

ACOLYTE OF NATURE: SPIRITUALITY IN FAULKNER'S WILDERNESS

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by
BRENDAN CONOR MIZE

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Abstract

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Brendan Conor Mize
B.A. Appalachian State University

Chairperson: Carl Eby, Ph.D

The environment is omnipresent in many of William Faulkner's novels not merely as a background or setting for the narrative and the characters, but also as a symbolic, metaphorical, and sometimes personified part of the identity of not only the characters but also the culture in which they live. Culture, tradition, and the environment find themselves intrinsically bound to one another, suggesting not only a symbiotic, but also a spiritual connection between them. My thesis explores the relationship between the environment and culture, discussing the wilderness—particularly as it is depicted in *Go Down, Moses*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and *As I Lay Dying*—as a spiritual place. The ways in which the various main characters of these novels interact with nature, particularly within *Go Down, Moses*, could be interpreted as a worship of the environment by imbuing it with some spiritual significance. Because of the close connection between the environment and the human culture, the destruction of the wilderness in Faulkner's novels mirrors the gradual destruction of the community and its culture, emphasizing the tragic devaluation of tradition.

This thesis will examine Faulkner's novels *Go Down, Moses*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and *As I Lay Dying* through the lens of the Book of Genesis, examining the ways in

which the environment, the wilderness, appears to be for the main characters of the respective novels their own personal Eden. The loss of this Eden can then be linked to all of the psychological, emotional, spiritual, and social problems they face later in life. Viewing the unspoiled environment as a type of Eden lends to the Book of Genesis not so much a religious theme as it does an ecological one, in which human action leads to the destruction or loss of the natural world, and the various negative effects this loss instigates.

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Introduction

The celebrated works of William Faulkner have been subject to wide criticism, examining everything from ecocriticism to feminist and critical race theory. Through an ecocritical lens, Faulkner's novels propose an environmental ethic that seeks to protect and preserve the natural world, a world that is continuously under threat within Faulkner's work. Faulkner's environmental ethic drives the narrative of his 1942 novel *Go Down, Moses* and frequently can also be found in *As I Lay Dying* (1930) and *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), becoming more environmentally conscious with every new novel and highlighting a fear of industrialization and deforestation in the Southern United States. The narratives, and much of the criticism on them, draw a connection between the gradual destruction of the wilderness through rapid industrial growth and a decline in values and traditions. Through these novels, Faulkner promotes an environmental ethic that encourages preservation of the natural world by depicting not only the positive effects its presence yields, but also the negative impact of being suddenly removed from the natural landscape. While this point of view remains largely anthropocentric in that it portrays how human beings can be tragically affected by the loss of the natural, preservation of the environment for its own sake also runs subtly through the narratives of these novels.

Go Down, Moses also proposes a more spiritual reading, a suggestion of a correlation between the environment and a form of worship that could be defined as *eco-spirituality*, maintained through traditions, customs, and ritualistic practices that illustrate a respect for

nature rather than a desire to subdue it. The main protagonist of *Go Down, Moses*, Ike McCaslin, believes so strongly in the “spirit” of the earth that when the wilderness in which he spent his childhood is laid to waste by deforestation, he experiences and presumably witnesses a dramatic decline in the spiritual values of the culture. Because of the close connection between the environment and the human culture, the destruction of the wilderness at the end of *Go Down, Moses* directly correlates with what appears to be a degradation in the spiritual health of the community.

Go Down, Moses frames the wilderness of Yoknapatawpha County as a type of Eden. Through this framework, the novel proposes an ecological reading of the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis rather than simply a religious one. However, by adding spiritual connotations to the natural world through a biblical framework, Faulkner’s environmentalism ascends beyond the typically scientific ecological arguments to a moralistic and spiritual level. Cut off from the natural world as it is rapidly destroyed through industrialization, commercial logging, and urban development, the human characters of Faulkner’s novels experience moral, spiritual, and psychological decline. While each novel’s characters have their own special Eden, the devastating impact of being exiled from their Eden courses through each narrative.

This thesis begins with an exploration of the scholarship already published on William Faulkner and ecocriticism, as well as the conflicting relationship between environmentalism and religious faith, specifically Western Christian faith. Chapter Two then discusses *Go Down, Moses* and the relationship between Ike McCaslin, Sam Fathers, and the wilderness that they use as their church in which they seem to commune with the environment. Discussing the ritualistic bleeding following McCaslin’s killing a deer, the

chapter examines the connection between the presence of the wilderness and the performance of the bleeding ritual as being significant to McCaslin's maturation and his spiritual health and growth. Following this, Chapter Three discusses in more detail eco-spirituality and the worship of the environment in different forms, examining pantheistic beliefs and more Christian ideas of acknowledging the environment and the earth as the works of God. Chapter Three also explores further the biblical framework that establishes the wilderness as a type of Eden. Chapter Four follows by adding the novels *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* to the argument, examining the ways in which they fit into this biblical framework.

Through a blend of ecological philosophy, ecocritical studies of Faulkner's works, and studies in religion, my thesis explores how the three novels *Go Down, Moses*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and *As I Lay Dying*, when framed through the Book of Genesis, reveal a treatment of the environment as being more than merely a physical entity, but as a spiritual temple. Further, these novels also invert the Book of Genesis to present an ecological reading of the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Man, rather than a purely religious one. By presenting such a view of the environment, these novels also promote what can be described as *eco-spirituality*, in which the natural world is viewed as a spiritual place, echoing sentiments of pantheism, but also of an ecologically-minded Christianity. Within Faulkner's novels, this eco-spirituality becomes a central aspect of the environmental ethic driving the novels, showing how the loss of the environment has a major negative impact on the human characters for whom it once meant so much.

Chapter 1

Review of Scholarship

Contemporary environmentalism encourages the protection of the natural world. Notions of conservation and preservation that exist today—and the programs instated to ensure such actions are taken—were not nearly as prevalent in William Faulkner’s time. Many of his novels promote an environmental activism rare to the early twentieth century. As a result, ecocriticism has been frequently applied to many of Faulkner’s novels. The environmental ethic of Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses* and *The Sound and the Fury* argues its point through depicting first the idyllic wilderness and its beauty, as well as its generally positive influence on the human characters who interact with it, and then the often dramatic or tragic loss of this wilderness to commercial logging corporations or industrialization. Although *Go Down, Moses* has already been the focus of some ecological studies, *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* have garnered considerably less analysis through this lens. In most of these ecological studies, however, the environment is viewed merely as the physical object symbolic primarily in its depiction of the changing south from agrarian to industrial, rural to urban. However, within these three novels, the environment seems to represent more than merely a symbol of the Old South, as its presence and its eventual absence both seem to have such dramatic impacts on the main characters’ psychological and spiritual health.

When discussing such main characters as Sam Fathers of *Go Down, Moses*, critical race theory is among the more common lenses to employ. However, because many such studies of *Go Down, Moses* have given little attention to Fathers, his significance within the narrative deserves further inspection. Melville Backman's 1961 essay "The Wilderness and the Negro in Faulkner's 'The Bear'" deals with the thematic relationship between race and the environment as they are depicted in "The Bear," one of the chapters of *Go Down, Moses*. The essay discusses racial tensions and themes in great detail, drawing in other chapters from *Go Down, Moses*, such as "The Fire and the Hearth." However, he turns the topic of his essay to "The Bear" and the theme of wilderness that runs through it. Backman discusses race and wilderness together in relation to McCaslin, stating that "his true home would become the wilderness; his true father an old Indian who...returned to the wilderness whence he had derived" (596). Backman's pairing of race and wilderness intentionally seeks to construct unity between these two notions, discussing the ways in which race has been tied culturally to the environment. He examines Sam Fathers both as a mixed-race character and in terms of his obvious relationship with the woods in which McCaslin and others go hunting. Backman's essay seeks not to undermine any side in a racial conflict, but rather celebrate what is perceived as an intrinsic relationship between Fathers and the wilderness.

The presence of nature and, as a result, a developing environmental ethic in Faulkner's novels is made more clear in Lawrence Buell's "Faulkner and the Claims of the Natural World," in which he examines numerous novels, including *Go Down, Moses* and *Light in August*, with particular focus on the former. Through examining both of these novels, Buell forms an argument based on the narrative's environmental implications, especially regarding the treatment of the natural world. Buell makes the argument that, rather

than simply bemoaning the degradation of the natural, Faulkner is painting a picture of conflict between industry and the environment:

...the stylized “exaggeration” underscores both the ugly wastefulness of industry’s leavings and also (no less strikingly) the environment’s power to fight back in its own way, as the machine disintegrates in “the red and choked ravines beneath the long quiet rains of autumn and the galloping fury of vernal equinoxes.” (4)

However, Buell also points out how *Go Down, Moses* “elegiacally anticipates the death of nature” (5). The character of nature in Faulkner’s novels also seems for Buell to participate in an unusual relationship with the human characters. The narratives of both *Go Down, Moses* and *The Wild Palms* encapsulate the recurring theme of man versus nature, particularly in the chapters “The Old People” and “Old Man,” respectively. Buell also makes reference to the tendency to view Faulkner’s novels through the lens of the “American masculinist wilderness narrative from Cooper to Melville and Twain” (3). This can also be said of *Go Down, Moses*, particularly in regard to the hunting party’s activities in the chapters “The Old People” and “The Bear,” the latter of which John N. Duvall explores more deeply in “Doe Hunting and Masculinity: *Song of Solomon* and *Go Down, Moses*.” Duvall argues, “In *Go Down, Moses*, McCaslin Edmonds speaks with the paternal voice of the Old South, inviting Isaac to take his rightful place in L. Q. C., McCaslin's patriarchal design” (97). Duvall’s focus is on the representations of masculinity in *Go Down, Moses*. The hunting party of “The Old People” and “The Bear” is entirely male, and Duvall explores the ways in which the obvious “maleness” translates to a domination of the natural through hunting. He draws parallels between the oppression of women with the oppression of nature through the act of hunting.

Duvall discusses the correlation that has often been drawn between women and the natural world, and furthering the connection by examining male chauvinism and the domination of nature. In particular, Duvall links his discussion of female representation with the killing of does in *Go Down, Moses*.

The correlation between female and nature, both under oppression by masculine male figures, also appears as a theme in *The Sound and the Fury*, as discussed by Dawn Trouard in her essay "Faulkner's Text Which Is Not One." Trouard points out that, unlike the "Delta Autumn Woman" of *Go Down, Moses*, who Duvall discusses as a victim of male chauvinist power, *The Sound and Fury*'s chief female character Caddy is far more multi-faceted and challenging to the dominance of the male characters in the novel. Like the Delta Autumn Woman, who is symbolically tied with a doe through Roth Edmonds's treatment of both female figures within the narrative, Caddy is associated with something natural: at one time honeysuckle, and at another, the trees. Caddy is viewed thus by the male characters Benjy and Quentin, which unintentionally subjects her to the same male dominant gaze that the male characters of *Go Down, Moses* cast upon the Delta Autumn Woman. However, whereas this unfortunate character of *Go Down, Moses* never achieves any real freedom, Trouard points out that Caddy at least fights back against the oppression her brother and various other male characters inflict upon her.

While much of Duvall's essay concerns itself with this discussion of female oppression and its symbolic ties to the natural world, it also calls attention to the importance of the character Sam Fathers:

The addition of 'The Bear' and 'Was' to the original sequence obviously places much more emphasis on the romance of old pre-industrial days versus

the comparatively shabby present, on wilderness versus settlement culture, and on white innocence versus hard-bitten middle and old age, with the latter no longer chiefly represented by the cranky Lucas, but by the more idealized figure of Sam Fathers. (Duvall 9)

Both Backman and Duvall, in their separate discussions of *Go Down, Moses* and the other works that they connect to Faulkner's novel, touch on the subject of nature as a spiritual entity, which leads to some notion of nature worship. The worship of nature can be tied to the environmental ethics of Faulkner's novel in ways that David H. Evans explores in some length in "Taking the Place of Nature: 'The Bear' and the Incarnation of America." Evans opens his essay by citing Faulkner as a "dedicated acolyte in the cult of Nature," to which my thesis title alludes. As an acolyte, Faulkner presents the worship of the environment, leading the narrative toward this theme of ecological spirituality. A formulation of Faulkner's environmental ethics leads to Evans' discussion of the various characters of the novel and their relationship with the wilderness in which they hunt and thrive. Evans also devotes particular attention to the character Sam Fathers, whom he refers to as a "spiritual father" to main protagonist Ike McCaslin. Fathers and McCaslin's relationship with the wilderness also works into Judith Wittenberg's essay "*Go Down, Moses* and the Discourse of Environmentalism." Wittenberg discusses some aspects of Faulkner's environmental ethic and how these ideas were woven thematically into the narrative of *Go Down, Moses*. Interestingly, Wittenberg argues that Faulkner was not completely opposed to altering the landscape, but she does explore his environmental ethic by referring directly to his words:

Asked...whether "The Bear" portion of the novel was about conflict between man and the wilderness, Faulkner said that he was not asking anyone to

choose sides, that we need rather “to compassionate the good splendid things which change must destroy.” He went on to say that process of change in the landscape must be judged by its outcome.... (Wittenberg 50)

In the exploration of the destruction of the wilderness in *Go Down, Moses*, critics also take into account the character of Old Ben, the bear, who seemed to stand as the last vanguard of the wilderness. The character Old Ben is also explored more deeply in Bart Welling’s “A Meeting with Old Ben: Seeing and Writing Nature in Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses*.”

Furthermore, Welling discusses various elements of ecocriticism and nature writing, using Faulkner’s novels as a primary work of examination. Welling explores the effect ecocritical or environmentalist writing should have and the ways in which it either succeeds or fails to capture the aesthetic essence of nature and the interest of the reader. His analysis includes a discussion of Old Ben, but largely in the context of “nature writing.”

Although there is considerably less ecocritical scholarship on *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* compared with *Go Down, Moses*, both novels present similar ecological concerns, some of which are discussed in Christopher Rieger’s “Outside the Garden: The Natural World in *The Sound and the Fury*.” Rieger explores some of the same Eden imagery present in *Go Down, Moses* and the different ways each of the three Compson brothers experience their individual “Fall of Man.” Employing feminist theory and examinations of nature and sexuality, Rieger links the primary female character Caddy Compson to nature in much the same way that Sam Fathers, as an ethnic minority, is also linked with nature. Rieger’s argument also explore how nature can be viewed as a type of Eden, or as a spiritual place, particularly within *The Sound and the Fury*.

The ecocritical lens through which Faulkner's novels can be viewed calls attention to other major issues of race and gender. According to Matthew Wynn Sivils, in his essay "Faulkner's Ecological Disturbances," many of Faulkner's novels conflated issues of race, gender, and environmentalism. He cites the estate in *The Sound and the Fury*, which is transformed into a golf course, as being linked to the oppression of both the earth and of African Americans—as both are symbolically joined in the narrative, namely the Dilsey section, and both are subdued by the white upper classes. In similar ways, Sam Fathers of *Go Down, Moses* is somewhat subjected to the perceived "superiority" of the white members of the hunting party. However, Sam Fathers should also be considered in terms of his significance to Ike McCaslin's spiritual growth. Evans's discussion of Sam Fathers, as well as his reference to Faulkner as an "acolyte in the cult of Nature," both suggest notions of nature worship, a subject that is central to Donald A. Crosby's *A Religion of Nature* (2002).

Crosby's work broadens the topic of nature worship beyond literary fiction to a philosophy of life. While Evans's essay seems to suggest more spiritual connections with nature, however, Crosby examines the worship of a nature without spiritual connotations, though he does look at nature as God's creation. Rather, Crosby argues for viewing the environment as a replacement for God, a source of worship for the non-religious. Crosby's book proposes an environmental spirituality, essentially a form of pantheism that places nature itself as the center of worship. The worship of nature for which Crosby argues is not necessarily abstractly spiritual, but it also is not atheistic, as it encourages the belief in and worship of nature itself. Robert Corrington's *Deep Pantheism* (2007), a response to Crosby's work, furthers the argument by suggesting that Crosby's religion of nature rejects the "postmodern" view of the natural world as devoid of spiritual connotations. Drawing

together elements from Christianity, Buddhism, Transcendentalism, paganism, and pantheism, both Crosby and Corrington's books discuss how the earth can be imbued with spiritual significance with the intent of promoting a more ecological ideal.

Using an anthropological approach, Bruno Latour also examines the relation between religion and the environment in his essay "Will Non-Humans Be Saved? An Argument in Ecotheology." He explores the notion of ecotheology, a form of religion—primarily Judeo-Christian—that seeks to incorporate caring for and effectively saving the natural world (i.e. the environment) in addition to saving human souls. Unlike Crosby, who suggests that the environment should be the source of worship, thereby strengthening an ecological mindset, Latour suggests that, if all natural things—including both plants and animals—are viewed as God's creation, historically right-minded religious denominations should more readily participate in ecological action. Latour explores the conflict of salvation between humans and what he calls "non-humans," or every other living thing on the planet, including both plants and animals. Latour makes an argument for a type of ecology that is spiritually driven, as a means of promoting care for the earth in lieu of the ecological movements that continue to divide people politically and ideologically. According to Latour, certain denominations of Christian faith have repeatedly distanced themselves from the world, viewing humans as separate, higher beings. Thus, it has been argued that humans are more important than the world, and that the natural world therefore does not need to be saved. This is the very worldview Latour seeks to destabilize by arguing that Christianity, and other religions, as well, should be more concerned with caring for the world and seeking to save it. He asks,

"What good would it be to possess the world, if you forfeit your soul?"

without realizing that because of the urgency of the ecological crisis, the

opposite is now far truer: “What use is it to save your soul, if you forfeit the world”? Do you by any chance have another earth to go to? Are you going to upload yourself to another planet? (Latour 463)

Latour’s essay can also be read as a rebuttal to Lynn White’s “Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” in which he argues that religion, primarily Christianity, is largely to blame for the current strain on the environment, as well as the problematic mindsets of those who continue to refuse to protect the earth. White traces the history of ecological action and sentiment back to druidism and the pagan worship of the earth of the pre-Middle Ages. White discusses how the advent of Christianity and its spread through civilization led over the ensuing years to less ecological and more economical views of the environment, emphasizing the biblical notion of man having “dominion” over the earth. Because Latour and White argue largely clashing points, their individual analyses of the relationship between religion and the environment becomes vital when discussing ecology through a spiritual lens.

Certain aspects of religious belief tied directly or thematically with nature echo some points of Deep Ecology. In his book *Environmental Philosophy* (2001), Christopher Belshaw discusses the concept of Deep Ecology, a philosophy concerned with values, including how the natural world relates to and interacts with human beings’ social, political, religious, and philosophical views in regard to the environment. Belshaw warns against what he calls a “wrong-headed” view of Deep Ecology that is “deeply infected by anthropocentric, crudely materialistic and hierarchical thinking” (181). Much like Latour, Belshaw observes that the view that humans are superior to the natural world is misguided, and that the focus needs to return to a form of stewardship, as commanded in the Book of Genesis, toward the earth. While the idea of stewardship remains somewhat anthropocentric, Belshaw’s use of the idea

promotes care for the earth rather than exploitation. The Deep Ecology that Belshaw promotes more closely aligns itself with the environmental ethic Faulkner subtly weaves through his narratives, which depict the environment as being more than simply a tool for humankind's use. Yet, even a view of the environment as needing protection by humans—even if it is protection from humans—suggests lingering anthropocentrism that still regards the environment as acting upon or being acted upon by humans. Belshaw's Deep Ecology still recognizes a relationship between humans and the natural world.

Philosopher Brian Ellis, in his book *The Philosophy of Nature: A Guide to the New Essentialism* (2002), applies to discussions of nature a scientific and essentialist perspective, drawing from such philosophers as Hume, Descartes, and Aristotle to explore what he calls a “new essentialism,” embodying a new take on the laws of nature. Ellis's book explores nature both in terms of the natural world and also the nature or attributes of a thing. Essentialism, according to Ellis, proposes a connection between the internal and the external: “Things behave as they do...not because of any external constraints that force them to, but because this is how they are intrinsically disposed to behave in the circumstances” (3). This connection, while not entirely causal, relies upon the existence of both the subject and the object in order for the claim to be made that they do not rely solely upon one another.

These issues become most prevalent in Fred Dallmayr's *Return to Nature* (2011), in which he explores notions of nature and divinity, and humankind's relationship with the natural world, discussing the impact that the environment has on humankind, and vice versa. Like Ellis, Dallmayr approaches discussions of nature from a more deeply philosophical perspective, applying the writings and ideas of Spinoza, Schelling, and other such philosophers to understand, again like Ellis, nature as both the environment and as the

internal attributes or substance of a thing. Dallmayr's chapters bring to mind the recurring issue of "nature vs. nurture" and attempts to unravel the problem of how external forces work upon the internal. However, unlike Ellis, Dallmayr's book seems more concerned with a spiritual relationship that sees God as akin to nature.

Throughout these works runs a theme of viewing the environment as more than the mere material, economic, and societal benefits humankind can reap from it. Within Faulkner's novels, particularly *Go Down, Moses*, nature does become more relevant to the lives of the human characters, symbolizing for them a kind of Eden in which they have known harmony and peace. For Ike McCaslin of *Go Down, Moses*, the wilderness becomes his sanctuary, in which he can grow and come to know himself. For Quentin and the other Compson children of *The Sound and the Fury*, their Eden lies within their family estate, a backwoods wilderness in which they spend their innocent childhood, void of the tragedies they will later come to know in life. In *As I Lay Dying*, the natural environment is not a wilderness but farmland, and the Bundren family is forced to abandon this land simply to live. Within their individual Edens, these characters find some form of solace. The tragedy that then occurs, the misfortune this thesis explores, is the subsequent "Fall" all of these characters experience, which triggers for them a descent that ends either in madness, isolation, depression, or death.

Chapter 2

Ritualistic Immersion in Faulkner's Wilderness

Culture often defines a society or civilization, reflecting values and finding material manifestation in traditions and practices that bring the values to life. Such practices exist to perpetuate a culture, but also to provide people with a definable method of recognizing the culture. A society's culture may be created by human beings, but its major influence is often the environment in which the society has established itself. For the novels of William Faulkner, the culture of the fictional community of Yoknapatawpha County can be connected directly to the environment, as in the natural world. Throughout many of his novels, humankind's relationship with nature becomes a focal thematic and narrative point. The novels *As I Lay Dying*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and *Go Down, Moses* in particular advance the notion of a close relationship with the wilderness and the natural world, a culture focused on agrarian lifestyles and rural ideals. Rituals, traditions, and other elements of a culture develop both the characters and the story in Faulkner's novels. Characters such as Ike McCaslin, the main protagonist of *Go Down, Moses*, act and make certain decisions based on the cultural traditions to which they apply importance. Although their culture is essentially a conglomeration of Native American, African, and regional Southern heritage, the characters imbue their traditions with a spiritual, symbolic power. In most of these cases, the traditions and rituals they recognize are tied directly to the environment in which they live. The wilderness becomes a part of the physical manifestation of the community's culture—the

community being primarily the hunting party that sees the forest not only as a place for sport and food, but also as a vital part of its very being.

Certain implicit moral and cultural values course through the communities of Yoknapatawpha County in Faulkner's novels. In *Go Down, Moses*, Ike McCaslin discovers the tragedies and transgressions of his family line, a history tainted with racism, incest, and slavery. But by McCaslin's time, such actions are no longer so rampant. While it has not vanished altogether, racism within the community—at least within the hunting party—appears to have diminished, as such ethnic characters as the mixed Native and African American Sam Fathers seem to be viewed with some sort of respect. However, by the end of the story "The Bear," these particular ethical ideas have almost disappeared along with the wilderness in which the hunting party spent its days. With the selling of the land to corporate logging companies, the one physical bond between the men of the hunting party—and the one catalyst for eschewing the trappings of society and embracing a more spiritual connection with nature—is robbed from the community. With the loss of the wilderness, the hunting party and the community it has created suffer from a loss of the ethical values it had begun to uphold, which is tied directly to its loss of a spiritual existence.

The representation of nature as being somehow linked not only to culture but also to spirituality appears throughout *Go Down, Moses*. The narrative of *Go Down, Moses* seems to promote what could arguably be described as *eco-spirituality*, a worship of nature that does not necessarily argue for the existence of God within nature (pantheism), but more for the spiritual value of nature—environmentalism as spiritually healthy. Eco-spirituality concerns itself with the upholding of nature and the environment as being more than simply a material resource for humans to exploit, acknowledging a more abstract, even divine, essence within

the environment. This eco-spirituality is first established through Sam Fathers by practicing a ritualistic bleeding ceremony with Ike McCaslin, in which McCaslin is initiated into maturity, but is also drawn into a spiritual connection with nature in which he learns to commune with the wilderness. Because of the close connection between the environment and this kind of spirituality, the destruction of the wilderness at the end of the story "The Bear" illustrates not only a loss of values, but also the gradual destruction of the community and its culture, emphasizing the tragedy of devaluation of tradition.

Within *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*, wilderness imagery and references and their gradual supplanting by recurring images of industrialization and corporate progress creates more abstract notions of the loss of spiritual and cultural ideals through their separate depictions of Yoknapatawpha County's transition from an agrarian society to one dominated by machines and factories. *As I Lay Dying* repeatedly draws stark disparities between the rural and the urban. While the Bundren family suffers condescension from more urban characters, the agrarian family also is forced to abandon its rural roots to enter into a more industrialized world merely to survive, as the land no longer offers for them any source of prosperity. *The Sound and the Fury* deals with the commercialization and commodification of the land, as the Compson family estate is replaced with a golf course. Whereas *Go Down, Moses* makes a point of the destruction of the wilderness to make way for commercial logging and mass deforestation, *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* allude to the industrialization of the South through physical descriptions of the locations the characters visit, sometimes through an unbiased lens. However, the narratives' details regarding the cities frequently cast such locations in an irreconcilably negative light.

Because of the presence of ritualistic practices in “The Old People,” from *Go Down, Moses*, the worship of nature reads more strongly than in either *The Sound and the Fury* or *As I Lay Dying*. The chapters “The Old People” and “The Bear” contain most of Ike McCaslin’s spiritual experiences with nature, in which he gradually eschews the trappings of civilization and the material things that tie him to his “civilized” existence as a member of the hunting party and the community. However, because of the wilderness’s destruction by commercial logging companies and industrial growth, McCaslin is eventually cut off from nature. He and the rest of the hunting party living within this seemingly Edenic world of abundant forest experience a tragic spiritual Fall, from which *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* follow as depictions of the aftermath, a post-spiritual world in which the eco-spirituality that once seemed to captivate the community has almost vanished altogether.

Faulkner’s novels present a critique of industrialization, which in turn can be inferred as a critique of the advancement of a civilization that relies on a rise in technology to progress. Progress and the teleology of human civilization seem unable to work harmoniously with the environment in Faulkner’s novels. The relationship between humans and the environment is fraught with complications due to humans being aggressive consumers of the environment’s production. Mass deforestation for the purpose of industrialization intrudes upon Ike McCaslin’s idyllic wilderness in *Go Down, Moses*. Following the deaths of Sam Fathers and Old Ben the bear, large swathes of wilderness are cut away. Prior to such destruction, the wilderness appears to have been for McCaslin a deeply spiritual place, a church or sanctuary for him, in which he first began to grow emotionally and psychologically. To a certain extent, however, his path of maturation was initiated by the priest-like Sam Fathers.

The primary problem with many works on *Go Down, Moses* is that they do not discuss Fathers as much more than merely being an ethnic man in a “white man’s world.” Melville Backman hints at the significance of Fathers as a priest-like figure to Ike McCaslin, but the idea is never fully developed. Sam Fathers is the catalyst for McCaslin’s spiritual immersion into the cult-like worship of the wilderness itself, which implies a larger theme of environmental spiritual. Scholarship on ecocriticism in Faulkner’s novels does not delve beyond the tangible, human surface. Neither considers the wilderness in *Go Down, Moses* as anything more than the wilderness itself, a natural phenomenon. To the central characters of the novel, the wilderness means much more. The human characters’ relationship with the wilderness reflects the culture in which they live, a culture that practices certain unofficial traditions that can be linked to their culture through religion and mythology. The wilderness contains a deeply spiritual quality that the characters in *Go Down, Moses* are able to ascertain, largely through a ritualistic immersion into the wilderness.

The ritualistic activities Ike McCaslin and Sam Fathers practice in *Go Down, Moses* suggests the development of a deep relationship with and worship of the wilderness, promoting a cult of nature worship. Although McCaslin still anthropocentrizes his experience by simply being a human having a connection with the forest, he still distances himself from humankind in general; the act of killing a deer, the “ritual killing,” is initially what brings him closer to a oneness with nature. This “oneness” with nature could, more broadly, be realized through a desire to connect with nature, a desire McCaslin clearly has—at least as a child. He willingly, even proudly, participates in a type of bloody ritual conducted by Sam Fathers because he perceives it as a monumental stage in his life, a major early step in his process of maturation. In this ritual, McCaslin’s killing of his first deer is celebrated, as

Fathers takes the blood and ritualistically paints McCaslin's face with it. By acknowledging that McCaslin has killed his first deer, Fathers is also marking McCaslin's first step toward maturation.

The impact of the bleeding ritual is so profound because McCaslin places great importance on it, and he believes in its value because of Sam Fathers, who he perceives not only as a father-figure, but also as a deeply spiritual person: "They were the white boy, marked forever, and the old dark man...who had marked, *whose bloody hands had formally consecrated him to that which, under the man's tutelage, he had already accepted* [emphasis added]...the first worthy blood which he had been found at last worthy to draw..." (157). The difference between the "white boy" and the "old dark man" calls attention to the disparity between the two characters not only in terms of race but also age. Sam Father's age is mentioned in order to hint at the correlation between age and wisdom in much the same way that his Native American heritage coincides with his connection to the wilderness.

This scene is imbued with religious language, particularly the word "consecrated." Because consecration is an act of making something sacred (OED), the use of the word's past tense in this context has an unusual implication. Is Fathers's ritual consecrating McCaslin, therefore making McCaslin a sacred person? Fathers's "bloody hands had formally consecrated him," which imbues the ritual of smearing the blood on McCaslin's face with weighty spiritual significance. While the words "marked" and "consecrated" can be immediately attributed to Faulkner as the author, they can also be accredited to the implied third person narrator: Ike McCaslin. In fact, any seemingly spiritual experience in the novel is made important because of McCaslin's belief in it. McCaslin's role in the ritual becomes just as important as Sam's because of his belief in the ritual. However, the spirituality that

courses through the language should not be narrowed simply to McCaslin's point of view, as it has larger implications. A spiritual connection with the wilderness reflects the Edenic existence McCaslin and the rest of the hunting party enjoy throughout the chapters "The Old People" and the first half of "The Bear."

The relationship between humans and the environment in *Go Down, Moses* does seem to transcend race. The idyllic ideal of the hunting eschews human-made issues: "...what makes a (white) man is not a relationship, but a ritual killing, and that appears to perpetuate a romantic myth that men in the Edenic wilderness are beyond racism" (Sensibar 112). The simple fact that people of differing races can have the same experience (as well as miss it) suggests that what is occurring has nothing to do with race itself. The hunting party is led predominantly by white upper class men, whose class and race privilege afford them the opportunities to spend days at a time within the wilderness. However, this does not discount the importance of those less privileged characters within the novel, namely Sam Fathers. Sensibar's point about the connection with nature making the "(white) man" still lingers on the subject of the racial differences between Fathers and McCaslin, an understandable interpretation given the novel's proclivity toward referencing Fathers's race. However, Sensibar's interpretation is somewhat exclusionary. The word "white" in parentheses serves only to harm the interpretation of the relationship between McCaslin and Sam, as well as both characters and the wilderness. In fact, a relationship with the wilderness seems to require only one very key component: the environment itself. The wilderness is one of the most important elements of McCaslin's life. Without it, McCaslin would not have had access to the experiences that he has in his childhood.

Throughout his early life, McCaslin displays an earnest aspiration to grow closer to nature, which he puts into practice by his gradual eschewing of modern human material things: first his watch, then his compass, and finally his rifle as he continues to visit the forest, slowly letting go of the trappings of civilization:

He stood for a moment—a child, alien and lost in the green and soaring gloom of the markless wilderness. Then he relinquished completely to it. It was the watch and the compass. He was still tainted. He removed the linked chain of the one and the looped thong of the other from his overalls and hung them on a bush and leaned the stick beside them and entered it. (197)

In order to fully integrate himself into the wilderness, McCaslin must systematically throw away all that ties him to human civilization, the unnecessary material items that presumably make him a “civilized” human being. The willingness, or rather the determination, to remove himself from society—at least in his childhood and teenaged years—reflects the same desire he has to grow closer to the wilderness. As long as he keeps these material items, McCaslin is “tainted.” He has had his first chance to break away from the standard society of his people through the blooding ritual, which he believes has endowed him with a spiritual power, a power he continues to perceive as his own as he gradually disposes of his material trappings.

When McCaslin comes of a certain age, however, his focus shifts to his family history, which, as it slowly unravels, reveals a disturbing chronicle of incest, racism, cheating, and even sudden death. Prior to the death of Sam Fathers and Old Ben, McCaslin never expresses any interest in his family history; his sole concern seems to be with integrating himself into nature, into the environment. The primary forces behind his actions were Fathers and the bear. With both of them dead, McCaslin turns to the anthropocentric

life of his heritage. The deeper he delves into his family history, the more disillusioned McCaslin becomes with humanity in general. He loses faith in his fellow man. With this loss comes his opinion regarding human dominion over nature: “[The land] was never mine to repudiate. It was never Father’s and Uncle Buddy’s to bequeath me...because it was never Grandfather’s to bequeath to them...because it was never Ikkemotubbe’s to sell to Grandfather for bequeathment and repudiation” (243). McCaslin continues by referring to the Book of Genesis in the Bible, reiterating God’s creation of the earth and His creation of man to oversee it “to hold the earth mutual and intact in the communal anonymity of brotherhood” (244).

Although his focus turns to studying his family history after Sam Fathers and Old Ben’s death, McCaslin’s thoughts return to the land. Holding the earth “mutual and intact” suggests not only a sharing of the land among people, but also *maintaining* the land. Ironically, maintenance of the land becomes forgotten altogether by the events of the story “Delta Autumn.” Before this occurs, however, McCaslin ruminates on the disintegration that he perceives to have occurred in his family history, as well as in the community. He also acknowledges the massive deforestation that occurs after Major de Spain sells the forest and surrounding lands to industrial corporations: “And the next spring they heard (not from Major de Spain) that he had sold the timber-rights to a Memphis lumber company...” (301). The deforestation and industrialization that immediately occurs upon the selling of the land deeply troubles McCaslin:

A new planing-mill already half completed which would cover two or three acres and what looked like miles and miles of stacked steel rails red with the light bright rust of newness and of piled cross-ties sharp with creosote, and

wire corrals and feeding-trough for two hundred mules at least and the tents for the men who drove them; so that [Ike] arranged for the care and stabling of his mare as rapidly as he could and did not look any more...save toward the wall of wilderness ahead within which he would be able to hide himself from it once more anyway. (302-3)

The gradual destruction of the wilderness through industrialization changes not only the face of the region, but also the character of the people. Immediately following the selling of the land is the dissolution of the hunting party; General Compson no longer hunts, though his reason is never stated, suggesting either that he dies or that he refuses to participate in hunting anymore. Furthermore, Major de Spain seems to have lost interest in hunting, filling the new role of a businessman. Even the role of the train now being used for the business of the industry once held a certain innocence prior to the beginning of the deforestation. "It had been harmless then. They would hear the passing log-train sometimes from the camp; sometimes, because nobody bothered to listen for it or not" (304). Following the rise of industrialization, McCaslin's perceptions of his world and community change for the worse. The role of the train becomes noticeably more pervasive throughout the latter sections of the novel just as its presence invades more of the land, "the land across which there came no scream of panther but instead the long hooting of locomotives: trains of incredible length and drawn by a single engine" (324).

The spirit that pervaded the community has been nearly invalidated by commercial logging with the supplanting of the natural for the industrial, the artificial. The natural is replaced by the man-made, the spiritual by the material. Pre-deforestation, McCaslin shared a spiritual experience with Sam Fathers in which he underwent a ritual that began his

transformation into adulthood. The profound effect this ceremony had on McCaslin should have in some way influenced the direction of his life in a more positive sense. By this logic, McCaslin would likely have passed this tradition of the bleeding ceremony down to his own children. However, he has no children; his marriage is a failure. He is unable to perpetuate the practice. Thus, the bleeding ceremony dies with Sam Fathers. As such, a spiritual connection with the wilderness can no longer be established, which leads to the decline of the community and the hunting party.

The hunting party once held a set of values it never explicitly stated, but of which it was always aware. The men in “The Old People” and “The Bear” had a certain honor code, which can be seen in the reverence that they held for Old Ben. The industrialization that follows Major de Spain’s selling of the land leads not only to massive deforestation, but also to the gradual devaluation of the hunters’ practices. The new hunting party holds none of the values of the previous hunting party. One clear example is the killing of a doe. Prior to the death of Old Ben and the selling of the land, killing a doe is considered taboo, unethical, though a logical reason is applied to this belief: “We don’t kill does because if we did kill does in a few years there wouldn’t even be any bucks left to kill...” (331). However, after the land is pillaged through deforestation and industrialization, even such beliefs as sparing a doe are forgotten. Respect for nature has so declined that does and fawns have now become “fair game.”

New hunter Roth Edmonds’s actions in “Delta Autumn” echo those of McCaslin’s grandfather Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin. Just as Lucius McCaslin committed incest with his daughter by a slave woman, so does Edmonds involve himself in an incestuous relationship with his distant cousin, the mysterious and nameless “Delta Autumn Woman.”

The muddled history of Ike McCaslin's family would seem to suggest that certain cultural values were never upheld; Lucius McCaslin involved himself in unethical incestuous relations long before industrialization and deforestation. However, the casual racism from which this activity stemmed is not present in the same capacity during Ike McCaslin's childhood and teenaged years—or he is at least unaware of it.

Ike McCaslin's perceptions reveal the significance of certain actions, such as the bleeding ritual. The ceremonial bleeding means so much to McCaslin's process of maturation because he believes it does. McCaslin views his childhood within the wilderness as his personal Eden: an untamed and beautiful harmonious world. As long as Sam Fathers is alive and a major influence in his life, and as long as the wilderness remains as an Edenic garden in which he can remain innocent, McCaslin never acknowledges his family's troubling past. However, the other characters of the hunting party are not involved in similar practices as Lucius McCaslin; they seem to adhere to an unspoken moral code, which suggests they also dwell within this prelapsarian world. When Fathers and Old Ben finally die and Major de Spain subsequently sells the wilderness and surrounding lands for deforestation and industrialization, the characters experience a type of moral fall. The culture in which McCaslin has grown up cannot continue. Roth Edmonds repeats the indiscretion of his ancestor because of the values that have at least established themselves during McCaslin's early life have by "Delta Autumn" disintegrated. McCaslin is unable to come to terms with this loss of values just as he cannot process his own fall.

Cleanth Brooks calls *Go Down, Moses* a bildungsroman. However, if this is the case, the novel is a failed bildungsroman: "one might claim that most of Faulkner's failed and defeated characters are men who somehow failed to grow up" (Brooks 340). Despite the

ceremony that was to symbolize his growth and maturation, Ike McCaslin never actually matures. This misfortune does not necessarily diminish the power of the ceremony when it was performed, but rather, it suggests that the power of the ceremony was tied symbiotically with the wilderness in which McCaslin and Fathers first performed the ritual. As the wilderness suffers its terrible destruction, so too does McCaslin suffer from a form of spiritual deforestation that effectively stunts his growth and maturity. He is unable to complete the process of growing because he becomes cut off from that which first granted him the rite of passage into maturity.

Culture, traditions, and spirituality are, in the case of *Go Down, Moses*, intrinsically tied to the environment, the setting of the novel. The characters' culture, even if it is merely a hunting party, relies heavily on the wilderness for its unifying ability; it is the only means for the men to socialize, to experience any form of kinship. Furthermore, it is only through this relationship with the wilderness that Ike McCaslin or any of the other characters he knew in his youth are able to experience any spiritual balance or form of contentment. Once the wilderness is stripped away, the community loses its source of significance. The destruction of the wilderness is symbiotically linked to the spiritual and cultural decline of the people, illustrating a loss of the cultural values that once held the community together and portraying the unfortunate impact that such a loss has had on the main characters and the town in which they live. Blending environmentalism with spirituality, *Go Down, Moses* emphasizes the importance of the wild on a deeper, more cosmological level, thus criticizing the destructive power of industrialization not just over the land, but also over the people who have lived as a part of the land for so many generations.

Chapter 3

Eco-spirituality and Faulknerian Environmentalism

The “man vs. nature” plot suggests an antagonistic relationship between humanity and the natural world in which one must inevitably vanquish the other. The outcome of such a struggle varies, but it is common for “man” in this equation to be considered the hero. However, modern environmental hazards such as pollution have triggered a shift: nature now often appears to be a victim rather than an antagonist, and as a victim, the environment must now be protected. The attention Faulkner’s narratives devote to the loss of the natural suggests that conservation was not as prevalent in his time as it is now. This form of environmentalism bridges the gap of adversity, echoing many of the more recent sentiments of environmentalism and Deep Ecology.

Throughout the chapters “The Old People,” “The Bear,” and “Delta Autumn,” Faulkner continuously recalls the theme of a close connection between the human characters and nature. The recurring theme of man vs. nature returns within these stories, but with slight inversions. Ike McCaslin, for example, appears not to see the wilderness as his enemy but as a sanctuary. His developing relationship with nature begins to influence his behavior toward it. However, his first monumental experience with the wilderness involves killing and dressing a deer, an action directly in opposition to the environmentalist attitude that he later adopts. Every other character within the hunting party, save for Sam Fathers, remains forever

at odds with the wilderness simply because of the inevitable and seemingly necessary relationship between the hunter and the hunted:

It was of the men...hunters, with will and hardihood to endure and the humility and skill to survive...ordered and compelled by and within the wilderness in the ancient and unremitting context according to the ancient and immitigable rules which voided all regrets and brooked no quarter. (Faulkner 182)

This relationship is adversarial on the surface and by necessity. The hunting party will always inflict some form of violence upon the wilderness, but it ironically relies on the wilderness for its livelihood. The wilderness may serve as a second home to Ike McCaslin, but it also serves an equally important role for the hunters, for whom the wilderness provides not only sport, but also food. Unlike most of the hunting party, whose relationship with the wilderness largely seems to be based on the material benefits, Ike McCaslin develops a deeper, more spiritual respect and love of the wilderness. Ike McCaslin's entire course of life is arguably altered when Sam Fathers performs the bleeding ritual with McCaslin's first kill. Ike McCaslin's experience with the deer immediately sets him apart from the others in the hunting party, as he gradually undergoes a process of letting go of his humanity, which he feels has "tainted" him and is preventing him from entering fully into the wilderness. Within the wilderness, Ike McCaslin is able to eschew all of the material items that tie him to his existence as a human being. By doing so, he begins to embrace the natural world and dares himself to venture deeper into the wilderness, on which he also begins to rely for his survival.

Unlike the other members of the hunting party, McCaslin's relationship with nature shifts from antagonistic to empathetic, and then to familial. Ike begins to develop a sense of

belonging within the wilderness. At the very core of this development is McCaslin's growing sense of a spiritual connection to the wilderness, which finds its genesis in the bloody ritual Sam Fathers conducts following the killing of the deer: "...Sam stooped and dipped his hands in the hot smoking blood and wiped them back and forth across the boy's face" (156). This ritual, for Ike, becomes a turning point in his early life, which marks and sets a path for the rest of his life. For Ike McCaslin and Sam Fathers, the wilderness becomes a sanctuary and a church, as well as a school—all of which contribute to McCaslin's emotional and psychological development. Unlike the rest of the hunting party, whose relationship with nature is largely material—based on sport and on their need for food, as well as the wilderness's ability to provide that food—McCaslin and Fathers, but the former in particular, find within the wilderness a more abstract, ethereal meaning. McCaslin and Fathers's relationship with nature becomes largely spiritual, and their practices within the wilderness shape their form of *eco-spirituality*.

Eco-spirituality in this sense is not necessarily a religion, but it maintains the ritualistic aspects of religion and involves a communion with nature itself. Eco-spirituality embodies an acknowledgement of the environment as more than a physical entity but as a source of spiritual health or well-being. Eco-spirituality is partially a pantheistic worship of nature itself. Eco-spirituality recognizes within what Bruno Latour calls "non-human beings" a spiritual and fundamental value and a presence that is often otherwise denied by anthropocentric worldviews. Eco-spirituality does not necessarily rely entirely on Western Christian doctrine, but because Christianity has historically been one of the primary antagonists of environmentalism, much of the shift toward an eco-spiritual mindset would need to be framed within Christianity in order to alter the religion's relationship with nature.

Furthermore, because of Christianity's prevalence, even in modern society, some of its fundamental elements can be easily understood and applied to an acknowledgement of some form of spirituality in nature.

Ralph Tanner and Colin Mitchell, in *Religion and the Environment* (2002), argue that the environment has always had influence in religions throughout the world, often helping to shape religious practice through such simple things as the geographical location in which the religion first formed, the materials provided by the environment for the creation of religious objects, altars, temples, and churches/monasteries. Religion, as such, has never truly been separate from the environment. Its relationship has often been exploitative, however. Eco-spirituality seeks to remove the exploitative element of this relationship, promoting some form of spiritual equality between humans and non-humans. The eco-spirituality McCaslin and Fathers practice in *Go Down, Moses* seeks to raise nature to a more abstract, celestial stature. McCaslin and Fathers's treatment of the wilderness centers the environment as the object of worship. However, this idea of eco-spirituality is also psychological in addition to being spiritual in essence. In regards to the characters within Faulkner's fictional world, eco-spirituality concerns the spiritual health, social and communal harmony, moral and ethical behavior, and emotional and psychological development of these characters, showing that the environment in which these characters live is intrinsically bound to them.

Ike McCaslin and Sam Fathers participate in a ritualistic practice within the "church" of the wilderness as depicted in "The Old People," in which Ike has his first spiritual experience within the wilderness:

They were the white boy, marked forever, and the old dark man sired on both sides by savage kings, who had marked him, whose bloody hands had merely

formally consecrated him to that which, under the man's tutelage, he had already accepted, humbly and joyfully, with abnegation and with pride too; the hands the touch, the first worthy blood which he had been found at last worthy to draw.... (156-7)

The implications of Sam Fathers's living "past the boy's seventy years and then eighty years" first makes the suggestion of Fathers's living spiritually with Ike long after his passing. Yet, stating that Fathers will live "long after the man himself had entered the earth as chiefs and kings entered it" also suggests not just a connection between two human characters—and to Fathers's human ancestors—but also a connection to the earth itself. It appears to mark a separation between spirit and body. The body is interred, while the spirit lives on.

As stated previously, however, this scene also foreshadows the course of McCaslin's life long after Fathers finally physically departs:

...the child, not yet a man, whose grandfather had lived in the same country and in almost the same manner as the boy himself would grow up to live, leaving his descendants in the land in his turn as his grandfather had done, and the old man past seventy whose grandfathers had owned the land long before the white men ever saw it and how had vanished from it now with all their kind, what of blood they left behind them running now in another race and for a while even in bondage and now drawing toward the end of its alien and irrevocable course, barren since Sam Fathers had no children. (157)

That Sam Fathers's bloodline ends with him significantly highlights his connection with Ike, whose fruitless marriage will also spell the end of his direct bloodline. The blooding ritual appears to mark the beginning of McCaslin's maturation, as it becomes a form of initiation

into the inner circle of the mature, adult hunters. More than that, it brings Ike closer to the wilderness. Ike is able to function and develop into a man because of his connection with nature, or the environment. The failure of his maturation is thus linked to the eventual mass deforestation that robs him of his source not only of spiritual growth but also of psychological development into adulthood. If McCaslin's development as a human being is so closely linked with the environment, the issue of nature vs. nurture must be addressed. Fred Dallmayr, in his *Return to Nature* (2011), discusses this issue by way of philosophers Friedrich Schelling and Benedict de Spinoza, whose separate views on the relationship between human spirituality and psychology and the natural world are brought together within Dallmayr's analysis. Dallmayr rejects the notion of human nature being innate and largely unaffected by outside sources. He suggests, instead, that there is a strong connection between the mind/spirit and the outside world (38). With Ike McCaslin, this certainly seems to be evident. Everything about McCaslin's character is influenced by his surroundings. He experiences growth only through the guidance of Sam Fathers and the existence of the wilderness. When both of these important aspects of McCaslin's life finally disappear, he is unable to continue his process of maturation and development, and he longs to return to his past.

Through both Sam Fathers and the wilderness, McCaslin comes to know the possibility of a state of contentment, or a type of happiness, that he continues to pursue until Fathers's death. Fathers both begins and ends McCaslin's spiritual and psychological growth, but prior to Fathers's death, McCaslin is able to seek out his own "salvation" within the wilderness when he ventures deeper into the forest and gradually relinquishes ownership of the man-made objects that he believes still bind him to his material humanity. His

environment shapes Ike McCaslin as a character and a human being—from his psychological makeup to his identity—. What must be considered when discussing Dallmayr's text is the difference between nature as in "human nature" and nature as in "the natural world" (i.e. the environment). In a sense, they are different, of course, but in another sense they are very similar. Dallmayr's handling of both Spinoza and Schelling leads to his proposal that human nature and the natural world are ultimately intertwined. If this is the case, then everything that happens to Ike McCaslin has nothing to do with who he is innately, but what happens externally around him (i.e. the destruction of the wilderness, the death of Sam Fathers, the madness of Boon, etc.).

McCaslin's experiences with nature do appear to mold and shape him. However, he actively pursues that which influences him. His willing participation in the bleeding ritual and the enthusiasm with which he continues to commune with nature suggests not only that he is shaped by the environment in which he lives, but that he actively seeks to be transformed within it. One of the most important aspects of Ike McCaslin's initiation into the church of nature worship is that he desires to be a part of it, and therefore performs the actions necessary to become such a worshiper. He pursues, in essence, what Spinoza called a God/nature matrix, the pursuit of which leads one to achieve "human happiness" (16). Spinoza seems more concerned with the divine aspects of nature, combining nature with God in a pantheistic, holistic approach to living in harmony with the natural world, but also with other human beings. According to Dallmayr, "...if people live in obedience to reason and find their virtue in the understanding of God-nature, they will 'always necessarily agree in nature' or 'always live in harmony with each other'" (24).

A sense of harmony flows through “The Old People,” as well as through the first half of “The Bear.” All members of the hunting party work and live together in an idyllic world, in which their relationship with the wilderness is both dependent and respectful. They display immense regard for the titular bear, Old Ben, seeing him as a final prey they all strive to catch. Only when Old Ben is finally killed and Sam Fathers falls ill and eventually dies does the harmony that once existed among the men and between the men and the wilderness finally dissolve. The source of harmony for the hunting party was the wilderness; it influenced every aspect of their lives. Spinoza’s “human happiness” achieved through the pursuit of God/nature now becomes entirely irrelevant to the characters of *Go Down, Moses*—particularly Ike McCaslin, whose connection with the spirituality he has perceived is finally robbed from him and replaced with the purely material—the industrial logging corporation.

The concept of God/nature promotes the act of humans living in harmony not only with one another, but also with nature, supporting a concept of Deep Ecology. Christopher Belshaw’s idea of Deep Ecology is concerned with the relationship humans have with the world that surrounds them, and the impact they have on the world, as well as the impact the world can have on them. However, Belshaw warns that a purely anthropocentric notion of Deep Ecology

...regards humans as isolated and fundamentally separate from the rest of Nature, as superior to, and in charge of, the rest of creation. But this view of humans as separate and superior to the rest of Nature is only part of larger cultural patterns. For thousands of years, Western culture has become increasingly obsessed with *dominance*...Deep ecological consciousness

allows us to see through these erroneous and dangerous illusions. (Devall and Sessions 65)

The point of view that still places humans at the top of the hierarchy, as having dominion over nature and the power or privilege to decide its fate, even when employed for the positive purpose of telling people that ecological conservation is their responsibility, still positions humans as better than nature, reinforcing age-old notions of power and control and granting humankind more power over nature than it should have. The recurring argument in favor of deep ecological thinking is that humans should learn to live in harmony with nature. While still inherently anthropocentric, this point of view stresses that the health of the environment should be regarded as equally important as the welfare of the human race, as the two are tied so closely together. A mutually beneficial relationship between humanity and nature encourages both to survive. Within *Go Down, Moses*, the hunting party does not necessarily practice this method of aiding the wilderness, as the human characters rely upon the wilderness for sport and sustenance. However, they tend to recognize some value in the wilderness outside of the solely material gains they can reap from it. This recognition manifests itself more strongly in Ike McCaslin and Sam Fathers's communion with nature. The wilderness becomes for these characters a holy place that they both wish to protect. They practice a form of ecology that sees the wilderness as something more than a means of fulfilling their anthropocentric desires. In fact, through his relinquishing the material items that make him human, Ike McCaslin seems to also renounce his anthropocentrism altogether by letting go of that which makes him a modern "civilized" human.

For these characters, the wilderness is not a dangerous, untamed wasteland that needs a human being's domesticating touch. Rather than subdue nature, McCaslin strives to

become one with it, making a second home for himself within the wilds. In other words, McCaslin does not seek to dominate nature. His regard for nature reflects one of the overarching themes of the novel—particularly the chapters “The Old People,” “The Bear,” and “Delta Autumn.” While many portions of the novel seem to deal with issues of race, these three chapters combine racial issues with ecological arguments for the conservation of nature by displaying how closely humans are bound with the environment, and how the destruction of the environment can have such a profound effect on humankind.

In “Delta Autumn,” the first of the postlapsarian problems the loss of the wilderness instigates are depicted. The change in the environmental ethic that was practiced by the hunting party of McCaslin’s childhood manifests itself within Roth Edmonds and his blatant disrespect for what remains of the wilderness. Feminism and ecology cross in Edmonds’s behavior in “Delta Autumn,” in the way in which he treats the environment and women. While his actions suggest that there has been a loss of values following the eradication of an Eden, Edmonds problematizes this Eden by replicating the actions of McCaslin’s grandfather, fulfilling a cycle of incest, racism, and misogyny. The Eden established for McCaslin is created within his childhood, and part of its destruction lies within his discovery of his family’s past transgressions. While Roth repeats these unethical actions of the past, his behavior also reflects that a new change in values has occurred. Here, John Duvall draws his correlation between Edmund’s incestuous relationship with and immoral treatment of a woman and his killing of a doe, which was previously considered taboo. However, Roth Edmonds breaks the taboo by killing a doe at the end of the story “Delta Autumn.” While conservation may not have been considered by the hunting party of McCaslin’s childhood,

the managing of the deer population through hunting—if it is viewed in that way—could arguably be an act of preservation.

Because they generally do not kill does, the deer population is able to continue, though the party's frequent hunting keeps the deer population from expanding too greatly. By the time McCaslin has grown old and the wilderness has been largely decimated by the commercial logging companies, those simple acts of preservation are no longer practiced, as Roth Edmonds kills a doe without hesitation, as if the taboo has been lifted or forgotten. It can also be inferred that the deer population in the wilderness has probably decreased drastically by this point because of the rapidly vanishing wilderness. Edmonds's action then becomes doubly problematic, as his killing of the doe does greater harm to the deer population than it would have in McCaslin's childhood. Roth Edmonds's view of morality and ethical behavior are even distorted. One member of the hunting party suggests "that it's only because folks happen to be watching him that a man behaves at all..." to which Edmonds responds, "Yes...A man in a blue coat, with a badge on it watching him. Maybe just the badge" (329). The implication is that, contrary to what Ike McCaslin attempts to argue, human beings are inherently evil, and all that stops them from committing a crime is the existence of laws or the presence of police. What can be further implied from this is a shift in values regarding morality, ethics, and sin.

According to the Book of Genesis, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). The implication to be derived from this verse is that the earth is inferior to man, and that man has God-given dominion over the earth. Contemporary politicians and conservative religious authorities, when the subject of environmentalism is discussed, frequently return to the Book of Genesis as a guide for

humankind's treatment of nature. Lynn White, in his essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," argues that, "Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny—that is, by religion" (9). He goes on to explain the development of the view that man has dominion over nature:

Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image. (9)

White argues that the rise in Christianity and the misinterpretation of the Book of Genesis as granting man complete domination over nature caused the eradication of previously dominant pantheistic and animistic views. From this subduing of nature arose the troubling lack of ecology in Western Christian doctrine. Bruno Latour, on the other hand, suggests that "nothing is less conservative, and nothing is more down to earth, than religion," (463), disregarding the oft-politicized environmental arguments that separate religion from nature on the basis of religion concerning the soul and environmentalism regarding the worldly. This type of worldview mitigates the importance of a healthy ecology by suggesting that humans, who must save their souls to ascend to heaven, therefore have no obligation to protect the world from which they will inevitably depart. Latour, however, argues,

Moralistic, spiritualist, psychological...definitions of religion have led theology, rituals, and prayers to turn away from the world...and to see nothing objectionable in the quote: 'What good would it be to possess the world, if you forfeit your soul?' without realizing that because of the urgency of the

ecological crisis, the opposite is now far truer: ‘What use is it to save your soul, if you forfeit the world?’ (463)

White concurs with Latour that “natural theology” has acknowledged that nature is God’s creation and is therefore worth preserving and protecting. However, recommends a shift from the historically tyrannical view that Christian leaders have held: that the natural world was created solely to benefit humankind. Latour, by comparison, suggests that one key to saving the environment is a shift in Christian mindsets toward ecological preservation through the acknowledgement that, if God created the world and all things in it, the natural world should be respected and protected.

If this more ecologically-minded type of stewardship toward the earth represents a more accurate translation and interpretation of the Bible, the characters of Faulkner’s novel should then be read in relation to this new biblical ecology. Sam Fathers and Ike McCaslin’s treatment of the wilderness as sanctuary requires a belief in the wilderness as possessing some aspect worthy not only of respect and regard, but also worship. Within the domain of the wilderness, the ritual of blooding, bloodletting, and initiation is performed, granting McCaslin his passage into maturity and framing Fathers as the ordained priest. Donald Crosby, in *A Religion of Nature* (2002), frames the environment as religious object as it would appeal directly to humans, returning notions of the environment to more anthropocentric points of view. Although Crosby’s book was published sixty years after *Go Down, Moses*, his discussion of nature worship can be applied to McCaslin’s attitude toward the wilderness and his communion with it.

Crosby discusses the abstract idea of six “role-functional” categories of religious objects, which he then applies to an analysis of the environment as an object of religious

worship. According to Crosby, objects of religious belief can manifest in six ways: *Uniqueness, Primacy, Pervasiveness, Rightness, Permanence, and Hiddenness*, all of which Crosby claims are “intended to identify an aspect of the distinctively religious function performed, or role played, by religious objects in the life of the religious person and in the cosmos as the religious person views it” (118). Crosby applies this model to the religion of nature, arguing that the environment is an “appropriate focus of religious concern” (121). McCaslin and Fathers’s devotion to the environment in the former’s childhood can be analyzed through Crosby’s role-functional categories for religious objects by discussing the wilderness as the religious object in question. For Ike McCaslin, the wilderness represents so much more than a physical wild space separate from human civilization’s domesticating influence. Unlike the hunting party and later the commercial logging companies, who seek in some way to dominate nature, McCaslin views the wilderness as something much more abstract.

Crosby defines the environment’s *uniqueness* as being important to human lives “when it functions for them as something sacred and set apart, a singular object of piety and reverence” (127). The sacredness of nature plays into McCaslin and Fathers’s ritualistic practice of blooding following the killing of the deer. It becomes more apparent as McCaslin views the wilderness as his sanctuary. The “reverence” that Crosby speaks of is obvious in McCaslin and Fathers’s treatment of the wilderness, and even more so in the hunting party’s respect for Old Ben the bear despite their dream of hunting him. For McCaslin, the wilderness is what Crosby calls “primary” to him as a religious person worshiping nature itself. The *primacy* in Crosby’s model means that “nature is aboriginal and self-sustaining”; nature in this analogy holds primacy when “it is more important to [individuals] than

anything else, the ultimate loyalty to which all of their other loyalties are subordinate” (127). Crosby goes on to state, “In this religious vision, conscientious care for all of nature, not just those parts of it immediately useful for human habitation, takes precedence over all other concerns” (127). McCaslin seeks to ingratiate himself with nature, no longer concerned with how he can make the wilderness “useful for human habitation,” and instead seeking to relinquish aspects of his humanity—or the man-made objects he believes still tie him to his humanity.

Crosby’s third point in the role-functional model of religious objects complicates the reading of *Go Down, Moses*. Crosby defines *pervasiveness* as the “function of the religious object as relating, or being expected to relate, at the deepest levels to every aspect of a person’s life, and as bringing the diverse elements of that life into unity” (119). In regard to nature, he elaborates: “everything that exists is an expression of the potencies of nature. Nature is everywhere, encompassing, sustaining, and inter-relating all things, human as well as nonhuman” (122). The presence of the wilderness seems to keep McCaslin, and to some extent the rest of the hunting party, in a state of spiritual and psychological health. It can also be easily said that the wilderness defines the existence of the hunting party. As long as the wilderness exists, the narrative deals solely with McCaslin and the rest of the hunting party’s experiences within it. Its eventual absence as the result of mass deforestation has a clearly negative impact on the characters; Boon Hogganbeck, for example, falls into complete madness, where his sense of reality is now completely warped: “The rest of the gun lay scattered about him...while he bent over the piece on his lap his scarlet and streaming walnut face, hammering the disjointed barrel against the gun-breech with the frantic abandon of a madman” (315). Ike McCaslin is perhaps more deeply effected, as he appears to lose all

sense of direction and purpose. The devastating effects of the wilderness's destruction become more apparent than the positive role the wilderness played in the characters' lives. Because it relates so strongly to the lives of the human characters, the wilderness's eventual departure has a naturally negative impact on these characters.

That McCaslin seems to lose all sense of purpose following the loss of the wilderness suggests that through the wilderness he felt he had a purpose. The wilderness provided for him his ability to mature and develop. This function is what Crosby would define as the *rightness* of nature as a religious object. *Rightness* “defines the goal of human existence, laying out a path of spiritual progress toward that goal” (120), which, for Ike McCaslin, would appear to be, in part, his eventual evolution toward a healthy, mature adulthood and a sense of fulfillment, satisfaction, and harmony. The two-fold tragedy of the wilderness's destruction spells both the end of a natural environment for the purposes of industry, greed, and production, and the death of Ike McCaslin's religion—a loss of faith, over which he had no control, and because of which he continues to suffer even after he grows old. Crosby's *rightness* and *pervasiveness* in the role-functional model depend largely on the eternal presence of nature. Through this “everlasting” environment, a spiritual relationship with the natural can be developed and nurtured. As such, these aspects of a religion of nature are relevant to Ike McCaslin not only because he appears to practice them as a child—when the wilderness still exists—but also because of the dramatic impact the loss of the wilderness has upon these aspects. Nature and nature worship are robbed of their *rightness* and *pervasiveness* at the end of “The Bear” because of the industrial logging companies.

The eventual departure of the wilderness in *Go Down, Moses* further problematizes Crosby's model because it seems to subvert Crosby's fifth point, *permanence*:

The cosmic *permanence* of nature as a religious object can be seen in its character *natura naturans*, the dynamic power that continues forever to generate and underlie (even if eventually also to undermine and destroy) successive world systems...nature in some form or another always has existed and always will exist. In that sense, it is clearly everlasting, without beginning or end. (122)

Crosby, however, makes an interesting point when stating nature as a religious object “provides a definitive way of coming to terms with the changeable, precarious character of temporal existence” (120). He proposes that nature is everlasting, but it is also changeable. The science of not only evolution, but also adaption makes a case for nature’s ability to survive through change. Nature is able to adapt to dramatic changes and thus remain constant. In *Go Down, Moses*, however, the wilderness is largely destroyed, not changed, and there is never a suggestion of recovery, evolution, or adaption. Furthermore, Ike McCaslin seems unable to come to terms with dramatic change or the “precarious character of temporal existence.” He seems reluctant to embrace change, which is ultimately what leads him to pine so strongly for the past to which he cannot return. In that sense, the destruction of the wilderness—if it is viewed as a religious object—once more has a more dramatic impact on McCaslin’s life, as his means of “coming to terms with the changeable, precarious character of temporal existence” is robbed from him.

Nature as a religious object, according to Crosby’s discussion, is thus defined by its relation to everything else, namely humans. Yet, because it remains entirely undomesticated and continues to defy full understanding, the environment and its existence remains a mystery. Crosby suggests that “Nature is not the work of some more fundamental principle,

being, or power. It is itself ultimate, and as such, is the ultimate mystery” (125). This is how Crosby defines *hiddenness*. While this definition—like most others in Crosby’s model—denies the existence of a higher power, it posits nature as the mystical, cryptic God-like entity:

Its ultimate depth and mystery are felt to be inexhaustible, no matter how much about it we might come to understand or claim to understand. The wellspring of each new life...is nature, and that is its most wondrous mystery...Even our best efforts at understanding ourselves and the nature from whence we come are tiny shafts of light projected into an infinite night.
(130)

Read in a literal sense, humans understand nature only in its relation to everything that is essentially *not* nature (i.e. natural vs. synthetic, or man-made). McCaslin clearly recognizes this difference when he concludes that the man-made objects in his possession (the watch, the compass, and the rifle) are restraining his immersion into the wilderness. The “mystery” of nature is very much akin to the mystery that is applied to divinity. It is not within a human’s ability to fully understand or comprehend the abstract or celestial, despite frequent attempts to do so. In this way, nature is arguably god-like; this notion is not entirely different from Spinoza’s pairing of God-nature.

If Ike McCaslin and Sam Fathers develop a ritualistic relationship with nature in which they seem to worship the wilderness and its inhabitants, do they then become practitioners of this eco-spirituality? In short, are the main characters deep ecologists? Unfortunately, making a claim for either side is not simple. Ike McCaslin is probably most nearly an ecologist due to his treatment of the wilderness. His ecological mindset, however,

becomes as deluded as his attitude toward everything else in his life following the destruction of the wilderness, as he desires to return to things as they were, to return to his prelapsarian Eden in which his childhood was perfectly idyllic. Other characters, by comparison, never seem to hold any strong love for the wilderness outside of the material benefits they can reap from it. Major de Spain, for example, sells off the land to commercial logging companies for profit. While he regrets this decision, Major de Spain's selling off the land for such destruction suggests a lack of the love for the wilderness that Sam Fathers and Ike McCaslin hold. Fathers is arguably the only true ecologist within the hunting party, and he first initiates McCaslin into the cult of nature through the bleeding ritual. Furthermore, his death precipitates the massive deforestation resulting from Major de Spain's selling of the land to the logging companies.

Despite Ike McCaslin's youthful ecological tendencies, his adult life is plagued with *inaction*, as he becomes decidedly passive, allowing tragedies such as the destruction of the wilderness and more personal conflicts like his failed marriage to happen without any effort to prevent them. Some of his depression can be attributed to his discovery of his ancestors' racism, sexism, and incest, which reveals to him a tragic past. However, his descent can also be attributed to the eventual loss of his source of worship, his religious object: the wilderness. The wilderness for McCaslin is God; but it is also his personal Garden of Eden, in which all people and creatures are able to live in a state of harmony. The narrative of "The Old People" and at least the first half of "The Bear" paint a portrait of a prelapsarian, Edenic world paralleling the vision of a perfect world before the Fall. While there is no eating from the Tree of Knowledge, the death of Old Ben kills the perfect myth, and the loss of the wilderness effectively ejects Ike McCaslin from his Garden, banishing Yoknapatawpha

County into a postlapsarian world where the harmony that once existed is now gone. *The Sound and the Fury*, although written thirteen years prior to *Go Down, Moses*, tells a story that appears to come chronologically after “The Old People” and “The Bear”, mirroring the Edenic wilderness of childhood and its eventual loss by commercialization and industrialization. *As I Lay Dying* then follows with a depiction of the postlapsarian world that Yoknapatawpha County has become for the human characters who reside within it, a world in which living with the land is no longer enough, and the characters must resort to an urban industrial life simply to survive.

Chapter 4

The Post-Wilderness Yoknapatawpha

The environment unharmed, undiminished, and in a perfectly harmonious relationship with humans illustrates an idyllic idealized world wherein humans care for and protect nature. The other side to this relationship is that the natural world will thus supply humans with the necessary resources with which to live—namely, food and shelter. Maintaining the stability of this relationship arguably requires conscious action from human beings that will benefit both themselves and the environment. This type of relationship with nature subverts the common literary trope of man vs. nature by proposing that humans and the environment should coexist harmoniously. The act of serving nature in this way echoes the Book of Genesis, in which God commands Adam to serve and protect the earth: “And God said unto them, ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth’” (Gen 1:28). The Garden of Eden in the Book of Genesis represents perfect balance and beauty. Eden is lost, however, when Adam and Eve eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, which instigates the “Fall of Man.” This Fall is linked, in Christian doctrine, with sin, hypocrisy, and all major tragedies. It is because of the Fall of Man that Jesus Christ was crucified. In addition to the many spiritual conflicts precipitating from the Fall, one other such issue emerging from the Bible’s portrayal of this tragedy is the distancing of humankind

from nature. Banished from the Garden of Eden, humankind finds itself at odds with the environment. The postlapsarian world thus struggles with conflicts between humans and the environment, as the command to care for the earth is lost or mistranslated.

Christian doctrine and theology characterize the period before the Fall as prelapsarian, pure, and untainted. Because of their depiction of a state of harmony, the chapters “The Old People” and “The Bear” can be read as prelapsarian texts; the wilderness is Ike McCaslin and Sam Fathers’s personal Eden, in which they and the rest of the hunting party arguably live in peace and harmony. However, because of the racial, social, and ideological conflicts occurring in the rest of the novel, only these two stories, and even then only a portion of “The Bear,” portray such an idyllic existence. More specifically, “The Bear” depicts the prelapsarian Eden of the wilderness, the “Fall,” and the subsequent postlapsarian world that Yoknapatawpha County has become. Prior to this “fall,” however, the human characters appear to live peacefully in a harmonious mutual relationship with the wilderness in which one depends upon the other.

While the chapters “The Old People” and “The Bear” depict an Edenic, prelapsarian world of harmony with both nature and fellow humankind, “Delta Autumn,” and the novels *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*, depict the postlapsarian world of Yoknapatawpha County—a community now beset by industry and estranged from not only the natural world, but also the harmony that they once knew. Thus, the three novels *Go Down, Moses*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and *As I Lay Dying* can be read as ecological texts that first illustrate the worship of nature and environmental practices that correlates with Donald Crosby’s *A Religion of Nature* and Christopher Belshaw’s *Environmental Philosophy*, then depict the tragedy that transpires once this source of worship and

stewardship—the wilderness—is finally robbed from the human community for whom it was central and dominant.

Acknowledging that elements of Belshaw's and Crosby's individual works are thematically present in Faulkner's novels, particularly *Go Down, Moses*, leads to a closer understanding of the environmental ethic Faulkner promoted through his narratives. As is sometimes the case with ecologically themed works of fiction, *Go Down, Moses* and *The Sound and the Fury* portray the positive aspects of nature's presence, followed by the unfortunate consequences of tainting this natural beauty. Recalling Spinoza's theory of the God/nature matrix, in which these two seemingly disparate forces are in fact connected, it could be argued that the natural world is in many ways a material reflection of God. If Spinoza's analogy of God/nature is read literally as God within nature, or nature as a material manifestation of the grace of God, Crosby's proposal of a religious worship of nature makes more sense in its acknowledgment of the God-like nature of the environment. Crosby, however, largely separates God as is understood in Western Christian doctrine from the environment, arguing not that the natural world should be worshiped because of God, but that nature should be worshiped like a god.

If Spinoza's God/nature equation is also paired with Crosby's religion of nature to suggest that God and the environment are one, then the argument could be made that the loss of the environment is similar to a loss of God, or a loss of a spiritual guide, so to speak. The loss of the natural in this way is metaphorically equivalent to humanity's exile from the Garden of Eden. Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* and *The Sound and the Fury* present a case for being read as being pre- and postlapsarian texts, as both novels depict first an Edenic world where humankind lives in perfect harmony with nature, an innocent time. However, both

novels also depict the loss of this Eden, though much of *The Sound and the Fury* takes place after the fall, reading more as a postlapsarian text. Reading both of these novels as depicting Eden and its loss leads to an interpretation of *As I Lay Dying* as fully postlapsarian, occurring chronologically after the events of “The Old People” and “The Bear,” as well as some of the major events of *The Sound and the Fury*. While the chapters of *Go Down, Moses* and *The Sound and the Fury* that depict the main characters in childhood also show the presence of the natural and its positive effects, *As I Lay Dying* presents no such harmonious connection between its human characters and the natural world.

The Book of Genesis depicts a close relationship between Adam and God, wherein God speaks directly to Adam, and vice versa. Adam and Eve’s direct communication with God appears to give them a fulfilling sense of purpose as God’s special creation and as caretakers of the Garden of Eden. Tending the Garden, from Latour’s biblical-ecological point of view, could also be equated with serving or worshiping God, as Eden was God’s creation. The Garden of Eden represents, in this context, nature; and if Spinoza’s God/nature binary is applied, the betrayal of God through eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is also a betrayal of nature. As a result, the loss of a close relationship with God also equates the loss of a connection to nature. The biblical Fall of Man would then arguably have ecological implications in addition to spiritual ones. Because Latour argues that religion—he references both Christianity and Buddhism—is more ecological than is often considered, the correlation can be drawn between worshiping God and protecting the environment; by extension, causing harm to the environment could then be interpreted as blaspheming God. The argument could also be made that the act of harming nature is thus sinful and would not have occurred prior to the Fall. The Garden of Eden would have provided for Adam and

Eve—and all of their descendants—an infinite abundance of the resources they needed to live well. When God has Adam and Eve banished from the Garden, he states, “...cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life...and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread...” (Gen. 3: 17-19). The implication is that Adam and Eve (representing all of humankind in this context) received fruit, vegetables, and other forms of sustenance for which they did not have to work. Their relationship with nature was such that they could benefit from its resources without harming it. Following the Fall, however, humankind must now toil in fields and farms to grow for themselves that which they need to survive. They can no longer so easily obtain the food they need.

Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* presents a similar Fall and prelapsarian/postlapsarian narrative to the Book of Genesis in that it depicts an Edenic world in the wilderness of Yoknapatawpha County and also portrays the loss of that Eden by the actions of the humans who rely upon it for sustenance. The Fall in *Go Down, Moses* leads to the loss of Ike McCaslin's Eden, which is precipitated by the death of Old Ben. Old Ben is akin to the forbidden fruit; everyone within the hunting party endeavors to hunt and eventually kill him, but most of them secretly dread doing so, as if they understand that Old Ben is the final prey, whose death could spell the end of the idyllic existence the hunting party enjoys so thoroughly. Old Ben is the ideal goal for which the hunting party strives but do not truly wish to obtain, as that act of obtaining would immediately rob them of their ultimate goal, leaving them without purpose. When Old Ben does finally meet his demise, the hunting party immediately loses its social, psychological, and spiritual order. Ike McCaslin loses his way on the path to maturation, Boon Hogganbeck falls into madness, Major de Spain abandons

the wilderness, and Sam Fathers dies. These men are metaphorically banished from their Eden. Though a portion of the wilderness still remains following the deforestation by commercial logging companies, its majesty and mystique are gone, and the wilderness that once held silence save for the songs of birds, in which McCaslin could seclude himself, is now constantly bombarded by the clatter of passing trains.

Unlike Adam and Eve, McCaslin is not necessarily an active participant in his Fall, as he does not kill the bear. In fact, McCaslin's environmental ethic of preservation and immersion extends to his regard for Old Ben. Ike McCaslin and Sam Fathers in *Go Down, Moses* practice the type of stewardship Latour proposes, which recalls the care for the Garden of Eden for which the prelapsarian man is charged. Twice, McCaslin has the opportunity to kill Old Ben, and in both instances, he stays his hand. McCaslin more readily recognizes the feelings toward Old Ben that most in the hunting party truly have but keep buried. Yet, McCaslin is as deeply affected by this "Fall" as the rest of the hunting party—perhaps more so, as his psychological and spiritual trauma continues to be seen long after the rest of the characters have departed from the narrative. McCaslin also appears to be the only member of the hunting party who continues to experience true regret over the death of Old Ben and the loss of the wilderness.

Because "The Old People" and at least half of "The Bear" portray a type of Eden in the wilderness where Ike McCaslin spends his childhood, they could arguably be read as mostly prelapsarian texts. The second half of "The Bear" then depicts the Fall in the form of the death of Old Ben the bear and the deforestation, a forced banishment from Eden instigated by commercial logging and industrialization. While eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge is expressly forbidden, hunting Old Ben is a goal of the hunting party. Only Ike

McCaslin sees the killing of the bear as taboo, which is why he consistently refrains from pulling the trigger when he has the opportunity to shoot Old Ben. Likewise, only McCaslin and Sam Fathers seem to recognize the wilderness as their Eden, though McCaslin's cousin claims to have undergone a similar blooding ritual. McCaslin's cousin McCaslin Edmonds states, "Because He told in the Book how He created the earth, made it and looked at it and said it was all right, and then He made man...He created man to be His overseer on the earth" (Faulkner 243). McCaslin Edmonds echoes most of the standard sentiments regarding humanity's relationship with the natural world.

However, Ike McCaslin repudiates by declaring, "...as your Authority states, man was dispossessed of Eden" (244). Ike McCaslin believes that, because humankind has lost its Eden, that it has lost its ability to live in harmony with nature. Thus, people have continuously attempted to own land, to dominate nature and the earth. Through being "dispossessed" of Eden, humankind has been cursed. McCaslin's own views on the loss of Eden, which he frames not only in a religious perspective but also a historical one, become reflected in his own life, as he appears to experience much the same curse following the loss of his own Eden. Without the existence of this Eden, the new generation of the hunting party lacks the direct communication with the wilderness that Ike and arguably the rest of the hunting party of his generation had. Similar to humankind's gradual separation from God following Adam and Eve's banishment from Eden, the new hunting party has become estranged from the natural world, and the psychological, emotional, and even spiritual gap that has been created is reflected in their treatment of what little of the wilderness remains.

"The Bear" illustrates this "dispossession" of the land and the results that follow. *The Sound and the Fury*, although written thirteen years earlier than *Go Down, Moses*, also

depicts a similar Eden and its loss. As with *Go Down, Moses*, *The Sound and the Fury* portrays the primary locations of the narrative both when they were still natural settings and when they were marred by industry and commercialism. At the same time, the psychological and spiritual effects that these dramatic changes have on the characters most closely related to them are also played out in the narrative interplay between past, present, and future. The first natural setting featured in *The Sound and the Fury* is the forested land on the Compson estate, which, like Ike McCaslin's wilderness, is a childhood sanctuary for the characters Quentin, Caddy, Benjy, and Jason. Whereas Ike McCaslin's experiences within the wilderness are spiritual, Quentin, Caddy, and Benjy's experiences become closely linked with materiality and sexuality: "Caddy took her dress off and threw it on the bank. Then she didn't have on anything but her bodice and drawers...and she slipped and fell in the water" (18). Although they are merely children, the Compson brothers' narratives sexualize this moment in their childhood by focusing so closely on what little Caddy is wearing. In this scene, their sister Caddy's near-nakedness is witnessed in conjunction with the muddy river. This link occurs again when Caddy climbs a tree and the brothers watch her muddy underwear rising above them (39) Throughout Benjy's narrative, Caddy's identity is also frequently associated with the natural: "Caddy smelled like trees" (42). Quentin's narrative also continues to draw connections between Caddy and the natural, as the smell of honeysuckle continuously reminds him of his sister and the incestuous relationship he believes occurred with her. Even after Caddy's presence in the novel diminishes, the pain of losing these irretrievable childhood moments, which were always linked with the natural, becomes clearer.

The eventual loss of the Compson children's natural setting affects all of the children, the tragic results showing more clearly when they reach adulthood, much like Ike McCaslin. Parallels can be drawn directly between the presence of the natural and the happiness of the main characters' individual childhoods. Nature, in this regard, could easily be read as merely symbolic due to its apparent connection with childhood innocence. The loss of the wilderness, then, would be symbolically equated with the maturity of the characters as they emerge into a harsher, colder world starkly contrasted with the green and vibrant setting of their youth. This interpretation would make logical sense except that such characters as Benjy, Quentin, and Ike McCaslin from *Go Down, Moses* never truly reach maturity. Benjy's mental disorder keeps him in an eternal child-like state, while McCaslin fails to develop into a responsible adult man who has evolved beyond his childhood yearning for the natural. As for Quentin, he commits suicide at the age of nineteen. The only Compson child in *The Sound and the Fury* who has matured is Jason, who has willingly abandoned the natural in favor of a completely urban existence.

Elements of *The Sound and the Fury* directly parallel and mirror aspects of the narrative of *Go Down, Moses*. Much like the wilderness in *Go Down, Moses*, the Compson estate is sold and developed for commercial use. Within Benjy's narrative, the estate as it once was is depicted alongside the current state of the land: a golf course. From Benjy's narrative, the reader learns that the estate must be quite expansive, a substantial farmland: "The ground kept sloping up and the cows ran up the hill" (21). Benjy seems able to find freedom in the rolling hills, the river, and the lightly forested areas where Caddy climbed trees. However, when the golf course is built, an iron gate surrounds the estate, cutting Benjy off from the world:

I went down to the gate, where the girls passed with their booksatchels...I tried to say, but they went on, and I went along the fence, trying to say, and they went faster. Then they were running and I came to the corner of the fence and I couldn't go any further, and I held to the fence, looking after them and trying to say. (52)

Selling the Compson estate appears to serve a worthy purpose—sending Quentin Compson to college, as it seems the family is putting their hopes in him. Quentin seems destined to be the successful child, and selling the land to developers is one of the steps toward his success. However, such action ultimately ends in futility, as Quentin commits suicide before even finishing his degree. The estate, meanwhile, has been developed into a golf course anyway, disrupting the natural rural setting in favor of an upscale urban world for wealthy businessmen. The urban and the commercialized encroach upon the natural and the rural, effectively eradicating the natural world the Compson family, like the McCaslins, once enjoyed.

Christopher Rieger suggests in his essay “Outside the Garden: The Natural World in *The Sound and the Fury*” that “Nature... is more important in terms of symbolism in *The Sound and the Fury*, as Faulkner rarely engages with the natural environment as a significant entity in its own right” (62). He goes on to add that the environment becomes more of a background for the human stories the novel depicts. The protagonists of *The Sound and the Fury* mirror Ike McCaslin in their reactions to the absence of the natural. Like McCaslin, Quentin Compson never reaches maturity, although this is due to his untimely death. Unlike McCaslin, whose life following the loss of the wilderness is plagued by inaction, Quentin Compson finds the strength to take action, even if that action has such tragic and unfortunate

consequences. He, too, pines for his childhood happiness in the forest and the river on his family's estate. Like McCaslin, Quentin finds himself shut out of his own Eden:

Quentin...feels expelled from the garden, excluded not because of any sin he has committed, but because he cannot reconcile the metaphysical (his abstract principles and values) with the natural, both human and physical nature. That is, sex, birth, and death are natural, sin is also natural (in that it is an innate part of human nature), and Quentin's refusal to accept this leaves him fenced out of an earthly paradise, stranded on the outside, desperately looking in and ultimately feeling as if death is his only method of entry. (Rieger 68)

Rieger suggests that the Compson children, mostly the sons, are all symbolically banished or removed from their own Eden by entirely disparate forces. Quentin connects nature with sexuality, and his imagined incestuous relationship with his sister Caddy thematically joins both sex and the natural world. Whereas McCaslin longs for the past but makes no attempt at change following the loss of his Eden, Quentin Compson recognizes that he cannot return to the Edenic life he enjoyed as a child, and as a result, chooses death instead of aging without maturation and without the joys of his childhood.

While Quentin's narrative draws stark differences between the rural and the urban, Benjy Compson's narrative does not differentiate even when he comes face to face with it by entering the golf course and finding he is unable to play in the wild like he once did. He is unable to understand the loss of the natural. By comparison, Jason Compson appears to have accepted the urban civilization and turned his back fully on the natural—evidenced by his car, his job, and his unwillingness to reminisce like other members of his family. The automobile has replaced the carriage, and Jason has embraced this change from natural

horsepower to the work of an engine. The only character who appears to have been capable of growing up is the one who has willingly given up on the natural world. Because Jason chose to relinquish the natural, he was not harmed by its loss.

In both *Go Down, Moses* and *The Sound and the Fury*, the environment suffers by the hands of humans, and usually for what they deem a good cause. Both Major de Spain of *Go Down, Moses* and the Compsons of *The Sound and the Fury* sell off their land to industry and commercialization for economic gain, an entirely anthropocentric and materialist concern. Faulkner's narratives, however, suggest that the destruction of nature for this or any purpose is futile and ultimately meaningless: Quentin Compson's death renders meaningless the selling of the estate to pay for his college tuition. Destroying the wilderness and replacing it with a golf course allegedly served a noble purpose, but it proves wasteful.

As in *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying* portrays a contrast between the rural and the urban, manifesting itself primarily in the conflict between the agrarian Bundren family and the city people, all of whom view the family as backward and dim-witted, despite the obvious intelligence some of them display. The conflict between the rural and the urban portrays the changing of sentiments regarding the natural environment. The once agrarian lifestyle is rapidly being undermined and substituted by a hyper-modernized mindset centered on industry and economic growth. Such a shift endangers the wilderness once more by turning it into a commodity for economic growth, thus disrupting the harmonious mutually beneficial relationship that once existed between the human characters and the environment. By the narrative of *As I Lay Dying*, this harmonious relationship with nature has decayed so rapidly that it is almost completely absent from the Bundren family. Though their life is essentially agrarian, the Bundren family does not consciously live with and within

the natural world as the hunting party of *Go Down, Moses* or the children of *The Sound and the Fury* do. Rather, they have lived by dominating the land, and now that the earth no longer provides for them the benefits they once enjoyed, they resort to moving to the city to work in factories. By becoming industrialized, the family turns its back altogether on the natural.

While their move to better prospects could be seen as progressive and positive, as the family will be able to live once more, they do so out of sheer necessity. They can no longer rely on their connection with the earth to support or satisfy them; they must turn to machines for their livelihood.

The Bundren family's adventure to the city becomes a spectacle for the urban world, which sees the family as backwards and archaic. Jolene Hubbs suggests,

The townspeople's observations about the Bundrens substantiate the idea that poor white obsolescence is a matter both of reality and of perception, for the family members and their possessions seem to metamorphose as they move from being described by poor rural spectators to being depicted by more affluent urban ones. (465)

As the family enters the city, the urban townsfolk's opinions begin to surface in the narrative, as they view the family's wagon as "ramshackle" (203) and the coffin as a mark of shoddy craftsmanship. The more urban environments are, like the backdrop of much of Quentin Compson's narrative, so alienated from the natural that it appears almost anathema. The agrarian Bundren family represents the rustic, which is seen as archaic and uncivilized. The connection to the land, once celebrated, is now ridiculed.

The harmonious relationship with the environment that the chapters "The Old People" and "The Bear" of *Go Down, Moses* depicts decays so overwhelmingly that, by the

time the narrative of *As I Lay Dying* occurs, the man vs. nature conflict once again dominates. As with the titular character of Faulkner's short story "Old Man," the Bundren family of *As I Lay Dying* struggle against the force of a raging river. Lawrence Buell analyzed the titular "Old Man" and his struggle with nature: "...the 'Old Man'...is Faulkner's strongest presentation of Nature untrammelled...The protagonist in 'Old Man'...despite almost superhuman endurance can do no more than just barely cope with the brut force of nature" (5). Unlike the old man, whose futile struggle with the river is his undoing, the Bundren family survives the encounter. Their survival suggests they have finally conquered the natural, even though the struggle comes with some loss: "Between two hills I see the mules once more. They roll up out of the water in succession, turning completely over, their legs stiffly extended as when they had lost contact with the earth" (149). The fight against the river also severely injures the character Cash for the second time. However, because all members of the family survive the conflict, their encounter with the river is not nearly as tragic as that of the titular "Old Man."

Both *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* depict the gradual replacement of the natural with the material, the industrial. The Bundren family becomes a relic of a bygone era, a rustic family in a rapidly modernizing world; the city people, who have adapted thoroughly to the urban, accuse the Bundren family of being uncivilized: "Them country people. Half the time they don't know what they want, and the balance of the time they can't tell it to you" (243). The family whose cultivation of the land could be interpreted as showing some care or love for the agrarian world and the natural properties of it, suddenly find themselves in constant conflict with the environment and then with the urbanized modern world, before they seem to slowly slip into its circle. They first conquer the river, and then

they enter into the urban world, never to return to their agrarian roots as far as the narrative suggests; the novel ends before the Bundren family even considers returning home, suggesting that there is no return for them. Like Ike McCaslin and Quentin Compson, the Bundren family have left their natural world behind. However, whereas McCaslin and Compson's Eden are sold off and taken from them, the Bundren family actively leave it behind, essentially abandoning their rural, natural setting and entering fully into the urbanized world. Anse Bundren, the father of the family, initially illustrates both the conflict with the urban and the agrarian lifestyle's relationship with the land when ruminating,

It's a hard country on man...Eight miles of the sweat of his body washed up
outen the Lord's earth...Nowhere in this sinful world can a honest,
hardworking man profit. It takes them that runs the stores in the towns, doing
no sweating, living off of them that sweats. It ain't the hardworking man, the
farmer. (110)

However, he goes on to add, "Sometimes I wonder why we keep at it. It's because there is a reward for us above, where they cant take their autos and such." Anse recognizes the conflict between the urban and the rural. Ironically, however, the early narratives explain that Anse does not work. He does not perform the manual labor associated with farming, despite what his own largely unreliable narrative states. Anse's desire to journey to Jefferson seems then to be a means of distancing himself from this rural environment and immersing himself in a world where he does not have to sweat—as if he did so before.

The Bundren family, driven largely by Anse Bundren, endures peril and risks its health simply to drive wife and mother Addie Bundren to the city Jefferson to be buried instead of burying her on the estate. While Anse Bundren insists that being buried in

Jefferson was her wish, readers are never given this wish, even when Addie's point of view is provided. The trek to Jefferson distances the family from their natural setting, for which they seem to care little. As they gradually immerse themselves in the urban, it becomes clearer that this move was Anse's deliberate choice. Anse, like Jason Compson of *The Sound and the Fury*, appears to have distanced himself from the natural world, and he continues to further separate himself through his insistence on taking actions that further involve the family with the urban and the unnatural. As with Jason, the Bundren family seeks a more urban existence for their livelihood. Farming no longer provides for the family any financial comfort, so they must resort to working in factories simply to live.

The Sound and the Fury portrays the gradual substitution of the natural with the industrial, until cars have replaced horse-drawn carriages and urbanized, material wealth has become more important in the lives of such characters as Jason Compson than the ecological setting of his youth. Like Jason Compson, the Bundren family of *As I Lay Dying* separates itself from the environment, relinquishing the natural almost entirely. None of the characters of these novels worship the environment as Ike McCaslin and Sam Fathers did, nor do most of them feel the loss of the wilderness as strongly. The respect for and worship of nature has died along with Sam Fathers, Old Ben, and the wilderness Ike McCaslin once enjoyed. All that occurs after it is material, artificial, and injurious both psychologically and spiritually to the characters who find themselves trapped in their modern industrial world. Those who still long for a return to an Edenic, idyllic world cannot grow to maturity either through a debilitating pining for that which is lost, or through death or madness.

If *Go Down, Moses* and *The Sound and the Fury* are both read as depicting a type of Eden and its loss, *As I Lay Dying* more clearly reads as the postlapsarian world after the

“Fall.” Symbolically, the Fall is different between the characters in their respective novels. However, if the Fall is equated with a sin against nature itself, destroying the land becomes the actual sin. Returning to Spinoza’s pairing of God-nature, the destruction of the wild for commercial logging or the development of a golf course also represent the death of God, or at least the human characters’ connection with a form of spirituality they now can no longer achieve due to the absence of their natural setting, their Eden. If the wilderness in *Go Down, Moses* and the Compson estate in *The Sound and the Fury* are both interpreted as an Eden for the main characters, the loss of that Eden is equivalent to the Fall of Man, from which all of the characters suffer afterward.

Viewing one’s natural setting as a personal Eden gives to that place an otherworldly, spiritual quality that encourages the care and cultivation of that setting. Such a point of view gives to the environment much the same power that Donald Crosby proposes in *A Religion of Nature*. Pairing Crosby’s work with Faulkner’s novels yields the interpretation of the wilderness as an embodiment of the very spiritually-inclined worship of nature Crosby encourages. While Crosby does not apply direct religious doctrine to the wilderness as Bruno Latour does, both critics’ arguments support the same ecological mindset Christopher Belshaw discusses in his *Environmental Philosophy*. The environmental ethic Faulkner’s novels propose employs, if interpreted as the novels are here, a view of the environment that condenses key aspects of the above critics’ arguments, depicting the wilderness as a deeply vital and even spiritual place reminiscent of the Garden of Eden; and if this is the case, the loss of this Eden has tragic psychological, emotional, and spiritual effects on all who were once connected to it.

Coda

Many of William Faulkner's works frequently concern themselves with the increasing strain upon the natural world. By depicting the negative effects of deforestation and the gradual urbanization of what was once rural, the narratives of Faulkner's novels call for a change in humanity's mindset in regard to its relationship with the environment, a relationship that has historically centered on the ways in which the natural world can benefit humans, largely with negative effects on the environment. Faulkner's novels seem to suggest that this one-sided connection with the environment is unsustainable and will lead ultimately to some form of tragedy, whether it be the tragic loss of the natural, or a moral, ethical, spiritual decline within humans, which could be linked to a societal decline. Rapid modernization and industrialization appear to be linked in Faulkner's novels with such a decline, as if the human characters' sense of morality is bound with the existence of their natural setting, their Eden. Thus, it would appear that the loss of this Eden instigates a "fall."

Through the use of Genesis as a frame for the novels *Go Down, Moses*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and *As I Lay Dying*, the loss of the natural world becomes a metaphorical Eden, and the Fall that results from the loss has its greatest impact not on the earth, but on the people who live on the earth. Even though this point of view is largely anthropocentric—and Christopher Belshaw would argue that continued anthropocentrism is still not the most appropriate view to take—moving people to action sometimes requires showing them the ways in which they may be negatively affected by continued exploitation and destruction of

the earth. Although the use of Genesis as a frame places the novels' narratives within Western Christian ideas, Eastern religion and philosophy, Buddhism in particular, can also be applied to arguments of eco-spirituality. Growing up with a religious mother in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century South, Faulkner would likely have been exposed extensively to the Bible, which would account for the biblical influences. Thus, using the Book of Genesis as a frame for exploring these novels makes sense. However, the use of Genesis and its themes does not necessarily promote a purely religious argument so much as it does an environmental one.

The depiction of the natural world as a kind of Eden becomes a troubling analogy both for those who do not wish to attach metaphysical notions to the material, and for those who see anything unrelated to the spirit as "ungodly." Eco-spirituality, an ecological worldview that lends to the environment some of the abstract spiritual elements often applied in religion, thus problematizes the views on either side of the environmentalism debate in politics. Lynn White has blamed religion, particularly Christianity, for current ecological crises. Generally, modern politics seems to divide the debate between liberals, who wish to protect and conserve the environment, and conservatives, who continue to exploit the environment for economic gain. The conflict is, of course, not so simple, but the view of exploitation has its foundation in evangelical views toward the environment as being little more than a resource, falling under man's "dominance." The ideas that both Donald Crosby and Bruno Latour have argued subvert these standard views toward the environment. Latour and Crosby have argued for a type of environmentalism that could hypothetically relieve the concerns expressed by both sides in the conflict over environmentalism by arguing for the importance of the environment in a way that satisfies both worldviews.

Although written many years before Crosby and Latour's work, Faulkner's novels seem to express this very ecological sentiment, which sees the natural world as more than a mere physical entity whose sole purpose is to provide humankind with the resources to survive. The relationship that should exist between humankind and the natural world, the relationship the novels implicitly promote, is a mutual one based upon a belief in keeping the natural world alive and healthy. The wilderness as a sanctuary still places the environment within an anthropocentric lens, but because of humankind's close relationship with nature, regarding the environment as it concerns humans has been a prevailing view in ecological activism, in that it attempts to convince environmentalism's opponents that caring for the earth is vital to their health, as well as being more cost-efficient than causing it harm. While seeing the environment as its own entity and seeking to protect and conserve it for its own sake is likely the ideal mindset, an anthropocentric point of view may ultimately dominate, as it can most easily speak to the desires of people to live healthily or safely.

Because of the natural human perspectives of the characters within Faulkner's novels, the narratives are inevitably anthropocentric; the relationship between humans and nature is thus framed by the impact the wilderness has upon the human characters. However, the wilderness and all its inhabitants are personified throughout *Go Down, Moses*, which grants the forest agency that is eventually robbed from it when the land is sold to commercial logging companies. Ecocritical scholarship has developed beyond a solely anthropocentric view to explore the ways in which humans can benefit the environment, not just how the environment can benefit humans. Conservation has become a key concept not only in ecocritical studies, but also in environmentalism and ecological activism. The importance of maintaining the wilderness, the jungles, and Arctic—as well as all the plants and animals

thriving within these natural places—has driven much of the ecological argument through arguing not only that these things should be protected for their own sakes, but also that their continued existence will benefit humankind in the long run. The theme of preservation has also been analyzed in Faulkner's novels, though minimal ecocriticism has been applied to *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*. Through a close ecocritical lens, the theme of conservation can be found more within these novels within a depiction of the negative impact the loss of the wilderness can have not only ecologically, but also socially. Studying Faulkner's works through such ecological and religious texts as Crosby, Belshaw, and Latour's reveals that *Go Down, Moses* in particular seems to suggest that viewing the environment as a spiritual place elevates it to an almost holy stature, which would hypothetically encourage greater ecological action toward conservation.

Because some critical analysis has referenced the wilderness in *Go Down, Moses* and *The Sound and the Fury* as echoing or representing Eden, the foundation for seeing the environment as spiritually imbued has been laid in regard to Faulkner. Exploring this theme further could reveal even more eco-spiritual themes latent in Faulkner's novels. Even when literal religious connotations stemming from Western religious doctrine may not always be apparent in the text, applying an eco-spiritual lens to Faulkner's novels may reveal a deeper ecological consciousness that suggests the individual wildernesses the characters of the different novels loved and lost were held for them a more profound meaning than merely what benefits they could reap from the natural resources.

New points of view regarding religion and the natural world are beginning to become more widespread, as contemporary theologians and ecologists, like Norman Wirzba and Wendell Berry, seek to distance themselves from the historically anti-environmental views

expressed in politics and evangelism. Even if Donald Crosby's religion of nature may alienate some, Bruno Latour's arguments for viewing the natural world as God's creation, and thus worthy of saving, seeks to increase an ecological awareness among those who previously disregarded the environment as un-biblical or non-spiritual. Such a point of view is not intended to estrange environmentalists, but rather to recruit those who have previously viewed religion and environmentalism as entirely separate entities. Latour argues for a more ecological approach to religion, as well as a more religious approach to ecology, transcending the previous conflicts that have historically existed between faith and science:

The sad histories of the Christian churches should not mislead us here. Even if they were unable to digest the shock of science in the seventeenth century, we should not forget that the appeal to renewing everything, here and now, and in this world, is first of all a religious passion – and a Passion it is...Whereas ecological consciousness has been unable to move us, the religious drive to renew the face of the earth just might. (463)

Arguments for a spiritual ecology should not alienate those who wish to protect the natural world. Rather, they should be employed to change the mindsets of those who continue to use religion as an excuse to do nothing for the environment—or worse, as a scapegoat for the environmental crisis the earth currently faces. Rather than blaming religion, as Lynn White does, for the ecological crisis, our modern worldview should shift toward acknowledging not only that the earth should be protected for its own sake as well as humans', but also that, for those who hold religious beliefs, religion and spirituality should be among the strongest motives for protecting the earth.

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Vita

Brendan Conor Mize is a native of North Carolina, who received his Bachelor's of Arts degree in Creative Writing from Appalachian State University in 2016. Immediately following undergraduate degree, Mr. Mize sought a Master of Arts degree in English from Appalachian State University. Receiving an assistantship to work in the University Writing Center afforded Mr. Mize the financial aid to further his education. The MA was awarded in 2018. Mr. Mize intends to continue his education by pursuing a Ph.D. in English.