiction works, as well as on her personal blog³. Her short story 'Am I Blue?', which first appeared in 1986 in *Ms.* magazine and later in the collection *Living by the Word* (1988), has frequently been referred to as an ecofeminist text, yet few of her other works of fiction have been examined through the same lens. This represents a significant gap in the research on Alice Walker's fiction. Firstly, because Walker so strongly aligns herself with the ecofeminist agenda in her activism, poetry and non-fiction⁴, it would be remiss to not explore this topic more in her fiction as well. Secondly, because there is increasingly a turn in the humanities towards the fields of ecocriticism and animal studies⁵ the time is ripe for the exploration of these themes in Walker's fiction.

The most comprehensive work thus far on Alice Walker's fiction in relation to ecofeminism is Pamela B. June's *Solidarity with the Other Beings on the Planet*, published as recently as April 2020. June examines Walker's evolving views on animals and problematizes what she calls "the slippery territory of viewing writers as moral guides" (2020:5), referring

³ alicewalkersgarden.com

⁴ The poetry collection *Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful* published in 1984 is infused with animal and nature imagery. The collection of essays *Living by the Word* (1988) takes a visibly ecofeminist stance. Walker's memoir *The Chicken Chronicles* (2011) describes the joys of relating to animals.

⁵ A selection of recent publications that reflect this turn: Mario Ortiz-Robles' *Literature and Animal Studies* (2016), Catherine Parry's *Other animals in twenty-first century fiction* (2017), Emelia Quinn and Benjamin Westwood's *Thinking Veganism in Literature and Culture* (2018) and Gregers Andersen's *Climate Fiction and Cultural Analysis* (2020).

to some of the criticism Walker has received from not always practicing what she preaches, particularly in regard to her dietary choices. June takes an interdisciplinary approach by exploring “the relatively uncharted area that falls between critical race studies and critical animal studies” (2020:4). Pamela A. Smith (1999) looks at the ‘ecospirituality’ of Alice Walker through the themes of ‘eros, activism and pantheism’, relying primarily on her essays and poetry. Smith briefly discusses how these themes influence Walker’s fiction but does not go into depth. Karla Simcikova’s *To Live Fully, Here and Now: The Healing Vision in the Works of Alice Walker* (2006) is devoted to exploring Walker’s “spiritual wisdom in the age of heightened global awareness, natural devastation, and spiritual crisis”. Simcikova locates Walker’s ecological awareness in her interest in Native American spirituality and looks at how this spirituality affects Walker’s writing.

While spirituality is definitely a central theme in Walker’s authorship, coupling it with the theme of ecofeminism is not entirely unproblematic. Firstly, the misconception that ecofeminists are goddess-worshipping anti-intellectuals is still used to discredit the field of ecofeminism (Greta Gaard, 2011:32). And secondly, this coupling arguably has the effect of diffusing the radical goals of ecofeminism. It is after all not just a value system or a set of beliefs, but a framework and movement for social and political change. Walker’s fiction merits an examination in that respect.

Walker’s works are interesting to examine in the context of ecofeminism because they highlight the way sexist, racist, heterosexist, classist and speciesist oppressions intersect. In addition, Walker’s notably optimistic approach, which emphasizes the possibility of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence between all beings on earth ties into the ecofeminist principle of the need for a radical social transformation. An integral part of this transformation is the creation of alternative images of the world that reflect ecofeminist beliefs of how animals, nature and humans are all interconnected and interdependent. The value of revisiting Walker’s texts in light of ecofeminism now, lies in the potential to take advantage of the renewed focus on the relationship between humans and the natural world and show how this issue has been addressed in the fiction of a highly influential and well-loved author. Walker’s widespread success as a writer and outspoken commitment to social justice has gained her a large and diverse audience over the years, and thereby also the potential to reach many with her words. The idea is that when Walker devotes her attention to a specific cause or topic, her readership will likely follow. Given ecofeminism’s agenda of social and political change, raising awareness about the ecofeminist cause is a vital part of the movement. This can be done in various ways, also through fiction. The role of fiction in the

ecofeminist movement will be discussed in a later chapter. The following section will provide a brief introduction to the texts and their critical reception.

The texts

Walker's most famous novel, *The Color Purple (TCP)* was published in 1982 and though it received widespread critical acclaim, it was not without its critics, many of whom objected to the novel's negative portrayal of black men, use of African American vernacular and sexual content. *TCP* is an epistolary novel, written in the form of letters. The setting is rural Georgia in the period between the wars. The novel follows the life of Celie, a black woman, born into a life of poverty, abuse and violence, on her journey towards self-acceptance and self-realization. This thesis argues that Celie's struggle out of oppression and abuse makes visible Donna Haraway's concept of other-worlding because it involves the reconceptualization of two creation stories that have been central in shaping her life trajectory. The first relating to anthropocentric religion and the second relating to women's connection to nature.

Walker's novel won the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction in 1983 and was later adapted to film by director Steven Spielberg. It also secured Walker's position as an important figure in the American literary canon and culture (Lauret, 2000:9). According to Gina Wisker (2010:21), *TCP* was and continues to be a "key text in teaching African American women's writing". She also argues that Walker herself "played a key role in the discovery and rediscovery of texts" (2010:21), which was an essential part of developing the field of black women's writing and bringing previously silenced narratives to the fore. Critical readings of *TCP* have covered how the novel engages with a wide range of topics, most notably racism, sexism, religion and female sexuality. Other observers have focused on elements of the novel's form, such as narrative technique, genre and language. Only to a lesser extent have critics explored the ecofeminist sentiments in *The Color Purple*.

Among those who have are Varikuti Bhuvanewari and Rosamma Jacob (2012) and Lianhong Wu (2019). They focus on the way Walker places the domination of women in the context of the domination and exploitation of nature, seen through the protagonist Celie's abuse at the hands of her step-father and husband, and the destruction of the Olinka tribe and village at the hands of white colonizers. Bhuvanewari and Jacob highlight the importance of sisterhood in *TCP* as a means of liberation from male dominance and violence. Wu explores *TCP* through the three stages of women's relationship to nature: fragmentation, oversewing and wholeness. Wu argues that through the awakening of the female and eventually male

characters coupled with nature's revenge, the novel ends with a positive message of how men, women and nature can live together in harmony. While there are no animal characters in *TCP*, they still make appearances in more covert ways. June (2020) offers an analysis of the animal imagery and animalized language in the novel. She argues that Walker is experimenting with the issue of human and nonhuman relationships in *TCP*, a topic she goes on to explore more explicitly in later novels (2020:95).

The Temple of My Familiar, first published in 1989, is arguably Walker's most experimental novel. Both in terms of form, due to its complex and multi-layered narrative and in terms of content, for the unique way it engages with the themes of racism, speciesism, anthropocentrism and sexism. The novel tells the stories of six central characters who are all in some way searching for their true identity and place in the world. Throughout the book the lives of these characters intertwine in various ways. The novel's setting is modern time (1980s) North Carolina, but the narrative spans through thousands of years of human history. *TMF* is often referred to as a sequel to *TCP*. While some characters, Celie, Shug and Olivia, make a reappearance, it is more a sequel in the sense that it expands on some of the themes and ideas explored in *TCP*.

Critical readings of *TMF* have covered aspects of the novel's form and the themes of spirituality and identity particularly in relation to the African diaspora. In ecofeminist readings critics have focused on the novel's animal characters. Amanda Greenwood (2000:164) argues that throughout *TMF* "Walker transcends stereotypical representations of women and people of color by choosing to celebrate the perception that they are 'close to nature'". Robert McKay (2001) critiques the claim that animal's inability to use language marks the essential difference between human and animals and suggests that the novel's portrayal of nonhuman animals helps bridge this supposed difference. June (2020:118) argues that in *TMF* Walker combines "religious critique with animal ethics" making "evident the damage that religion has caused in perceptions of gender, race, and species". This thesis argues that Walker makes visible other-worlding through reconceptualizing the Christian creation myth of The Fall, the theory of evolution and by creating her own origin story describing how women, animals and men were originally separated from nature and each other.

Theoretical approach

Ecofeminism

Theory – the seeing of patterns, showing the forest as well as the trees – theory can be a dew that rises from the earth and collects in the rain cloud and returns to earth over and over.

But if it doesn't smell of the earth, it isn't good for the earth.

Adrienne Rich, from 'Notes Toward a Politics of Location' in *Blood, Bread and Poetry* (1994:213-4)

The critical field of ecofeminism is host to a number of different viewpoints. The reason being that ecofeminist theory has evolved from various branches of feminist enquiry and activism, such as the movements for animal liberation, peace, women's health care and environmental protection (Gaard, 1993:1). In the West, ecofeminism emerged in the 1970s alongside second-wave feminism and the green movement. The early stages of ecofeminist discourse were aimed at bridging the gap between these two movements by highlighting the parallels between the domination of women and the domination of nature in the context of patriarchy and capitalism. The term 'ecofeminism' was coined by the French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974 with her publication *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*, in which she brought attention to women's connection to nature and their potential for environmental activism (Marion Hourdequin, 2015:88). Since then ecofeminism has grown both as a theory and movement, and while there is no single definition of ecofeminism, there are certain core principles, the most important of which will be outlined in this chapter.

Ecofeminism, at the least, requires us to make connections. Connections that reveal both the interdependence between all life forms on earth, and how various forms of oppression intersect. Ecofeminism challenges the belief that nature and culture, and related dualisms, are separate and opposed. According to ecofeminism, the source of this opposition is an androcentric and anthropocentric worldview (King, 1989:19). Ecofeminism is both a value system, a movement for change and a theory for political, social and literary analysis, more importantly it is a process that requires action. Given ecofeminism objective of ending all oppression it has been important to capture the principles of the movement in a way that links theory and practice (Birkeland, 1993:19). For the outline of ecofeminism's central tenets, I will rely on Ynestra King's four principles from 'The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology' (1989), and Janis Birkeland's nine precepts from 'Ecofeminism: Linking Theory and Practice' (1993). Below King and Birkeland's views are organized under

five headlines that capture the central principles of ecofeminism as it is understood in this thesis:

1. Transformation – According to Birkeland (1993:20) “fundamental social transformation” is a fundamental principle of ecofeminism. This is because in order to achieve the goal of ending all oppression, it is necessary to reconstruct “the underlying values and structural relations of our cultures” (1993:20). King (1989:20) concurs, arguing for a “radical restructuring of human society according to feminist and ecological principles”. This social transformation should align with the following criteria.

2. Antihierarchical worldview – King (1989:19) states that: “Life on earth is an interconnected web, not a hierarchy”. Ecofeminism believes that the hierarchical structure of society according to anthropocentric and androcentric practices, is not a natural arrangement, but a construct used to justify social domination. Birkeland (1993:20) agrees and suggests that this structure must be replaced with “a more biocentric view that can comprehend the interconnectedness of all life processes”.

3. Interdependency – Birkeland (1993:20) states that: “Everything in nature has intrinsic value”. This belief is an important basis for the principle of social transformation because it involves the recognition of animals and nature as subjects and ‘things-in-themselves’, and not objects for human use. However, human life is also dependent on the earth. This connection may not be apparent for those of us living in cities with easy access to running water and electricity, but this connection is essential for the identity and livelihood of many, particularly indigenous people and agrarian communities. The key to make this relationship work is respect and reciprocity.

4. Diversity – King (1989:20) argues that: “A healthy, balanced ecosystem, including human and nonhuman inhabitants, must maintain diversity”. Diversity is a central ecofeminist principle in terms of both biological and cultural diversity. Biological diversity or biodiversity contributes to the overall health and stability of the earth’s ecosystems. Ecofeminism values cultural diversity, as opposed to a global monoculture, because it expands human’s overall set of skills, values, knowledge and beliefs. The principle of diversity encourages a sustainable development of the world. The opposite, a biological and cultural simplification, could according to King, result in “the wiping out of whole species” and “the homogenization of taste and culture” (1989:20). This description is not entirely uncharacteristic of the current global development.

5. Moving beyond dualisms – Birkeland (1993:20) argues that: “The dualist conceptual framework of Patriarchy supports the ethic of dominance and divides us against each other, our ‘selves’, and nonhuman nature”. Ecofeminism recognizes this conceptual framework to be constructed and false and is committed challenging dualisms such as nature/culture, man/woman, black/white, human/animal. For King (1989:20), moving beyond the nature/culture dualism is essential for the viability of all life on earth, stating that: “The survival of the species necessitates a renewed understanding of our relationship to nature”.

What sets ecofeminism apart from other critical fields is its commitment to radical social transformation. Ecofeminism not only challenges the status quo but is dedicated to cultivating lasting change. A comprehensive critique of the current framework of domination and oppression is the first step, but in order to achieve ecofeminism’s aims this critique must be followed by an effort to facilitate a new order of things. The principles outlined in this section are the foundation for this effort to create a new and better world. Before moving on to how ecofeminist literature plays a role in these efforts towards social transformation, it is necessary to engage with some of the criticism aimed at ecofeminism.

Criticism

While ecofeminism is generally accepted as a value system and social movement, it is rarely given much credit as a theory for analysis, be it political, literary or social – this is rooted in a particularly damaging backlash towards ecofeminism in the 1990s. Since its conception in the 1970s, ecofeminist scholars have provided intersectional analyses of the ways in which various forms of oppression, like sexism, racism, speciesism and classism, intersects with environmental degradation. Ecofeminism had a promising start and according to Great Gaard (2011:31) many believed it would become feminism’s third wave, “building on and transforming the anthropocentric critiques of first- and second-wave feminisms with an ecological perspective”. However, due to a series of criticisms aimed at the movement in the 1990s, ecofeminism was discredited and effectively discarded as a theory. The many feminists who still saw the value of discussing the links between feminism and ecology continued to do so but used different terms like “ecological feminism” and “feminist environmentalism” to separate their research from the ongoing dispute. This is partly why the field of ecofeminism comes across as both confusing and incoherent at first sight. The criticism aimed at ecofeminism claimed it was dualistic, essentialist and incoherent. This section will briefly address these claims.

The claim that ecofeminism is dualistic stems from a misconception of its intent. Ecofeminism is not about raising women over men or nature over culture, instead it is about recognizing and celebrating how all forms of life are interconnected and interdependent as is made apparent in the principle of an antihierarchical worldview. Similarly, the principle of cultural diversity counters the claim that ecofeminism conceives women to be a homogenous group without making distinctions between different races, classes, sexualities etc. (Birkeland, 1993:21). The ecofeminist framework is emphatically intersectional. Ecofeminism clearly states that dualistic thinking is false and constructed, while still recognizing the very real effect it has on women, men, animals and nature alike.

The major criticism of ecofeminism has been that it is essentialist, meaning that it claims that women have an inherent affinity to nature that men do not. This criticism was accurately aimed at cultural feminism but does not hold up when directed at ecofeminism. Cultural feminism is a branch of both the feminist and ecofeminist movement which believes in the existence of a certain female essence or nature, thereby emphasizing essential differences between men and women as part of its theoretical framework (Gaard, 2011:27). Like the dualistic claim, the essentialism claim is not consistent with ecofeminist principles. Since ecofeminism conceives life on earth is “an interconnected web” (King, 1989:19), no one group can be closer to nature. Further, Birkeland (1993:22) argues that: “The assertion of ‘difference’ is based on the historical socialization and oppression of women, not biologism”. Ecofeminism does not claim that women are inherently more caring and compassionate, yet it does not deny the existence of these conceptions in society. Ecofeminism provides a framework for critically engaging and challenging these conceptions and is integral in the work towards cultivating alternative conceptions of women, animals and nature.

At first sight, ecofeminism can appear quite incoherent and confusing. Social ecologist Janet Biehl (1991), has criticized ecofeminism for being so diverse it has no center. While it is true that ecofeminism is diverse, this is not necessarily a bad thing. As Diamond and Orenstein (1990:xii) argue, it is not in the interest of ecofeminism to formulate a single master theory, because it is “precisely the diversity of thought and action” that makes it such a promising tool and catalyst for change. The different strains and perspectives of ecofeminism reflect the principle of diversity and fosters the movement’s intersectional aims.

The role of fiction in the ecofeminist movement

Given ecofeminism’s roots in various activist movements advocating for political and social change and its foundation in philosophy and ethics, it might not at first appear obvious how

literature, particularly fiction, fits into ecofeminist discourse. This section sets out to answer the question: what is the role of fiction in the ecofeminist movement?

The idea that literature reflects, and influences society is not a new concept. In this relationship literature has a dual function. Literature can maintain and stabilize, sometimes justify the current social order. It also has the ability to question, challenge and potentially dismantle this order (Albrecht, 1954:425). In her essay on the ethical potential of literature, Hanna Meretoja argues that literature can “expand the possibilities open to us” thereby “shaping our sense of the possible” (2017:138). Meretoja is referring to the way literature, particularly fiction can develop our imagination by inviting us “to explore times, places and modes of experience that would otherwise be beyond our reach” (2017:135). Central to Meretoja’s account are the concepts of *narrative unconscious* and *narrative imagination*. The former refers to the cultural, political and historical mechanisms that regulate and shape literary traditions, and in extension also society. The latter is defined as “our capacity for thinking beyond dominant narratives that are presented to us as self-evident and for imagining alternative courses in life” (2017:139). She argues that the key to unlocking the *narrative imagination* lies in an awareness of the *narrative unconscious*. Such an awareness can be consolidated either by critically engaging with literary works through analytical frameworks that challenge dominant narratives, or by reading literary works that in themselves challenge dominant narratives.

Ecofeminist literary criticism offers an analytical framework for challenging and questioning dominant anthropocentric and androcentric narratives. Starting in the 1990s the insights of ecofeminism began to make its way into literary studies. Greta Gaard and Patrick Murphy (1998) argue that ecofeminist literary criticism builds on existing literary study, particularly the concept of ‘the other’, but suggests it must be “rethought through grounding it in a physical being” (1998:6). By this they mean that ‘the other’, for example an animal or nature more generally, must be recognized as a self-existent entity with value and worth outside human use. Ecofeminist literary criticism has primarily been focused on rectifying false images of animals, women and nature that have perpetuated their status as ‘other’ in literary works that reveal the oppressiveness of patriarchal dualistic and hierarchical thinking (1998:5-6). In recent years, ecofeminist literary criticism has changed its approach somewhat by not confining itself to critique, but also seeking to reveal more hopeful ecofeminist narratives that highlight how society can move forward in a direction that is aligned with ecofeminist principles. Douglas Vakoch’s collection of ecofeminist readings of a diverse selection of literary works, entitled *Feminist Ecocriticism* (2012), is dedicated to this

approach, seeking to “identify and articulate liberatory ideals that can be actualized in the real world” (2012:3). This development is a significant step towards formulating what a world aligned with ecofeminist principles might look like.

In the 1990 collection of essays entitled *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein’s highlight the importance of creators and artists in the ecofeminist movement. The basis for this importance is the ecofeminist principle of social transformation. Unlike mainstream feminism which works for equality within the current androcentric and anthropocentric system, ecofeminism seeks to dismantle this system and completely rebuild it on the foundation that all forms of life on earth are interconnected and interdependent (1990:xi). In other words, that all living things have intrinsic value and contribute in their own unique way to maintaining the health of the earth’s ecosystems, which is essential for the survival of humans and nonhuman animals alike. Diamond and Orenstein write in their introduction (1990:xi-xxi) that:

[E]cofeminism seeks to reweave new stories that acknowledge and value the biological and cultural diversity that sustains all life. (...) The process of creating new cultures that honor the Earth and her peoples is not something we can postpone. Moreover, because the creation of new images of living with the Earth is viewed as an essential element of the process of transformation, creative artists are an integral part of this new constellation.

In the final chapter of the book, Orenstein expands on this idea arguing that “instead of viewing the arts as adjuncts to political activity or as distractions from political activism, ecofeminism considers the arts to be essential catalysts of change” (1990:279). The arts in this respect refers to everything from music and poetry to sculptures, paintings and fiction. With fiction, ecofeminist writers are creating alternative visions of the world that both show us where humans have lost touch with the natural world and how to reconnect. Ecofeminist fiction may be concerned with the past, the present or the future, or all at once. The past is important for understanding the basis of the nature/culture divide and to challenge the creation stories and myths about how this divide came to be regarded as natural and sacrosanct. The present has a place in ecofeminist fiction because it is vital to highlight the consequences of human’s disassociation from nature in a space that is recognizable to the reader. The future, often in the form of utopias and dystopias, figures prominently in ecofeminist fiction. Ecofeminist dystopian novels like Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* and Sara Hall’s *Daughters of the North*, presents images of worlds that are in stark opposition to ecofeminist principles. On the other hand, ecofeminist utopian novels like

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* envisions communities that embrace the ecofeminist principles of diversity, interconnectedness and interdependency. Orenstein (1990:287) ends her chapter by summarizing the role of the ecofeminist artist as one of "taking journeys, visualizing many possibilities, presenting us with alternative visions, and gleaning knowledge that can only be obtained via the imagination"

Moreover, literature and particularly fiction can be instrumental in situating abstract ecofeminist discourse in concrete settings that make the principles and aims of the movement more easily accessible (Alice Curry, 2013:10). Professor of environmental ethics, Roger King (1999:27) suggests that "we need to articulate the meaning of moral concepts by embedding them in images of possible life practices". By putting forward such images, ecofeminist fiction can create a space for moral and ethical exploration of the intersection between various forms of oppression and environmental degradation. Such an exploration could potentially promote attitudinal change. The following section will discuss how Donna Haraway's concept of other-worlding fits into this tradition.

Other-worlding

It matters what matters we use to think other matters with;
it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with;
it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts,
what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties.

Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016):

Donna Haraway, born 1944 in Denver, Colorado is a leading feminist scholar whose work explores the ties between science, technology, humans, animals and nature. Haraway's project is dedicated to creating a new ontology, a new way of articulating 'being'. Other-worlding is part of this project. Other-worlding is about creating alternative worlds in which to reconceptualize the connections between the human and nonhuman world. Haraway calls into question *who* and *what* we perceive and consider to be human and nonhuman, and how this distinction affects not just lived experience but also how this experience is depicted. The alternative worlds may be violent, just or compassionate, the important thing is that they reveal that anthropocentrism is a political construct, not a natural order or things. This thesis

sees other-worlding as a process that may or may not be underway in literary works and intends to use it as a tool for analyzing ecofeminist themes in Alice Walker's fiction.

Other-worlding is an anglicization of *autre-mondialisation* and appears in Haraway's book *When Species Meet* (2008), in which she mediates on the relationship between humans and nonhuman animals. Arguably, as will be explained below, the concept of other-worlding can be found throughout Haraway's works, under different names. In *WSM*, other-worlding is primarily about how Haraway reconceptualizes the lived experience of humans and their 'companion species'⁶, which refers to the wide array of species (from dogs, to fungi, to cellphones) that have influenced humans throughout history. Haraway uses 'worlding', 'becoming with' and 'becoming worldly' interchangeably to describe the same phenomenon. She writes: "Species interdependence is the name of the worlding game on earth, and that game must be one of response and respect" (2008:19). This view reflects central ecofeminist principles. Haraway views the process of other-worlding, of reconceptualizing the relationship between the human and nonhuman world, as a "*dance of relating*" (2008:25):

The flow of entangled meaningful bodies in time – whether jerky and nervous or flaming and flowing, whether both partners move in harmony or painfully out of synch or something else altogether – *is communication about relationship, the relationship itself, and the means of reshaping relationship and so its enactors.* (2008:26, emphasis added)

The emphasized portion is central to other-worlding as it is understood in this thesis. Other-worlding, in the context of ecofeminist fiction, can be used as a tool to engage in communication about the relationship between the human and nonhuman world through storytelling, and potentially contribute to reshaping this relationship and those involved. Storytelling is an important aspect of other-worlding. Stories and narratives shape the way ideas and knowledge about the world is formed. Since existing knowledge forms the basis for new knowledge, Haraway is interested in how knowledge about the world is produced and sustained in society.

Central to Haraway's philosophy is the notion that all knowledge is situated, and therefore open to being challenged. Haraway's term 'situated knowledge' describes a knowledge that is shaped by the social, political and historical conditions of its production, thereby challenging the notion of neutral and objective science. The term first appeared in a 1988 essay entitled *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the*

⁶ The term first appeared in Donna Haraway's *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (2003)

Privilege of Partial Perspective. Rogers et al. (2013) defines it as “the idea that all forms of knowledge reflect the particular conditions in which they are produced, and at some level reflect the social identities and social locations of knowledge producers”. This view of knowledge has ramification for how society as a whole is perceived. For Haraway, the existing political, social, economic and cultural system is sustained, not by essential truths, but by the stories told and constructed by various social institutions, like religion, science, language, the media, the educational system etc. (Nasrullah Mambrol, 2018). This dynamic gives additional meaning to the phrase ‘knowledge is power’ because it highlights how knowledge can contribute to upholding systems that assert power in society.

In Haraway’s undoubtably most well-known work, the cyborg manifesto⁷, in which she uses the figure of the cyborg (a hybrid of machine and organism) to illustrate the need to move beyond the rigid categories of gender, sexuality, race, class and species, storytelling plays a central role. Haraway’s cyborg world is an example of other-worlding. In this alternative world: “Nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other. The relationships for forming wholes from parts, including those of polarity and hierarchical domination, are at issue in the cyborg world” (1991:151). This excerpt shows that the cyborg world Haraway envisions, embodies some of the ecofeminist principles of moving beyond dualism and hierarchy towards interconnectedness. Interestingly, Haraway also links the figure of the cyborg to storytelling. Writing is an important pursuit for cyborgs. Haraway states that (1991:175):

Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other. The tools are often stories, retold stories, versions that reverse and displace the hierarchical dualisms of naturalized identities. In retelling origin stories, cyborg authors subvert the central myths of origin of Western culture.

Origin stories, also referred to as creation stories or myths, are constructed narratives that describe how the world and humans came into being. These are stories of human development from anthropological, religious and cultural perspectives. Lori Gruen (1993:62) argues that these narratives, primarily written and developed by white middle-class men, have served to justify the oppression of women, animals and nature. While not often explicitly recognized, these constructed narratives of human origin and development “inform virtually every aspect

⁷ ‘A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century’. Essay published first in 1985, then in *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature* (1991)

of daily life” (1993:64). It is in these narratives that we find the origin of the creation of the ‘other’. It is significant that Haraway connects writing to survival because it points to both the very real power these narratives have over the lived experience of the ‘other’. A label as ‘other’, be it on the basis of race, gender, sexuality or species, has the potential of not only limiting an individual’s freedom and choice, but can also determine whether that individual is deserving of life or death. That is why the efforts to rewrite and reimagine these narratives are of vital importance not only for the ecofeminist movement but for society as a whole.

In 1994, with the essay ‘A Game of Cat’s Cradle’, Haraway elaborates further on other-worlding. Using the metaphor of the game of cat’s cradle, also called string figures, Haraway makes the argument that everyone and everything is intimately connected. This formulation makes apparent that the purpose of other-worlding is to critically engage with knowledge in a way that questions its validity and basis. She argues that (1994:62):

The point is to get at how worlds are made and unmade, in order to participate in the process, in order to foster some forms of life and not others. (...) The point is not just to read the webs of knowledge production; the point is to reconfigure what counts as knowledge in the interest of reconstituting the generative forces of embodiment.

Analysis

The Color Purple

He beat me like he beat the children. Cept he don't never hardly beat them.
He say, Celie, git the belt. The children be outside the room peeking through the cracks.
It all I can do not to cry. I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you a tree.
That's how come I know trees fear man.

Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (2017:23)

In *The Color Purple* Walker makes visible other-worlding through the protagonist Celie's journey of self-acceptance and self-realization. This journey is brought on by her questioning and challenging the creation stories that have shaped her life trajectory. From an ecofeminist perspective, there are particularly two creation stories or myths that stand out. One relating to anthropocentric and androcentric religion, in this case Christianity. The other relating to the assumed 'natural' connection between woman, animals and nature. These creation stories have had a detrimental effect on Celie's life, ultimately preventing her from realizing her true potential and worth. Three central characters help facilitate other-worlding in the novel. They do so by bringing awareness to the falseness of these creation stories, effectively advocating for an alternative way of viewing the world and Celie's place in it.

The first character is Celie's sister Nettie, who has fled the country to join a missionary couple in Africa but continues to write letters to Celie about her experiences. Unfortunately, Celie's abusive husband Albert hides Nettie's letters making her think that her beloved sister has forgotten her or even worse, died. The second character is Celie's lover and friend, the mesmerizing blues singer Shug, who also happens to be Albert's long-time mistress. The third character is Sofia, a strong tenacious woman, and the wife of Albert's oldest son Harpo. The insight and support Celie gains from these women promotes a shift in her consciousness whereby she is awakened to her own voice and strength. This awakening has the effect of setting the stage for a larger process of forgiveness and reconciliation between Celie and herself, and between the men and women in the novel. Arguably, this process also serves as an example of how humans can repair their relationship with nature. By challenging the creation stories that have separated men, women, animals and nature, humans can heal themselves and their relationships to each other and begin to cultivate a more harmonious and balanced connection to the natural world. The following analysis of other-worlding in *The Color Purple* will be split into two sections; the first addressing Celie's

rejection of an anthropocentric and patriarchal God, the second addressing how Walker reconceptualizes the connection between women and nature.

Rejection of God

In 'Ecofeminism: Toward global justice and planetary health' (1993), Greta Gaard and Lori Gruen cite the spread of anthropocentric and androcentric religion as an explanation for the separation between humans and the natural world, and the subsequent oppression of women, animals and nature. In these religions, like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, people worship "a sky god" and nature is seen "as his creation" (1993:237). The anthropocentric view of these religions originates in the belief that humans are the 'children of God' and thereby favored by the earth's creator. God also invokes in humanity the power to rule over the earth and its inhabitants (Stacey Enslow, 2010). Gaard and Gruen describe how this manifests itself (1993:237):

The role of the male in reproduction was elevated above the role of the female; women were compared to fields which would gestate and bear the male seed. (...) In the Judeo-Christian tradition, a great chain of being was established with god at the top, appointing Adam to be in charge of his entire creation. Woman was created from Adam's rib and placed below him, and below the divinely appointed heterosexuals were the animals and the rest of nature, all to serve man.

In *TCP*, it is the anthropocentric and androcentric views of Christianity, and particularly its image of God that shapes Celie's life for the worse. The authority God holds over Celie's life is apparent in the fact that she addresses her letters to him. While this may be read as Celie finding comfort and guidance in God, the contents of her letters and the novel's opening line of: "*You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy*" (*TCP*:3), points to a different interpretation. Celie's letters detail the extent of her abuse and molestation at the hands of her stepfather. These are deeply traumatizing experiences in Celie's life that she is forced to keep to herself, no doubt increasing their negative influence on her self-worth and self-esteem. The line, presumably uttered by her stepfather, indicates the consequences should she ever dare to open up about her experiences; it would break her mother's heart. The role of God in Celie's life is therefore not one of comfort and consolation, instead God acts as a keeper of painful and shameful secrets that ultimately prevent Celie from realizing her true value and worth. Moreover, God acts as an extension of male dominance, embodying the same qualities of the men in her life: "trifling, forgetful, and lowdown" (*TCP*:173). This is

why it is vital for Celie to reject this representation of God in her life thereby relinquishing his power over her.

Her sister Nettie helps facilitate this rejection through revealing the falseness of this God by introducing Celie to ‘other-worldly’ alternative images of Christianity. Nettie’s insights are derived from her experiences with the missionary couple Samuel and Corrine and from her time in Africa living with the Olinka tribe. Under the influence of Samuel and Corrine, Nettie learns that the teachings of the bible are up for interpretation. In a letter she writes (*TCP*:120):

It is the pictures in the bible that fool you. The pictures that illustrate the words. All of the people are white and so you just think all the people from the bible were white too. But really white *white* people lived somewhere else during those times. That’s why the bible says that Jesus Christ had hair like lamb’s wool. Lamb’s wool is not straight, Celie. It isn’t even curly.

The bible arguably contains the most influential creation myths in Western civilization. What Nettie is highlighting in the extract above is the importance of representation. Reading or being taught the bible as a black woman is arguably an alienating experience. Firstly, the androcentric foundations of Christianity situate women as servants and subordinates to not only God but also men, thereby consolidating their position as inferiors. Secondly, the complete erasure of black people from the scripture effectively denies their entire existence. It is often stated that the experience of the black woman is one of dual oppression, one on the basis of her gender and one on the basis of her race (Frances Beal, 2008). This experience is certainly true for Celie’s life. The religion Celie has been conditioned to believe in justifies and sustains her oppression. Her sister Nettie offers an alternative reading of the bible where people of color can recognize themselves as part of God’s creation too.

Nettie’s experiences with the Olinka tribe changes her and thereby Celie’s perception of God as a single human and male figure of divinity. The Olinka’s worship the roofleaf tree which they use to build huts for shelter and in extension sustains their way of life. Nettie wonders: “We know a roofleaf is not Jesus Christ, but in its own humble way, is it not God?” (*TCP*:139). Arguably she is questioning the validity of a God fixed in the form of a white man in the sky looking down on humans. The Olinka’s God is among them on earth and is not given a higher power. While the Olinka do spend a lot of time and effort worshipping the roofleaf tree, what they give they get in return. Arguably, the roofleaf tree is worshipped not because its existence is greater and more valuable than any other existence, but rather because its existence is meaningful for the Olinka’s way of life. The God in Celie’s life does not

contribute positively to her life but is instead an authoritative figure that keeps her suppressed. In Nettie's words (*TCP:233*):

God is different to us now, after all these years in Africa. More spirit than ever before, and more internal. Most people think he has to look like something or someone – a roofleaf or Christ – but we don't. And not being tied to what God looks like, frees us

Shug's entrance in Celie's life further promotes her rejection of God. Firstly, Shug gives Celie someone to confide in about being abused by Albert. Shug, having a completely different experience of him is in disbelief and asks: "What he beat you for?", Celie replies: "For being me and not you." (*TCP:71*). Despite never having seen this side to Albert, Shug supports Celie unconditionally. When Celie shares her painful experiences to someone else than God, she relinquished the power he holds over her in keeping her secrets. Shug also encourages Celie to be critical of the role men, and by extension God, has played in her life (*TCP:177-8*):

Man corrupt everything, say Shug. He on your box of grits, in your head, and all over the radio. He try to make you think he everywhere. Soon as you think he everywhere, you think he God. But he ain't. Whenever you trying to pray, and man plop himself on the other end of it, tell him to git lost, say Shug. (...) But this is hard work, let me tell you. He been there so long, he don't want to budge. He threaten lightning, floods and earthquakes.

This extract emphasizes the pervasiveness of anthropocentrism and androcentrism in society. To be woman and to be a black woman is to constantly have to fight against these influences and to avoid letting them determine your worth. Shug believes in the possibility of an alternative arrangement. Through her 'other-worldly' notion of an all-encompassing and loving God she offers a way out of this oppressive framework. Nature and realizing the connection between humans and the natural world has brought her to this God (*TCP:176*):

My first step from the old white man was trees. Then air. Then birds. Then other people. But one day when I was sitting quiet and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it come to me: that feeling of being part of everything, not separate at all. I knew that if I cut a tree, my arm would bleed.

Sofia also plays a part in facilitating Celie's rejection of God. Sofia is a brave and inspiring character who does not abide by the bible's perception of women as subordinate servants to men. Sofia talks back at both Albert and her husband Harpo regularly, and when Harpo tries to make her submissive by giving her a beating, she fights back full force. "I loves Harpo, she

say. God knows I do. But I'll kill him dead before I let him beat me" (*TCP:39*). While Sofia's anger does get her in serious trouble it is nevertheless important. Her anger is revealing of how she sees herself as worthy and deserving of a life without oppression. As a result of the constant emotional abuse from her stepfather and Albert, Celie has become used to seeing herself as poor, ugly, stupid, and ultimately unworthy of love and happiness. Celie has in many ways accepted this as her fate, her only hope is that heaven will be different. This is clear in her answer to Sofia's question of how she deals with anger (*TCP:40*):

Well, sometime Mr — git on me pretty hard. I have to talk to Old Maker.
But he my husband. I shrug my shoulders. This life soon be over, I say. Heaven last all ways.
You ought to bash Mr — head open, she say. Think bout heaven later.

Celie's answer reveals how she has lost hope in bettering her life, instead she is longing for the day it will end and the suffering will be over. Sofia clearly takes issue with this and encourages Celie to get in touch with her anger. Sofia wants Celie to fight for her happiness on earth in this life, arguably because she questions the validity of the notion of heaven as the ultimate resting place. The religion Celie leans on does not acknowledge women and black people's rights and value on earth, why would it be any different in heaven? Celie's rejection of the anthropocentric and androcentric God that has shaped her life and self-image is made visible in the following exchange with Shug (*TCP:173*):

What God do for me? I ast. She say, Celie! Like she shock. He gave you life, good health, and a good woman that love you to death.

Yeah, I say, and he give me a lynched daddy, a crazy mama, a lowdown dog of a step pa and a sister I probably won't ever see again. Anyhow, I say, the God I been praying and writing to is a man. And act just like all the other mens I know. Trifling, forgetful, and lowdown.

As a result of the insights and support of Nettie, Shug and Sofia, Celie is able to relinquish the power God has over her life. She does so by embracing an alternative God of everything. This is apparent in her final letter which she addresses: "Dear God. Dear stars, dear trees, dear sky, dear peoples. Dear Everything. Dear God" (*TCP:259*).

Reconceptualizing women's connection to nature

Ynestra King (1989:20) argues that in the project of building Western industrial civilization “nature became something to be dominated, overcome, made to serve the needs of men”. The means of this domination has been religion, patriarchy, the industrial and scientific revolution and the spread of capitalism. The outcome, the reworking of nature to fit man's needs, is thought to be the creation of culture, thereby consolidating the nature/culture divide. Women have long been associated with nature due to their biology.

This association has both a positive and negative aspect (Judith Plant, n.d). Women and nature are seen as passive givers and nurturers of life, through women's role in perpetuating the species and through nature's life-sustaining resources. At the same time women and nature are seen as wild, uncontrollable and constant reminders of man's ultimate mortality: Women through their potential power of seduction and as the giver of life they are also made responsible for its inevitable end. Nature with its storms, droughts and other natural disasters which threaten both man's life and livelihood (Plant, n.d). Due to these characteristics women, like nature, have been subjected to man's domination and violence. She has also been excluded from the spheres of knowledge production such as science, politics, literature and philosophy and relegated to the domestic sphere where her primary occupation has been to be a mother and housewife (King, 1989:20-22).

Walker's reconceptualization of women's connection to nature happens alongside Celie's rejection of God. Indeed, as mentioned, nature provides a way out anthropocentric and androcentric religion. In the extract that opens this chapter, Celie details the way she manages her husband's abuse. This is the book's first mention of women's connection to nature and the wording is significant because it points to how this connection holds a dual function in Walker's novel. When Celie writes “That's how come I know trees fear man” (*TCP*:23), she recognizes a central ecofeminist principle: namely, the fact that women and nature have been and are both victims of man's violence and domination. Celie's likening of herself to a tree: “I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you a tree” (*TCP*:23), is arguably also a coping mechanism, a way of finding the strength to survive the violence she faces at the hands of her husband. At this point in the novel, Celie is aware of the oppression that comes with women's assumed connection to nature, but not yet aware of the potential power and strength that lies in this connection. Nettie, Shug and Sofia are central character in embodying alternative ways to view this connection which facilitates a shift in Celie's own understanding of her relation to nature.

Women's connection to the natural world is made apparent in various ways in the *The Color Purple*. Most obviously through the ways in which the female characters are depicted as targets for male aggression, violence and domination. Through Nettie's letters of her experiences with the Olinka tribe, this oppression of women by men is put in the context of humans', in this case white men's, exploitation and domination of nature. The Olinka village is ruined by white colonizers who build roads and turn all their land into a rubber plantation. Nettie's descriptions of the Olinka's way of life arguably has the effect of making Celie more attentive to the nature that surrounds her in her daily life. Nettie's experiences serve as a representation of what access to education can do for women's lives. Celie's was taken out of school early, even though she loved it. "You too dumb to keep going to school, Pa say. Nettie the clever one in this bunch" (*TCP*:11). While Nettie continues reading and learning, Celie has to stay home and take care of the household. This does not cause the sisters to separate however, Nettie is Celie's biggest support and continues to teach her how to read and write. She is also always reminding Celie that she is neither dumb nor ugly and that she loves her more than anything in the world. By sharing the knowledge she gains from her education and travels, Nettie helps Celie rectify the misconceptions she has of herself.

Shug's approach to God as a God of everything also has the effect of changing Celie's outlook on nature and encourages her to pay more attention to her surroundings. Shug says that: "God loves admiration. (...) I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it. (...) People think pleasing God is all God care about but any fool living in the world can see it always trying to please us back" (*TCP*:177). This description indicates that Shug believes in a God that is among humanity, not raised up as a higher power. Ultimately the relationship between God, humans and the natural world is interconnected. Shug's effect on Celie is apparent when she says that: "Now that my eyes opening, I feels like a fool. Next to any little scrub of a bush in my yard, Mr ——'s evil sort of shrink" (*TCP*:177). In essence, Celie's renewed appreciation of nature gives her both comfort and strength, it shows her that she is surrounded by support in the form of trees, flowers, rivers, birds, bees etc.

Shug also helps Celie get in touch with and own her sexuality. Shug is a free spirit; she has sex because she enjoys it and she does not limit the subjects of her affection to men only. Female sexuality and sexual desire are topics often infused with shame and guilt, and throughout history it has been yet another area where men have asserted their dominance. As an extension of their assumed affinity with nature, women's sexuality has also been seen as uncontrollable and wild, thereby in need of male dominance (Plant, n.d). Shug embraces her

own sexuality and refuses to be constrained by society's or men's dominance. For example, Shug is a blues singer. According to Marybeth Hamilton (2000), female blues songs were often infused with sexual imagery and details of physical pleasure, arguably as a way of asserting control and authority over their own sexuality. When Celie is brushing through Shug's hair she starts "to hum a little tune" (*TCP*:51). Celie notices the sexual nature of this song: "Sound low down dirty to me. Like what the preacher tell you its sin to hear. Not to mention sing" (*TCP*:51). This comment also reveals how Celie has been conditioned by Christianity to believe that being sexual is sinful.

Sofia brings awareness to Celie's internalized misogyny and is an inspirational figure that Celie can shape her new sense of self and place in the world around. Sofia does not abide by the rules set for women by society, she frequently talks back to Harpo and Albert, and when Harpo tries to assert his dominance over her by giving her a beating, she fights back full force. Harpo goes to both his father and Celie for advice on how to handle Sofia's stubbornness. Celie reveals her internalized misogyny when she says: "Beat her" (*TCP*:36). Sofia confronts Celie, who explains that "I'm jealous of you. I say it cause you do what I can't" (*TCP*:39). Sofia does not hold this against her because she recognizes how the belief that women should be subordinate to men does not come from Celie's heart but rather her experiences. As explained above, Sofia encourages Celie to take steps towards coming into her own by getting in touch with her rage.

For Celie, the defining moment of her renewed understanding of her connection to nature is when she decides to join Shug in going to Memphis, thereby leaving Albert and his kids to fend for themselves. Albert tries to manipulate Celie into staying by repeating the insults she has been conditioned to believe about herself. In comparing Celie to Shug he says: "You ugly. You skinny. You shape funny. You too scared to open your mouth to people. All you fit to do in Memphis is to be Shug's maid. Take out her slop-jar and maybe cook her food" (*TCP*:186). Albert's comments reflect his, and moreover society's, perception of women's value as residing in their appearance and housewife skills.

However, through the insights and support from Nettie, Shug and Sofia, Celie has made the realization that her value and worth is not determined by these characteristics. Her realization is made apparent through her talking back to Albert for the first time: "I curse you, I say" (...) "Until you do right by me, everything you touch will crumble" (*TCP*:187). Albert responds with spiteful laughter, which arguably triggers the rage in Celie that Sofia encouraged her to get in touch with. What is significant about this rage is that while it stems from years and years of physical and emotional abuse, it is brought to the fore by Celie's

connection to nature: “Until you do right by me, I say, everything you even dream about will fail. I give it to him straight, just like it come to me. *And it seem to come to me from the trees*” (TCP:187, emphasis added). This is a powerful scene in the novel in which Celie comes to find her own voice and inner strength. This moment shapes Celie’s journey as one of overcoming both physical and mental obstacles and ultimately a journey of healing.

The Temple of My Familiar

In *The Temple of My Familiar* Walker makes visible other-worlding through the character Lissie's accounts of her many past lives that span through thousands of years of human history. In Lissie's past lives her race, gender and species are not fixed. This allows Walker to reconceptualize the experience of the 'other' through literary encounters that question the validity of this 'otherness', thereby challenging the anthropocentric, androcentric and racist foundations of Western origin stories. Lissie's experiences are particularly influential in the life of Suwelo, who hears them first-hand. Suwelo's job as a history teacher is not inconsequential, but points to how his profession has a unique role in relaying these origin stories. The following analysis of other-worlding in *The Temple of My Familiar* will be split into three parts; the first addressing Walker's re-envisioning of Darwinian evolution theory, the second addressing Walker's rewriting of The Fall and the third addressing how Walker creates her own origin story describing how men, women, animals and nature were originally separated from each other.

Re-envisioning Darwin

Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and its contribution to the field of biology and evolution theory has had an instrumental effect on the way humans understand and relate to the natural world. Catherine Parry (2017:3) argues that Darwin's theory of evolution marked the starting point of a process within empirical sciences toward "dismantling traditional notions of a radical and metaphysical break between humans and other animals". However, this process and more recent development within posthumanist theory has not accounted for any substantial revision of the predominant anthropocentric view of animals and nature as 'other' (Parry, 2017:3). This development, or rather lack thereof, is summarized by Lynn White (1967:1206) "Despite Darwin, we are not, in our hearts, part of the natural process. We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim". It seems Darwin's theory has been somewhat misconstrued throughout history to authorize humans' self-assumed position as center of the universe. This position arguably has its origin in anthropocentric religion, which was discussed in relation to *The Color Purple*, and will be discussed later in relation to *The Temple of My Familiar* as well.

Darwin had two main points; the first is the idea that all present life on earth can be traced back to one universal common ancestor; the second is the theory of natural selection by

which species evolve by adapting to their environments over time, commonly referred to as ‘the survival of the fittest’ (Francisco Jose Ayala, 2020). Darwin’s idea of common ancestry or descent reflects a view of life on earth as interconnected and interrelated. Ecofeminism echoes this view. The second part of Darwin’s theory relating to natural selection has arguably been used to suggest that humans are the most evolved species. This does not align with Darwin’s first point. Parry (2017:3) argues that “the remarkable adaptability, creativity and vigour of the human species has spawned a powerful sense of entitlement to acquire, use and manipulate the matter of the world”. Through the process of other-worlding Walker is able to envision a different arrangement of “the matter of the world”, one that brings ‘othered’ experiences to the fore.

In *TMF* Alice Walker re-envisions Darwin’s theory of evolution by suggesting that the evolution from apes to humans was not necessarily an evolution in the positive sense. The term evolution and the process of evolving typically have positive connotations, but Walker problematizes this interpretation. Walker also highlights, as Amanda Greenwood (2000:172) argues, that the relationship between humans and apes “is one founded on mutual cooperation and respect rather than simply on evolutionary connection”. Lissie’s memory of her life as part of a tribe who lived alongside chimpanzees in the jungle is sparked by Suwelo’s question of whether she has ever in all her lifetimes experienced peace (*TMF*:83). She comes to realize that she has experienced all kinds of oppression in her life but locates something that stands out as a “peaceful foundation” in what she refers to as “the dream world of [her] memory” (*TMF*:83). In this peaceful foundation Lissie and her tribe live in harmony with their chimpanzee cousins who were “as big as were – and black and hairy, with big teeth, flat black faces, and piercingly intelligent and gentle eyes” (*TMF*:84).

In the human tribe women and children live separate from men. The chimpanzees however live together as a family, all involved in the day to day life of looking after the children, foraging for food and grooming. Lissie describes this arrangement with admiration and wonders how humans ended up following a different path (*TMF*:85-6):

There was such safety around their trees (...) They seemed nearly unable to comprehend separateness; they lived and breathed as a family, then as a clan, then as a forest, and so on. If I hurt myself and cried, they cried with me, as if my pain was magically transposed to their bodies. (...) There was no violence in them – that is to say, they did not initiate it, ever – only thoughtfulness. I used to look at them and wonder how we, so little, so naked, so easily contentious, had splintered off.

Generally speaking, the human development from apes to humans is considered a positive development. Anthropologist Augustin Fuentes (2018:154) argues that humans and apes “share a range of similarities in our bodies and brains”, for instance the ability to sustain complex social relationships and utilize tools. He argues that the most distinctive characteristic of humanity is its ability to significantly alter our surroundings. Fuentes highlights the invention of various technologies, economic and political institutions, the spread of religion and culture. Importantly he also states that “Today humans deploy many of the same capacities that enabled our success as a species to kill/control other humans and manipulate the planet to the brink of ecological devastation” (2018:163). Walker seems to echo this view in the way she describes humanity’s process of ‘splintering off’.

In *TMF*, the peaceful foundation is disrupted by humanity’s violence, need for dominance and greed. This process is initiated by an attack by other humans who are not part of Lissie’s tribe: “They carried sticks with sharp points on them, and they hurled these at our cousins, striking them in the chest. To our horror, they took our cousins’ skins and sometimes cooked and ate our cousins’ bodies” (*TMF*:87). The subsequent development is that members of Lissie’s tribe learn to make weapons of various kinds which creates animosity, fear and distrust between them and the chimpanzees. “We were perceived as helpless and cute no longer, and, for our part, there were those among us who gloried in at last having the means to make our giant cousins fear” (*TMF*:87). This traces the root of humanity’s domination over animals in a need to feel superior. She also describes how “the idea of ownership – which grew out of the way the forest now began to be viewed as something cut into pieces” (*TMF*:87) separated humans and the natural world even further. Moreover, Lissie describes this development as a pattern that repeats itself throughout history. There is a period of harmony and peaceful coexistence until man claims ownership and domination over women, animals and nature. Following this greed is a period of oppression then emancipation before the cycle begins again. This is perhaps the lesson of this story, namely that humans essentially never learn and continue to make the same mistakes. However, it does also have a positive element in the sense that it recognizes the possibility of reconciliation.

Rewriting The Fall

The Fall is a story within the larger Christian creation myth Genesis, which is an account of how God created earth and humankind. The Fall details how sin, guilt and death came into the world and how humans and animals were expelled from the Garden of Eden, where they had previously lived in innocence with God. Eve is lured by the serpent to taste the forbidden fruit and shares it with Adam. This act of disobedience has the result of banishing men, women and animals from paradise and God also gives them individual punishments. Adam, thereby men, are condemned to work the land for food and nourishment. Eve, thereby women, are forced to go through labor and be man's subordinate. The serpent is punished by being forced to live on the ground and eat dirt (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). Through an ecofeminist reading, The Fall represents the moment the distinction between sexes is first perceived and patriarchy is established. Additionally, the story creates a separation between humans and animals whereby humans sever their ties to the animal community. A separation that has been used to assert humans' superiority over animals and ultimately justify and sustain their oppression (McKay, 2001:257).

The memory Walker uses to rewrite The Fall is one from a very distant past. Lissie has repressed and deliberately weakened it over time. In this memory Lissie is incarnated as the first white person, a boy whose mother is the queen of their tribe. By the mother's side is her familiar, the lion Husa. Familiars live independently from their human companions, but both parties "enjoy a relationship of reciprocal physical and emotional care" (McKay, 2001:256). Lissie explains (*TMF*:360): "This was long, long ago, before the animals had any reason to fear us and none whatever to try to eat us". It is significant also that only the women had familiars, which later becomes a source for man's resentment. Lissie describes the arrangement of this community (*TMF*:361-2):

In these days of which I am speaking, people met other animals in much the same way people today meet each other. You were sharing the same neighborhood, after all. You used the same water, you ate the same food, you sometimes found yourself peering out of the same cave waiting for a downpour to stop. (...) I wish the world today could see our world as it was then. It would see the whole tribe of creation climbing an enormous plum tree.

⁸ Serpents are found in the myths of many cultures and religions, traditionally symbolizing various evils like temptation, sexual desire and death. The serpent is thought to differ from a snake in that it has legs, and potentially also wings as it does in Walker's rendition.

This arrangement seems almost like an ecofeminist utopian ideal. The notion of familiars also aligns with Haraway's concepts of companion species and species interdependence. The white boy's mother attempts to hide his complexion by rubbing his skin with various ointments made of berries and nuts. He is himself unaware that he is different, even though the other children sometimes look at him strangely. When the time comes for the boy to find a partner his difference is revealed to him. The girl he likes has her own familiar, the serpent Ba. When they make love, the ointments rub off and the boy is filled with shame: "All I could think of was hiding myself – my kinky but pale yellow hair, the color of straw in late summer, my pebble colored eyes, and my skin that had no color at all" (*TMF*:365). The boy runs away to hide, but the girl follows him: "She was crying as much as I was, and beating her breasts. For we learned mourning from the giant apes, who taught us to feel grief anywhere around us and to reflect it back to the sufferer" (*TMF*:365)

The boy does not respond well to the girl's show of affection and care and grabs a stick to chase her away. This frightens the girl who turns to run back. However, her familiar, noticing her fright tries to defend her by scaring the boy away, who in his rage strikes Ba: "a brutal blow, with my club, so hard a blow that I broke its neck, and it fell without a sound to the ground" (*TMF*:366). Following this incident, the boy lives in exile, away from his tribe and animals. The only one that comes to visit him is his mother's familiar, the lion Husa, who treats the boy as his own cub. One day Husa brings him the remains of a kill, the skin of an animal. In an attempt to assert himself the boy, now a man, proceeds to make a cape of this skin to drape around himself. This further alienates him from the animals, who run from him "as if from plague" (*TMF*:367). He is totally alone for many years until: "I raided the litter of a barbarous dog, and got myself companionship that way" (*TMF*:367)

Lissie's story has the same components as the Christian creation myth of The Fall, a man, woman and serpent, but Walker makes important changes (McKay, 2001:257-8). In Lissie's story 'the fall' is instigated not by the woman and the serpent, but by the boy's own insecurities about his race, which he sees as an imperfection. These insecurities are projected as anger and violence toward the girl and Ba. This points to an interpretation of the separation of men, women and animal, as being the result of man's own insecurities and feelings of inferiority. In Walker's rewriting man, woman and animal are all part of the same community despite their differences in race, gender and species. The other members of the tribe accept the boy despite his different complexion. While it is true that his mother tries to conceal the boy's whiteness, this is arguably more to protect his ego. In the biblical story, Adam and Eve

are part of the same human community but are separated based on their gender. The serpent is excluded from this community altogether based on species.

In the Christian myth, Eve and the serpent are punished harsher than Adam for their collusion and disobedience to God. The result of The Fall is the subordination of women and animals. In Walker's rewriting the boy is arguably not ostracized from the tribe but chooses to live in exile because he is shameful of his actions. He never attempts to make contact with the tribe ever again. Instead he tries to make his own: "I found a staff to support me in my walks and to represent 'my people'" (*TMF*:367). The wording here is significant. 'Staff' indicates that these people are serving him, and the quotes around 'my people' suggest that this is all a figure of the boy's imagination. What is telling however is that the only one who comes to visit the boy is the lion Husa, pointing to animals' innate forgiving and compassionate nature. Lissie concludes by pointing out that this story "is also the fantasy upon which the Old testament rests, (...) but without any mention of our intimacy with the other animals or of the brown and black colors of the rest of my folks" (*TMF*:368)

The point of Walker's rewriting is to dismantle accepted and unquestionable truths and create an alternative story of creation that includes 'othered' experiences. Genesis, and in particular The Fall, has been instrumental in establishing an anthropocentric and androcentric worldview. This worldview has influenced the creation of cultures, politics, science and moreover informs the production of knowledge, resulting in what Haraway calls 'situated knowledge'. This knowledge forms the basis of all new knowledge about the world, that is why it is so vital to critically engage and question these creation myths in order to move towards social transformation and change.

Constructing a new origin story

Questioning and challenging the foundations of the current worldview is an essential step towards mending the relationship between humans and each other and between humans and the natural world. However, this is only the first step. Ecofeminism believes it is of vital importance to also work toward creating new narratives and images of this relationship. Diamond and Orenstein describe this process as the need to "reweave new stories that acknowledge and value the biological and cultural diversity that sustains all life" (1990:xi). As was discussed above, ecofeminist fiction plays an important role in this aspect because it is central in bringing to life these new stories.

The previous sections on *TMF* have discussed how Walker engages critically with two creation stories: Darwin's theory of evolution and the Christian creation myth of The Fall. Due to a misconception of Darwinian evolution theory, humans' separation from nature has been attributed to their assumed superiority over other species. In The Fall, humans' separation from nature is attributed to Eve and the serpent's act of disobedience towards God. Walker challenges both of these notions with her re-envisioning of Darwinian evolution and rewriting of The Fall. In other words, she exposes the falsity of these creation stories. She also hints at the real explanation for this separation but does not go into detail. Instead Walker constructs her own story of creation, through one of Lissie's past lives, which depicts how women, men, animals and nature were originally separated from each other.

In this depiction Lissie is herself a familiar, a lion. She describes her memory of this life as "one of those dream memories so frayed around the edges that it is like an old, motheaten shawl" (*TMF*:369), which arguably reveals Walker's intent to construct this as an origin story, a story from the very beginning of time. Lissie's memory is one of chaos, though it had started out peacefully with men, women and familiars living side by side in harmony. The roots of this chaos, Lissie describes as the merging of men and women, who had lived separately previously. However, it is not the merging in itself that causes chaos, but men's need to dominate women and ultimately separate them from their familiars: "the men asserted themselves, alone, as the familiars of women. They moved in with their dogs, whom they ordered to chase us. It was a time of trauma for women and other animals alike" (*TMF*:370). Man draws a wedge between women and animals. This wedge becomes the foundation for humanity's separation from the nonhuman world. Lissie describes how she came to interpret this development later in life, pointing to present-day aspects of humans' relationship with the natural world (*TMF*:370):

I think I knew we were experiencing one of the great changes in the structure of earth's life, and it made me sorrowful, but also very thoughtful. I did not know at the time that man would begin, in his rage and jealousy of us, to hunt us down, to kill and eat us, to wear our hides, our teeth, and our bones. No, not even the most cynical animal would have dreamed of that.

In addition, Walker uses Lissie's story to highlight how humans have avoided taking responsibility for this separation throughout time through the negative portrayal of animals in society, especially through literature. This points to an awareness of the importance of literature in creating and sustaining the separation between humans and the natural world.

Mario Ortiz-Robles (2016:2) claims that “animals as we know them are a literary invention”. Indeed, the common characteristics of various animals, for example the snake as sly, the fox as cunning, the donkey as stubborn etc. have little to no basis in empirical evidence. These characteristics are arguably more descriptive of the humans who invented these characteristics than the animals they describe. Ortiz-Robles (2016:2) argues that: “The presence of animals in literature, marginal yet constant, suggests that literature is that discourse whereby humans simultaneously declare their difference from animals, and take the measure of their suggestive similarities”. In this view, literature is a means for humans to assert their experience of themselves in relation to animal ‘others’, typically at the expense of the latter. Throughout *TMF* Walker tries to rectify some of the commonly held perceptions about animals in society.

Lissie describes that as women and men merge into chaos, the lion has to move on. She ascribes this to the lion’s inherently peaceful nature; “as a lion, I could not bear loud noises, abrupt changes in behavior, voices raised in anger. *Evilness*. No lion could tolerate such things. It is our nature to be nonviolent, to be peaceful, to be calm” (*TMF*:370). While this other-worldly conception of the lion may not be any closer to reality than other more prevalent conceptions, it nevertheless makes apparent that any portrayal of an animal’s internal qualities is ultimately a human construction. Lissie describes how this conception of the lion developed into what it is today as a gradual fading into myth (*TMF*:371). She traces the prevalent view of lions as brutal and violent killers to literature and religious scripture, in which they are depicted as the enemies to man.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored ecofeminist themes, using Donna Haraway's concept of other-worlding, in *The Color Purple* and *The Temple of My Familiar* written by Alice Walker. This thesis has argued that Walker visible other-worlding through literary encounters in which she challenges and rewrites creation stories that have served to justify the oppression of women, nature and animals. By reconstructing the experience of the 'other' and challenging an anthropocentric and androcentric worldview, this thesis sees Walker's novels as contributing to the ecofeminist principle of social transformation by offering alternative stories upon which a new and better world can be created.

The circumstances surrounding the writing of this thesis in the spring of 2020, a year that will undoubtedly be remembered as revealing and eye-opening in the context of humans' relations to the natural world. The increased saliency of the issue of climate change, spurred on by wildfires, drought, floods and the global spread of a zoonotic virus, highlights the need and relevancy of ecofeminism both as a movement and framework. Ecofeminism's goal of radical social transformation could not be more important than in the present time. What has hopefully become clear through this thesis is the merit of ecofeminist literary criticism, and ecofeminist literature moreover. The ecofeminist framework has been instrumental in highlighting an aspect of Walker's fiction that has previously been quite unexplored. This exploration has arguably contributed both to the appreciation and value of Walker's novels and also to the ecofeminist goal of creating alternative images of the world.

Bibliography

- Albrecht, Milton** (1954) 'The Relationship of Literature and Society'. *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 59(5), p. 425-436.
- Andersen, Gregers** (2020) *Climate fiction and cultural analysis: A new perspective on life in the anthropocene*. (Routledge environmental literature, culture and media). London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Ayala, Francisco Jose** (2020) 'Evolution'. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Retrieved June 17 2020, from: <https://www.britannica.com/science/evolution-scientific-theory>
- Beal, Frances M.** (2008) 'Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female'. *Meridians*, vol. 8(2), p. 166-176.
- Bhuvanewari, Varikuti and Rosamma Jacob** (2012) 'An Ecofeminist Study of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*'. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*. vol. 2(1), p. 7-12.
- Biehl, Janet** (1991) *Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics*. Boston: South End Press.
- Birkeland, Janis** (1993) 'Ecofeminism: Linking Theory and Practice'. In Greta Gaard (ed.) (1993) *Ecofeminism: women, nature, animals*, p. 13-59. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Buchanan, Ian** (2018) 'Haraway, Donna'. In *A Dictionary of Critical Theory* (2nd edition) Oxford University Press. Retrieved 18 June 2020, from <https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezproxy.uio.no/view/10.1093/acref/9780198794790.001.0001/acref-9780198794790-e-312>
- Curry, Alice** (2013) *Environmental Crisis in Young Adult Fiction – A Poetics of Earth*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Diamond, Irene and Gloria Feman Orenstein** (eds.) (1990) *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books
- Encyclopaedia Britannica** (eds.) (2020) 'Life of Adam and Eve'. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Retrieved on May 14 2020, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Life-of-Adam-and-Eve>
- Enslow, Stacey** (2010) 'Anthropocentric View'. In David A. Leeming, Kathryn Madden, Stanton Marlan (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*. Boston: Springer. Retrieved June 25 2020, from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-71802-6>
- Fuentes, Augustin** (2018) 'How Humans and Apes Are Different, and Why It Matters'. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, vol. 74(2), p. 151-167.
- Gaard, Greta** (ed.) (1993) *Ecofeminism: women, nature, animals*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

————— (2011) ‘Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-Placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism’. *Feminist Formations*, vol.23(2), p. 26-53.

Gaard, Greta and Patrick D. Murphy (eds.) (1998) *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Gaard, Greta and Lori Gruen (1993) ‘Ecofeminism: Toward global justice and planetary health’. *Society and Nature*, vol. 2, p.

Greenwood, Amanda (2000) ‘“THE ANIMALS CAN REMEMBER”: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NON-HUMAN OTHER IN ALICE WALKER'S *THE TEMPLE OF MY FAMILIAR*’. *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology*, vol.4 (2), p. 164-178.

Hamilton, Marybeth (2000) ‘Sexuality, Authenticity and the Making of the Blues Tradition’. *Past & Present* (169), p. 132-160. Retrieved July 30 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/651266

Haraway, Donna J. (1985) ‘A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century’. In (1991) *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature*. p. 149-181. New York: Routledge.

————— (1994) ‘A Game of Cat’s Cradle: Science Studies, Feminist Theory, Cultural Studies’. *Configurations*, vol.2(1), p. 59-71.

————— (2008) *When Species Meet*. Posthumanities, Volume 3. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

————— (2016) *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Hourdequin, Marion (2015) *Environmental Ethics: From theory to practice*. London: Bloomsbury Academic

June, Pamela B. (2020) *Solidarity with the Other Beings on the Planet: Alice Walker, Ecofeminism, and Animals in Literature*. Critical Insurgencies. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

King, Ynestra (1989) ‘The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology’. In Judith Plant (ed.) *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. p. 18-28. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

King, Roger (1999). ‘Narrative, Imagination, and the Search for Intelligibility in Environmental Ethics’. *Ethics and the Environment*, vol 4(1), p. 23-38.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford (1992) *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

Lauret, Maria (2000) *Alice Walker (Modern Novelists)*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

- Mambrol, Nasrullah** (2018) 'Key Theories of Donna Haraway'. *Literariness.org*. Retrieved 18 June 2020, from <https://literariness.org/2018/02/22/key-theories-of-donna-haraway/>
- McKay, Robert** (2001) 'Getting Close to Animals with Alice Walker's *The Temple of My Familiar*'. *Society & Animals*, vol. 9(3), p. 253-271.
- Meretoja, Hanna** (2017) 'Narrative Hermeneutics and the Ethical Potential of Literature'. In Jakob Lothe (ed.) *The Future of Literary Studies*, p. 135-147. Oslo: Novus
- Orenstein, Gloria Feman** (1990) 'Artists as Healers: Envisioning Life-Giving Culture'. In Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein (eds.) (1990) *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, p. 279-287. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books
- Ortiz-Robles, Mario** (2016) *Literature and Animal Studies*. (Literature and Contemporary Thought). Proquest Ebook Central. Basingstoke: Taylor & Francis Ltd.
- Parry, Catherine** (2017) *Other animals in twenty-first century fiction*. (Palgrave studies in animals and literature). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Plant, Judith** (ed.) (1989) *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.
- Plant, Judith** (n.d, presumably late 1980s) 'Woman and Nature'. Extract from *GreenLine Magazine*. Retrieved 15 June 2020, from <https://www.thegreenfuse.org/plant.htm>
- Quinn, Emelia and Benjamin Westwood** (2018) *Thinking Veganism in Literature and Culture: Towards a Vegan Theory*. (Palgrave studies in animals and literature). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rogers, Alisdair, Noel Castree and Rob Kitchin** (2013) 'Situated knowledge'. In *A Dictionary of Human Geography*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved 18 June 2020, from <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199599868.001.0001/acref-9780199599868-e-1686>
- Simcikova, Karla** (2006) *To Live Fully, Here and Now: The Healing Vision in the Works of Alice Walker*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Smith, Pamela A.** (1998) 'Green Lap, Brown Embrace, Blue Body: The Ecospirituality of Alice Walker'. *CrossCurrents*, vol. 48(4), p. 471-487.
- Vakoch, Douglas A.** (ed.) (2012) *Feminist Ecocriticism: Environment, Women, and Literature* (Ecocritical Theory and Practice). Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Walker, Alice** (1984) *Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful*. San Diego: Harcourt Trade Publishers.
- (1986) 'Am I Blue'. In (1988) *Living by the Word: Selected Writings 1973-1987*. London: The Women's Press, p. 3-8.

- (1988) *Living by the Word: Selected Writings 1973-1987*. London: The Women's Press.
- (2004) *The Temple of My Familiar*. London: Phoenix.
- (2011) *The Chicken Chronicles: A Memoir*. New York: The New Press
- (2017) *The Color Purple*. London: Weidenfield & Nicolson.
- White, Lynn** (1967) 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis'. *Science*, vol. 155(3767), p. 1203-1207.
- Wisker, Gina** (2010) 'Teaching *The Color Purple*'. In Gina Wisker (ed.) *Teaching African American Women's Writing*. p. 21-41. Teaching the New English. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wu, Lianhong** (2019) Reading *The Color Purple* from the Perspective of Ecofeminism. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 9 (8), p. 965-972.
- <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0908.11>