

國立臺灣師範大學英語學系

碩 士 論 文

Master's Thesis

Department of English

National Taiwan Normal University

生態烏托邦的崩解:

由生態女性批評的角度檢視童妮·摩里森的《樂園》

An Ecotopia Disrupted:

An Ecofeminist Approach to Toni Morrison's *Paradise*



指導教授: 何文敬教授

Advisor: Dr. Wen-ching Ho

研究生: 陳韋伶

Advisee: Wei-ling Chen

中華民國一百零四年六月

June 2015

摘要

本文旨在運用生態女性主義的角度探討童妮·摩里森的《樂園》。由於對自然的宰制與對性別、種族與社群的壓迫具有高度相關性，在這樣宰制的邏輯中，文化上較低等的實體一直以來都被視為是某種可被控制、宰制和殖民的客體。為了除去這種父權中心的意識型態，筆者認為人類應該學習與大自然彼此和諧地相處，並在此生態系統中學習互相關愛與互相尊重。

大致上，本論文主體可分為五個部份，分別是引言、正文與結論。在正文中，筆者試圖探討性別、種族和社群與自然之間的關係，分三章討論。第一章闡明《樂園》裡自然與性別的相互關係。筆者首先將露比鎮與女修道院的自然環境做比較，透過這兩處自然環境的異同與動物的暗喻，筆者認為自然與女性所受到的壓迫現象頗有相似之處。接著，筆者試圖探討在父權體制下，不同種族與階級的女性在《樂園》中所經驗到的性別壓迫現象。第二章主要著重在殖民的邏輯的議題上，筆者於此章除了探討殖民的邏輯也檢視了激進的排他性對種族延續所造成的負面效果。筆者在此章也檢視了身分認同的衝突問題，特別是在異族混血和世代衝突等問題上。第三章旨在檢視自然與生態烏托邦的關係。本章首先探討人類對生態烏托邦的嚮往與追尋，並討論《樂園》中對生態烏托邦的追尋，筆者也探討生態系統中將自然視為孕育萬物的母親，但筆者認為若將自然視為孕育萬物的母親，人類將會合理化對大自然恣意的剝削與宰制。最後，筆者檢視了生態社群中的集體文化認同現象。

關鍵詞：童妮·摩里森，《樂園》，生態女性主義，宰制的邏輯，父權中心，性別，種族，社群，醫治

Abstract

This thesis attempts to apply an ecofeminist approach to Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, for the suppression upon nature is correlated with the suppression of gender, race and community. Under the logic of domination, the culturally inferior entities have long been regarded as “objects” that can be controlled, dominated, and colonized. In order to de-center the patriarchal ideology, one should learn to live in harmony with each other based on mutual love and respect in the ecosystem.

As a whole, this thesis is composed of five parts—an Introduction, three chapters constituting the bulk of the thesis, and a Conclusion. Chapter One offers insight into the interrelations of nature and gender in *Paradise*. This chapter first offers a comparison of the natural environment between Ruby and the Convent. Through the representation of the natural environment and the animal metaphor, this chapter demonstrates that women and nature are both dominated by the patriarchy ideology. This chapter also attempts to investigate the sexual oppression as experienced by women with different race and class under the patriarchal system. Mainly paying attention to the problems of the logic of colonization, Chapter Two discusses the logic of colonization and examines the ways radical exclusion in the effect of disallowal. This chapter also investigates the problem of identity conflict in miscegenation and the conflict between generations. Scrutinizing the relation between nature and ecotopia, Chapter Three first investigates the search for ecotopia, and then discusses whether we should regard the ecosystem as a nurturing mother. After that, this chapter examines the collective and cultural identity of eco-community.

Keywords: Toni Morrison, *Paradise*, Ecofeminism, logic of domination, patriarchy, gender, race, community, healing

Acknowledgements

I'm very grateful to many people that have helped me in writing my Master thesis. First I would like to acknowledge the support of the Department of English at National Taiwan Normal University, in particular, Dr. Wen-ching Ho for guiding me in the process of writing my thesis. I would say, I am very lucky to have Dr. Ho as my advisor. For me, Dr. Ho is like Moses who leads me out of the painful writing process. Whenever I am stuck in my thesis, he is the light that brightens the gloomy corner of my heart. Besides, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. I-ping Liang for providing the most useful and solid suggestions in my thesis. Her comments on the original proposal prove instrumental in shaping a more concrete direction of my thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. Robin Chen-Hsing Tsai. His work in ecocriticism and ecofeminism serve as a source of inspiration for this thesis. Their interest and support have made the groundwork for this thesis possible. Many thanks are also due to my family and my friends for their assistance and patience. Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to those who have provided the educational and emotional support in the past four years.

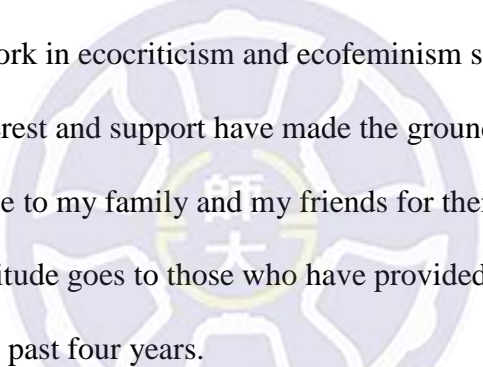


Table of Contents

Abstract in Chinese	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Introduction	1
I. An Introduction to Ecofeminism	7
II. Ecofeminist Literary Criticism	11
III. An Ecofeminist Reading of <i>Paradise</i>	13
Chapter One The Interconnection between Women and Nature in <i>Paradise</i>	17
1.1 The Natural Environment of Ruby and the Convent	17
1.1.1 The Animal Metaphor	21
1.2 The Similar Fate the Female Suffered under the Patriarchal Society	24
1.3 The Desire for Healing	30
1.3.1 The Healing Meal: Energized by Nature as the Resource of Food	32
1.3.2 The Drawing on the Ground	33
Chapter Two Dualism: The Logic of Colonization in <i>Paradise</i>	37
2.1 The Logic of Colonization	39
2.1.1 Naturalizing the Natives	42
2.1.2 The Effect of Denial	43
2.2 Radical Exclusion	45
2.2.1 The Effect of Disallowal: A Place for Home	46
2.3 The Identity Conflict: Miscegenation	49
2.3.1 Identity Conflict between the Old and the Young	51
2.4 Reclaiming Identity	53
Chapter Three The Interconnectedness of Nature and Ecotopia in <i>Paradise</i>	57
3.1 In Search of Ecotopia	60
3.1.1 The Pursuit of Ecotopia in <i>Paradise</i>	62
3.2 Ecosystem Community as a Nurturing Mother	65
3.2.1 Religion as Nurturing Power in <i>Paradise</i>	67
3.3 Collective and Cultural Identity of the Eco-community	73
3.3.1 The Significance of Naming in <i>Paradise</i>	75
3.3.2 Healing from the Eco-community in <i>Paradise</i>	77
Conclusion	81
Works Cited	84

Introduction

As a novelist, editor, and professor, Toni Morrison is famous for her distinctive characterization, poetic language, and complex themes in her novels. Morrison's literary works epitomize the black society, in which issues of race, class, culture, and gender are intertwined. She mixes fantasy with legendary myths and created her stories with profound meanings and aestheticism. With the aid of African and African American myth, folklores, written and oral histories, she tends to reveal the unspeakable part of the black community and attempts to foreground meaningful issues which have been ignored or forgotten for centuries. Her works subvert some of the arbitrary and rooted belief. It is as if she has been trying to lift the dark curtain behind the scene and give us a chance to realize the issues of inequality in gender, race, and culture. She leads us to reconceptualize or "re-memory" (to quote the word she has coined in *Beloved*) the history we have taken for granted for so long and guides us to reflect upon the false assumptions asserted by the patriarchal society. In "The Novels of Toni Morrison: 'Wild Wilderness Where There Was None,'" Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace have noticed that "in representing the subjugated standpoint of African Americans, Morrison is notable for exploring how the natural world has been used as an instrument of oppression but has ultimately provided a source of sustenance and comfort" (Armbruster and Wallace 213). In a manner, Morrison skillfully engages with the natural environment in *Paradise*.

Paradise, a complex but beautiful masterpiece, blends some crafted techniques from Toni Morrison's early works such as *The Bluest Eye* (1970) and *Sula* (1973), while relating her major concern of ethics, as shown in *Beloved* (1987). As the finale of Morrison's trilogy, *Paradise* foregrounds the issue of excessiveness in religious belief, as Ron David in *Toni Morrison Explained: A Reader's Road Map to the Novels* (2000) claimed that "*Beloved* is about excessive love of one's children, *Jazz* is about

romantic love taken to excess, and *Paradise* is about love of God taken to excess” (David 179). It is the excess of religious love that drives the men to take on the extreme act of violence in the Convent. *Paradise* is narrated in flashbacks, with shifting and multiple narratives, in a sense, it presents a “patchwork” in which all the characters’ lives are intertwined and entangled with each other. Beginning with a communal violence, the story presents the male’s barbarous and remorseless action in murdering the Convent women. In *Paradise*, the male characters seem to maintain the biased viewpoints by demonizing the women who are free, independent and autonomous. Their false projection upon women is related to the biased ideology implemented in the Western civilization. As Carolyn Merchant has claimed in *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1989), women are often demonized by men and “woman was both virgin and witch: the Renaissance courtly lover placed her on a pedestal. . . .The witch, symbol of the violence of nature, raised storms, caused illness, destroyed crops, obstructed generation, and killed infants. Disorderly woman, like chaotic nature, needed to be controlled” (Merchant 127). For example, in *Paradise*, Consolata, one of the Convent women, becomes a scapegoat as she is murdered by a group of black men from the neighboring town called Ruby because of the black men’s arrogance and vanity. In short, *Paradise* demonstrates the black women’s confrontation with patriarchal society, their search for a natural and harmonious way of life, and their eventual self-realization by subverting anthropocentrism and patriarchy.

On all accounts, *Paradise* also foregrounds the racial issues, for a great number of blacks, freed from slavery, tend to escape from the hostile world and build an idealized all-black town named Ruby. The black males attempt to build up an all-black community by mastering the land and colonizing the natural environment. The founding fathers started their journey from Mississippi to Louisiana, and then to

Oklahoma. According to Channette Romero, the Migration Movement is similar to the *Exodus* in the Bible, since “newly freed African Americans migrated in large numbers to Kansas, and later Oklahoma, because of the failures of Reconstruction to bring full equality, political rights, and safety to African Americans” (Romero 421). Migrating to the west signifies that the black people hope to gain freedom and search for a place for shelter. For the African Americans, they are longing for a paradise with safety and equality. As Jill Matus argues in *Toni Morrison* (1988), “In *Paradise* Morrison envisions the survival of one of those Oklahoma black towns where paradise is ownership and freedom from fear, harassment and rejection” (Matus 155). Influenced by the trauma of slavery and the Disallowing effect, the black men are designated to build an all-black town that can provide them a sense of safety and belonging—the paradise they have in mind.

However, the isolated black community in *Paradise* is what Morrison comes to criticize in her novel, as Evelyn E. Sholey declares in her review, *Paradise* is “a story about US versus Them” (Sholey 15). The problem of exclusivity in the community shows “the inability to remember an event, to narrate or to place it in time is itself a symptom of the unspeakability of the occurrence. The historical trauma of Ruby’s ancestors has produced a fixation on memorialisation and a need to repeat the conditions of their rejection and the town’s founding” (Matus 161). In her depiction of Ruby, Morrison portrays the separateness and superiority in the African American community within the context of American history. It is clear that the black men duplicate the same domineering system from the white and use it to oppress women and nature.

Having been suppressed by the patriarchal society for centuries under the thought of binary opposition, women and nature have long been regarded as “objects” that can be controlled, dominated, and colonized. As Sueellen Campbell has noticed,

“we can’t do anything without causing lots of side effects because everything is connected, nothing is isolated” (Campbell 132). Since we are part of nature, all the human actions would definitely “provoke unexpected reactions” to nature (Campbell 130). Therefore, in contemporary nature writing, as Scott Slovic has suggested, we should take note of one of the crucial aspects by acknowledging “how this literature translates into concrete changes in readers’ attitudes toward the environment, and into more environmentally sound behavior” (Slovic 364). So, we need to investigate the relationships “between the human mind and the natural world—‘correspondence’ and ‘otherness’—which the more recent writers have continued to investigate” (Slovic 367).

The problem in the contemporary world is that, we human beings tend to regard ourselves as the center of the world. And we seem to be fogged by the ideas of anthropocentrism, since such fallible concept of anthropocentrism has been built in the human mind. If we neglect these issues and continue to deprive nature of its resources, we may face with the most destructive impact from the environment. Therefore, we should think how to live in harmony with nature, rather than keep thinking on how to make it as our property and take great advantage of it. Also, we should not take nature for granted, nor should we regard nature as our own property, for this concept would cloud our visions of the world.

According to William Howarth, “ecology leads us to reorganize what life speaks, communing through encoded streams of information that have direction and purpose, if we learn to translate the messages with fidelity” (Howarth 77). Such readings would help us challenge the socially constructed ideology and give us applicable approach to literature. Hence, the relationship between literature and nature can be explained in an essay called “The Comic Mode,” a chapter from Joseph W. Meeker’s pioneering work *The Comedy of Survival* (1972). Here, Meeker asserts that literature

should be examined carefully and honestly to discover its influence upon human behavior and the natural environment—to determine what role, if any, it plays in the welfare and survival of mankind and what insight it offers into human relationships with other species and with the world around us. (Meeker 3-4)

While examining the relationship between humans and nature in literature, I realize that the ideology has embedded in the logic of colonization. As Annette Kolodny once put it, “colonization brought with it an inevitable paradox: the success of settlement depended on the ability to master the land, transforming the virgin territories into something else” (Kolodny 174). In other words, human beings, especially men, tend to tame the wild, the dark and mythic nature, for they enjoy the privilege of dominating nature and the female, endowing nature with feminine quality and try to civilize it. In “Development, Ecology, and Women,” Vandana Shiva has pointed out that “the violence to nature as symptomatized by the ecological crisis, and the violence to women, as symptomatized by their subjugation and exploitation, arise from this subjugation of the feminine principle” (Shiva 84). What Shiva suggests is that both nature and women are objectified, which can be used by men unfairly. In “Heroines of Nature: Four Women Respond to the America Landscape,” Vera L. Norwood claimed that “women’s separation from pristine nature can be traced to the belief that woman is to man as nature is to culture” (Norwood 324). In a sense, the dualistic idea of women to nature and man to culture results from the logic of domination under the ideology of patriarchy. In addition, while the patriarchal viewpoints have prevailed in the world for centuries, the view of the domination of nature and women has been regarded as rational and reasonable.

While conducting research on this thesis, I discovered that though a tremendous amount of research has been done on Morrison’s *Paradise*, but very few scholars have

come to analyze *Paradise* from the perspective of ecofeminism. Therefore, one problem with the current state of Morrison scholarship is that it often fails to explicate the correlation between the natural environment and the formation of the identity in the racially and sexually stereotyped community. Hence, in order to help fill this gap, this thesis plans to take an Ecofeminist approach to investigate the suppression of women under the patriarchal system in its relations with race, gender, class, and community, since such “androcentrism” is constructed by the dominant culture and society. In order to subvert such biased ideology, I intend to bring readers to reexamine the false fantasy of androcentrism by reflecting upon Karen J. Warren’s term, “the logic of domination.”

In other words, what motivates me to work on this thesis is my concern with the “logic of domination” of women and nature under such a patriarchal ideology prevailing in the black community, the concern of the “logic of domination” with the interracial issues with nature, and the concern of the interconnection of nature and ecotopia. The aim in this thesis is to reveal the complication and domination of patriarchal society. Also, I shall scrutinize the problems of the racial dispute in the text, and identify the false assumptions in the black community. In addition, I shall elucidate some of the theoretical assumptions about the biased black community and the interconnection of nature and ecotopia. And I shall argue that it is possible to build a paradise for human beings if we respect each other and live in an equal and harmonious way with nature.

I. An Introduction to Ecofeminism

The term “Ecofeminism” is coined by a French feminist scholar named Françoise d’Eaubonne in a book called *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974). She called upon the females to participate in saving the planet in which we live, as she thought women have the potential to solve the ecological crisis the whole world has been

faced within the modern times. Ecofeminism links the repression and oppression of women with that of nature.

In general, Ecofeminism is regarded as the third-wave feminist movement. Aside from taking the issues of gender, race, and class into consideration, Ecofeminists also pay great attention to maintaining an eco-friendly system. They regard human beings as part of the organism in the ecosystem. And each individual should be conscious of the complicated issues in the natural environment. In other words, the third-wave feminist movement has shifted its focus from self-identity, gender, and social structure to investigate the relation between human beings and nature. One of the main reasons in the combination of eco-criticism and feminism in Ecofeminism is that in the progression of western civilization, women and nature often serve as an analogy to each other. Both women and nature are the targets that could be controlled, exploited, and occupied under the patriarchal system.

Thus, Ecofeminists attempt to compare the oppression of women to the suppression of nature. Karen J. Warren in *Ecofeminism* (1997) points out that the domination of nature and the domination of women are operated by the same ideological system. It is the patriarchal system and logocentrism that the Ecofeminists intend to subvert. Ecofeminism investigates the ideology of the relation in the double domination in both women and nature and attempts to overthrow all the domineering ideas and pursue the inter-connectedness between the human race and nature. The first step to debase such domineering concept is to demolish the rigid binary opposition. Ecofeminists also emphasize the appreciation of diversity and individual differences. They foreground the “mutuality” among the ecosystem rather than the dominating relation proposed by the Enlightenment. Although there are some diverse perspectives about Ecofeminism, the main task of Ecofeminism is to focus on preventing from the patriarchal domination and preserving the ecological environment. Ecofeminism

insists that human beings and nature are inter-connected and interdependent. Such mutually connected relation cannot be explained by the perspective of anthropocentrism, for the anthropocentric concept endows the privilege to human beings to treat the environment at will. In other words, the idea of anthropocentrism only values the status of nature based on nature's advantage or benefit toward human beings. This selfish and paradoxical concept had been justified and abused by people for centuries. That is why the environment we live in at present is becoming worse and worse than before—the poisoned food chain, the devastation of the forest and the seas, the horrible effect of the nuclear power plant, the rapid climate change, the polluted soil, the spread of certain disease without cure, and so on. In order to save and protect the degrading environment, Ecofeminists regard the relation between human and nature based on mutual dependence.

Ecofeminists also expose how the ideology of patriarchy naturalizes men's domineering operation towards nature, women and different races. As Carol J. Adams claims in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* (1993), Ecofeminism not only challenges gender inequality suffered by women, but also challenges the idea of materialism and imperialism. Such concept of materialism is often covered by making a great profit and bringing significant advantage towards people, thus, the production of commodity often goes beyond human beings' necessity. Under such an ideology, nature had become a victim that can be conquered without restraint. In addition, the ideologies of industrialization, materialism and imperialism are in part generated by similar patriarchal thoughts. Ecofeminism attempts to eradicate such ideas in the relation between women and nature.

On the whole, the main task of Ecofeminism is to abridge all the related domineering system rooted in the existing patriarchal system. Therefore, only by sabotaging the patriarchal perspective can we dissolve any biased and one-sided

oppressive practices enacted by the domineering concept. And this is how Ecofeminism differs from the idea in Deep Ecology. In effect, while Deep Ecologists were engaged in the preservation of the ecological system, they fail to notice the patriarchal ideas in considering the original cause of ecological crises. Some of the scholars in Deep Ecology still maintain the innate patriarchal ideology, for they prefer to use the term “rape” to describe the devastation of the natural environment. Or, they tend to use “virgin ground” to describe the forest or lands which have not been invaded or colonized by human beings. In a sense, these metaphors show strong dominating influence of patriarchal power. Besides, the scholars of Deep Ecology often ignore the influence of imperialism, for it had caused the stringent devastation towards nature. Such aggressive invasion prompted by imperialism is often challenged and rebuked by Ecofeminism. And the deterioration of environment also caused serious impacts on female fertility.

Ecofeminism did not emphasize the differences between male and female; instead, it encourages the partnership between male and female. However, there are other scholars who emphasize the feminine quality of nature and tend to link women with nature, which had caused criticism by scholars. The controversial issues not only show in theological spirituality but also reveal in the diverse opinions on the questions of women and nature.

For example, one of the schools of the Ecofeminist scholars regards “nature” as “Mother Earth.” They contemplate nature as merciful mother who creates, cultivates, and cares for all the creatures. The scholars with such perspective include Carolyn Merchant, Elizabeth Dodson Gray, and Rosemary Radford Ruether. In *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1989), Merchant has pointed out that nature is regarded as the nourishing mother before the Age of Enlightenment—the thought of living organism. Thus, the action of destroying nature

is like murdering one's own mother. So, people were not willing to destroy nature then. Later on, when it comes to the Age of Reason, scientists had proved that the earth was not a living organism; hence, people began to devastate the planet at will (Merchant 3). Here, Merchant seems to hint that the theory of "Mother Earth" can prevent people from damaging nature. And in *Green Paradise Lost* (1979), Elizabeth Dodson Gray once claims nature as mother, and she takes the perspective of psychology to analyze the male's psychological motive upon suppressing women and destroying nature. This is because the male may try to find a path to decamp from the mother on the process of developing his identity. The advancement of technology gives men a chance to depart from nature/mother and become an intellectual identity. Gray further explained that the male's Oedipus complex may have great influence on their relation with women. This is why men need to conquer women and dominate the feminine nature.

Aside from these famous scholars, an Australian ecofeminist activist has also exerted immeasurable influence upon the development of Ecofeminism. Val Plumwood in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993) claims that the relation between human beings and nature needs to be rethought, for culture has been used as an instrument to "naturalize domination in both human and non-human spheres" (Plumwood 6). Thus, such internalized ideology had triggered the operation of patriarchy and cause the domination on women and nature.

Although each ecofeminist scholar maintains diverse opinions on the analogy of nature and women, they still consent with each other in pursuit of solving the unjust domination on women and nature. Many scholars in recent years have attempted to rethink the relation between women and nature thorough different perspectives and religions to draw the connection between women and nature, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, goddesses worship and so on. In this way, we may say that Ecofeminism

still continues to develop even though there are quite a few controversial issues in this theory. In a sense this theory is still in progress. Thus, we can remain positive towards the future development of Ecofeminism.

II. Ecofeminist Literary Criticism

In defining Ecofeminist literary criticism, one cannot but notice the two prestigious scholars, Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva who wrote *Ecofeminism* (1993) together. The former is a social scientist, from the feminist movement, and the latter is a theoretical physicist, from the ecology movement.

As Carol J. Adams has suggested in *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* (1993), ecofeminism has been useful in discussing “the interrelationship of social domination and the domination of the rest of nature,” and the term, eco-feminism, refers to the studies of the “twin dominations of women” and “the oppression of the rest of nature” (Adams 1). Ecofeminists argue that the oppression upon women and nature is based on the same logic of domination and should be highlighted while investigating such problems in literature. In addition, the domineering metaphors by patriarchal ideology, as Adams suggested, rationalize the idea in feminizing nature and naturalizing women at the same time. While scrutinizing the interconnection of the domination upon nature and the society, Ecofeminists have dedicated themselves to subverting such internalized patriarchal dominance over women and nature.

Actually, the problematic relationships between women and men, between human beings and nature are, in a sense, closely related with one another. In *Ecofeminism* (1993) Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva have argued that “nature is subordinated to man; woman to man; consumption to production, and the local to global” (Mies and Shiva, 5). The problem in the modern world is that “in the resultant struggle one part will eventually survive by subordinating and appropriating the ‘other’” (Mies and Shiva, 5). But can we find a new way to break away from

“appropriating the other?” A possible answer is a new way in examining the contemporary world; that is, an ecofeminist perspective, for it “propounds the need for a new cosmology and a new anthropology which recognizes that life in nature is maintained by means of co-operation, and mutual care and love” (Mies and Shiva 6).

As Mies and Shiva have noticed, the patriarchal system is developed and cultivated through “the colonization of women, of ‘foreign’ peoples and their lands; and of nature, which it is gradually destroying” (Mies and Shiva 2). While examining the relation of the domination between man and nature, Mies and Shiva reminds us that such oppressive domination between men and women results from the patriarchal ideology. In other words, under the logic of domination, nature and women turn into the “other,” as Ynestra King puts it, it is “something essentially different from the dominant, to be objectified and subordinated. And women, “who are identified with nature, have been similarly objectified and subordinated in patriarchal society” (King 21). In a sense, nature and women become “objectified others,” which can be exploited and dominated at the same time.

Mies and Shiva remind us of an important aspect, in which women “find it is difficult to perceive commonality both between their own liberation and the liberation of nature.” What is the main reason behind the dilemma? As Mies and Shiva suggested, “this is because capitalist patriarchy or ‘modern’ civilization is based on cosmology and anthropology that structurally dichotomizes reality, and hierarchically opposes the two parts to each other” (Mies and Shiva 5). According to Mies and Shiva, ecofeminists tend to use metaphors such as “reweaving the world” and “healing the wounds” in interconnecting the world as an organic web. Because women and nature have long been colonized and “‘opened up’ for free exploitation and subordination,” and “transformed into the “objectified others” (Mies and Shiva 7), it is imperative for us to foreground the healing of the wounds upon nature and the whole world.

III. An Ecofeminist in the Reading of *Paradise*

The theory of Ecofeminism, I believe, would shed light on the investigation of the domineering praxis on women and nature in *Paradise*. To subvert the patriarchal concept, Ecofeminism leads us to interrogate the suppression of women and nature. In this novel, Morrison tends to deal with the intersecting issues of race, gender and the black community in its depiction of the black people's journey from place to place, and the description of racial discrimination in their interactions with the others: *Paradise* shows the intraracial prejudice, especially the one-drop rule, between light-skinned blacks and dark-skinned blacks. In *Paradise*, Morrison "explore[s] the boundaries between the past as an inspirational fantasy and as a site of oppression, denying change, preventing the realization of new opportunities and possibilities, and inhibiting growth" (Peach 169).

In terms of the problem of gender, the female characters in the novel tend to be forced to be submissive but, at the same time, eager to find a place to gain their autonomy and voice. In "Heroines of Nature: Four Women Respond to the America Landscape," Vera L. Norwood notices that Morrison "lays open ways that racist images of blacks as animals are used to justify slavery, rape, and murder" and "expands her critique to show how such domination of slaves is only one reflection of a general lack of respect for all of nature" ("Heroines of Nature: Four Women Respond to the America Landscape" 189).

Morrison presents the problems of the patriarchal ideology in the excluded community established by a group of narrow-minded black male characters. Such patriarchal concepts trigger the establishment of the binary opposition between "self" and "other," which consolidates the male's false viewpoints towards women and nature. In "Unspeakable Things Unspoken," Morrison once argued "what is astonishing in the contemporary debate is not the resistance to displacement of works

or to the expansion of genre within it, but the virulent passion that accompanies this resistance and, more important, the quality of its defense weaponry” (“Unspeakable Things Unspoken” 128). In this lecture, Morrison reminds us that

we are the subjects of our own narrative, witnesses to and participants in our own experience, and, in no way coincidentally, in the experience of those with whom we have come in contact. We are not, in fact, “other.” We are choices. And to read imaginative literature by and about us is to choose to examine centers of the self and to have the opportunity to compare these centers with the “raceless” one with which we are, all of us, most familiar. (“Unspeakable Things Unspoken” 133)

As a whole, Morrison’s *Paradise* demonstrates not just the problematic issues in the excluded black community, but also the suppression upon women and nature in a patriarchal society. Hence, the women in Ruby fail to gain such autonomy, whereas the free-spirited women in the Convent finally regain what they have lost—autonomy, freedom and self-fulfillment.

Throughout the novel, the logic of domination triggers the domination upon women and nature. It also causes the racial division after the traumatic slavery period. And the exclusion of a community explicates the disillusion of building a harmonious paradise. In a sense, the dream to build up an ecotopia seems to be disrupted in Ruby. In the end, the biased and excluded Ruby town fails to function as a paradise for the townspeople; on the contrary, the harmonious relation with nature in the Convent serves as a paradise that leads to heal the wounds of the residents.

As a whole, this thesis will consist of an introduction, three main chapters, and a conclusion. The Introduction discusses the theoretical framework of ecofeminism to Morrison’s *Paradise* and investigates the theoretical background of Ecofeminism, Ecofeminist literary criticism, and the application of Ecofeminism to *Paradise*. In

terms of methodology, this thesis mainly takes the historical interconnection proposed by Carolyn Merchant, the socioeconomic interconnections advocated by Vandana Shiva, the conceptual and political interconnections suggested by Val Plumwood and Noël Sturgeon, and the empirical interconnections asserted by Karen J. Warren.

Chapter One discusses the interrelations of nature and gender problems in *Paradise*. This chapter first offers a comparison of the natural environment and then investigates the similar fate the female suffered under the patriarchal society. After experiencing the patriarchal logic of “anthropocentrism,” these traumatic women long for healing the trauma inflicted upon their body and mind.

Chapter Two mainly outlines the racial problems under the logic of colonization in *Paradise*. First investigating the logic of colonization, this chapter endeavors to illustrate how naturalizing the natives and the effect of denial provides the evidence of the logic of domination. This chapter also tries to explore the ways radical exclusion sprung from disallowal come to shape their identity and psyche, for it motivates the founding fathers to search a space of home. After that, this chapter also investigates the problem of identity conflict in miscegenation and the conflict between generations. Last, this chapter also illustrates the need to reclaim one’s identity.

Chapter Three analyzes the interconnection of nature and ecotopia. This chapter first investigates the search for an ecotopia, and then discusses whether we should regard the ecosystem as a nurturing mother. In this chapter, I argue that religion can be served as nurturing power in *Paradise*. In addition, this chapter examines the collective and cultural identity of eco-community. In shaping the collective cultural identity, it is necessary to foreground the importance of naming and the healing from the eco-community.

To conclude, this thesis aims to investigate, from the perspective of Ecofeminism, the individual and communal suppression in gender, race, and community, and also to

scrutinize the healing process of the black community in Morrison's *Paradise*. My hope is not only to subvert the patriarchal oppression upon nature and its connection with gender, race and community, but also to carve out an innovative perspective of mutual care in ecosystem. By using the approach of Ecofeminism, this thesis would, I believe, provide an insightful analytical reading of *Paradise*.



Chapter One

The Interconnection between Women and Nature in *Paradise*

Paradise aims, in part, at representing black women's confrontation with patriarchal society, their search for a natural and harmonious way of life, and their eventual self-realization by subverting anthropocentrism and patriarchy. In this chapter I plan to adopt the theory of Ecofeminism to examining the relationship between women and nature in *Paradise*, investigating the natural image presented in *Ruby and the Convent*, interrogating the image of garden and the animal metaphors presented in the novel. This chapter also probes women's suppression under the patriarchal society in the two locales, and thematizes the lack of communication and the women's deception to illustrate male domination. In addition, this chapter also investigates women's longing for healing. An Ecofeminist investigation, I believe, would shed light on the domineering praxis on women and nature in *Paradise*.

1.1 The Natural Environment of *Ruby and the Convent*

Val Plumwood¹ argues that “western culture has treated the human/nature relation as a dualism and that this explains many of the problematic features of the west's treatment of nature which underlie the environmental crisis, especially the western construction of human identity as ‘outside’ nature” (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 2). Under such concept of western psyche, nature seems to be subordinated to reason. According to Plumwood,

the concept of reason provides the unifying and defining contrast for the concept of nature, much as the concept of husband does for that of wife, as master for slave. Reason in the western tradition has been constructed as the

¹ Val Plumwood's *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993) expounds Ecofeminism, ecological feminism, and the other feminist theories such as deep ecology. Scrutinizing the relation between women and nature, Plumwood maintains that the connection of male domination upon women is highly related to the domination upon nature.

privileged domain of the master, who has conceived nature as a wife or subordinate other encompassing and representing the sphere of materiality, subsistence and the feminine which the master has split off and constructed as beneath him. (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 3)

In this sense, nature is regarded as a feminine other that can be exploited and dominated by men. The ideology constructed by western civilization has viewed nature as something that can be controlled or developed. Norwood claimed that “women’s separation from pristine nature can be traced to the belief that woman is to man as nature is to culture” (“Heroines of Nature: Four Women Respond to the America Landscape” 324). Thinking in a similar vein, Plumwood writes, “racism, colonialism and sexism have drawn their conceptual strength from casting sexual, racial and ethnic difference as closer to the animal and the body construed as a sphere of inferiority, as a lesser form of humanity lacking the full measure of rationality or culture” (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 4). The conception of viewing nature as an inferior sphere is also represented in the language we use as a realm of epistemic violence. In an essay called “Split Culture,” Susan Griffin notices that the language we use seems to suggest we attempt to emphasize we are superior to nature. As Griffin writes, “through the words *masculine* and *feminine*, which we use to designate two alien and alienated poles of human behavior, we make our sexuality a source of separation. We divide ourselves and all that we know along an invisible borderline between what we call Nature and what we believe is superior to Nature” (“Split culture” 7-8). In this way, we seem to regard nature as inferior to human beings in our mind-set, and such incarnated ideology is, as suggested by Griffin, “a mind in exile from its own wisdom” (“Split culture” 8). Upon examining the relationship between humanity and nature, L. Teal Willoughby also points out that “Ecofeminism views exploitation of nature as connected to the oppression of women” (Willoughby 135).

According to Rosemary Radford Ruether, Ecofeminism demonstrates the “concern for the interconnection of domination of women and exploitation of nature” (“Ecofeminism: Symbolic and Social Connections of the Oppression of Women and the Domination of Nature” 14). “Ecofeminist consciousness,” as suggested by Willoughby, “would seek a greater understanding of the etiology of natural events and the possible role of humanity within it. The relationship pattern in mutuality is an awareness of interconnectedness as well as the individuality” (Willoughby 136). Thus, Ecofeminism investigates “how these natural communities function to sustain a healthy web of life and how they become disrupted, causing death to the plant and animal life” (“Ecofeminism: Symbolic and Social Connections of the Oppression of Women and the Domination of Nature” 13). “Nature,” as Ruether suggested, “does not need us to rule over it, but runs itself very well, even better, without humans. We are the parasites on the food chain of life, consuming more and more, and putting too little back to restore and maintain the life system that supports us” (“Ecofeminism: Symbolic and Social Connections of the Oppression of Women and the Domination of Nature” 21). Thus, when we observe the natural environment of Ruby, we see “no baby’s breath anywhere,” for “not one garden had any” (149). Such a clue “no baby’s breath” is also a pun, which illustrates the potential problems of the lower birth rate in Ruby. Through the image of “water-hungry freesia” and “tea roses improperly dethorned” holding by Billie Delia in Arnette’s wedding, we can notice Ruby functions as an unhealthy web of life. In addition, Ruby is a place with “no public place to sit down.” And there “were closed doors and shut windows where parted curtains were swiftly replaced” (67-8). Here, the clues of the “closed doors” and the “shut windows” indicate that the town is excluded from others. This exclusion from the outside society is what Morrison intends to criticize in the novel. In short, while dominating and civilizing nature and women, the male have brought much more destruction upon nature in Ruby. Delores S. Williams has

pointed out, “the destruction of nature is rationalized on the basis of technology providing greater profits, comfort” (Williams 24). Under such annihilation upon nature, Ruby bears no life or growth. In this light, Ruby seems to be a place of infertility, sterility, and drabness.

On the contrary, the environment of the Convent displays vitality, as we see the growing of the food production such as hot pepper, and “the relish lasted years with proper attention” (11). The interdependent relation between humanity and nature is harmonious in the Convent. As the narrator says, although the townspeople in Ruby attempt to grow the seeds, “the pepper grew nowhere outside the Convent’s garden” (11). The garden in the Convent can be linked to the Garden of Eden which provides prosperity, vigor, and affluence, since it is a place where “a breeze swept through the kitchen door, displacing the food smell with a sweeter one” (40). This is a place where “flowers mixed in with or parallel to rows of vegetables. In some places staked plants grew in a circle, not a line, in high mounds of soil” (40). Here, Ecofeminism helps us rethink the basic self in relation to the natural system. As Ruether writes, “the sustaining of an organic community of plant and animal life is a continual cycle of growth and disintegration” (“Ecofeminism: Symbolic and Social Connections of the Oppression of Women and the Domination of Nature” 22). In the conversation with Elizabeth Farnsworth, Morrison offers contrasting conceptions between Ruby and the Convent,

Well, Ruby has the characteristics, the features of the Old Testament. It’s patriarchal. The men are very protective of their women, very concerned about their role as leaders. The convent, as it evolves, becomes a kind of crash pad for some women who are running away from all sorts of trauma, and they don’t seek the company of men. They have been hurt profoundly by men, so that even though they quarrel and fight most of the time, they’re

in what they consider a free place, a place where they don't have to fear that they are the people to be preyed upon, but the values are different.

(Farnsworth 157)

In a manner, the Convent is a harmless and helpful place, where people can be taken in and rest. In short, the contrasting image between Ruby and the Convent demonstrates the fact that the patriarchal domination over nature provides no euphoria and happiness the people genuinely need.

1.1.1 The Animal Metaphor

In an essay called "The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology," Ynestra King writes that women seem to be silenced and becomes the "others" in the modern society, and nature also become 'other, "something essentially different from the dominant, to be objectified and subordinated. Women, who are identified with nature, have been similarly objectified and subordinated in patriarchal society. Women and nature, in a sense, are the original 'others'" (King 21). Such "process of objectification," of appropriating and dominating women and nature as otherness, are accentuated by men, for "they forget that they were born of women, were dependent on women in their early helpless years, and are dependent on nonhuman nature all their lives, which allows first for objectification and then for domination" (King 22). The patriarchal domination over nature and women can also be shown through the animal metaphors presented in the novel. In *Paradise*, some interesting animal metaphors like the green snakes in the Oven and the bear presented in Fleetwood's house, for the two metaphors have great connection with the "twin dominations of women" and "the oppression of the rest of nature" (*Ecofeminism and the Sacred* 1).

For the first animal metaphor, the green snakes represent the men's biased viewpoints of women. As the narrator observes, through the perspective of K. D., "where the Oven had been, small green snakes slept in the sun. Who could have

imagined that twenty-five years later in a brand-new town a Convent would beat out the snakes, the Depression, the tax man and the railroad for sheer destructive power?" (17). Here, the green snakes could represent the patriarchal power, in that K.D. attempts to tendentiously blame the Convent women whom he thinks are equipped with a destructive power. I think this destructive power can also be connected to the domineering potentiality. Apparently, if we attempt to subvert such internalized patriarchal dominance over women and nature, we should be perceptive to the biased viewpoints as claimed by the male. This "logic of domination is identified by Karen J. Warren, as she writes that "the sort of logic of domination used to justify the domination of humans by gender, racial, ethnic, or class status is also used to justify the domination of nature" ("The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism" 132).

Another image is that of the bear in Fleetwood's house. In a meeting between the Morgans and the Fleetwoods, the male members negotiate about Arnette and K.D.'s wedding, for Arnette has got pregnant by K.D. In a manner, the bear image shows a sense of male power that cannot be overturned or challenged, and this "invisible" power is reticent, overwhelming and repressive. In "Women/ Wilderness," Ursula K. LeGuin has made a perceptive comment on the hunting of the bear, as she writes, "the men's wilderness is real, it is where men can go hunting and exploring and having all-male adventures, away from the village, the shared center, and it is accessible to and structured by language" (LeGuin 46).

According to Warren, the patriarchal center as constructed by language, reveals the inferiority of the female and the superiority of the male. Thus, the gathering between the Morgans and Fleetwoods demonstrates scene of silence, since the conversation is all controlled by men. In the discussion, we note that Arnette is going to college in August, but her father claimed that "I'm her father. I'll arrange her mind" (61). This authoritative statement exhibits the patriarchal power that has silenced

Arnette. As Warren argues,

Patriarchal conceptual frameworks that justify the domination of women also justify the domination of nonhuman nature by conceiving women and nature in terms which feminize nature, naturalize women, and position both women and nature as inferior to male-gender identified culture. (“A Feminist Philosophical Perspective on Ecofeminist Spiritualities” 123)

In this scene, Arnette is positioned as inferior to the male. This event clearly shows that women are silenced and absent in the male discussion. After the negotiation, we hear “the tippy-tap steps of women who were nowhere in sight” (61). The absence of the women’s participation suggests their oppression by men. Sadly speaking, we only hear the sounds of the women’s footsteps. In short, the two animal images—the green snakes in the Oven and the bear in Fleetwoods’s house—foreground the male domination over women.

To conclude, the interconnecting relationship between women and nature is shown by the patriarchal domination. Such oppressions upon women and nature often carry with violent destructions which have resulted in the crisis of survival for both women and nature. Shiva in “Development, Ecology, and Women” avers that “patriarchal categories which understand destruction as ‘production’ and regeneration of life as ‘passivity’ have generated a crisis of survival” (Shiva 82). Thus, we see the contrasting image between Ruby and Convent: the former provides no vitality on account of being controlled by patriarchy, while the latter contributes to prosperity by virtue of the harmonious lifestyle with nature. Ruby is a place that violates the “integrity of organic interconnected, interdependent systems, that sets in motion a process of exploitation, inequality, injustice, and violence” (Shiva 84). On the contrary, the Convent is a place that emphasizes nature’s harmony and maintains good relations with it.

1.2 The Similar Fate the Female Suffered under the Patriarchal Society

The women's suppression under the patriarchal society can be linked to the male's false projection upon women, for such a biased ideology has been implemented in the Western civilization for centuries. According to LeGuin, "those who were identified with Nature, which listens, as against Man, who speaks—those people are speaking. They speak for themselves and for the other people, the others who have been silent, or silenced, or unheard, the animals, the trees, the rivers, the rocks" (LeGuin 46). In a section called "Sexist-Naturist Language," from her essay "Taking Empirical Data Seriously: An Ecofeminist Philosophical Perspective," Warren notices that the language used to depict women and nature often is "sexist and naturist." Warren intends to center on "empirical women-nature connections" ("Taking Empirical Data Seriously: An Ecofeminist Philosophical Perspective" 3). As Warren mentions, women are often endowed with animal features in language. As she writes,

women in a (patriarchal) culture where animals are seen as inferior to humans (men) thereby reinforces and authorizes women's inferior status. Similarly, language which feminizes nature in a (patriarchal) culture where women are viewed as subordinate and inferior reinforces and authorizes the domination of nature: 'Mother Nature' is raped, mastered, conquered, mined; her secretes are 'penetrated' and her womb is to be put into service of the 'man of science.' ("Taking Empirical Data Seriously: An Ecofeminist Philosophical Perspective" 12)

In this light, such oppression upon women and nature is, as Warren argues, "justified by feminizing them; the exploitation of women is justified by naturalizing them" (Warren 1997:12). In a sense, women are often demonized by men. In "Nature as Disorder: Women and Witches" from *The Death of Nature* (1989), Carolyn Merchant

has pointed out the idea of “disorder in nature.” According to Merchant, the disorder, “symbolized in the macrocosm by the dissolution of the frame of nature and the uncivilized wilderness of the new world, in society by the witch who controlled the forces of nature and the women who overturned its order, and in the self by the bestiality of the Indian and the cannibal, the sexual lust of the female, and the animal passions of all humans heralded the death of the old order of nature” (Merchant 148). Therefore, such an ideology triggers the male to conquer the “disorderly woman” and “chaotic nature” at the same time. Throughout centuries, women, as suggested by Merchant, seem to be reproached with the lure and seduction in causing the male’s physical corruption. Such evil images of women as witches are often constructed by men. As Merchant has explained, “once imprisoned, they [women] were stripped of their clothing, searched for the marks of familiars on their body, and examined for signs of intercourse with the devil” (Merchant 138). In *Paradise*, we see that the male have strong prejudice towards the Convent women, for “what they see is the devil’s bedroom, bathroom, and his nasty playpen” (17). The association of women as the devil betrays the misogynist mind, which is what Susan Griffin has noticed in “Ecofeminism and Meaning” in *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature* (1997), since “the racist mind, the misogynist mind, the mind being afraid of nature and which denies natural limitation and mortality are often the same mind” (“Ecofeminism and Meaning” 225). Griffin also indicates that “neither rape, nor the word woman can be understood without an understanding of racism, nor can racism be understood without an understanding of the social construction of gender, nor can either be fully understood apart from ecology” (“Ecofeminism and Meaning” 225). In *Paradise*, such misogynists’ viewpoints are displayed by Reverend Pulliam, who supposes these Convent women are “like children, always on the lookout for fun, devoted to it but always needing a break in order to have it” (157). Based on Pulliam’s perspective, the

Convent women, the “fun-obsessed adults” were “signs of already advanced decay” (157). Such a conception of misogyny foreshadows the underlying motivation in the upcoming slaughter in the Convent. As Shiva observes, gender subordination and patriarchy are the forms of oppressions that have “taken on new and more violent forms through the project of development. Patriarchal categories which understand destruction as ‘production’ and regeneration of life as ‘passivity’ have generated a crisis of survival” (Shiva 82).

Such a crisis of survival of the female is represented in *Paradise*, for the women’s identities are often oppressed or impaired by the male. In *Toni Morrison and Womanist Discourse* (1999), Aoi Mori points out, “black women are similarly subject to the maneuvering power of reflections in a mirror which reinforce an even more perilous subordination” (Mori 58). In *Paradise*, some of these women are battered by their male lovers; the others are silenced by their mates; and still the others are betrayed and deceived by their romance in love. In this section, I would put these women’s suppression by men into three categories: male domination, the lack of communication, and the deception. I would argue that the three themes are interconnected to Warren’s concept of the logic of domination. In the following paragraphs, I would illustrate these themes in detail, for the theme of male domination can be shown through Mavis and Seneca; the theme of lack of communication can be found in Soane and Dovey; and the theme of deception can be noticed in Pallas and Sweetie.

The goal of ecofeminism is, according to Mies and Shiva, to “address the inherent inequalities in world structures which permit the North to dominate the South, men to dominate women, and the frenetic plunder of ever more resources for ever more unequally distributed economic gain to dominate culture” (Mies and Shiva 2). According to Merchant, since women are often defined with the function of

reproduction, such parturition are seen as adjacent to nature, their social status is inferior to the male in terms of the cultural aspects (Merchant 144). With this in mind, I argue that in *Paradise* the women's identities are oppressed by the male, which can be shown by the two characters in the Convent: Mavis and Seneca.

The patriarchal domination often involves violation of women's bodies violently as well as the exploitation of nature. As Delores S. Williams points out, "violation and exploitation of the land and of women's bodies is, in part, caused by widespread human disrespect for the unity of nature's placements" (Williams 27). Thus, the act of "breaking the spirit of nature today through rape and violence done to the earth" is similar to exploiting the women's bodies through "rape and violence," which, "constitute crimes against nature and against the human spirit" (Williams 27). Such rape and violence can be shown through Mavis and Seneca, for both of them have experienced the brutal and unwilling acts of sex committed by men. After being tortured by her husband's brutal and emotionless sex, Mavis remains quiet and waits all night to run away from him. Like Mavis, Seneca also suffers from male domination through violent rape as well, for she has been raped by her foster brother, Harry. He is the one who got her underwear off and then "a safety pin holding the waist of her jeans" also came down and scratched her stomach with blood. When she told Mama Greer, the adult denied by saying, "Don't you ever say that again. . . . Nothing like that happens here" (261). Consequently, the effect of denial against the sexual harassment damaged the development of Seneca's self-identity. Plumwood in "Androcentrism and Anthropocentrism: Parallels and Politics" points out that "denial is often accomplished via a perceptual politics of what is worth noticing and what can be acknowledged, but fear and anxiety remain when the Other threatens to return" ("Androcentrism and Anthropocentrism: Parallels and Politics" 338). According to Plumwood, the effect of denial makes Seneca as "the exception, negation, or lack of

the virtue of the Center” (“Androcentrism and Anthropocentrism: Parallels and Politics” 338). When Seneca grows up, she seems to be delighted in the cut on her body. The intersecting scars Seneca created on her arms bring about a sense of distorting relief and temporary comfort to her.

To sum up, both Mavis and Seneca have been violently raped by men. The physical and mental wounds upon them explain the ruthlessness of the men’s domineering behavior. Through the perspective of Ecofeminism, we see that women and nature have long been colonized and “‘opened up’ for free exploitation and subordination, transformed into the ‘others,’ the ‘objects,’ in the process of European (male) ‘subject’s’ emancipation from the ‘realm of necessity’ (Mies and Shiva 7). In this light, women are turned into the submissive “others” that can be silenced or treated at men’s will.

The restraint, silence and reticence among the female characters also reveal the women’s subordinating status. Here, the theme of the lack of communication can be seen through Soane and Dovey. Similarly, the twin sisters Soane and Dovey, seem to be turned into the submissive objects that are “opened up” for subordination in their relation with their husbands. The lack of speech between the two couples, in a sense, becomes a serious problem. The incident can be shown when Soane said “I don’t understand, Deek.” Instead of explaining in detail, Deek only replied, “You don’t need to.” Apparently, such a male-centered statement shows Deek’s patriarchal power. As the narrator observes near the end of the novel, “Soane is chastising herself for not having talked, just talked to Deek. Told him she knew about Connie, that the loss of their child was a judgment against her—not him” (287-88). Since Soane is unable to express her true feelings under such an oppressive environment, the misunderstanding between her and Deek also becomes one of the factors in annihilating the Convent women.

On the other hand, the problem of the lack of speech between Dovey and

Steward is also recognizable. In the relation between the two, the failure of the intimate conversation becomes a serious problem in this affinity as well. Supposedly, Dovey's miscarriages had significantly affected Steward's mind. The cursing barrenness instigates Steward's wrath, acrimony and asperity. In the kinship between the two, Dovey is often chilled by her husband's intimidation, unable to utter for herself. Here, Morrison uses an interesting symbol, the locked door, to describe their affinity. The door Steward has locked symbolizes the exclusion and segregation from his wife. Such "exclusivity and dispossession," suggested by Shiva, could provoke and worsen "the colonial processes of ecological degradation and the loss of political control over nature's sustenance base" (Shiva 81). When Dovey tried to open the door, "it was locked—again . . . Dovey was sure theirs was the only locked door in Ruby. What was he afraid of?" (90). In this context the lock epitomizes a sense of exclusivity and a sense of male pride that the female is not allowed to share.

To conclude, both Soane and Dovey experience the predicament of the lack of speech and the male suppression respectively. In other words, the two sisters have suffered emotional and psychological torment under the patriarchal hegemony, for they are forced to be submissive while finding a place to gain their autonomy and voice.

According to Judith Plant, since women are often connected with the "subordinate" and "deferential" essence, they somehow carry the obligation of tending the others with "guilt and anxiety" (Plant 3). In Morrison's *Paradise*, this guilt and anxiety can be observed in Sweetie. Upon hearing the cries of a baby, Sweetie became angry suddenly because all the other babies were silent. I think Sweetie's anxiety is triggered by jealousy and shame on the grounds that her motherhood is affected by her four abnormal babies. Therefore, the desire for babies' crying and the deep shame at the babies' imperfection motivate Sweetie to lie to her

friends and family. Thus, the Convent women become the victims of her beguilement. According to Plant, “because of this skewed situation, caring often becomes entangled with personal frustrations over feelings of powerlessness, leading to an inability to take responsibility” (Plant 3). In a sense, some of the female characters are often trapped in such a predicament. They know they need to take care of the children, but, at the same time, they also invent lies in attempting to get rid of the children.

Therefore, the theme of deception can be observed through the characterization of the female characters, for these women are forced to tell lies after experiencing extreme agony in their life. For example, Arnette gets an abortion in the Convent, for she is unwilling to take the responsibility; Sweetie is frustrated with her four broken babies and seems to transfer the guilt on the Convent women by falsifying the wickedness of the Convent women; Pallas is betrayed by her boyfriend and her mother so she lied about her pregnancy to the Convent women at first.

In a nutshell, the theme of deception is important in the novel in all respects. In fact, all of the female have been driven to the verge of a temporary sensory breakdown: Pallas is unable to speak, and Sweetie is unable to hear. But unlike Sweetie, Pallas reveals the veil of deception after receiving the healing energy from the support of the Convent women by retelling her painful past. By contrast, Sweetie is the one who undergoes no change, since she is still trapped by the vicious circle of self-deception upon blaming the faults on the others. In a sense, after experiencing the traumatic deception in relations with men, most of the females are weary of the physical and mental wounds. To some extent, they crave for respect and healing from the wounds.

1.3 The Desire for Healing

Throughout the novel, most of the female characters have experienced male domination, suffered from the lack of communication and are agonized by a sense of

deception. In “Toward an Ecofeminist Spirituality,” Charlene Spretnak reminds us that “as we all bear scars from having been raised under patriarchy, the ability to heal ourselves and each other psychically and physically is essential to the growth of women’s culture” (Spretnak 130). According to Ruether, human beings are “finite organisms, centers of experience in a life cycle that must disintegrate back into the nexus of life and arise again in new forms” (“Ecofeminism: Symbolic and Social Connections of the Oppression of Women and the Domination of Nature” 22). Therefore, recovery from the wounds, or “from alienated, hierarchical dualism to life-sustaining mutuality,” is strongly connected to the rituals of healing, which “will radically change the patterns of patriarchal culture” (“Ecofeminism: Symbolic and Social Connections of the Oppression of Women and the Domination of Nature” 22). As Spretnak writes, “rituals created within a framework of women’s spirituality differ in form and content from the empty, hierarchically imposed, patriarchal observances with which most of us grew up. They involve healing, strengthening, creative energy that expands with spontaneity from a meaningful core of values” (Spretnak 130).

Thus, it is clear that these mentally and physically injured women desire for a paradise of love and acceptance. In other words, these women long for a “home” to heal their fragmented and broken hearts. In “Community—Meeting Our Deepest Needs,” Helen Forsey reminds us that “the concept of ‘home’ has been viciously distorted—co-opted by capitalism to refer to an exchangeable piece of real estate; corrupted by patriarchy to mean a man’s castle, where women and children are neither free nor safe” (Forsey 231). In a manner, these wounded women crave for a home to heal their wounds. In *Paradise* such desire for healing can be shown in three aspects: the meal Consolata prepared represents the gaining of energy from nature; the drawing on the ground means the better understanding of oneself, and the loud dreaming symbolizes certain sense of spiritual purification.

In *Paradise*, the Convent is like an asylum, or a shelter that serves as a home to the injured women. For example, the Convent is “the most peaceful place on earth” for Mavis (182). As for Billie Delia, the Convent is, “a place where you can stay for a while. No questions. . . . you can collect yourself there, think things through, with nothing or nobody bothering you all the time. They’ll take care of you or leave you alone—whichever way you want it” (176). For Pallas, the Convent is like a shelter, with “images of a grandmother rocking peacefully, of arms, a lap, a singing voice soothed her. The whole house felt permeated with a blessed malessness, like a protected domain, free of hunters but exciting too. As though she might meet herself here—an unbridled, authentic self, but which she thought of as a ‘cool’ self—in one of this house’s many rooms” (177). Indeed, the Convent is a place that provides, in the words of Forsey, “the need for roots in the earth, for a reliable, sustained relatedness to a particular area or locality. Again, the multiple vision of people seeking and creating balanced, egalitarian, harmonious communities all have in common that element of sturdy rootedness” (Forsey 231).

1.3.1 The Healing Meal: Energized by Nature as the Resource of Food

Such a harmonious community can be found in the sharing of the food, since the meal represents the natural power of healing. For instance, after Consolata had set the table and placed the food, she finally found herself going back and said, “I call myself Consolata Sosa. If you want to be here you do what I say. Eat how I say. Sleep when I say. And I will teach you what you are hungry for” (251). This statement “I call myself” represents the awakening in Consolata’s mind, now she can express her voice assertively. Consolata’s change can also be indicated from the transformation of her appearance, for after the meal, she is the one with higher cheekbones and stronger chin, and with skin smooth as a peach. At this stage, Consolata’s mind and soul has changed as well, as she proclaims, “if you have a place that you should be in and

somebody who loves you waiting there, then go. If not stay here and follow me” (262). But no one left. This statement is like Jesus telling his disciples to leave what they cherish and follow him.²

1.3.2 The Drawing on the Ground

Besides the healing meal, the drawing on the ground also explains the effect of healing, for such actions provide a chance to experience a sense of freedom. Here, the ways the Convent women clean and scrub the dirt on the floor also epitomize the cleansing of wound inside one’s heart. After the cleansing, Consolata asks them to undress and lie down, and she “walked around her and painted the body’s silhouette. Once the outlines were complete, each was instructed to remain there. Unspeaking. Naked in candlelight” (263). Here, the image of oneself is outlined on the ground, and the nakedness in candlelight gives the Convent women a chance to know themselves. In her interview with Ann Hostler from “Interview with Toni Morrison: ‘The Art of Teaching,’” Morrison explains that

What Consolata does with the women at the convent is what an artist does. Within the death outlines they draw of each other, she encourages them to use paints and chalk to recreate themselves. They lie in a spot of their own making. She encourages them to tell the truth to each other. Only after this can they get beyond the petty fighting that has plagued their relationships with each other. (Hostler 198)

In a manner, what Consolata does for the Convent women demonstrates the healing power that has transformed these injured women. As Spretnak suggested, “women are coming together to cultivate the powers that can result from exploring matrifocal

² In the book of Luke, Jesus told his disciples, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (King James Version, Luke 9:23).

heritage, personal and collective mythology, natural healing, meditation, dreamwork, celebrating the cycles of nature and rituals” (Spretnak 130). Such rituals of healing can be shown in the Convent women’s loud dreaming. During the time of loud dreaming, each of the women burst into tears, and “yelps with pain from a stranger’s penis and a mother’s rivalry—alluring and corrosive as cocaine” (264). In this light, once we are healed by true love and shake off the yoke of bondage, we are likely to move toward the paradise we are longing for.

In an essay “From Healing Herbs to Deadly Drugs: Western Medicine’s War Against the Natural World,” Marti Kheel notices that “the holistic tradition out of which herbal healing evolved honored not only the power of the body to heal, but that of the mind (or spirit) as well. Prayers, chants, incantations and other forms of ritual frequently accompanied both the preparation and the ingestion of herbs” (Kheel 97). Healing, as suggested by Kheel, “was associated, in the early matriarchal cultures, with the life-giving capacities of women” (Kheel 97). In a sense, the effect of loud dreaming gives them a chance to talk about the harm they have been through. For example, this is discernible from Consolata’s confession about her past. As Consolata declares, “my child body, hurt and soil, leaps into the arms of a woman who teach me my body is nothing my spirit everything. I agreed with her until I met another. My flesh is so hungry for itself it ate him. When he fell away, the woman rescue me from my body again” (263). When Consolata broke with Deacon, her mind seems to be lost in somewhere else. Luckily, she finds herself back under the caring of Mother Superior, for she was once lost but now found. To some extent, the painting on the ground and the loud dreaming help these female characters confront with their inner problems. For example, Seneca decides to mark the body on the floor when she attempts to incise her thigh; Gigi draws a “heart locket around her body’s throat” (265); Pallas depicts a baby in her “template’s stomach.” When Pallas was asked who

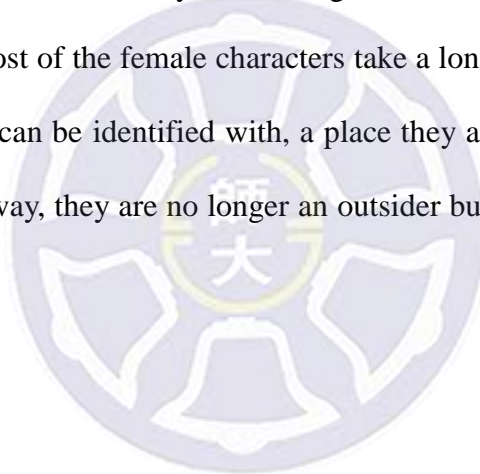
the father was, she chooses to be silent and drew “next to the baby a woman’s face with long eyelashes and a crooked fluffy mouth” (265). Such a drawing is like a therapy that assists them in transferring the terrible past into a relief.

As a whole, Consolata leads the Convent women to confront with their traumatic self. The food, the drawing and the loud dreaming—these are the crucial essences that quench the craving for healing. As Forsey suggested, “we feel a need for hope, for possibilities in the midst of despair; for integrity and wholeness in the struggle against alienation; for nurturing and closeness based on equality and respect, not on obligation and exploitation. These needs dictate the journey, and many of us find what we seek in community” (Forsey 230). As Morrison points out in an interview with Hostler, “What I had to do here was to take away the labels of ‘psycho-babble’ and to show the healing. This is difficult, but the hardest thing to do in this novel was to make visions ordinary and not exotic for the characters who have this thing called ‘faith’” (“Interview with Toni Morrison: ‘The Art of Teaching’” 198). Therefore, after the effect of healing, these women are no longer the same: the eyes of Consolata become “sociable and connecting” and the younger ones “had done their hair” (265). From now on, “the Convent women were no longer haunted. Or hunted either” (266). In a sense, the Convent women begin to get rid of the old self and discover the new self. Such a concept can be found in the book of *Ephesians* from the *New Testament*, as we should put away the old ones, be renewed in the spirit of our mind and put on the new ones.³

In short, Ecofeminism leads us to examine “the interconnection of domination of

³ In the book of Ephesians, the Scripture says, “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:22-24).

women and exploitation of nature.” Concerning the interconnected domination of women and nature relation, Warren suggested that we should “understand the nature of oppressive and patriarchal conceptual frameworks” (“A Feminist Philosophical Perspective on Ecofeminist Spiritualities” 122). Both women and nature become the subordinate objects that can be violently dominated by the male, as we can observe through the contrasting presentation of the natural environment in the Convent and Ruby and the domineering effect enacted upon women and nature. Accordingly, these women crave for a home, a place where they can be healed from the wounds. As Kheel suggests, “by helping to integrate body, mind, instinct, and intuition, holistic healing enables us to live in harmony and ecological balance with all of the natural world” (Kheel 109). Most of the female characters take a long journey, and attempt to search for a place they can be identified with, a place they are related to, and a place they belong to. In this way, they are no longer an outsider but an insider, one within a spiritual home.



Chapter Two

Dualism: The Logic of Colonization in *Paradise*

To begin with, *Paradise* foregrounds not only the excessiveness of religious love but also conflicts within the black race. Like other fiction of its time, *Paradise* represents the deepest desire of human beings in establishing an optimal environment. In fact, the novel creates a space for Morrison's assertion in portraying the ideals of nature. According to Armbruster and Wallace, Morrison's "representation of African American experiences with nature reminds us that, as culturally and historically positioned subjects, we all identify with particular constructions of nature; our perceptions and valuations of nature are not simply 'natural' responses to the green world but responses that rest on underlying racial politics" (Armbruster and Wallace 225). In this light, *Paradise* represents "the catastrophic and far-reaching effects of double consciousness in a manner that affects the black characters' relationships not only with each other but also with the land" (Hunt 119). Apparently, the racial problems Morrison probes in *Paradise* echoes what W. E. B. Dubois proposes, "the problem of the color line." In her conversation with A. J. Verdelle regarding the racial issues in *Paradise*, Morrison claims that she wants to invite her readers "to examine, recognize, hold onto, or dismiss, the racial baggage, which is frequently cultural baggage, that a reader brings to a character" (Verdelle 165). In a sense, *Paradise* demonstrates, among other things, how nature is bound up with racist viewpoints and the conflicts within race.

Accordingly, to rethink the racial problems, it is necessary to challenge the racial presumptions constructed by the dominant society and culture. According to Lucius Outlaw,

'race' is *not* wholly and completely determined by biology, but is only partially so. Even then biology does not *determine* 'race,' but in complex

interplay with environmental, cultural, and social factors provides certain boundary conditions and possibilities that affect racialization and the development of geographical races. The definition of ‘race’ is partly political, partly cultural. (Outlaw 68)

In a sense, what Outlaw suggests is that “race is a *social* formation” and is also historically constructed. In other words, race is not a genetic category, but a social category. From the offstage beginning of the novel, Morrison begins with a sentence, “they shoot the white girl first.” However, Morrison intentionally refrains from identifying who the white girl is. In this light, the “dualistic conception of race,” as Noël Sturgeon has suggested, “gave the women involved only two choices of racial subjectivity, and thus impoverished the conversations among the members, continually returning them to only one axis (white and nonwhite) along which to conceive of the social construction of race and the operations of racism” (Sturgeon 104). We only see the novel denounces patriarchal control by unveiling the murdering event. In an interview with A. J. Verdelle, Morrison explains her purpose by saying, “the reader knows that the majority of those women are black, they just don’t know which ones. *I* know. But not signaling race frees me up to talk about the characters in all sorts of ways—to not have race be the only way in which they are understood” (Verdelle 166). Throughout the novel, the dualist idea of the white and the non-white seem to be a clear boundary in the black men’s mentality under the logic of dualism.

Therefore, I begin this chapter with a focus on the logic of colonization in relation to the racial discourse in *Paradise*. As the chapter begins with “dualism: the logic of colonization,” a term I borrow from Plumwood’s theory, I shall consider the deployment of ecofeminist conceptions of race within the context of the logic of colonization. Warren, in a prestigious book called *Ecofeminist Philosophy* (2000), has pointed out that the two distinguished ecofeminist scholars, Val Plumwood and Noël

Sturgeon, have dedicated their literary works in the aspects of “political interconnections” among ecofeminist critiques. Therefore, to give a few examples of this discourse, I will structure this chapter with the representative artifacts of ecofeminism mainly from Plumwood’s discussion of the logic of colonization and some of the ideas from Sturgeon’s *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory and Political Action* (1997). I chose the two scholars because they illustrate, in different ways, the problems I want to examine, and because I am most concerned with certain kinds of racial discourse, such as the logic of dualism, the denial of the colonized identity, the radical exclusion (hyperseparation), and the identity conflict. In this chapter, I do not focus on the slavery history in *Paradise*. Rather, I want to point to the positive potential for ecofeminism as a strategic discourse within the analysis of logic of colonization. Therefore, I shall examine how the logic of colonization naturalizes the natives and achieves the effect of denial, how it becomes radical exclusion, causing identity conflict, and how it is important to reclaim one’s identity. Since Morrison’s representation of race in *Paradise* interrogates the idea of paradise, I argue that in pursuing the ideal paradise, one should not exclude the others; rather, as the spirit of ecofeminism has taught us, one needs to learn to live in harmony with other races and respect the distinctiveness of different races. However, in *Paradise*, most of the characters seem to be trapped in the logic of colonization.

2.1 The Logic of Colonization

In her “Dualism: The Logic of Colonization” from *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, Plumwood suggests that dualism (the logic of colonization) has already existed in the western human/nature binary relations. She argues that a dualism arises from a “denied” reliance on an inferior other. Since such a relation of “denied dependency” constitutes a sense of seemingly reasonable system, the rejection and the affinity of “domination/ subordination” could fashion the identity of the colonized and

the colonizer (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 41). Upon explaining the dualism of male/female, mental/manual (mind/body), civilised/primitive, and human/nature, Plumwood reminds us that the dualisms tend to result in certain oppressions on gender, race, class and nature by way of naturalizing them respectively. Plumwood has used several examples of different kinds of oppressions to explain the certain kind of “logical formulation,” such as gender, race and colonization. According to Plumwood, “the key exclusions and denials of dependency for dominant conceptions of reason in western culture include not only the feminine and nature, but all those human orders treated as nature and subject to denied dependency. Thus it is the identity of master (rather than a masculine identity pure and simple) defined by these multiple exclusions which lies at the heart of western culture” (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 42). In this light, we see the exclusions and denials of not only the women and nature but also among other races, for western culture has cultivated the idea of the “identity of master” while dominating the others. As Plumwood notices,

dualism can also be seen as an alienated form of differentiation, in which power construes and constructs difference in terms of an inferior and alien realm. In random tyrannies, beings may be selected for oppression in arbitrary and random ways. But in systematized forms of power, power is normally institutionalised and ‘naturalised’ by latching on to existing forms of difference. Dualisms are not just free floating systems of ideas; they are closely associated with domination and accumulation, and are their major cultural expressions and justifications. (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 42)

Through dualism, as Plumwood writes, “the colonised are appropriated, incorporated, into the selfhood and culture of the master, which forms their identity” (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 41). Such an identity is the eyes of Val Plumwood, a colonized

identity. As Plumwood indicates, the concepts of humanity, rationality and masculinity are closely intertwined with each other as a network, a set which maintains the related concept of dualism of “nature, the physical or material, and the feminine.” These ideas are connected as the “logical structure of dualism” derived from the “exclusion of the master identity” (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 46).

In a manner, the logic of dualism consolidates the white mentality of slavery. As Morrison indicates in the interview with Verdelle, “you can find it so overwhelming and so frightening and so wicked that you can’t separate yourself from its wickedness—say slavery, for example—so that you feel sullied and stained and incompetent and hurt all of your life. So there’s kind of a negotiation that has to take place between one’s self and one’s national past, one’s cultural past, one’s personal past, and one’s racial past” (Verdelle 164). In *Paradise*, the African American people strive to construct their identity by way of decolonizing the ideology constructed by western civilization. However, they seem to be intrigued in the circle of the white enticement. In a manner, such post-colonized identity has put the African Americans in a certain sense of predicament. In this way, the colonized, as suggested by Plumwood, seems to fall into a trap in the mentality of colonization. Thus, one of the main problems for the colonized is the “reclamation and affirmation of subordinated identity” in the dimension of race, class and ethnic colonization (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 61). In this light, the colonized are not genuinely free from the bondage of slavery mentality; rather, they are inclined to identify and cling to what the colonizer has taught them, internalizing such a dominant ideology in their mind-set. In *Paradise*, the founding fathers reproduce such a dominant ideology and enact upon the all-black community they established, falling into the pitfall of the logic of colonization unconsciously. And such a logic of colonization brings about the sense of hegemonic masculinity, which also results in the suppression of Native

Americans.

2.1.1 Naturalizing the Natives

In the western concept, the Natives are linked with nature, as primitive, uncivilized and wild. Under the logic of colonization, the Natives, the so-called “noble savages,” are those who need to be enlightened by Western civilization. Noël Sturgeon has pointed out, “the ‘noble savage’ stereotype brings with it the myth of the ‘vanished Indian.’ In other words, without allowing for change, for agency in conditions of cultural transformation, Native American cultures will only be seen as either pure or extinct, as either pre-modern or assimilated” (Sturgeon 123). In *Paradise*, the Convent used to be a school run by the nuns in teaching the Indian girls. As we may note, the nuns “bring God and language to natives who were assumed to have neither; to alter their diets, their clothes, their minds; to help them despise everything that had once made their lives worthwhile and to offer them instead the privilege of knowing the one and only God and a chance” (227). Under the dualistic discourse, the Natives are marginalized as the “other” that should be civilized by western culture. According to Plumwood, “the other is recognised only to the extent that it is assimilated to the self, or incorporated into the self and its systems of desires and needs: only as colonised by the self. The master consciousness cannot tolerate unassimilated otherness” (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 52). Similarly, in *Undomesticated Ground*, Stacy Alaimo argues that “sexualizing conquest and colonialism naturalizes those processes while depicting women, the land, and indigenous people as mysterious zones that invite their own violation. Indeed, the very glorification of ‘nature’ as a quintessentially American ideal is complicit with a conquest mentality” (Alaimo 13). Hence, it is clear that the “conquest mentality” triggers the black men to reconstruct the same mechanism, which they enact upon women and nature. As Sturgeon points out, “racial parity as a dualistic operating

principle designed to resist racism ends up replicating its structures” (Sturgeon 106). In order to resist racism, the black men attempt to establish a paradise of their own but, at the same time, they unconsciously reproduce the similar hegemonic system of colonization in excluding the others.

2.1.2 The Effect of Denial

In the concept of dualism, the effect of denial cultivates the contrasting concept of hierarchy and the inferior versus the superior/ dominant. “Hierarchies,” as Plumwood suggests, “can be seen as open to change, as contingent and shifting. But once the process of domination forms culture and constructs identity, the inferiorised group (unless it can marshall cultural resources for resistance) must internalise this inferiorisation in its identity and collude in this low valuation, honouring the values of the centre, which form the dominant social values” (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 47). What Plumwood hints here is that dualism creates the boundary between the dominant and the inferior, which provides certain estrangement and supremacy. This is what Plumwood argues,

dualism is a relation of separation and domination inscribed and naturalised in culture and characterised by radical exclusion, distancing and opposition between orders constructed as systematically higher and lower, as inferior and superior, as ruler and ruled, which treats the division as part of the natures of beings construed not merely as different but as belonging to radically different orders or kinds, and hence as not open to change. (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 47-8)

In *Paradise*, the effect of denial forces the eight-rock family to move to Arapaho territory. As the narrator relates, “denied and guarded against, they altered their route and made their way west of the unassigned lands, south of Logan County, across Canadian River into Arapaho territory, becoming stiffer, prouder with each misfortune”

(14). Turned down by the other towns, the 8-R families travel miles to search for a watering place. The search for running water represents the desire of life, cleansing, prosperity, and freedom from sins. The flow of running water symbolizes the mobility and vitality of nature. As the origin of running water, the deep well symbolizes the root that connects the life of the black people. In a sense, the blacks are eager to build up a community so that they can be interconnected with each other, like a paradise providing with living water of life. However, since the effect of denial has traumatized their mind-set, the colonized mentality transforms the thirst for love and freedom into a sense of radical exclusion, as Plumwood suggests, a sense of “hyperseparation.”

2.2 Radical Exclusion

“Radical exclusion,” as Plumwood suggests, is the main goal of dualism. Since the other is regarded as inferior, “differentiation from it demands not merely distinctness but radical exclusion, not merely separation but hyperseparation” (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 49). In addition, “radical exclusion requires unbridgeable separation, a separation not open to change, in extreme cases rendering conjunction, continuity, or proximity even unimaginable (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 51) . “Separation,” as Plumwood observes, “may be established by denying or minimizing overlap qualities and activities, and by the erection of rigid barriers to prevent contact” (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 49). In an interview with Farnsworth, Morrison talks about the idea of separation,

the isolation, the separateness, is always a part of utopia. And it was my meditation, if you will, and interrogation of the whole idea of paradise, the safe place, the place full of bounty, where no one can harm you. But, in addition to that, it’s based on the notion of exclusivity. All paradises, all utopias are designed by who is not there, by the people who are not allowed

in (Farnsworth 156).

Therefore, in order to accomplish “maximum separation,” the master may attempt to amplify and heighten the significance of distinctness and to eradicate the common characteristics. Such mentality may come along with a sense of denial. According to Plumwood, “denial or minimisation of continuity is important in eliminating identification and sympathy between members of the dominating class and the dominated, and in eliminating possible confusion between powerful and powerless” (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 49). For the supreme and powerful ruler, “formation of identity” may require “constant reassurance of superiority and hence constant reassertion of hierarchy” (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 51). To this light, such hierarchy strengthened by dualism would consolidate the boundary between the dominant and the dominated. Consequently, the dualistic mindset shapes the relationship between the master and the slave and, at the same time, deepens the hierarchies of superiority and inferiority. In doing so the relation between the colonizer and the colonized is interconnected, but not one of equivalence or reciprocity, albeit each is relying on the other for shaping the identity.

2.2.1 The Effect of Disallowal: A Place for Home

In *Paradise*, radical exclusion is shown by the disallowing effect. The blacks are inflicted by the trauma of slavery, since they are rejected not only by the white but also by the other black community. Hence, they travel a great distance from Mississippi to Louisiana to Oklahoma. They search for a space for place, but, at the same time, they are traumatized by the effect of disallowal. In fact, they are “turned away by rich Choctaw and poor whites, chased by yard dogs, jeered at camp prostitutes and their children, they were nevertheless unprepared for the aggressive discouragement they received from Negro towns already being built” (13). Such humiliation and shame harden their hearts in establishing an isolated community to

exclude the others from the all-black community. As the narrator says, “having been refused by the world in 1890 on their journey to Oklahoma, Haven residents refused each other nothing, were vigilant to any need or shortage” (109). In her essay entitled “Paradise Lost: The Destructive Forces of Double Consciousness and Boundaries in Toni Morrison’s *Paradise*,” Kristin Hunt reminds us that the main characters fail to adapt themselves to the changing condition. As Hunt writes, “in their attempts to gain and maintain control of space and time, the townsmen end up destroying innocent women. The pressures of geographical displacement and racism take their toll even in the unlikely location of an established all-black town” (Hunt 119).

In a sense, the black South is regarded as the Israelites enslaved in Egypt of racial bondage in the biblical allusion. According to Glenn Meeter, the South is like “Israel wandering in the wilderness, like Israel led into captivity by heathen conquerors” (Meeter 283). The journey can be regarded as the biblical exodus, for the blacks travel from place to place. This is similar to the way that Moses leads the Israelites (who are also turned down by the Egyptians) away from Egypt. Hence, after the nine families experienced the ruthless rejection in different places,

they become a tight band of wayfarers bound by the enormity of what had happened to them. Their horror of whites was convulsive but abstract. They saved the clarity of their hatred for the men who had insulted them in ways too confounding for language: first by excluding them, then by offering them staples to exist in that very exclusion. Everything anybody wanted to know about the citizens of Haven or Ruby lay in the ramification of that one rebuff out of many. (189)

Such fear of rejection illustrates the humiliation and contempt. As the narrator writes, “it was the shame of seeing one’s pregnant wife or sister or daughter refused shelter that had rocked them, and changed them for all time. The humiliation did more than

rankle; it threatened to crack open their bones” (95). And this humiliation and contempt inscribed upon the black is what Frantz Fanon declares in “The Fact of Blackness,” “Shame. Shame and self-contempt. Nausea. When people like me, they tell me it is in spite of my colour. When they dislike me, they point out that it is not because of my colour. Either way, I am locked into the infernal circle” (Fanon 112). Such an idea can be linked to Patricia’s mother, a light-skinned mulatta, for the townspeople use Pat’s mother to go into a store to buy supplies or a can of milk. Unfortunately, she died in childbirth with no help from the townspeople because of her skin color.

The humiliation upon the blacks can also be illustrated in Deek’s sister, Ruby. When Ruby was sick on the trip, there is no medical help provided by the others, since “no colored people were allowed in the wards. No regular doctor would attend them” (113). As a result, Ruby died on the waiting room bench when the nurse attempted to find a veterinarian to examine her. The inhumane treatment to the blacks, especially regarding black women as animals, aggravates the exclusiveness of the black community. Therefore, the mentally wounded blacks reproduce what they had experienced before by shutting themselves in the community they build. This is what Plumwood has pointed out, “the colonised is not free to proceed independently, but affirms uncritically whatever the coloniser has made of him or her, or embraces whatever the coloniser despised and excluded” (Plumwood 1993:61).

In fact, the rejection from the other communities aggravates the effect of exclusion among the blacks. In this light, the rejection by the white and other black towns illustrates a sense of invisibility among the wounded blacks, for the “invisibility,” in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1952), is shown when “you ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world, that you’re a part of all the sound and anguish, and you strike out with your fists, you curse and you swear

to make them recognize you” (Ellison 7-8). The painful remark is justified, for the black are often racially perceived as inferior, immoral, and wicked; as oftentimes “Sin is Negro as virtue is white” (Fanon 124). Such invisibility from the racist groups intensifies the humiliation and contempt upon the blacks. Thus, rejected by the white and the colored towns, the founding fathers established an all-black town in excluding the others. In her conversation with Ann Hostler, Morrison discusses her idea about paradise:

[It] is based on boundaries, on exclusion, which is not love. The Piedade has at the end of the novel—of a ship—hints at a vessel on which there is no hierarchy, no exclusion. That’s why the “paradise” at the end of the novel is supposed to have a lowercase ‘p.’ . . . True paradise is what we enact here. Salvation occurs in context and history. The community of Ruby has not developed a language to accommodate the new, the non-hierarchical notions of community emerging at the convent, so they fear it. (Hostler 198)

The idea to build up a paradise for the all-black community implies a sense of exclusion. Such exclusion from the others becomes a severe problem that Morrison attempts to criticize. In reply to Elizabeth Farnsworth about the danger of exclusivity, Morrison says that

isolation, you know, carries the seeds of its own destruction because as times change, other things seep in, as it did with Ruby. The ’50s, that was one thing; the ’70s, that was another, and they refused to deal with the changing times, and simply threw up their gates, like any gated community, to keep everything away. And, in fact, that was the necessary requirement for the destruction of their paradise. (Farnsworth 156)

For example, Morrison uses the character Misner to point out such a crucial issue, as Misner converses with Pat, “we live in the world, Pat. The whole world. Separating us,

isolating us—that’s always been their weapon. Isolation kills generations. It has no future” (210). In a sense, isolation cannot eradicate racial discrimination, rather, it would become a kind of poison that could annihilate the future society. In addition, such an isolation is further evidenced in the school Nativity play, with seven holy families instead of nine original families. What’s more, such an effect of disallowal has gone to such an extreme that it has resulted in the attack of the Convent. And the Convent women are turned as scapegoats, as those who bear the burden of the black men’s vanity, pride and hypocrisy. What the Convent women suffer is similar to what Jesus had experienced, for they are misjudged by the crowds’ false accusation and attacked by the ones with malice. In a manner, the black men in Ruby town are like Pharisees, to whom Jesus condemned as the devil’s descendants.⁴ I think these black men are the ones who are unclean inside of their hearts by spreading false teaching and lies.

In short, the effect of disallowal gives rise to the establishment of the exclusive community. The new fathers set up the one-drop rule to maintain the pure blood among the blacks. However, if one violates such a rule, the problem of identity conflict would appear, and the effect of disallowal would come along as well.

2.3 The Identity Conflict: Miscegenation

Throughout the novel, the issues of slavery, incest, miscegenation, patrimony increase the complexity of the 8-rock family. Morrison presents the black people’s resistance against the white and their quest for subjectivity, depicting the black people’s compassion, love, and humanity in their confrontation with the white. The

⁴ In the book of John, Jesus told the Pharisees, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it”(John 8:44).

white authority, with racial prejudice, enacts the suppression upon the black, but it is the black who suppress the mulattoes.

The fear of miscegenation in the all-black community consolidates the radical exclusion against light-skinned blacks. While resisting the white ideology upon black identity, dark-skinned blacks reproduce the mentality of dualism in constructing the hierarchy and the inferiority, excluding light-skinned blacks from the all-black community. *Paradise* contains an important clue of the racial issue, “for ten generations they had believed the division they fought to close was free against slave and rich against poor. Usually, but not always, white against black. Now they saw a new separation: light-skinned against black” (194). Such a separation appears to me as a sense of abjection. In an essay entitled “Leaving Abjection: Where 'Black' Meets Theory,” Corrie Claiborne takes on Julia Kristeva’s notion of “abjection” to explain that “Black women, as they are presented in this passage, are truly abject beings, so far from any sense of identity that they merely disappear or become invisible when trying to engage in the discourse of domination. This utter abjection, sublime alienation, would seem, at least according to Kristeva's argument, to put black women in the ripe position to become subjects” (Claiborne 30). For example, we notice that Patricia Best Cato, a light-skinned mulatto, works on genealogy by collecting the family history of the townspeople. During her process in investigating the family tree, Patricia realizes that the “new separation” is caused by skin-color: “light-skinned against black” (194). When she asks questions from door to door in Ruby, the only thing she found in her project is “invisible doors closed, and the conversation turned to weather” (187). Through her project, Patricia discovers that a number of women have “only one name” or have “generalized last name.” In this light, it can be inferred that women’s identity are attached to her husband; otherwise, they may have no specific identity. Thus, we can perceive that the problem of racial issue is racial purity,

for miscegenation can be regarded as a stain to the whole family. In this sense, the new fathers make great efforts to keep the family lines racially “pure,” but, Roger Best, Patricia’s father, is the first one to violate the rule, for he married a light-skinned woman “with no last name, a wife without people, a wife of sunlight skin, a wife of racial tampering” (197). As Steward remarks, Roger Best is the one who brings “along the dung we leaving behind” (201). In a letter to her father, Patricia writes, “Daddy, they don’t hate us because Mama was your first customer. They hate us because she looked like a cracker and was bound to have cracker-looking children like me, and although I married Billy Cato, who was an 8-rock like you, like them, I passed the skin on to my daughter” (196). Such a miscegenation in Cato’s family breaks the one-drop rule and is regarded as evil by the 8-rock family. Therefore, the Cato family has been endowed with “impure” essence, certain as death. After she finds out that the history of Ruby and Haven is controlled by the narrow-minded and hypocritical patriarchs, Patricia “burns the papers” since there is no use keeping track of the origin of family due to the exclusion of her family. Even though Patricia is a daughter of an 8-rock father, her skin color is the distinct disdain that excludes the mulattoes from entering the all-black community.

To sum up, the binary opposition between the black and white is cultivated by the logic of colonization. Such an idea has caused the identity conflict among the black community, for the effect of maintaining pure blood seems to be sabotaged by the act of miscegenation. Thus, the fear of miscegenation reassures a radical exclusion, and the mulattoes are rejected or despised by the black community. If the ideal to build up an all-black community is by way of radical exclusion from the other races, then, undoubtedly, not only the people in such a community but also the other races would be trapped in the predicament of identity conflict.

2.3.1 Identity Conflict between the Old and the Young

Aside from the identity conflict in miscegenation, the logic of colonization also results in conflict between the old and the young in the black history. According to Sturgeon, “the conceptualization of racial parity as a dualism precluded an analysis of power that identifies the intersections of multiple forms of domination, discrimination, oppression, and privilege” (Sturgeon 107). In her conversation with Carolyn C. Denard, Morrison explains,

whites have been thinking about it exclusively as their history. There was no history for Whites in the South other than the South. . . . For Black people it was their past but not their history. Their history was someplace else. What they did with their past is to create something brand new” (Denard 195).

Under the colonial mentality, the black people in Ruby attempt to maintain an intact community and resist any change. They want to exclude the others with the purpose of consolidating the pure bloodline, but at the same time, they become withered, short-sighted, and indifferent. For example, the younger generation yearns for rewriting history; however, the old generation still maintains the concept in preserving their ancestor’s history. On seeing the Oven’s faded motto, the younger generation aspires to change and restore it as “Be the Furrow of His Brow”; on the contrary, the older generation still wants to conserve it as “Beware the Furrow of His Brow.” The old generation refuses to change it because they have lived in the secluded society for years. They feel they have the obligation to protect the tradition. Therefore, the discussion of the motto raises the argument between the two generations. In the process Deacon blames Roy Beauchamp angrily, “Nobody, I mean nobody, is going to change the Oven or call it something strange. Nobody is going to mess with a thing our grandfathers built. They made each and every brick one at time with their own hands...They dug the clay— not you. They carried the hod—not you” (85). Responding to Deek, Roy Beauchamp argues that “It’s our history too, sir. Not just

yours” (86). What Roy says here is that the history belongs to all the members of the black community, and should not be controlled by some people. The patriarchal domination can be revealed in the old generation’s remark, as Steward Morgan says, “If you, any one of you, ignore, change, take away, or add to the words in the mouth of that Oven, I will blow your head off just like you was a hood-eye snake” (87). Obviously, the founding fathers threaten the younger generation by the violent warning. However, such refusal to change would not help the growth among the black people. That is, they need to change their old ideas and get improved. And improvement lies in adjusting oneself in the changeable environment. As Misner suggests, “there was a whole lot of life before slavery. And we ought to know what it is. If we’re going to get rid of the slave mentality, that is” (210). In other words, if the blacks want to shake off the slave mentality, they can trace back to Africa, a place Misner regarded as the roots for African Americans. As the character Misner realizes, shaking off the slave mentality also means that the blacks need to trace back to Africa, a place where he regarded as the roots for African Americans.

In a nutshell, for the young generation, history is changeable and dynamic whereas for the old generation, history is something fixed and immovable. The identity conflict between the older and the younger generations also shows the hidden menace of the radical exclusion. Under the logic of colonization, such an identity conflict between the generations is in consequence of the radical exclusion from the other communities. Hence, it is necessary for the two generations to reclaim their identity, rather than resort to the exclusion of all other races.

2.4 Reclaiming Identity

If one attempts to go beyond colonized identity, one cannot but notice the critical affirmation in reclaiming one’s identity. As Plumwood notes, the reworking of gender identity is related to “elements of transcendence” and “elements of affirmation.”

Hence, what we attempt to reclaim is a healthy feminist identity, which requires “a good balance between self-criticism and self-affirmation. In the same way, critical reconstruction requires the balancing of conflicting imperatives towards redefinition and revaluing” (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 65). Since colonized identity seems to be a prison for the colonized, it is pivotal to maintain affirmation to reclaim his or her identity. And “affirmation,” suggested by Plumwood, “is essential to counter the logic of the master subject, who inferiorises women both individually and culturally, backgrounds and devalues their works, and defines them as peripheries to the master’s centre” (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 63). Under the systems of oppression, the identities of the colonized and the colonizer seem to be intertwined with each other. In this light, “women are not only the colonised in relation to gender, but are also themselves the colonisers (for example, in relation to other races and cultures, classes and species), critical reconstruction of identity normally involves not only affirming and rebuilding subordinated identities, but also reconstructing master identities” (Plumwood1993: 67). Accordingly, Plumwood suggests that women should try to shake off the “master identity,” for such ideology has been implemented upon western culture for centuries. I think the concept of reclaiming one’s identity is connected to what Frantz Fanon suggests, “I refuse to accept that amputation. I feel in myself a soul as immerse as the world, truly a soul as deep as the deepest of rivers, my chest has the power to expand without limit. I am a master and I am advised to adopt the humility of the cripple” (Fanon 125). To some extent, such awakening in one’s identity is necessary but cannot be taken to an extreme. What I want to emphasize is that to reclaim one’s identity does not mean to exclude the others or to dominate the others. Since we are interconnected with each other, we cannot be alienated from the other races. In an essay entitled “Learning to Live with Differences: The Challenge of Ecofeminist Community,” Judith Plant suggests that Western

civilization seems to be unconscious of the notion that the natural world and humankind are, in fact, interdependent to each other as a coexisting web. As Plant suggests, the establishment of ecofeminist community would benefit from healing the broken relationships among nature and humankind. In doing so, Plant asserts that “humanity must turn toward ecocommunity: the creation of vibrant and sustainable human communities, a way of being in this world that reflects a respect and love for all of life” (“Learning to Live with Differences: The Challenge of Ecofeminist Community” 121). What Plant encourages here is to live a harmonious way with all the distinctness in the ecosystem. In other words, Plant encourages us to learn from the natural world because “good health is sustained by a tolerance of diversity, and stability is a result of ongoing mutual aid between and among species” (“Learning to Live with Differences: The Challenge of Ecofeminist Community” 121). Such idea is similar to Morrison’s idea in her interview with Verdelle, for the main target in *Paradise* is “talking about the concept of living in a good space and wanting goodness for its own sake, not for its glamour, not for its feel-good qualities, not for its notoriety, but in and of itself” (Verdelle 169).

In short, if we learn to respect different races and understand the fact we are all depend on each other rather than exclude the others, then, it is possible to reclaim one’s identity and build a healthy community. Hence, it is imperative to recognize the importance of “interdependence” and act accordingly in the future.

In a sense, *Paradise* demonstrates, among other things, how nature is bound up with racist viewpoints and the intraracial conflicts. As discussed in the preceding paragraphs, I have scrutinized the logic of dualism, the denial of t colonized identity, radical exclusion (hyperseparation), and the identity conflict with the aid of Plumwood’s theory. I argue that if we want to establish a paradise, it is essential to live in accord with different races, rather than exclude the others by regulating the

strict racial boundary. And the idea of building an “Ecotopia” will be discussed in the next chapter.



Chapter Three

The Interconnectedness of Nature and Eco-community in *Paradise*

On the whole, Morrison's *Paradise* bears witness to the failure of an all-black of community. Under the traumatic historical background, the founding fathers have experienced the abjections not only from the white but also from the light-skinned blacks. Accordingly, the influence of shame and humiliation brought up by slavery history compels the founding fathers into establishing a supposed utopia in Ruby town. Nevertheless, the excluded community in Ruby expounds the disillusion of a perfect paradise on the basis of monotony, uniformity, and fixedness. On the contrary, the Convent epitomizes an easily accessible place, with its harmonious relations with nature, where the broken-hearted women are at liberty to come and go. In a manner, the tenacious connection with nature in the Convent allows the resident to transform, flourishing in the dynamic ecosystem and propagating themselves under the nourishment of nature.

Therefore, this chapter focuses on the interconnection of nature and eco-community. Divided into four sections, section one investigates the meaning of and the search for ecotopia. In the following section, I discuss the paradoxical consideration in imagining the ecosystem community as a nurturing mother. In section Three, I argue that religion serves as the nurturing power in *Paradise*. In the final section, I scrutinize the cultural and collective identity of the eco-community, which I also explore the significance of naming and healing from the eco-community in *Paradise*. My primary goal in this chapter is to explore the potential of ecofeminism in the discussion of the interconnection of nature and eco-community.

As a whole, ecofeminism focuses on disconnecting the interrelated oppressive structure in the community. In "Ecofeminism: Linking Theory and Practice," Janis Birkeland points out that Ecofeminism is not only a social movement, rather, it also

“offers a *political analysis* that explores the links between androcentrism and environmental destruction” (Birkeland 18). Namely, Ecofeminism takes a political approach to reveal the existing problems between nature and the socially constructed community. In an essay entitled with “A Cross-Cultural Critique of Ecofeminism,” Huey-li Li proposes that “the praxis of ecofeminism aims at ending many interrelated oppressive systems” (Li 289). To ecofeminists, “nature is not an abstract, static, and fixed entity, but rather a complex and interconnected web of life” (Li 290). Such idea of community as an interconnected web is similar to Plant, as she suggests, “in the natural world, where all life is interrelated, teeming with diversity and complexities, so it is with everyday human life” (“Learning to Live with Differences: The Challenge of Ecofeminist Community” 133). Since we are all connected, we attempt to build up an ideal community in which to live; however, I think such an idea implies a search for utopia, or, I would say, an ecotopia. And in *The Pursuit of Ecotopia* (2010), E. N. Anderson defines ecotopia by saying: “ecotopia would be a place of love and freedom. It would be a world of free choices and many options, rather than a world of uniformity. Ecotopia, like sustainability, is a process goal” (*The Pursuit of Ecotopia* 207).

The image of ecotopia, suggested by Ynestra King, conveys the “utopian visions of harmonious, diverse, decentralized communities, using only those technologies based on ecological principles, as the only practical solution for the continuation of life on earth” (King 25). The beautiful and harmonious image of ecotopia is also echoed by Plumwood,

the story of a land where women live at peace with themselves and with the natural world is a recurrent theme of feminist utopias. This is a land where there is no hierarchy, among humans or between humans and animals, where people care for one another and for nature, where the earth and the

forest retain their mystery, power and wholeness, where the power of technology and of military and economic force does not rule the earth, or at least that part of it controlled by women. (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 7)

However, such an ecological community as a life-supporting system is often destroyed by patriarchal dominance. In “Toward an Ecological-Feminist Theology of Nature,” Rosemary Radford Ruether argues that, “the notion of dominating the universe from a position of autonomy is an illusion of alienated consciousness” (Ruether 148). In establishing an eco-community, Plant suggests that we should embrace differences. As Plant argues, “without embracing diversity, the various organizations and factions would continue to be limited to single-issue struggles. But by building common ground, this coalition could do more than fight corporate forestry practices” (“Learning to Live with Differences: The Challenge of Ecofeminist Community” 139). At some point, Plant proceeds “to create a community in which our differences could work together for the common well-being of both people and place. After all, this is nature’s pattern: diversity is the sign of a healthy and stable ecosystem” (“Learning to Live with Differences: The Challenge of Ecofeminist Community” 139). A healthy and stable ecosystem, I believe, is what Morrison has proposed in the Convent, in which she emphasizes the importance of to establish a sustainable and dynamic community, one that accepts diversity and difference. On the other hand, if a community only accepts the people within the limited boundary, such a community would be at a deadlock. In other words, embracing diversity also implies a love of nature. According to Chaia Heller, “love of nature emerges from knowledge of oppression and potential liberation within our eco-communities. We learn this love by actively caring for our social and natural eco-communities, by fighting all forms of social oppression, and by expressing our potential for cooperation and creative

enhancement of nature” (Heller 234).

In short, all of the community is interconnected with nature. There is no culture or society exists exclusively or secluded. Hence, “we will strive to know and care for the resistance of all living things that dwell in poisoned eco-communities, offering ourselves as allies in resistance to social and ecological degradation. The question will no longer be how to ‘protect’ nature, but, rather, how to liberate humans within society so that we may create a harmonious, ecological world” (Heller 235).

3.1 In Search of Ecotopia

In the book of *Genesis*, the Garden of Eden is home to Adam and Eve and contains numerous fruitful plants and abundant natural resources. Originally, the word “Eden” means “pleasure” in Hebrew. The Garden of Eden is also called “paradise,” a place that symbolizes the harmonious relationship among God, mankind, and nature. In *Genesis* chapter two, we see the natural environment of Garden of Eden is full of serenity and harmony with the ecological system, since “the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:9). However, when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruits from the tree of knowledge and escaped away from God, they were banished out of the Garden. God has prepared bountiful food for men, but it is men who rejects God first and follow their own ways. In the story, Adam and Eve had the choice not to eat the forbidden fruits. But when they made mistakes, instead of admitting their faults, they blamed the others first. Thus, when God asks Adam whether he had taken the forbidden fruits, Adam replied “the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit of the tree and I took it” (Genesis 3:11). In Adam’s reply, he did not admit his mistakes; instead, he blamed the faults on God. Hence, because of the original sin, people are inclined to blame the faults on the others. In the biblical

allusion, the Garden of Eden can be seen as an ecotopia, a harmonious place where we've lost and have been dreamed of for a long time.

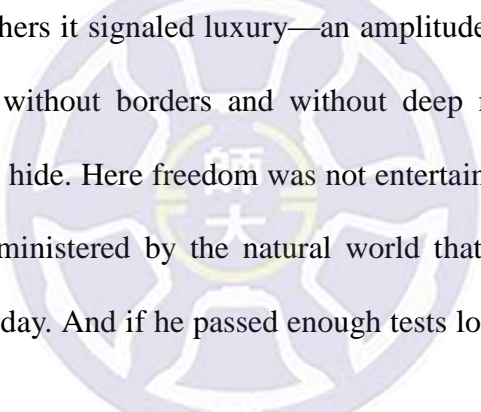
Therefore, the desire to search for an ecotopia becomes the deepest longing in the man's hearts. In order to find such an ecotopia, it is necessary to study our interactions and connections with the natural environment. In other words, when we study the "environment," we are examining the complicated interactions with our lives and nature. Throughout the history, the worst issue of the contemporary world has been the communal animosity, which spawns from social abjection, particularly alienation from the underprivileged and the wretched. What's worse, "conformity and passivity also result from social rejection and intolerance; people fail to take responsibility or to learn from others" (*The Pursuit of Ecotopia* 196). Thus, the environment is agonized by human acrimony and repudiation. In this way, the idea to build up a self-sustainable community would be merely an illusion. So, the potential annihilation to the tranquility of an ecotopia is suggested by Anderson, who writes

standardization, mindless conformity, intolerant hate, and mutual jealousy have combined to produce a worldwide cultural trend hostile to all difference, all deviance, and all variety. This is, at present, the more extreme and direct threat to the environment, as it is to human life and to the human spirit. (*The Pursuit of Ecotopia* 26)

Specifically, it is harmful to pursue a collectively pure society. If we do not learn to cooperate with one another, we would fail to establish an ideal place. That is, if we want to maintain a healthy ecological management, we should strive to accommodate ourselves to the diverse ecosystem.

The solution to the problem is to reach the consensus that we are all connected together. So, how can we establish a perfect ecotopia? According to Anderson, "the morality of a perfect world would be a basic one of concerned citizenship: Care, care

for, care about. It would be an ethic that could be accommodated easily in any religion or political ideology, without interfering too much with process of living” (*The Pursuit of Ecotopia* 45). Nevertheless, the exclusion of a community would hinder the progression of any society. The healthy and pleasant eco-community cannot afford to be shackled by the excluded ideologies; thus, it is essential to subvert such concept and learn to be compatible with diverse ecosystem. Specifically, if we want to build up an ideal eco-community, one should learn to revere the diversification of the biosphere and esteem one another with different cultures. In *Paradise*, building a community of Haven on the Indian’s land is a search for freedom, as the narrator describes it,


 to the Old Fathers it signaled luxury—an amplitude of soul and stature that was freedom without borders and without deep menacing woods where enemies could hide. Here freedom was not entertainment. . . . Here freedom was a test administered by the natural world that a man had to take for himself every day. And if he passed enough tests long enough, he was king. (99)

In this sense, the building of a community is a quest for freedom, a shelter and a homeland. In short, the black people are longing for an ecotopia where they can be protected from harm, where they can gain autonomy and freedom without suppression, and where they can rest in peace as a home.

3.1.1 The Pursuit of Ecotopia in *Paradise*

Throughout *Paradise*, most of the characters are searching for home, an ecotopia that they can obtain freedom and true love. Such an ecotopia is a lost paradise that people attempt to establish. As Karen F. Stein suggests, “*Paradise* depicts several journeys in search of home: two of them, in past tense, are epic in scope and led by men; the others, in present tense, are the less purposeful wanderings of five women”

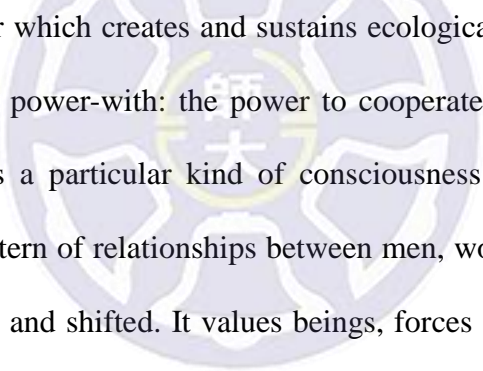
(Stein 157). The pursuit of an ideal home can also be shown in Morrison's conversation with Farnsworth, as she put it:

They had left a home. So they're seeking for another home, while other people are doing the same thing, except the other people were leaving a home that they didn't want to be in any longer, or couldn't be in any longer. Native Americans were being moved around in their home. African-Americans were looking for a second one and hopefully one that would be simply up to them, their own people, their own habits, their own culture, and to contain themselves in that. (Farnsworth 156)

That is, having experienced certain sense of trauma, most of the characters attempt to search for an ideal home. The people in Ruby tend to build up a utopian city to fulfill such a dream. Nevertheless, in "Reading and Insight in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*," Linda J. Krumholz pinpoints the ironic problem of *Paradise* as that "repetition without a difference maintains itself through rigidity and exclusion and thus destroys the ideal it seeks to preserve; an unchanging *Paradise* inevitably loses its paradisiacal nature" (Krumholz 21). Besides, in *Reading, Learning, Teaching Toni Morrison* (2009), Karen F. Stein points out that "the isolated, exclusive, utopian city of Ruby becomes unstable precisely because it resists change. Locked into their nostalgia for the past, the founding fathers seek to keep the external society's changing values out of their small paradise" (Stein 158). The truth is, the founding fathers' unwillingness to change in Ruby fails to establish the paradise they dream of. In addition, in *Toni Morrison: Playing with Difference* (2003), Lucille P. Fultz investigates the community in *Paradise*, as she writes, "it is a community splintered not by white racism but by intraracial caste based on color and gender, and a community further diminished by intolerance based on fear of a women-centered enclave" (Fultz 11).

As a whole, I think the ideal to build up an ecotopia can be realized in the

Convent because this community, unlike the isolated Ruby town, functions as a self-reliable and self-sustainable ecotopia for the mentally-traumatized women. Therefore, the Convent women, as Magali Cornier Michael proposes in “Re-Imagining Agency: Toni Morrison's *Paradise*,” maintain an amiable, collective and reciprocal affiliation within the community; each of them is nurtured by the dynamic and organic eco-community. (Michael 650). The Convent, as Jill Matus has described it, provides “freedom to come and go, the plenty of the miraculous gardens, and as a result of Consolata’s mediations, consolation, relief from pain, and saving” (Matus 157). Apparently, the Convent serves as a dynamic ecotopia flowing in an endless stream. Such an idea is brought up by Anne Primavesi’ in *From Apocalypse to Genesis: Ecology, Feminism and Christianity* (1991). As Primavesi observes,



it is the power which creates and sustains ecological community. It enables us to exercise power-with: the power to cooperate, to share, to change. It also embodies a particular kind of consciousness: it is conscious of the world as a pattern of relationships between men, women, and Nature which can be shaped and shifted. It values beings, forces and people according to their effects on others and the appropriateness of their actions. It takes account of the effects of its own actions in relation to the largest number of systems possible. (Primavesi 221)

This interconnection based on the mutual support in the eco-community can achieve the effect of healing. In other words, “it is power aligned with love. It is the combination of both power and love and which makes a community workable and sustainable. It is the combination of power and love which Christians call the Spirit, and which empowers us to shape our common future for the good of all” (Primavesi 221). In a sense, ecotopia is a place where people can be connected with the power of love and create a better future for the people within it.

To sum up, the search for an ecotopia explicates people's aspiration for an ideal paradise in the fulfillment of autonomy. In *Paradise*, these wretched women found their sanctuary in the Convent. Since human beings are connected with nature so deeply, the establishment of an ecotopia needs mutual respect and support with nature in the ecosystem.

3.2 Ecosystem Community as a Nurturing Mother

Throughout centuries, western culture has projected nature with the image of the “nurturing mother.” Such an image links nature with a kind and generous female dedicated all she has to supporting the needs of all human beings. In fact, such ideas of the unreserved mother image are invented by the patriarchal fantasy. In “For the Love of Nature: Ecology and the Cult of the Romantic,” Chaia Heller notices that “the metaphor of ‘Mother Nature’ is crafted within a patriarchal ideology that ‘justifies’ women’s compulsory heterosexuality, motherhood, and submissiveness. It contains within it the history of what it has meant to be a woman and mother within this society, as well as what it has meant for women within this society to continually be compared to our dualistic idea of nature” (Heller 232). Thus, nature is often endowed with generous and submissive devotion to mankind, as Shel Silverstein presented in the story of *The Giving Tree*. Aside from the devoting and generous mother image, the patriarchal ideology coined an antagonistic image of mother, depicting nature with wilderness and disorder. Such untamed and unmanageable nature, as Primavesi suggested, “could bring on violence, storms, droughts and general chaos” (Primavesi 62). Specifically, if nature brings about the natural disaster instead of providing the resources we want, we often demonize it as savage and enigmatic and make great efforts to conquer or force it to become the way we presume. Similarly, the men of Ruby town stereotyped women as submissive, kind and sacrificial entity for the community; however, the Convent women are deviated from their fantasy of the

submissive and nurturing women image. Thus, the men of Ruby hatch a plot to the attack of the Convent for the purpose of converting these barbarous women.

Here, ecofeminism helps us to illuminate the myth of imagining nature as a nurturing mother, for I assume such an idea is constructed by the patriarchal center. Since the patriarchal idea creates nature as a nurturing mother, people tend to exploit nature as much as possible. Therefore, the love of “Mother nature” seems to be nonsensical, as Heller asserts, “when motherhood in this culture is oppressive, devalued, and even despised” (Heller 232). In the face of the environmental problems, there is a problematic argument in advocating the concept of saving or protecting nature as propagated by the patriarchal ideology. Hence, Heller suggests that we should learn to relinquish the struggle or craving for delivering or dominating the others. According to Heller,

entering into a social movement is not as romantic as ‘saving’ nature. When we cease to focus exclusively on ‘protecting nature,’ we are forced to encounter people. We encounter the rage, desires, and often the rightful mistrust of the oppressed as well as the unrelinquished privilege of those in the ruling class. (Heller 235)

In a sense, we should neither regard nature as a nurturing mother nor presuppose nature as a helpless and vulnerable female waiting to be saved. As Heller suggests, “we cannot think of nature as a maternal abstraction that we must ‘preserve.’ Abstracting natural ecosystems from social ecosystems reflects no love of nature. Instead, it reflects a carelessly racist or sexist dismissal of humanity” (Heller 236). In order not to be a racist or sexist, what is our role in the ecosystem? The answer is that, as Heller suggests, “our role is not to idealize, protect, or restrain, but to care for each other and for nature in a way that truly expresses an authentic love for the natural and social worlds” (Heller 241). In *Paradise*, the men of Ruby romanticize a flawless idea

in creating an excluded paradise so as to protect their women, children and perfect home. In order to maintain the “wholeness” of the community, Ruby is withdrawn from the interaction with the natural and social world. In other words, the inability to grow in the ecosystem explicates the collapse of the secluded Ruby town. What we learn from the Ruby town exemplifies the breakdown of exclusion; thus, we are under obligation to learn to love nature and to care about nature, since it is “a process of personal and social transformation” (Heller 239).

In short, the appropriate attitude toward nature is neither to regard it as a nurturing mother nor to project it as a vulnerable female waiting for delivering. Alternately, we should learn to appreciate nature. As Heller argues, love of nature is supposed to be “a process of becoming aware of and unlearning ideologies of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and able-ism so that we may cease to reduce our idea of nature to a dark, heterosexual, ‘beautiful’ mother” (Heller 231). In addition, such love of nature “is learned not only by caring for the soil in the community garden, and crafting windmills and solar panels on top of community building, but also by caring for the creative and social needs of human nature within that ecosystem” (Heller 234). In a nutshell, it is essential to embrace the differences of the other with great adoration and love. Through such ways of appreciation, we can set out with the intention of understanding ourselves better. Yet, one thing we should keep in mind is that “love cannot be ‘acquired’ by mediating in isolation” (Heller 233), for isolation would prevent the prosperity and accomplishment in a community.

3.3 Religion as Nurturing Power in *Paradise*

When it comes to nurturing power, one cannot but notice the influence of religion. As Kelly Reames once comments, “just as *Beloved* explores maternal love and *Jazz* romantic love, *Paradise* explores religious devotion” (Reames 21). In *Paradise*, religion plays a crucial role in sustaining the community, as Morrison has

indicated in her conversation with Ann Hostler, “it’s about spiritual love—how it gets played out and how it gets corrupted. For instance, the old nuns at the convent are literally abandoned by the church to which they have given their lives. Ruby is founded by the vigor of black Protestants who survived and prospered. But what saved them in the past could not be transferred along the generations” (Hostler 198). According to Anderson, religion consolidates the ethical systems, maintains the idea of the reverence for life, and gives people the moral support. Religion not only “gives people hope and strength,” but also “teaches and creates real love” (*The Pursuit of Ecotopia* 47). In general, Anderson connects religion with the “environment regulation,” for “environmental management is almost always regarded as a divine charge, enforced by supernatural beings. Most cultures, traditional or other, see the universe as created by divine beings, who want it to be maintained and managed for general welfare” (*The Pursuit of Ecotopia* 45). Thus, religion functions as a certain power that consolidates the wholeness of a group of people. “Religion,” as Anderson suggests, “creates a wider world and an active, intense, emotional involvement in it. It creates a universe of respect for human and nonhuman beings” (*The Pursuit of Ecotopia* 48). However, if the excessiveness of religion has gone too far, it is likely to give rise to an extreme destruction in the society. For example, Reverend Misner perceives Ruby as a community that is “different from other communities in only a couple of ways: beauty and isolation. . . . All of them maintained an icy suspicion of outsiders. Otherwise they were like all small black communities: protective, God-loving, thrifty but not miserly. They saved and spent” (160). Specifically, the problematic issue in the all-black Ruby town is the false piety towards God because they honor God with superficial deeds and behavior; in other words, some of them worship God with affected devotion on the surface but deviates from God inwardly.⁵

⁵ In the book of Isaiah, the predominant prophet Isaiah foretold God’s words by saying, “Wherefore the

Other problems are the incompetence to tell their lives, the repetition of the “past heroism” for the future, and the duplicated life of the old times. Apparently, the people in Ruby town cease to move, but rather prefer lingering in the past. Consequently, the community of Ruby is dead in the water, for the people of the community seem to be dumb to all feelings of compassion and love. On the contrary, the Convent is presented as an eco-community which can make progress in life, growing as a living organism at every moment.

Some critics regard *Paradise* as a book of excessive love of God, however, I would argue, *Paradise* depicts the pretentious love of God. Such pretentious devotion to God explains why the black men of Ruby fabricate a seemingly reasonable rationale for the invasion of the Convent. And the unreasonable attack on the Convent has deeper connection with the religious dispute in *Paradise*, as we shall see the contrasting conflict between Senior Pulliam and Richard Misner. For instance, Senior Pulliam’s sermon proves biased and false, as he said, “do you understand me? God is not interested in you. He is interested in love and the bliss it brings to those who understand and share that interest” (142). As a false teacher, Pulliam expresses paradoxical and ambiguous dogma. On the contrary, Pastor Richard Misner is the one who genuinely understands the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ, as he points out, “God loved the way humans loved one another; loved the way humans loved themselves; loved the genius on the cross who managed to do both and die knowing it” (146).

As an examination of the “utopian community,” *Paradise* deals much with the religious zeal; however, “religious fervor turns into condemnation of others, and the founders’ obsession with protecting their town leads them to betray its principles”

Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men” (Isaiah 29:13).

(Reames 21). In *Paradise*, The community is supposed to provide the nurturing strength to the townspeople, but it fails as a supportive system in Ruby because of the ostentatious religion fervor. As Hunt avers, “Morrison illustrates how this patriarchal mentality eventually fails to nurture a permanent bond between the townspeople and the land” (Hunt 121). In *Ecologies of the Heart: Emotion, Belief, and the Environment* (1996), Anderson implies that religion may provide people with safety and love; however it “has often been bent to serve the most murderous and destructive ends” (*Ecologies of the Heart* 162). As I said above, the bestial massacre in the Convent explicates the enactment of patriarchal power disguised by the religious crusade.

Now let us observe the natural environment of the murdering event. In the crime scene, the environmental surrounding discloses that the slaughter event happened in the middle of the night, surrounded by fog. The men of Ruby chose midnight to execute the carnage because they are unwilling to “engine hum or headlights to ruin their cover of darkness” (18). The cover of darkness, in a sense, symbolizes the men’s malice intrigue. The men’s villainous manner under the cover of darkness⁶ is similar to Judas’s betrayal of Jesus, for the wicked men maneuver the malevolent action by selling Jesus to the Roman officers in the middle of the night. The attack on the Convent embodies the effect of scapegoatism, for “people tend to blame the nearest ‘different’ person” if people are unable to provide a satisfying explanation to the inevitable problem (*Ecologies of the Heart* 96). Thus, Consolata becomes the scapegoat under the malicious plot by the men of Ruby. And those men piously sure

⁶ In the book of John, Jesus condemned the men’s evil acts by saying, “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (John 3:19-21).

of their own righteousness are what Jesus condemned as hypocrites.⁷

With the biblical allusion to Jesus' life, Morrison deliberately performs the theme of resurrection in *Paradise*. In a manner, the theme of resurrection is related to life, vitality, and rebirth in nature, and can be linked to religion as a nurturing power in the eco-community. In this place, the theme of resurrection epitomizes the revival of physical and mental life. In an interview with Ann Hostler, Morrison illustrates this idea by saying,

After his resurrection, Jesus appears to those who want to see him. Vision is a kind of life. The women of the convent in *Paradise* are not deified, but after death they appear to those who want to see them, just as the risen Christ appeared to his disciples. It's bigger than nostalgia. The person who has the vision, converses with it, becomes larger than themselves. (Hostler 197)

In a sense, the theme of resurrection in *Paradise* can be seen as the rebirth from nature, for the bodies of the Convent women mysteriously disappeared after the assassination. Much to our surprise, these women are miraculously rescued by certain divine, unknown and omnipotent power. As Justine Tally has observed in *The Cambridge Companion to Toni Morrison* (2007), "none of the bodies of the slain women are ever found, although all appear again to family members and on the shore of a mysterious ocean located 'down here in paradise'" (Tally 67). In a sense, the Convent women have experienced transformation on the process of life formation. They grow, learn and make progress in the eco-community, the Convent. Near the end of the novel, the Convent women appeared their relatives as the healed and complete

⁷ In the book of Matthew, Jesus condemned the hypocrisy of the people by saying, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Matthew 15:8).

human beings, no longer the “drifting” or “broken-hearted” women. This is what Morrison suggests in the interview, “they claimed their own voices and found a ground from which to speak. They were able to acknowledge their desires and to use their dreams and their art to realize their own identity” (Hostler 197). Besides, before Consolata recovers from her trauma, we see the image of the “winter-plagued” garden as “tomato vines hung limp over fallen fruit, black and smashed in the dirt. Mustards were pale yellow with rot and inattention. A whole spill of melons caved in on themselves near heads of chrysanthemums stricken mud brown. A few chicken feathers were stuck to the low wire fencing protecting the garden from whatever it could” (251). After Consolata begins to meditate about her life, she has transformed from the inside out and realized that she was lost before but is found now.⁸ The transformation of Consolata has great connection to Mary Magna, for it is Mary Magna who saves Consolata from the great depression in breaking up with Deacon. In a manner, Mary Magna demonstrates God’s love in her relationship with Consolata, as Mary told Consolata, “God’s generosity is nowhere better seen than in the gift of patience” (242). In a sense, it is the power of religion that gradually heals Consolata’s mental wounds and gives her the strength to love.

To sum up, all of the Convent women are nurtured by the eco-community. As an eco-community, the Convent not only provides physical nutrition but also spiritual food. After they eat the meal Consolata has prepared, they no longer drift, instead, they are transformed. *Paradise*, as Jill Matus points out, “closes with a vision of Consolata’s paradise, a beatific seashore realm, but not one divorced from this world and its detritus—discarded bottle tops, an old dead radio in the surf, a sandal” (Matus

⁸ The lyrics of the hymn, “I once was lost but now am found,” is an excerpt from the song called “Amazing Grace.” The next sentence, “was blind, but now I see,” explains the situation of Consolata. In a sense, even though she is physically blind, she is no longer blind; instead, she is healed from the spiritual blindness.

167). Besides, they are the ones genuinely carrying out the truth of love and mutual support in the eco-community. They are also the ones receiving the mental healing from their traumas by way of conducting mutual love and forgiveness in Jesus's body of love.⁹ In other words, the Convent is like a branch of the vineyard¹⁰ connected to the life of Jesus. In this vineyard, the Convent women nurture each other's aspiration for love and sprout from the nourishment of the eco-community.

3.3 Collective and Cultural Identity of the Eco-community

As a whole, community symbolizes an essential system that helps to establish certain collective and cultural identity among human beings. In "Community—Meeting Our Deepest Needs," Helen Forsey notes that "community does not represent a withdrawal from the struggle; instead, it is an affirmation that better ways do exist, and an expression of our determination to live those better ways in the here and now" (Forsey 233). In a sense, a healthy community, as Forsey maintains, emphasizes the equilibrium of sovereignty and self-government. And all the members of the community are endowed with authority commensurate with responsibility to settle an issue. The notion of "equality" is rather paramount within a community, since a robust community needs such a balance in both internal and external system. Such a harmonious community can be found in eco-community, for an eco-community is a community that values "equality and respect within the group regardless of sex, race, class, age, other differences, and freedom from intervention

⁹ In the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul explains Gods' words by saying, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

¹⁰ In chapter 15 from the book of John, Jesus explains his relation with his people by using the metaphor of vineyard and gardener, as he says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

from the outside” (Forsey 233). Hence, it is likely to acquire the collective and cultural identity within a compatible eco-community, in which reverence to one another is highlighted.

However, throughout centuries, we have been eager to build a perfect community that unconsciously excludes the others or alienates ourselves from the outside world. In fact, alienation from the outside world would definitely impede the growth within a community. In *Toni Morrison and Womanist Discourse* (1999), Aoi Mori suggests that “alienation from the community inevitably means a lack of communal support and understanding, which is deleterious for the healthy formation of individual identity” (Mori 103). But what triggers the wave of rioting in creating alienation in the community? As Helen Forsey suggests, “the basic causes of that alienation lie in patriarchal attitudes and structures, distance from nature and lack of knowledge and respect for its cycles and systems” (Forsey 232). Under such alienating structures, disparities and exploitation could exist within the community, which could also lead to violence causing the rupture among the community. Such an idea becomes one of the main factors in the raid of the Convent in *Paradise*. The violent onslaught imposed on the Convent women, as Kristin Hunt asserts, “represents a final moment of alienation and a reassertion of the double consciousness that the men of Ruby have held at bay through the power of history and myth inherited from the founders of Haven” (Hunt 125).

Because of the alienation within the community, the founding fathers fall through to ensconce themselves in building a congruous community to attain the collective and cultural identity. However, it is the exclusion that prevents the community to gain the collective and cultural identity. In *Paradise*, the death of Save-Marie in Ruby demonstrates the disintegration of the isolated community. In other words, the funeral of Sweetie’s younger child represents the demand of forgiveness. The death of

Save-Marie dissolves the men's pride and functions as a symbol of the town's redemption, for "Sweetie's vindictiveness put the 8-rocks in the awkward position of deciding to have a real and formal cemetery in a town full of immortals" (296).

In short, I assume that the establishment of an eco-community can be beneficial to keep abreast of developments of the collective cultural identity. In the following sections, I would explain how the theme of naming effect would shed light on achieving the collective cultural identity, and how the healing from the wounds within a community would become a decisive step in shaping a collective cultural identity in an eco-community.

3.3.1 The Significance of Naming in *Paradise*

In general, naming plays an essential role in establishing a collective cultural identity. Without names, one would be lost as drifted plants; thus, reclaiming one's name means to recognize one's own values. In an essay entitled "Recovery of African-American Identity," Aoi Mori contends that "the loss of names and the naming process represents a system of burial and recovery that is significant to African-American identity" (Mori 47). Mori also reminds us that naming could be regarded as "manipulative instruments" which would become another formation of oppressive power. In "Roots: Rejoining Natural and Social History," Stephanie Lahar writes that, "history has rendered women and most non-European, non-privileged people invisible or despicable, destroying their identities and cultures. Invisibility and violence are strangely and intimately related; refusing to perceive or acknowledge another person is one end of a continuum whose other is murder and genocide" (Lahar 93). The absence of name symbolizes the absence of one's identity, thus, the namelessness as intertwined with violence would lead to a horrible assault. Oftentimes, the privileged people are superior in the hierarchy. The naming process, as Mori suggests, is "maneuvered by a ruling group of people in order to maintain a

hierarchical and social order which preserves their own privileges, exploiting black people and relegating them to everlasting disadvantages and the periphery” (Mori 41).

Mori suggests that Morrison in *Paradise* has investigated the cultural and collective lineage in searching for African-American roots. As she expounds,

the discovery of one’s own name is essential to the discovery of one’s identity; names and naming function in the development of awareness of one’s embodied self and his/her relation to the past. The act of naming and the repossession of original names are a refusal to be controlled by images and concepts inflicted by the dominating group; and by these means African Americans are able to obtain their identities and history. (Mori 54)

Throughout centuries, the African Americans have been deprived of their cultural and social identity. Thus, the act of naming is a way to proclaim one’s identity, as Coffee changes his name into Zechariah and leaves his brother after finding his brother dancing in front of a group of the white. Besides, Consolata once claimed, “I call myself Consolata Sosa” (251) when she recovers from the traumatic past. At this stage, the theme of naming effect can be regarded one of the ways to deliver the African Americans from the imprisonment of slavery history. In *Paradise*, as Hunt suggests, due to the affront the founding families of Haven had bear from place to place, they “were determined to establish a strong sense of camaraderie amongst themselves, a line of protection against any outside influences” (Hunt 121). In order to maintain the sense of security and integrity in the all-black community, the founding fathers build up the Oven as an emblem of eternity to consolidate the black community. According to Birkeland, “the egoistic conception of human nature—the image of Man striving for self-realization through independence from necessity (nature) and freedom from social constraints (community)—becomes the implicit goal of humanity as a whole” (Birkeland 25). Nevertheless, we see the dream for independence and freedom is not

realized in the Ruby town. As is shown in Patricia's historical project in the records of the genealogy of the women in Ruby town, the absence of the women's first name exemplifies the disillusion of a community. These women are like a clinging vine attached to the men they marry to. And we know little about their identity and where they are from.

In a nutshell, the naming effect explicates the need of the African Americans to regain their collective and cultural identity. In doing so, one cannot but trace back to the roots of African American cultures. That is, connection to the roots of African American culture and values would also count in creating a healthy and supporting community. If African Americans only have limited knowledge of the roots and the past, then they are likely to become a cultural orphan, for "the destruction of African-American values is closely associated with the loss of original African names" (Mori 40). In other words, if we want to accomplish the collective cultural identity in an eco-community, "we should work to expose and redress the personal insecurities and unconscious motives underlying the power drive and *demystify the social conception of masculinity as power*" (Birkeland 53). However, in order to gain the collective cultural identity in an eco-community, we need not only to examine the effect of naming, but also investigate the healing process in the eco-community.

3.3.2 Healing from the Eco-community in *Paradise*

Since African Americans have experienced tremendous trauma from slavery history, naming assists them in the search of their cultural roots. Aside from this, the effect of healing from the eco-community plays an imperative role in reclaiming one's collective cultural identity. In *Paradise*, rain signifies a healing power in the eco-community, for it cleanses the wounds inside the Convent women's hearts, washes their sin away, and helps to rebuild their identities. As the narrator describes it,

They would have laughed, had enchantment not been so deep. If there were

any recollections of a recent warning or intimations of harm, the irresistible rain washed them away. Seneca embraced and finally let go of a dark morning in state housing. Grace witnessed the successful cleaning of a white shirt that never should have been stained. Mavis moved in the shudder of rose of Sharon petals tickling her skin. Pallas, delivered of a delicate son, held him close while the rain rinsed away a scary woman on an escalator and all fear of black water. Consolata, fully housed by the god who sought her out in the garden, was the more furious dancer, Mavis, the most elegant. (283)

In a manner, the Convent women seem to be sanitized by rain. After the rain, these women are no longer stained, broken, or fragmented. Instead, each of them is healed as a newly complete person¹¹. In addition, the effect of singing in the eco-community is another healing power to the traumatized women. Such healing effects in the eco-community can be perceived in the songs sung by the African American women. As Mori points out, “African-American music has been characterized by reciprocal participation, communal support and healing potency” (Mori 102). For example, the Convent women’s chanting in their dreams represents a healing process from their suppressed hearts. Audible at the end of the novel is Piedade’s song: “in ocean hush a woman black as firewood is singing. Next to her is a younger woman whose head rests on the singing woman’s lap. Ruined fingers troll the tea brown hair. All the colors of seashells—wheat, roses, pearl—fuse in the younger woman’s face” (318). The singing in Piedade’s song ameliorates the traumatic memory of the wounded women, as the narrator relates,

There is nothing to beat this solace which is what Piedade’s song is about,

¹¹ See the book of 2 Corinthians, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

although the words evoke memories neither one has ever had: of reaching age in the company of the other; of speech shared and divided bread smoking from the fire; the unambivalent bliss of going home to be at home—the ease of coming back to love begun. (318)

A beautiful, harmonious, and peaceful picture of the eco-community has been presented at the end of the novel, as the narrator concludes, “another ship, perhaps, but different, heading to port, crew and passengers, lost and saved, atremble, for they have been disconsolate for some time. Now they will rest before shouldering the endless work they were created to do down here in paradise” (318). In *Paradise*, Morrison subverts the corrupt religious pieties, but, at the same time, she offers a bright future to her readers, as Krumholz indicates, “Morrison transforms piety from an image of rigid adherence to the law to Consolata's imagination of Piedade, the lost mother, the singing woman consoling her on the ocean shore” (Krumholz 31). In other words, Morrison steers her readers to a unique horizon, a new direction towards paradise.

In conclusion, raining and singing have a great connection to healing in an eco-community. If the eco-community has experienced certain sense of healing, then, it is likely to grow and provide a harmonious shelter to the human beings. In *Paradise*, the Convent is such a community that has undergone the transformation of healing. In “The Woman I Love is a Planet; the Planet I Love Is a Tree,” Paula Gunn Allen notices that “healing the self means honoring and recognizing the body, accepting rather than denying all the turmoil its existence brings, welcoming the woes and anguish flesh is subject to, cherishing its multitudinous forms and seasons, its unfailing ability to know and be, to grow and wither, to live and die, to mutate, to change” (Allen 56-57). Namely, the Convent is an eco-community that welcomes the wounded, accepts the broken-hearted, and heals the mentally-collapsed. In a sense,

this eco-community in the Convent is like a paradise that provides the tree of life with the living water flowing through it.¹²

In short, although I take the approach of ecofeminism to examine the interrelation between nature and community, I did not attempt to take the spiritual invocation of the goddess as my approach, instead, I prefer to take the cultural and political dimensions of ecofeminism to investigate Morrison's *Paradise*. In this chapter, I have explored the definition of ecotopia and the search for ecotopia. I have argued that we should not treat ecosystem community as a nurturing mother. Upon interrogating the nurturing power in the eco-community, I maintain that religion can be seen as a nurturing power in the eco-community in *Paradise*. After that, I have scrutinized the importance of reclaiming the collective and cultural identity in the eco-community. In this section, I discuss the effect of naming and healing from the eco-community in *Paradise*. I believe Morrison's paradise, as Krumholz writes, "is not a peaceful utopian moment of eternal sameness; it is a complex, dynamic, and challenging process in which insight informs action and responsibility" (Krumholz 31). Likewise, as Huei-li Li explains, "everything is connected with everything else," we should learn to live peacefully and dynamically with nature (Li 291). From this standpoint of ecofeminism, I examine the issues of dynamic eco-community, harmony, continuity and diversity in Morrison's *Paradise*.

¹² In the book of Revelation, we see that "in the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:2).

Conclusion

Morrison's *Paradise* foregrounds the domination upon women, the dualistic idea of colonization upon race, and the interrelation between nature and eco-community. As the finale of Morrison's trilogy, *Paradise* examines the complicated and intertwining issues of sexism, racism and "color-caste hierarchy" (Bouson 5). It also highlights the double consciousness of the characters' relation with each other and the natural environment. In the juxtaposition of time arrangement, Morrison deliberately demonstrates the fictional present and then dates back to the past or shifts to the future period. The shifting time sequence, obviously, brings about the fact that the main characters fail to adjust to the changing environment. The novel illuminates the complication of the suppressive effect upon nature and its interconnection with gender, race, and community.

In this thesis, my study of Morrison's *Paradise* through the perspective of ecofeminism provides a unique interpretation. While investigating the interrelation of nature and women in revealing the problematic roots of "androcentrism," I attempt to subvert such patriarchal domination upon nature and women. In comparing the natural environment between Ruby and the Convent, I found the former functions as a dead and lifeless place, with no vitality like a withered flower, whereas the latter serves as an affluent and robust region, with energetic vigor like a growing plant. In the end, the residents of the Convent are transformed by the power of healing with the harmonious connection with nature. And I assume the women's deepest wounds can be healed through a harmonious and balanced interaction with nature. Because of the harmonious relation with nature, the Convent women can cultivate the food as their healing resource for the wounds whereas Ruby fails to grow any food due to its unbalanced connection with nature. Therefore, the women in Ruby, like Sweetie and Arnette, are still trapped in the predicament of trauma.

While scrutinizing the racial problems in *Paradise*, I put them in the context of dualism as the logic of colonization, a term claimed by Plumwood, because nature is intertwined with the interracial conflicts in *Paradise*. Under the logic of colonization, the blacks had experienced the effect of denial on their migration. In order to maintain the pure blood heredity, they reproduce the same system of radical exclusion to reject the light-skinned people. However, the bumptious pride in the maintenance of pure blood in an all-black community not only contravenes the law of nature but also stifles the growth of the new generations. Such a division of race results in the identity conflict. It is therefore imperative to reclaim one's identity through mutual reverence and support.

While interrogating the interdependence of nature and eco-community, I argue that *Paradise* explores the search for an ecotopia, a place people can gain autonomy and identity, a place people can be healed from their mental and physical trauma, a place people can be completed, and a place people can be nourished from the inside out. Near the end of *Paradise*, the death of Savie-Marie symbolizes the imminent collapse of the excluded community in Ruby. On the contrary, healing from the love of nature in the Convent epitomizes a dynamic and vigorous progression. In other words, the Convent functions as an organic community with no hierarchy and patriarchy, transforming itself on mutual support and love of nature.

As a whole, the findings of this research should lead to decentering the logic of domination upon nature and its relation with gender, race and community. I affirm that ecofeminism would be conducive to providing a more comprehensive and far-reaching perspective than that of other feminisms, especially dealing with the oppressive issues among human beings, and the suppressive relations between mankind and nature. In general, the thesis is useful in adopting a new methodology to the reading of Morrison's complicated 1998 novel. In so doing, I have examined the

relation between human and nature while deconstructing the ideology of “androcentrism” and “anthropocentrism” implemented by the socially constructed culture. Specifically, this research could serve to arouse the concern of relation with nature. Finally, I hope that it will shed a light on several issues or at least pave the way to new research projects which will help consolidate the study of nature and human beings.

In a nutshell, in this thesis, what I want to propose is that, as the narrative voice in *Paradise* suggests, under the dynamic and changing era, one cannot but learn to respect and accept the differences of each other. In this way, the ideal of building an ecotopia could be realized in the near future.



Works Cited

- Adams, Carol J. *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*. Ed. New York: Continuum, 1993. Print.
- Alaimo, Stacy. *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000. Print.
- Anderson, E. N. *The Pursuit of Ecotopia*. California: Praeger, 2010. Print.
- _____. *Ecologies of the Heart: Emotion, Belief, and the Environment*. New York: Oxford UP, 1996. Print.
- Armbruster, Karla and Kathleen R. Wallace. "The Novels of Toni Morrison: 'Wild Wilderness Where There Was None.'" *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*. Eds. Karla Armbruster and Kathleen R. Wallace. Charlottesville and London: UP of Virginia, 2001. 211-230. Print.
- Birkeland, Janis. "Ecofeminism: Linking Theory and Practice." *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*. Ed. Greta Gaard. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993. 13-59. Print.
- Campbell, Sueellen. "The Land and Language of Desire: Where Deep Ecology and Post-structuralism Meet." Eds. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. *The Ecocritical Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens, Georgia: U of Georgia P, 1996. 124-36. Print.
- Claiborne, Corrie. "Leaving Abjection: Where 'Black' Meets Theory." *Modern Language Studies* 26.4 *Colorizing Literary Theory* (1996): 27-36. *JSTOR*. Web. 25 Sep. 2013.
- Curry, Patrick. *Ecological Ethics: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011.
- Davidson, Rob. "Racial Stock and 8-Rocks: Communal Historiography in Toni Morrison's 'Paradise.'" *Twentieth Century Literature* 47.3 (2001): 355-73. *JSTOR*. Web. 25 Sep. 2013.
- David, Ron. *Toni Morrison Explained: A Reader's Road Map to the Novels*. New York: Random House, 2000. Print.

- Des Jardins, Joseph R. *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy*. Belmont: College of Saint Benedict, 2001. Print.
- Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. New York: Random House. 1952. Print.
- Fanon, Frantz. "The Fact of Blackness." *Anatomy of Racism*. Ed. David Theo Goldberg. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P. 1990.108-126. Print.
- Farnsworth, Elizabeth. "Conversation: Toni Morrison." Ed. Carolyn C. Denard. *Toni Morrison: Conversations*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2008.155-58. Print.
- Forsey, Helen. "Community—Meeting Our Deepest Needs." *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. Ed, Judith Plant. Philadelphia: New Society, 1989. 227-234.
- Fultz, Lucille P. *Toni Morrison: Playing with Difference*. Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 2003. Print.
- Glotfelty, Cheryl and Harold Fromm. *The Ecocritical Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens, Georgia: U of Georgia P, 1996. Print.
- Gray, Elizabeth Dodson. *Green Paradise Lost*. Wellesley, MA: Roundtable P, 1979. 144. Print.
- Griffin, Susan. "Ecofeminism and Meaning." *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, ed. Karen J. Warren. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997. 213-226. Print.
- _____. "Split culture." *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. Ed, Judith Plant. Philadelphia: New Society, 1989. 7-17. Print.
- Heller, Chaia. "For the Love of Nature: Ecology and the Cult of the Romantic." *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*. Ed. Greta Gaard. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993. 219-242. Print.
- Hostler, Ann. "Interview with Toni Morrison: 'The Art of Teaching.'" Ed. Carolyn C. Denard. *Toni Morrison: Conversations*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2008. 196-205. Print.

- Howarth, William. "Some Principles of Ecocriticism" Eds, Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. *The Ecocritical Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens, Georgia: U of Georgia P, 1996. 69-91. Print.
- Hunt, Kristin. "Paradise Lost: The Destructive Forces of Double Consciousness and Boundaries in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*." *Reading under the Sign of Nature: New Essays in Ecocriticism*. Ed. John Tallmadge and Henry Harrington. Salt Lake City: U of Utah P, 2000. 117-27. Print.
- Kheel, Marti. "From Healing Herbs to Deadly Drugs: Western Medicine's War Against the Natural World." *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. Ed, Judith Plant. Philadelphia: New Society, 1989. 97-111. Print.
- King, Ynestra. "The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology." Ed, Judith Plant. *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. Philadelphia: New Society, 1989. 18-28. Print.
- Kolodny, Annette. "Unearthing Herstory: An Introduction." Eds, Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. *The Ecocritical Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens, Georgia: U of Georgia P, 1996. 105-23. Print.
- Krumholz, Linda J. "Reading and Insight in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*." *African American Review* 36. 1 (Spring, 2002): 21-34. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Sep. 2013.
- Lahar, Stephanie. "Roots: Rejoining Natural and Social History." *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*. Ed. Greta Gaard. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993. 91-117. Print.
- LeGuin, Ursula K.. "Women/ Wilderness." *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. Ed. Judith Plant. Philadelphia: New Society, 1989. 45-47. Print.
- Li, Huey-li. "A Cross-Cultural Critique of Ecofeminism." *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*. Ed. Greta Gaard. Philadelphia: Temple UP. 1993. 272-294.
- Matus, Jill. *Toni Morrison*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1998. Print.

- Meeker, Joseph W. *The Comedy of Survival*. New York: Scribner's, 1972. Print.
- Merchant, Carolyn. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. NY: Harper One, 1989. Print.
- Michael, Magali Cornier. "Re-Imagining Agency: Toni Morrison's *Paradise*." *African American Review* 36: 4 (Winter, 2002): 643-661. *JSTOR*. Web. 10 Nov. 2011.
- Mies, Maria and Vandana Shiva. *Ecofeminism*. New Jersey: Spinifex P, 1993. Print.
- Morrison, Toni. *Paradise*. New York: Knopf, 1998. Print.
- _____. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1992. Print.
- _____. "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature." *Modern Critical Views: Toni Morrison*. Ed. and intro. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1990. 201-30. Print.
- Norwood, Vera L. "Heroines of Nature: Four Women Respond to the American Landscape." Eds, Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. *The Ecocritical Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Georgia: Georgia UP, 1996. 323-50. Print.
- _____. *Made from this Earth: American Women and Nature*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina P, 1993. Print.
- Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- Outlaw, Lucius. "Toward a Critical Theory of 'Race.'" *Anatomy of Racism*. Ed. David Theo Goldberg. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1990. 58-82. Print.
- Peach, Linden. *Toni Morrison*. New York: St. Martin's P, 2000. Print.
- Plant, Judith. "Toward a New World: An Introduction." *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. Philadelphia: New Society, 1989. 1-4. Print.
- _____. "Learning to Live with Differences: The Challenge of Ecofeminist Community." *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, ed. Karen J. Warren.

- Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997. 120-39. Print.
- Plumwood, Val. "Androcentrism and Anthropocentrism: Parallels and Politics." *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*. Ed. Karen J. Warren. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997. 327-55. Print.
- _____. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. NY: Routledge. 1993. Print.
- Primavesi, Anne. *From Apocalypse to Genesis: Ecology, Feminism and Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress P, 1991. Print.
- Reames, Kelly. *Toni Morrison's "Paradise": A Reader's Guide*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001. Print.
- Romero, Channette. "Creating the Beloved Community: Religion, Race, and Nation in Toni Morrison's 'Paradise.'" *African American Review* 39.3 (2005): 415-30. *JSTOR*. Web. 25 Sep. 2013.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation*, New York: Seabury, 1975. Print.
- _____. "Ecofeminism: Symbolic and Social Connections of the Oppression of Women and the Domination of Nature." *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*. Ed. Carol J. Adams. New York: Continuum, 1993.13-23. Print.
- _____. "Toward an Ecological-Feminist Theology of Nature." Ed, Judith Plant. *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. Philadelphia: New Society, 1989. Print.
- Shiva, Vandana. "Development, Ecology, and Women." Ed, Judith Plant. *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. Philadelphia: New Society, 1989. 80-90. Print.
- Slovic, Scott. "Nature Writing and Environmental Psychology." Eds, Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. *The Ecocritical Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens, Georgia: U of Georgia P, 1996. 351-70. Print.

Spretnak, Charlene. "Toward an Ecofeminist Spirituality." *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*. Ed, Judith Plant. Philadelphia: New Society, 1989.127-32. Print.

Stein, Karen F. *Reading, Learning, Teaching Toni Morrison*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009. Print.

Sturgeon, Noël. *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory and Political Action*. Routledge: New York, 1997. Print.

Tally, Justine. *The Cambridge Companion to Toni Morrison*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. Print.

The Holy Bible: King James Version. Dallas, TX: Brown Books Publishing, 2004. Print.

Verdelle, A. J. "Loose Magic: A. J. Verdelle Interviews Toni Morrison." *Toni Morrison: Conversations*. Ed. Carolyn C. Denard. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2008. 159-170. Print.

Warren, Karen J. ed. *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997. Print.

_____. *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000. Print.

_____. "A Feminist Philosophical Perspective on Ecofeminist Spiritualities." *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*. Ed. Carol J. Adams. New York: Continuum, 1993. 119-32. Print.

_____. "Taking Empirical Data Seriously: An Ecofeminist Philosophical Perspective." *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*. Ed. Karen J. Warren. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997. 3-20. Print.

_____. "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism." *Environmental Ethics* 12:3, 1990. 125-46. Print.

Willoughby, L. Teal. "Ecofeminist Consciousness and the Transforming Power of Symbols." *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*. Ed. Carol J. Adams. New York: Continuum, 1993. 133-48. Print.

Williams, Delores S. "Sin, Nature, and Black Women's Bodies." *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*. Ed. Carol J. Adams. New York: Continuum, 1993. 24-29. Print.

