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Beauty and the Beasts: Making Places with Literary Animals of Florida

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Beauty and the Beasts: Making Places with Literary Animals of Florida

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of English
College of Arts and Sciences
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ABSTRACT

Place theory examines the relationship between human identity and physical locations, asking how meaningful attachments are formed between people and the spots they visit or in which they live. Literature of place exhibits this relationship and the myriad ways humans connect to their environment through storytelling, both fictional and nonfictional. Florida literature, an emerging and dynamic genre, features characters, cultures, and histories heavily embedded in place. Florida's places also abound with animal presences, and literature about Florida almost always illustrates significant human-animal interactions that drive plots and character development. Therefore, Florida literature invites consideration of how animals influence human attachment to the land in stories written by Florida authors. Scholarly attention has noted the important relationships formed by humans and animals in literature about Florida, but no extensive study incorporating place theory, ecocriticism, and close reading has been done on the literary representation of Florida animals or their contribution to the state's diverse reputations.

This dissertation brings together theories about place attachment, ecocriticism, and critical animal studies (CAS) to illustrate the roles of fictional and nonfictional animals in works by six Florida authors: William Bartram, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Elizabeth Bishop, Rachel Carson, and John Henry Fleming. These works contain prominent animal characters that illuminate four ways of seeing Florida: idyllic Florida, wild

Florida, opportunistic Florida, and mysterious Florida. These identities build off historical views about Florida as place: explorers, tourists, and developers projected their hopes for advancement onto the state based on its reputation as an exotic paradise, wild hinterland, or untouched beacon for industry and agriculture. Literature helped to produce these ideas about Florida through travel writing, but Florida stories also critique opportunistic ideologies responsible for harming animals and the environment. Literature can also preserve Florida's mysteries and myths, offering narratives about nature and animals that challenge notions of human superiority. Thus, literature enacts a dynamic engagement with the four faces of Florida I discuss.

Florida animals are vital to the construction of these four identities. For example, Henry Bunk, the protagonist of Douglas's *Alligator Crossings*, sees the Everglades as an idyllic alternative to the city for its many birds and fish. Rawlings depicts Cross Creek as a wild host to deadly snakes, predatory big cats, and ubiquitous insects. Bishop captures through poetry the ordinary activity of Florida fishing in such a way that invites us to question the harm inflicted on animals for the opportunity of recreation. Fleming's stories suggest that exploration, industry, and science have mostly erased the mysteries of Florida's natural world, but his enigmatic and monstrous animals, along with their ties to the land, offer hope for reviving a meaningful attachment to the land.

This dissertation connects literary representations of animals to real forms of violence occurring in Florida today, including fishing, caged hunting, and animal captivity. The works examined herein can prompt readers to rethink their own relationships to place and to nonhuman nature. As a cultural force, literature holds the potential for effecting change in our world.

Beginning with the local is one way of witnessing this potential for the dynamic interplay between literature and place.

INTRODUCTION

In January of 2015, I participated in the Miracle March for Lolita held in Miami, Florida. Lolita was captured from Puget Sound in 1970 and sold to the Miami Seaquarium for \$20,000. Originally called Tokitae, Lolita was renamed for the heroine of Vladimir Nabokov's novel; an issue of *The Miami News* described her as "that pretty new girl at the Seaquarium...Lolita, the slim, trim, killer whale" ("Lolita" 30). For the past 48 years, Lolita has circled her concrete tank, the small size of which violates federal standards, as calls for her freedom continued to build.¹ I joined thousands of concerned advocates in Miami's Virginia Key Beach Park, where we met to organize the march days before a scheduled ruling by the National Marine Fisheries Services on Lolita's endangered status.²

On that sunny Florida morning, where, even in January, it was sweltering before noon, I realized what my animal advocacy had been missing. I had followed Lolita's case for a while, but as I walked and held my sign with her tank in sight, looming over the fenced attraction at the Seaquarium on Rickenbacker Causeway, I recognized the importance of place. Being present with Lolita nearby made her plight more real for me, invigorating my passion for helping her and inscribing my location with the myriad emotions I felt. My attachment for Virginia Key Beach

¹ In 1999, the U.S. Department of Agriculture certified that Lolita's tank satisfied the minimum requirements set by the Animal Welfare Act. However, a 2017 audit by the USDA Inspector General's office suggested otherwise, indicating that the island in the middle of the tank for trainers obstructs horizontal movement (leaving 35 feet of swimming space in one direction as opposed to the minimum of 48 feet). The Miami Seaquarium has not been contacted by the USDA since this audit and has made no changes to Lolita's environment.

² The ruling affirmed that Lolita belonged to the Southern Resident Killer Whale population, and that she is thus endangered. However, NMFS also declared that there is no provision against keeping endangered orcas in captivity, meaning Lolita could remain at the Seaquarium.

and the route of our march will always evoke those contradictory feelings of anger, hope, and the thrill of seeing countless diverse but likeminded people fighting for one animal's freedom. Eventually, that attachment also inspired me to contemplate the interstices of animals, literature, and Florida. Why are so many animals held captive here for public amusement or employed for human entertainment? What roles do animals play in how residents and visitors experience Florida? And, can literature of place about Florida offer any hope for reducing the many forms of animal violence that occur here? These are some of the questions driving the following study on animal representations in Florida literature.

To answer them, I analyze the work of six authors who write about their time in Florida: William Bartram, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, Elizabeth Bishop, Rachel Carson, and John Henry Fleming. A naturalist from Philadelphia specializing in botany, William Bartram toured Florida in 1774 and produced detailed illustrations of the flora and fauna he encountered. While living at Cross Creek in Alachua County between 1928 and 1953, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings documented the Florida Cracker culture and its reliance on subsistence living. Journalist and women's suffrage advocate Marjory Stoneman Douglas founded Friends of the Everglades in 1969, when she was 79 years old, and defended the Everglades from attempts at draining and industrialization. Elizabeth Bishop, a painter and poet from Massachusetts, purchased a home in Key West in 1938 after visiting Florida for fishing trips during the 1930s. Bishop's poetry records her vivid impressions of Florida's landscapes and animals. In 1954, renowned author and marine biologist Rachel Carson performed field research in the Florida Keys as part of her work on coastal ecosystems. John Henry Fleming is an author

and professor at the University of South Florida whose work challenges accounts of Florida as a sunny, golf-course infused paradise.

Each of these writers experienced place attachment in Florida; that is to say, they grew to care for the geographical settings of Florida: Payne's Prairie, the St. John's River, Cross Creek, the Ocala National Forest, Sunshine Key, Key West, Temple Terrace, the Everglades, Miami, and more. They discovered meaning and self-transformation in their interactions with non-human nature. Their attachments are complex and cannot be explained by a single description. Part of my dissertation seeks to understand each writer's relationship with Florida and the processes of place attachment revealed in their narratives. Another part of my work extends this relationship between author and place to their positionality within the forms of animal violence they depict. What is their attitude toward the non-human animals around them, and can their work be considered animal advocacy? Their texts portray hunting/poaching, fishing, the circus, and even sending animals into space, among other instances of harming animals. Though these exploitative acts against non-human nature are not unique to Florida, the writers I examine illustrate the particularly Floridian qualities enabling their occurrence. As Kathryn Seidel asserts, "In Florida literature, the relationship between people and animals is ubiquitous and complex. Whether animals are hunted, eaten, despised, or cherished as companions and pets, animals express the authors' attempt to conceptualize nature and to understand the role of humans within the natural world of Florida" (423). Seidel summarizes what scholars of Florida literature (see Rowe, 1986; Cerulean, 2002; Iannini, 2003; Davis, 2001, 2005, 2009; Chambliss, 2012; Hospital 2013) have long pointed out. However, the role of Florida animals in place construction and place attachment has not been critically examined. For their widespread presence in literature of

Florida, animals deserve treatment by scholarly work that considers them sentient subjects and major players in the identities humans create about the state. Furthermore, I contend that any study of Florida animals as represented by literature would be incomplete without concentrating on real forms of violence occurring here that harm them.

The authors represented in my dissertation vary widely across time, genre, style, and personal beliefs about nonhuman nature. What connects them is place: their experiences in Florida and how they express their attachment through writing. Florida holds several contradictory identities. It is both a sunbather's paradise and muggy wetland; theme park headquarters and inspiration for enigmatic urban legends; concrete jungle and home to the swampy Everglades. Moreover, animals, both native and non-native, are integral to many works of Florida literature, often serving as central characters or vital plot catalysts. I am interested in how animal presences help to construct four of Florida's identities: idyll, wilderness, opportunity, and mystery. These faces of Florida depend on various forms of place attachment, which often involve animals. To give one example, the protagonists of Marjory Stoneman Douglas seek to protect egrets and alligators from poachers, and in doing so they experience personal transformation and enlightenment about their connection to the land. Interactions between humans and animals within Florida literature are not always marked by compassion or pleasure. Activities in which animals become objects or commodities appear in texts that depict Florida as a land of opportunity for hunting, recreation, circuses, and scientific advancement. The inclusion of dangerous predators such as alligators and snakes aids in depicting Florida as a wilderness. Finally, many writers use the mysteries of Florida and its unseen animals to advocate for protection efforts in order to save what perhaps is the state's most valuable attribute: its

relatively untouched natural world and the power of that world to challenge the belief in human superiority.

In exploring these four identities of Florida, I employ concepts from the fields of ecocriticism, animal studies, and place theory. Now a well-established field influencing other branches of literary inquiry, ecocriticism took root in the 1970s in light of the growing environmental movement. William Rueckert coined the term ‘ecocriticism’ in his seminal article, “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism.” Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm make the common observation that ecocriticism owes much to Carson’s *Silent Spring*. Glotfelty also supplies the most straightforward definition of the field, stating that ecocriticism studies the relationship between literature and the physical environment. One of the most common literary modes of experiencing the environment, pastoralism, may be defined as the bucolic alternative to industrial, urban settings, in which humans enjoy a simplified existence by tending the land. Greg Garrard’s work on the literary pastoral informs my discussion of idyllic Florida as portrayed by Bartram and Douglas in Chapter One.

Contrary to pastoralism, in which people benefit from a harmonious relationship with the environment, wilderness connotes a region both undeveloped and hostile to human habitation. In *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Roderick Frazier Nash describes how American perceptions of wilderness have changed, from the Puritan fear of Satanic wild spaces through efforts to preserve Hetch Hetchy Valley and John Muir’s founding of the Sierra Club. Nash writes, “Appreciation of wilderness began in the cities,” indicating the dichotomy between urban and rural that led many (including Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings) to seek out wilderness as a refuge from busy cities (44). In the 1930s, Aldo Leopold strengthened the wilderness preservation

movement with his scientific study of wilderness as the key to good health and ethical attitudes toward land. Some works of Florida literature, most notably those by Rawlings, embrace life in the largely uncharted wild regions of Florida. *The Yearling* and *Cross Creek* illustrate humans and wild animals at-odds, with fear dictating their characters' responses to undesirable or dangerous species. As my chapters on Rawlings and the "wild things out in the wood" will show, valuable human-animal ethics surface within these narratives about Florida's wild places (CC 243).³

In a 2009 issue of *PMLA*, Michael Lundblad usefully differentiates between critical work that lends itself to nonhuman animal advocacy and scholarship that is more concerned with formalist representations of animals in literature without wanting necessarily to further the animal rights movement. He associates the former with animal studies and the latter with animality studies. For Lundblad, "Animality studies can prioritize questions of human politics, for example, in relation to how we have thought about human and nonhuman animality at various historical and cultural movements" (497). Animality studies would use nonhuman animal representations to better understand what it means to be human, an aim that Lundblad admits can be seen as speciesist. Lundblad's distinction engages with a critical disagreement about what literature should do; animality studies corresponds to the belief in art for art's sake, while Critical Animal Studies (CAS) finds value in literature's ability to effect real-world change. My dissertation combines these approaches, as I am interested in how literature represents animality, but I also hope to show that Florida literature can inspire readers to find real solutions for ecological problems faced by our state. As Carolina Hospital writes, "Florida is both illusion and

³ CC is an abbreviation for *Cross Creek* to be used in parenthetical citations.

reality” (2). The imaginative depictions of literary animals in the works I discuss correspond to real concerns tackled by CAS.

In addition to ecocriticism and animal studies, place theory influences my reading of Florida literature. In *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977), a seminal text in human geography, Yi-fu Tuan defines place as “centers of felt value” (4). Maria Lewicka supplies a useful definition of place attachment in her work on memory and connecting to a new place, describing it as “an affective bond that connects people to places, usually residential ones but also places of recreation, second homes, places of work or sport activities...Like other forms of attachment, place attachment implies ‘anchoring’ of emotions in the object of attachment, feeling of belonging, willingness to stay close, and wish to return when away” (49). By contrast, spaces lack these meaningful connections. Arguably, controversies over draining the Everglades throughout the 20th century involved a tension between space versus place. Where Hamilton Disston, Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, Richard Judy, and others seeking to profit from destroying the Everglades saw an expendable wasteland, environmentalists such as Douglas recognized an idyllic, wild, and mysterious place whose land and animals deserved protection.

Tim Cresswell examines the contested nature and difficulties in defining place throughout important works like *In Place/Out of Place* (1996) and *Place: An Introduction* (2012). The former traces the relationship between maintaining social order and drawing geographic lines across normal versus aberrant or subversive activities. Cresswell also categorizes three types of place: descriptive, social constructivist, and phenomenological. Descriptive place refers to objective details about a specific location: geographic coordinates,

population, and climate, for instance. Social constructivist understandings of place, influenced by the work of human geographer David Harvey, claims that places are not “natural,” but imbued with cultural meanings along the lines of race, gender, and class. Finally, phenomenological place emphasizes the subjective experience of being-in-the-world. As Cresswell indicates, Martin Heidegger’s notion of *dwelling*, or “a spiritual and philosophical endeavor that unites the natural and human worlds,” is fundamental to phenomenological place studies (*Short Introduction* 22). My dissertation also draws from phenomenology, as I classify four identities of Florida based on how authors experience being-in-the-world while living or visiting here.

Using these approaches, I explore idyllic Florida as depicted by Bartram and Douglas in Chapter One; wild Florida as experienced by Rawlings in Chapter Two; opportunistic Florida as understood by Rawlings, Fleming, and Carson; and mysterious Florida as celebrated by Carson, Bishop, and Fleming. An important text that supplements my discussion of these four Florida identities, particularly in Chapter Four, is *The Wild Heart of Florida*, a 1999 anthology edited by Jeff Ripple and Susan Cerulean. Its essays explore what it means to “restory” the land, or to fill in gaps left behind by traditional histories. Restorying is a political act designed to encourage readers to care about a place, including its flora and fauna, and to engage with conservation efforts. I argue that the most compelling works of Florida literature reveal about the state what postcards, travel brochures, and traditional advertising do not. Bartram, Douglas, Carson, Rawlings, Bishop, and Fleming all engage in restorying Florida to underscore the value of its land and animals.

The belief that literature about imaginary animals can promote activism on behalf of real ones and their habitats is vital to the purpose of this dissertation. When Marjory Stoneman

Douglas described the Everglades as a “river of grass,” she was not simply creating an idyllic metaphor that reflected the dynamism of this region. Douglas emphasized the physical geography of the Everglades as a filtration system which cleaned nutrient-rich water flowing south from the Kissimmee River. This system has been disrupted by human activity several times.⁴ In the late 1800s, Floridians began draining the Everglades to accommodate the growth of sugar farms, residential homes, and businesses.⁵ In 1928, flooding from the Okeechobee hurricane resulted in more than 2,500 deaths from drowning in Belle Glade, Pahokee, South Bay, and other cities; in response, the Florida legislature and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers built the Herbert Hoover Dike in 1930. Lake Okeechobee then faced a lower water-to-nutrient ratio, which was exacerbated in the 1960s when the Kissimmee River was straightened into a canal, sending water laden with phosphorous and nitrates into the lake too quickly. Cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae, thrives off of these nutrients, most of which are released into Lake Okeechobee today by the three sugar companies that produce half of the nation’s sugar supply. This runoff also feeds *Karenia brevis* bacteria, the algae of red tide. Florida is currently experiencing the worst red tide since 2006. Neurotoxins produced by the algae have killed thousands of fish, manatees, dolphins, and sea turtles. Manipulating the natural filtration capacity of the Everglades for personal and corporate advancement is directly responsible for the vast algae blooms

⁴ For a comprehensive look at the attempts to control the Everglades, see Davis, Jack E., *An Everglades Providence: Marjory Stoneman Douglas and the Environmental Century*. University of Georgia Press, 2009, and Cerulean, Susan et al., *Book of the Everglades*. Milkweed Editions, 2002.

⁵ The Swamp and Overflow Land Grant Act of 1850 gave Florida thirty thousand square miles of land that had been federally owned. Douglas believed that much of Florida’s history was decided by this act, which opened the Everglades for development. In 1881, Florida governor William Bloxham made a land deal with Hamilton Disston, an industrialist and businessman from Philadelphia. Disston embarked on the first large-scale attempt to drain the Everglades, hoping to expand the St. Cloud sugar plantation and sell plots of land to the wealthy tourists who visited Florida each winter. By 1884, he claimed to have successfully drained two million acres of the Everglades, but an excursion team found only fifty thousand usable acres and reported significant problems with Disston’s drainage infrastructure. Disston committed suicide in 1896 after additional ventures in Florida had failed.

currently decimating marine life along Florida's southwest coast. According to Douglas biographer Jack E. Davis, Douglas "sought to pass a central message along to others: the Everglades were part of a complex ecosystem that extended beyond the shining vastness of sawgrass, hammocks, and cypress swamps" (*EP* 17).⁶ Douglas anticipated the harm caused by interfering with the Everglades, the river of grass which serves an invaluable role in preserving Florida's ecosystems.

This dissertation owes much to the scholars, writers, and activists advocating for spaces generally seen as homogenous and uninteresting. The human population of Florida has grown by roughly 20 million in the past century, spawning industrialization of natural lands on a massive scale.⁷ Animals living in regions targeted by developers were little more than a nuisance. The disastrous impact of urbanization on Florida's flora and fauna is well documented. As early as 1932, Charles Torrey Simpson felt that Florida's plants, trees, and animals destroyed by commercialism had earned a memorial. In *Florida Wild Life*, he remembers visiting Lake Okeechobee, where "vast flocks of water birds skimming the air or alighting and feeding...was a strange and varying panorama of constantly changing beauty and life" (188). Species flourishing at the time of his journey include deer, minx, opossums, herons, bears, raccoons, and wild cats. Simpson continues, "We have caused as great destruction of the wild birds and animals as we have with the face of nature...I have...mentioned the vast numbers of wonderful birds and the fish which filled our waters. The birds have been sadly decimated and there is no reason to doubt

⁶ *EP* is an abbreviation for Davis's biography on Douglas, *An Everglades Providence*, to be used in parenthetical citations.

⁷ In 1900, 528,000 people lived in Florida. In 2017, Florida's population was approximately 21,300,000, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. Florida continues to be one of the fastest growing states in the nation. In 2016, its growth rate was 1.8%, compared to the national population growth average of 0.7%.

that considerable inroads have been made on our fish” (191-192). He blames “greed... folly...[and] that strange desire in the heart of man to overrun, to trample out and mercilessly destroy” for the harm inflicted on Florida’s natural environment (Simpson 194).

However, Simpson urges readers away from total despair in light of (then) recent attempts to preserve this unique landscape. Out of the “realization of the value of beauty for beauty’s sake,” parks showcasing royal palms, hammocks, and wildlife were established in many counties, such as Highlands and Miami-Dade (Simpson 195). According to Simpson, “If this project carries, our children and our children’s children will have the opportunity to see and possess at least a remnant of the wild life and natural beauty which has been so wantonly wasted and destroyed. Verily light is beginning to shine through the darkness” (195). Great strides have certainly been made in environmental protection efforts since Torrey’s remarks, but natural Florida is still under siege from pollution, poaching, overfishing, and other anthropogenic threats, not to mention the exploitation of animals not native to Florida, such as orcas, elephants, lions, tigers, and other “exotic” species of zoos and theme parks who attract millions of visitors to the state each year. Literature of place offers a bridge between literary representations of animal violence and its actual occurrences. The works of Florida literature I explore in the following chapters invite us to rethink our relationship to nonhuman nature. If the environmental ethics espoused by their writing can inspire more recognition of “beauty for beauty’s sake,” we have the duty to listen.

CHAPTER ONE:
**“A PARADISE OF FISH”: IDYLIC FLORIDA IN BARTRAM’S *TRAVELS* (1791),
MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS’S *ALLIGATOR CROSSING* (1959) AND
“PLUMES” (1930)**

Introduction

In a letter to her close friend and fellow writer Marianne Moore dated September 1, 1943, Elizabeth Bishop described her recent trip to Miami, Florida:

I wish you could have seen the beautiful sight I saw from the bus...nine tall white herons in a group, each on one leg, standing in shallow water where mangroves are just beginning to spring up—just an arch here & there with a few leaves on it. The bus was stopped for almost ten minutes—only one moved all that time, took one slow step & looked from the bush down into the water. (*Poems* 758)

With this brief portrayal of wildlife skirting the Florida Everglades, Bishop illustrates how animal presences contribute to our experience of place. In this instance, animal life augments the idyllic aspects of Florida Bishop sees—young mangroves emerging from shallow water, their roots taking shape—captivating her attention from a stopped bus that will soon be moving again. In an earlier letter to Moore, Bishop remembers “the strangest and most beautiful birds...different kinds of herons, blue and white, and some small, pinkish doves” dotting the skies of her “favorite” state (*Poems* 742-43). The beauty drawn from Florida’s beasts prompts

Bishop to appreciate the slow, peaceful grace of the natural world. By 1964, when she had lived in Florida intermittently for over two decades, Bishop's letters reflect her transformed animal ethics. She writes, for instance, to Anne Stevenson about meeting Ernest Hemingway: "he had the right idea about lots of things. (NOT about shooting animals. I used to like deep-sea fishing, too, and still go out once in a while, but without much pleasure, & in my younger tougher days I liked bull-fights, but I don't think I could sit through one now.)" (*Poems* 859). Though Bishop does not directly attribute her condemnation of hunting and bloodsports to her appreciation for idyllic Florida, her letters and poems, which I treat more fully in Chapters 3 and 4, demonstrate a recurring pattern in Florida literature: expressions of animal advocacy concomitant with pastoral views of the land.

One of the first Florida writers to illustrate this pattern is Philadelphia botanist William Bartram, whose seminal *Travels* (1791) exhibits the perils and delights of pre-industrial Florida—usually emphasizing the latter.⁸ The text not only influenced canonical authors such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, and Henry David Thoreau; it is also considered an exemplar for Florida writers even hundreds of years after its publication. In her 1944 article for *Transatlantic Magazine*, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings reflects on Florida's uncertain future in the face of growing industrial development, suggesting that this development must be curbed if "the Florida of Bartram will survive" (17). Marjory Stoneman Douglas gives a nod to Bartram in *The Everglades: River of Grass* (1947), and some critics note the resemblance between her

⁸ The book's full title is *Travels through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida, the Cherokee County, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges, or Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Chactaws; Containing an Account of the Soil and Natural Productions of Those Regions, Together with Observations on the Manners of the Indians*.

portrayal of Florida and that found in *Travels*.⁹ Both Douglas and Bartram were influenced by the values of Quakerism, believing that “humans were no less creatures of nature and no less dependent on nature’s providence than were birds and alligators” (*EP* 16). This chapter explores constructions of idyllic Florida in Bartram’s *Travels* and Douglas’s *Alligator Crossing* (1959) and “Plumes,” (1930). These constructions hinge on animal presences and can be used to advocate for real Florida animals. Though separated considerably by time period, Bartram and Douglas convey a similar elation with Florida’s idyllic spaces. Moreover, Bartram shares with Douglas’s protagonists a personal transformation as a result of their journeys. Each of the three narratives shows how vast, undeveloped spaces are transformed into pastoral places that serve as alternatives to industrial urban living. As in the sketches drawn by Bishop’s letters, depictions of animal life in idyllic Florida by Bartram and Douglas can inspire both place attachment and a respectful land ethic.

Of the many identities Florida holds, idyllic “natural” paradise was the first to dominate travel writing, which drew thousands of visitors to the state in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The idyllic mood evoked by these writings shares many traits with the pastoral genre in ecocriticism. The literary pastoral offers a useful approach to texts from all historical periods that engage with environmental causes. Greg Garrard divides the literary pastoral into three categories: the classical, romantic, and American. As a refuge from rapidly growing urban areas in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, where visitors might enjoy physical and spiritual rejuvenation, idyllic Florida fits well within Garrard’s first and second types of pastoral. In the

⁹ See John Goggin’s review in *The Journal of American Folklore*, p. 229-231 (1948).

romantic pastoral, urban malaise prompts city dwellers to flee to the countryside. Similarly, classic pastoral often waxes nostalgically on the pre-industrialized world and views undeveloped, “wild” spaces as opportunities for relaxation and even recuperation. According to Susan A. Eacker, “In the nineteenth-century version of the myth of Florida as the location of the Fountain of Youth and a place of reinvigoration, the state was celebrated as a curative space for a multitude of Yankee ailments and drew thousands of invalids to Ponce de Leon’s ‘Land of Flowers’ (La Florida)” (499).¹⁰

The classic pastoral allure of Florida drew Ralph Waldo Emerson to St. Augustine in 1827 seeking treatment for tuberculosis. As Anne Rowe explains in *The Idea of Florida in The American Literary Imagination*, Emerson’s experience of Florida evolved from “revulsion to ambivalence to what might even be called fascination” (12). He was appalled by the indolence of St. Augustine residents, a quality anathema to his New England upbringing, but he grew to enjoy a languid stroll on the beach. In a poem titled “St. Augustine,” Emerson records the idyllic traits of Florida, where “the fig and citron shed/ Their fragrant blooms” (qtd. in Rowe 13). Though Florida did not comprise a significant part of his life or writings, Emerson left descriptions of his visit to cities like St. Augustine and Tallahassee that Alan J. Downes calls “picturesque” (334). His journey to rest and recuperate in the “delicious,” balmy air occurred at the outset of Florida’s travel boom; the widespread use of steamboats in the 1820s brought greater numbers of northern visitors, who by the 1870s traveled by the St. John’s-Ocklawaha, Suwanee, and other rivers.

¹⁰ Ponce de Leon probably didn’t see many flowers in Florida. He named the state for the Spanish Feast of the Flowers, referring to Easter, which was occurring when he landed along the northeast coast (near the site that would become St. Augustine) on April 2, 1513.

Rowe traces the notion of Florida as an idyllic retreat through letters, guide books, and fictional works, including those by Emerson, Sidney Lanier, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry James, and Edward King. As mediated by these writers, the peninsula becomes “not merely a geographical region but an image...Eden-like, where the striving and seeking, the rigorous pioneering and getting ahead that characterize the Land of Opportunity has been tempered and diverted by the languors of a tropical climate washed by the Gulf Stream and the balm of an always warm sun” (Rowe 4). Though not all early depictions of Florida were idyllic (some in fact described the territory as a veritable hell-scape),¹¹ much travel writing of the 1800s contributed to the influx of wealthy tourists who sought peaceful rejuvenation there. Tourists who wrote about their time in Florida also perpetuated idyllic notions of the state in popular imagination.

An exemplar of travel writing showcasing Florida’s idyllic side is Sidney Lanier’s *Florida: Its Scenery, Climate, and History* (1876). Lanier, a Georgia-born author and poet received \$125 to compose a guidebook on Florida. More poetic treatise than objective report, the resulting book represents Florida as a pastoral retreat with exotic flora and fauna to dazzle the senses. Aboard a steamboat traveling the Ocklawaha River, Lanier adopts “an attitude of perfect rest” leaving him in “blessed ease,” and he encourages his “tired friend[s] to pursue the same “Elysian tranquility” there (253). The river serves as a shelter from civilization and commercialism; Lanier believed it could inspire readers to reject the solicitations of street vendors and real estate agents hoping to sell an orange grove. “Sail, sail, sail through the

¹¹ See accounts by Jonathan Dickinson, *Jonathan Dickinson’s Journal*, ed. Walker, Florida Classics, 1961 (published 1699); and Jacob Rhett Mott, *Journey into Wilderness*, UP of Florida, 1953 (written 1838)

cypresses,” he writes, “and so shall you have revelations of rest, and so shall your heart forever, afterwards interpret Ocklawaha to mean repose” (265).¹² Lanier highlights the phenomenological dimension of place attachment, painting our experience of Florida as an interpretive act—in this case, one that values Florida for its pastoral beauty.

Though not necessarily a supporter of improved animal welfare like Bartram or Douglas, Lanier appreciated the numerous and vibrant animal presences of Florida, often featuring them in his illustrations of the landscape. Upon visiting Silver Springs in Marion County, Lanier describes the Silver River’s “innumerable kaleidoscopic flashes and brilliances” (488). He continues by portraying the circling fish as “multitudes of animated gems,” while “the prismatic lights seemed actually to waver and play through their translucent bodies, until the whole spring, in a great blaze of sunlight, shone like an enormous fluid jewel that without decreasing forever lapsed away upward in successive exhalations of dissolving sheens and glittering colors” (Lanier 488). In Chapter 5 of the guidebook, Lanier focuses on the Gulf Coast, where “there seems to be literally no end to the oysters, the fish, the sea-birds, the shells, the turtles...and the shores and islands abound in the bear, deer, turkey, opossum and raccoon” (1479). Once more, the immense variety of fish, about which “the most marvelous stories are told,” prompts Lanier’s idyllic reflections about “the multitudinous piscine life of these parts” (1481). He identifies thirty kinds of fish, from silver bream to gar to bass. More so than shorebirds, an icon of paradisiacal Florida, the variegated marine life inspires Lanier’s fascination with his surroundings.

¹² *Ocklawaha* is actually Muscogee for “muddy” or “dark water.”

Florida: Its Scenery, Climate, and History demonstrates active place attachment influenced by animal presences. It both emerged from and perpetuated the idea of Florida as a pastoral retreat brimming with exotic natural wonders. Lanier joins many acclaimed visitors to Florida who wrote about the state as a warm, idyllic paradise, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe. In her memoir *Palmetto Leaves*, Stowe acknowledges the influence of travel writing on how people perceive Florida: “Tourists and travelers generally come with their heads full of certain romantic ideas of waving palms, orange-groves, flowers, and fruit, all bursting forth in tropical abundance” (313). Though she points out that these visitors often leave disillusioned, repulsed by Florida’s “rough coarse grass...scrubby underbrush” and sickly wandering cattle, Stowe also voiced her reluctance to move back to the North after growing enamored with the state’s birds and balmy climate (320).

Feathered Songsters and Innumerable Fish: Bartram’s St. Johns Eden

Lanier, Stowe, and others exhibit how animal representations drew humans to the state on the cusp of Florida’s travel boom. They shape the genre of Florida travel writing whose seminal work appeared 85 years before *Florida: Its Scenery, Climate, and History*. In 1791, Philadelphia botanist William Bartram published *Travels*, his account of a trip throughout the southeastern United States during which he logged descriptions of the surrounding flora and fauna. Bartram portrays idyllic Florida with exaltations of joyous wonder, like Lanier after him. A devout Quaker whose God charged humans with protecting the earth and its animals, Bartram viewed his travels along the wild southeastern continent as a religious experience. In 1774, he encountered Florida’s thriving and diverse animal life, meeting alligators, pelicans, turtles, fish,

songbirds, mosquitoes, deer, turkeys, bears, wolves, raccoons, opossums, squirrels, large cats, and more. Not all of these species contributes to Bartram's illustration of Florida as idyllic (his terrifying run-in with a congregation of alligators and pursuit by the violent "hurricane" prove some of the most memorable episodes in the book), and he sometimes harms animals in addition to celebrating them (132). Still, the trend of Bartram's narrative frames Florida as an exotic slice of paradise where humans might nurture their spirituality, growing closer to God.¹³ Therefore, *Travels* serves as an exemplar of animal ethics driven by religious devotion and an appreciation of nature as idyllic place.

Much scholarship on *Travels* examines Bartram as an early environmentalist and forerunner of Emerson, Thoreau, John Muir, and others.¹⁴ For Paul Corrigan, "Bartram's *Travels* presents readers with an opportunity to reflect on some of the most important ethical questions of the twenty-first century, most critically those environmental questions...that involve the human and the nonhuman" (par. 2). In her comprehensive study of Bartram's early environmentalism, Kerry S. Walters refers to animal wellbeing as Bartram's "special concern" (158). According to Walters, Bartram condemned "the human disregard for animal life and well-being exemplified in the wasteful bloodsport so popular among his contemporaries" and promoted "a nonchauvinistic attitude towards animal life" (158). In Part II: Chapter X of *Travels*, Bartram declares, "Within the circle of my acquaintance, I am known to be an advocate or vindicator of the benevolent and

¹³ Bartram's expression of his travels as a religious calling recurs throughout the text; Part II: Chapter I provides one example: "We are...subject to crosses and disappointments, but more especially the traveller; and when they surprise us, we frequently become restless and impatient under them: but let us rely on Providence, and by studying and contemplating the works and power of the Creator, learn wisdom and understanding in the economy of nature, and be seriously attentive to the divine monitor within" (70).

¹⁴ See Herbst (1954), Clarke (1985), Kelley (1985), Walters (1989), Adams (1994), Slaughter (1996), Hallock (2001), Magoc (2002), Sturges (2012), McLoone (2014), Sayre (2015)

peaceable disposition of animal creation” (222). His Introduction to the text, which focuses heavily on animals, also voices many concerns shared by animal activists today. For instance, he refutes the philosophical claim that animals rely on brute instinct and are therefore inferior to humans. Bartram also meditates on the lives and experiences of animals, such as birds, whom he describes as “social and benevolent creatures; intelligent, ingenious, volatile, active beings” (25). Imagining what their lives are like provides an important first step toward empathizing with animals and treating them ethically; Bartram’s attempts to do so recur throughout *Travels*.

For Walters, Bartram traversed the southeast to do more than record plant and animal species for the fields of botany and zoology. Walters argues that Bartram was influenced by the Society of Friends’ emphasis on spiritual equality for all humans and on compassionate dealings with animals; however, while Quakers called for kindness toward brute creation as a means of serving God (rather than because they believed animals had a right to fair treatment), Bartram was more interested in observing the animal community empirically to prove their moral capacity. “Humans should treat them compassionately not only because such treatment is pleasing to God,” Bartram believed, “but because the rational character of animals logically demands it” (quoted in Walters 171). As Walters indicates, Bartram discovered much evidence of purposeful and creative behavior in animals, meaning that, like humans, they must be rational. Bartram asserts in his Introduction, “If we bestow but very little attention to the economy of the animal creation, we shall find manifest examples of premeditation, perseverance, resolution, and consummate artifice, in order to effect their purposes” (22).¹⁵ In an undated fragment titled

¹⁵ Unlike his contemporary Jeremy Bentham, a utilitarian who argued for animal protection on the basis of their ability to suffer, Bartram maintains that reason is necessary for inclusion within the moral community.

“Thoughts on Morality,” Bartram goes as far as positing that animals are *more* rational and virtuous than humans. His strong animal ethic transcended Quaker philosophy and articulated many concepts now integral to the contemporary animal rights movement. The Florida landscape, which Bartram represented for the most part as a pastoral retreat from industrial civilization, afforded him many opportunities to observe and engage with his beloved animals.

Bartram’s consideration of Ephemera, or mayflies, along the St. Johns demonstrates his belief that humans might learn from the rational and virtuous capacities of animals. His attention to detail in describing their “awful...procession” along the river indicates Bartram’s respect for these short-lived insects that most would regard as inconsequential (Bartram 88). Bartram depicts the “innumerable millions of winged beings, voluntarily verging on to destruction, to the brink of the grave, where they behold bands of their enemies with wide open jaws, ready to receive them” (88). Though he anthropomorphizes them, painting their serene approach toward death as marked by “peace, love, and joy,” Bartram also asks us to reflect on what these miniscule creatures reveal about a higher power (88). “There are annually of these beautiful winged beings,” Bartram declares, “which rise into existence, and for a few moments take a transient view of the glory of the Creator’s works, a number greater than the whole race of mankind that have ever existed since the creation” (88). For Charles Adams, the mayflies excerpt shows that Bartram “remained open to the possibility of unity and complexity in all forms of life,” an important tenet of environmentalism (Adams 70). In other words, Bartram removes a whirring Florida pest from the hierarchical chain of being that sanctions violence toward nonhumans, questioning the chain itself by placing insects and humans on an equal plane of existence.

Bartram writes, “The importance of the existence of these beautiful and delicately formed little creatures, whose frame and organization are equally wonderful, more delicate, and perhaps as complicated as those of the most perfect human being, is well worth a few moments contemplation; I mean particularly when they appear in the fly state” (89). Paul Corrigan explores *Travels* for its answer to the question, “How can we live on earth in such a way as to both live fully and allow other life to live fully?” (par. 2). Bartram’s treatment of the Ephemera is remarkably salient for that question: “If we consider the very short period of that stage of existence, which we may reasonably suppose to be the only space of their life that admits of pleasure and enjoyment, what a lesson doth it not afford us of the vanity of our own pursuits!” (89). The mayflies observed by Bartram spend nearly their entire lives immobile, buried under mud, and enjoy the fresh air for a few hours or days before their death. He encourages us to learn from their brief experience of freedom so that we might not take our time here for granted.¹⁶ According to Chris Magoc, Bartram’s ecological awareness also emerges in his remarks on the Ephemera, or his understanding that the health of any system is connected to each unit in the system as well as surrounding ecologies. Overall, the mayflies episode shows Bartram’s environmentalist thought and his reverence for animal life, traits which describe his abundant passages on idyllic Florida.

Birds and fish are the animals most commonly associated with pastoral Florida, inspiring lyrical descriptions of their movements through water and air. Accordingly, Bartram often depicts fish and songbirds as colorful, dazzling creatures of Eden. He enjoys daily “the sweet

¹⁶ Bartram’s illustration of the mayflies bears some resemblance to Benjamin Franklin’s “The Ephemera: An Emblem of Human Life,” which the latter sent to Madame Brillon in 1778. Where Bartram studies the insects in a mostly objective fashion, Franklin writes a short fiction about their imagined conversations with one another to highlight the brevity of life for both bugs and humans.

enchanted melody of the feathered songsters” (Bartram 88). He also details at length “the loud, sonorous watchful savanna cranes (*grus pratensis*) with musical clangor,” who “spread their light elastic sail” and “move from the earth heavy and slow” (Bartram 135-136). Bartram watches as “they all rise and fall together as one bird; now they mount aloft, gradually wheeling about; each squadron...descend on the verge of some glittering lake; whilst other squadrons...wheel round and double the promontory, in the silver regions of the clouded skies, where...they...observe the verdant meadows on the borders of the East Lake” (136). His contemplation of the birds allows Bartram to capture this dynamic, multi-dimensional image of Florida’s water, skies, and landforms. Following this poetic sketch of the savanna cranes is a longer, more scientific survey of their appearance, behaviors, and diet. Such abrupt shifts in tone characterize *Travels* and have frustrated critics seeking to call it poetry, taxonomy, or something else.¹⁷ Thomas Hallock suggests that Bartram’s idyllic profile on the sandhill cranes and other wild aspects of Florida “attempt[s] to establish an identification with place on the most uncertain of terms” (124). In other words, Bartram navigates this relatively unexplored, unfamiliar part of the continent by idealizing it on pastoral terms.

In Part II: Chapter V, shortly after his report on the birds, Bartram recalls fishing for supper in the Little Lake. “What a most beautiful creature is this fish before me!” he writes, “gliding to and fro...in the still clear waters...the whole fish is of a pale gold...the scales...are variably powdered with red, russet, silver, blue, and green specks, so laid on the scales as to appear like real dust or opaque bodies, each apparent particle being so projected by light and

¹⁷ See, for instance, Berta Grattan Lee, “William Bartram: Naturalist or Poet?” *Early American Literature*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1972, pp. 124-129.

shade, and in the various attitudes of the fish, as to deceive the sight” (Bartram 140-141). His close attention to the animal’s shades and movements mirrors the lights and colors of the landscape, where Bartram finds repose amidst “a brisk and cool breeze...passing over the clear waters of the lake, and fluttering...through the surrounding groves...to the moon-light savannas” (141). The “harmonious and soothing...native sylvan music” produced by doves, nonpareils, whippoorwills, mockingbirds, and frogs augments Bartram’s pastoral experience of Florida, illustrating the relationship between animal presences and the creation of place (141).

The George Lake episode just a few passages later exemplifies this relationship even more profoundly than the above excerpts. Filling “a vast circular expanse” are “diaphanous” waters, “a great variety of fruitful and floriferous trees, shrubs, and planets, the pendant golden Orange,” and “the balmy air vibrating with melody of the merry birds” (Bartram 150). Bartram constructs the image of Eden with “innumerable bands of fish...clothed in the most brilliant colors,” including garfish, trout, bream, catfish, flounder, and bass, all swimming peacefully with one another as a disinterested alligator sits nearby (150). He then describes “this amazing and delightful scene” as belonging to pre-lapsarian nature; so perfect is the state of earth and animals before him that Bartram likens it to a painting. I take this chapter’s heading from the following passage and will present it in full:

And although this paradise of fish may seem to exhibit a just representation of the peaceable and happy state of nature which existed before the fall, yet in reality it is a mere representation; for the nature of the fish is the same as if they were in Lake George or the river; but here the water or element in which they live and move, is so perfectly

clear and transparent, it places them all on an equality with regard to their ability to injure or escape from one another. (Bartram 151)

The phrase “paradise of fish” encapsulates rather succinctly how animal presences contribute to our experience of natural places. Bartram asserts a collective ‘fish nature’ that dictates their behavior throughout time, suggesting that the idyllic setting before him has a biological explanation: the fish inhabit such clear water that none may ambush any other. As a result, “the trout freely passes by the very nose of the alligator, and laughs in his face, and the bream by the trout” (Bartram 151). That the anticipated prey-predator relationship has been disrupted at the lake seems feasible only in paradisiacal nature.

Thus far, I have explored just a sample of Bartram’s celebratory remarks about how animals can make places meaningful.¹⁸ These philosophical and aesthetic positions correspond to his tangible interactions with real Florida animals. Though he occasionally harms animals like alligators and birds (mostly by shooting them) and voices certain anthropocentric ideas, more often, Bartram attempts to defend his fellow creatures from humans wishing to exploit them for sport. In Part II: Chapter VI, on the journey from Cuscowilla, Bartram (unsuccessfully) begs his companions not to kill a family of deer. He also regrets dining on a savanna crane, preferring “their seraphic music in the ethereal skies” to their flesh (Bartram 189). In the Introduction, Bartram likens the killing of a bear along the Musquito River to “cruel murder” after witnessing its cub pawing the mother and crying out “like a child” (22). His retelling, though slightly anthropomorphic, demonstrates Bartram’s empathy toward animals and his aversion to seeing

¹⁸ For additional examples, see p. 85 (“Having a lively leading breeze...”); p. 125 (“Here is in this river...”); p. 159 (“At the return of the morning...”); pp. 160-161 (“How cheerful and social...”); p. 196 (“It is amazing...”); p. 199 (“After indulging my imagination...”)

them harmed. I maintain that his animal ethics contribute to Bartram's respectful appreciation for and celebration of idyllic Florida.

Travels does not exclusively represent Florida as a tranquil paradise, however. The aforementioned alligator attack and particularly Bartram's terror during a severe thunderstorm depict Florida as more of a wilderness—in which environments are largely hostile to human survival—than an idyll. Many critics relate these shifting faces of Florida to Bartram's more general views on nature. Rowe, Patricia Medeiros, and Elliot James Mackle see the text as a pastoral paean to the natural world, focusing on the abundant garden imagery used to portray Florida as Eden. For Medeiros, *Travels* achieves one of the first “artistic interpretations of the American continent” and narrates a Thoreauvian retreat from society, immersion in wild nature, and return (202). Similarly, Rowe observes that “Bartram uses the word *Elysium* as he makes his solitary way into the wilderness” (3, italics in original). Still, the wild nature Bartram navigates generally differs from the more perilous manifestations of Florida wilderness found in the novels of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, for instance.

Robert Sayre and Thomas P. Slaughter examine Bartram's treatment of wilderness in light of its various ecocritical definitions. Sayre references Roderick Nash's work on the American wilderness, which explains how it transformed from demonic and forbidden (in the Puritan view) to an untapped resource for colonial exploit (if one disregarded the natives who had made it their home). According to Sayre, Bartram belongs with those who “occupied a vantage point from which wilderness could be regarded with something other than hostility” (Nash 55). Slaughter adds that Bartram did not view nature as “open to...enterprise” if that enterprise meant significant damage to the environment (430). He also affirms that Bartram's

appreciative attitude toward the wilderness was ahead of his time. This does not mean, however, that Bartram sought to preserve wild spaces and leave them untouched. As many scholars have indicated, Bartram condoned certain industrial uses of the land.¹⁹ In Part II, Chapter III, he writes, “I kept as near the East shore as possible, often surprised by the plunging of alligators, and greatly delighted with the pleasing prospect of cultivation, and the increase of human industry, which frequently struck my view from the elevated, distant shores” (Bartram 85). Significantly, this celebratory portrait of human development includes the splashing of alligators, symbolizing an attitude toward conservation that respects existing nature and animals. As Corrigan notes, “While it is true that [Bartram] supports advancing human industry into the wild parts of Florida...he holds a vision of humans living peaceably side-by-side with nonhumans” (par. 6). Additionally, though Bartram encountered preindustrial, wild Florida with its unpredictable weather and fearsome animals, *Travels* translates his experience into the pastoral by highlighting the state’s idyllic qualities. As Rowe indicates, “There were mosquitoes, but, though he mentions them, he minimizes their torturous stings. Alligators attacked Bartram’s canoe, but he preferred to emphasize the amusement they provided with their nightly barking” (3).²⁰ Bartram rarely permits the hazardous elements of Florida to overshadow its paradisiacal splendor, especially regarding the animal presences that helped to foster his sense of place.

¹⁹ See also Rob McLoone, “Natural Affinities: The Political Economy and Ecology of Desire in William Bartram’s Southern Gulf,” *The Southern Literary Journal*, vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 67-87. According to McLoone, Bartram is very much interested in the new economic relations between settlers and Native Americans, most of which required some development of the land.

²⁰ Though he idealizes Florida much less than Bartram, Emerson also made light of the pests he encountered, writing about them in his St. Augustine poem, “And dulcimer mosquitoes in the woods/ Hum their sly secrets in unwilling ears/ Which, like all gossip, leave a smart behind.”

Finally, crucial to Bartram's literature of place is his personal transformation as he journeys throughout the southeast. According to David Seamon, one indicator of place attachment is place identification, or a renewed understanding of the self as interwoven with physical places.²¹ Critics have pointed out the religious fulfillment Bartram gains from witnessing the private and intricate activities of nature, but attention to the role that animals play in his identity as a traveller, botanist, and human being is scarce. "This world," thought Bartram, "is furnished with an infinite variety of animated scenes, inexpressibly beautiful and pleasing, equally free to the inspection and enjoyment of all...creatures" (15). In this passage, Rob McLoone sees Bartram contemplating himself as a traveller and the importance of spaces to explore. Although I agree, I would add that Bartram also reveals his attachment for the places he has visited, an attachment built upon his love of nature and nonhuman animal. In his Introduction, Bartram notes how animal lives have already shaped his sensibilities, and in *Travels*, he often pauses to consider the moral and philosophical implications of the creatures before him, as in the Mayflies passage. Doing so enables Bartram to create places out of spaces, or to connect as a human with land that imperial eyes may view as uninhabited and dispensable. Seeking Bartram's benevolent place identification can help in protecting what remains of idyllic Florida and in fostering an ethical relationship with animals.

²¹ See Manzo, Lynne C. and Patrick Devine-Wright, editors. *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Methods and Applications*. Routledge, 2014, p. 17.

Miracles of Light: Marjory Stoneman Douglas's Rebranding of the Everglades

William Bartram serves as an exemplar for Florida nature writers, including Marjory Stoneman Douglas, whose novels, short stories, and nonfiction inspired real-world activism on behalf of the state's nature and animals. Douglas worked as a journalist, editor, and writer for many decades before gaining notoriety as an environmental and social justice advocate. If Bartram anticipated the modern environmental movement, Douglas helped the public to realize it and to act en masse on behalf of nature and animals. She focused in particular on the Everglades,²² the subject of her best-known work, *The Everglades: River of Grass* (1947), and setting for two texts most pertinent to this chapter, "Plumes" a 1930 short story and work of historical fiction, along with her 1959 novel *Alligator Crossing*. The former depicts the murder of Guy Bradley, an Audubon Society warden, by egret poachers in 1905.²³ *Alligator Crossing* documents the killing of alligators for their hide and shows, through the eyes of a bullied, adolescent runaway, all that is worth saving in the Everglades.

As a young child, Douglas traveled through Florida from Minneapolis with her family on their way to Cuba. The white light, both dazzling and calming to her, formed Douglas's first impressions of the state. She moved to Miami in 1915 at the age of 25, following a brief, failed marriage and the death of her mother, and began writing for her father's newspaper, the *Miami-*

²² As Douglas explains, "glade" has an old English origin "glaed," meaning "shining" or "bright," referring perhaps to the sun on the water. Douglas sheds new light on the swampy glades, hence the subtitle for this section. (See *River of Grass*, p. 7)

²³ Guy Morrell Bradley was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1870, and moved to Florida with his family at age six. While living in Monroe County, as a child, Guy helped plume hunters find their quarry. He later took up plume hunting himself until the passage of the Lacey Act in 1900, which outlawed the practice in an attempt to save dwindling species of game animals. Bradley then became an outspoken opponent of poaching and was hired as one of the nation's first game wardens in 1902 by the American Ornithologists' Union. His new position made Bradley quite unpopular; hunters sometimes shot at him while he patrolled the region. On July 8, 1905, Bradley responded to gunshots near his home in Flamingo and discovered a family friend, Walter Smith, and his two sons hunting in an egret rookery. When Bradley attempted to intervene, Walter Smith fatally shot him. Two additional Audubon Society employees died in a similar fashion in 1908.

Herald. Frank Stoneman had followed the attempts to drain the Everglades by Hamilton Disston, Napoleon B. Broward, and William Jennings, and often described these endeavors as hurried and haphazard. In 1940, he discovered that a Miami water source named Slaughter Creek, part of the sewage and water mains system funded by Henry Flagler, was contaminated with the blood and other remnants from animals who were killed and prepared there for sale. Stoneman published his findings in the newspaper, resulting in improvements to the water supply. Douglas shared her father's activism and concern for the environment.²⁴ At the *Miami-Herald*, she produced columns on Florida history, women's rights, conditions of Miami slums, the civil rights movements, and threats to the Everglades.

The Everglades: River of Grass opens by celebrating the uniqueness of the Everglades. Douglas pleads for their protection because "there are no other Everglades in the world...Nothing anywhere else is like them" (*River* 5). She then offers a picturesque look at her subject that resembles Bartram's joyous recollections in *Travels*: "The miracle of light pours over the green and brown expanse of saw grass and water, shining and slow-moving below" (*River* 5). Animal life enhances the serenity enjoyed here: "An everglade kite and his mate, questing in great solitary circles, rising and dipping and rising again on the wind currents, can look down all day long at the water faintly green with floating water lettuce or marked by thin standing lines of reeds, utter their sharp goat cries, and be seen and heard by no one at all" (*River* 9). Birds such as ibis and heron continue to dominate Douglas's portrayals of the Everglades in her short fiction. Davis notes the importance of animal presences to the Everglades' idyllic

²⁴ As Davis points out, Frank Stoneman should not be considered a complete forerunner of his daughter's environmental advocacy. Though he complained that drainage attempts by Broward and Disston were rash and unplanned, Stoneman did see the Everglades as an opportunity for development; he did not share Douglas's attachment to their wild and untouched state.

(“wondrous” in his words) atmosphere: “Observers have recorded more than one hundred fish species in Florida Bay and three hundred kinds of birds...throughout the Everglades. Those enhancing the region’s wondrousness include stick-legged wading birds with a narrow habitat range: herons, egrets, roseate spoonbills, ibises, wood storks, and others” (*EP* 28). Douglas demonstrates her understanding of the Everglades as an intricate ecosystem, in which birds “interact as prey and predator with some of the area’s sixty-five known species of reptiles, including snakes, alligators, turtles, and the American crocodile” (*EP* 28).

According to Chris Wilhelm, Douglas’s writings capture “the different identities Floridians have assigned to the Everglades throughout history” (431). These attitudes range from revulsion to ambivalence to adoration. As Douglas observes, “the region now called ‘The Everglades’ was described as a series of vast, miasmic swamps, poisonous lagoons, huge dismal marshes without outlet, a rotting, shallow, inland sea, or labyrinths of dark trees hung and looped about with snakes” (6). One holding this view was Army surgeon Jacob Rhett Motte, for whom the Everglades were “a most hideous region to live in, a perfect paradise for Indians, alligators, serpents, frogs, and every other kind of loathsome reptile” (qtd. in Grunwald 42). In *Alligator Crossing*, Henry Bunk gazes at the seemingly homogenous distance before him from a small boat; initially terrified and uncertain of his surroundings, he grows to cherish the lively wetlands and the animals residing there. Douglas thus recreates the trajectory from public ambivalence toward the Everglades—during the multiple efforts to drain them for development and widespread hunting for profit—to energetic advocacy for their preservation. Many works of Florida literature feature this process of transforming spaces into meaningful and valued places.

Environmental advocacy groups, which grew substantially throughout the 1970s, include Friends of the Everglades, founded by Douglas herself in 1969. The first efforts to save the Everglades, however, were led by the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs (FFWC), founded in 1895. Davis asserts, "years before women could vote, their civic and charitable organizations assumed an important role in progressive reform of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (*EP* 56). After creating Florida's first state park in 1916 at Royal Palm, the FFWC pursued the two goals of preserving royal palms and protecting the habitats of wading birds in the Everglades. In addition to their environmental aims, the FFWC fought for social concerns such as women's rights, child welfare, urban infrastructure, public health, and treatment of Native Americans—issues which resonated with Douglas and prompted her to join women's clubs in Miami. One of her unpublished stories which may be considered ecofeminist, "Women and Birds" highlights the role of women in rescuing the environment from masculine violence.

According to Davis, Douglas attributed her social consciousness to educators like Emily Greene Balch, whose Quaker passivism nurtured Douglas's penchant for nonviolence and her love of animals. Douglas shares the Quaker sensibility toward nonhuman nature with Bartram, though she was not an official follower of Quakerism as a religion.²⁵ Their philosophies regarding human-animal relationships are remarkably similar, as Davis illustrates:

Douglas claimed to be pragmatic in her views of humans and their relationship with the natural world. The needless destruction of plant and animal life simply carried no social value. Any landscape was an open portfolio of natural beauty and civilization's most

²⁵ Douglas was agnostic; she believed that following any decisive religious practices detracted from the ability to enjoy life in the present moment. In the last years of her life, she professed no fear of what came after death. Douglas also recognized that wild nature offered humans spiritual rejuvenation, but she did not associate nature with God.

accessible and important aesthetic resource...Taking a Quaker stewardship view of nature, Douglas loved creatures of the wild, from the low-slung sand crab to the stilted seabird. (*EP* 59)

In naming Friends of the Everglades, Douglas acknowledges her Quaker influences. Within a few years, the organization boasted three thousand members and made restoration of the Everglades their goal. Defending this aim, Douglas famously declared in 1982, “Conservation is now a dead word. You can’t conserve what you haven’t got” (Horton 13).²⁶

Friends of the Everglades successfully opposed the construction of a jetport in Florida’s Big Cypress region, one of several attempts to exploit the land, animals, and humans of a misunderstood tropical ecosystem. In addition to praising their rare and mysterious beauty, Douglas discusses the history of violence and profiteering in the Everglades, beginning with U.S. raids against Seminoles who had made South Florida their home. Proposals to drain the Everglades for agriculture and urban expansion began in the 1830s. The flourishing of railways built by Henry Flagler and canals funded by Hamilton Disston increased Florida’s population while eroding wetland areas. As population around the Everglades grew, so too did hunting and trapping of raccoons, otters, alligators, and birds. Any regulations on hunting were seldom enforced. As David McCally notes, five million birds were shot for their feathers in one season alone, and a single hunter killed 250 alligators and 172 otters during one visit to the Everglades.

²⁶ Interview with the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, Nov. 28, 1982

Poachers targeted egrets for their plumes, which were used as fashionable decorations for women's hats.²⁷

Guy Bradley's murder reinvigorated a disorganized Audubon Society and galvanized an environmental movement. The FFWC first proposed establishing a protected state park after Bradley's death. In "Plumes," Douglas imagines the events that may have led to that day in 1905 through the fictional stand-in for Bradley, John Pinder, a fugitive and would-be game warden. Of critical importance is Pinder's devotion to the birds of the Everglades and how they kindle his attachment to place. Together, animals and the Florida environment allow Pinder to experience place identification. For Pinder, birds—especially the threatened egrets—give Florida its idyllic qualities. "Plumes," therefore, offers a distinct example of the relationship between animal presences and place construction.

When Pinder overhears plume hunter Two-Gun George Johnson's verbal claim to the Cape Sable and Shark River rookeries, he feels "unaccustomed anger...boiling in him" ("Plumes" 98). The rage frightens him; everyone else in the community quietly accepts Two-Gun's plan, and Pinder knows that to fit in, he must accept it, too. As an escaped criminal from Pennsylvania, Pinder is out of place in the small Florida town. His neighbors hunt, fish, and poach for a living, regardless of animal protection laws. He alone respects the egrets as autonomous creatures deserving life, but his compassion is dangerous, threatening to reveal his identity as an outsider and potentially return him to prison. Though Pinder believes that "[t]hey were, in a way, all his people now...they would even stand by him with their silence if it were

²⁷ Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings acknowledges efforts to curb egret poaching in Chapter 18 of *Cross Creek*: "The egrets are coming back into their proper numbers, thanks to Federal protection and to women's vanity taking another turn than the wearing of their feathers" (270).

necessary,” he also knows this silence is contingent upon his acquiescence to any illegal activities of the town (“Plumes” 100).

The first part of Douglas’s story reads as a crisis-of-conscience tale, with Pinder initially siding with his fellow humans: “Not for anything in the world would he acknowledge to himself...that it was up to him to go up to Miami and pass the word to the game warden...He would be here still, wouldn’t he, and the sea and the sun and the quiet-spoken people whom he liked, and who asked no questions, if every last egret in the world were obliterated from the memory of man?” (“Plumes” 101). Here, Pinder decides to suppress his idyllic vision of Florida to fit in amongst those who view the state as open for environmental exploitation. He wavers on this conviction, however, after realizing that Florida’s birds embody his newfound freedom and personal transformation.

Douglas’s description of the birds as Pinder travels up the Shark River paints Florida as an Edenic refuge:

Ah! There, high up, far over the distant tree tops, where the river receded straightly before him, there were the first small white-flashing specks that were birds. The sun lay westering behind him, so that his shadow reached forward on his gray deckhouse and he stared with the curious catch of breath that the first view of those rising birds always brought him. His face, raised to them, his reaching look, was drained of everything but a kind of clear happiness. There were the birds. (“Plumes” 103)

Pinder moves through the scene spatially, his gaze drifting from treetops to the shadow stretching before him. Douglas prompts the reader with visual, auditory, and sensory clues to

identify with her protagonist and the joy that the animals bring him. This joy fills the space of the Shark River, transforming it into a meaningful place for Pinder. His view of the rookery expands as the boat draws closer. As the day nears sundown, “bright explosions of thousands upon thousands of wings” dot the landscape (“Plumes” 104). Pinder notes the shape of individual long-necked birds and the forms they take together in flight, “mile-long fluttering ribbons of birds; birds in the blowing streamers, in ordered ranks, in far-spaced floods” (“Plumes” 104). In a dazzling slew of color imagery, Douglas strengthens her portrayal of paradisiacal Florida: “Their whiteness as they turned and flashed against the blue, against the sunlight, was the whiteness of white petals, of new snow, of white foam bursting from a riven sapphire sea. The blue of the herons’ long bodies was the blue white turned, in one wheeling turn of thousands of identical wings, and became blue, became dark, became shadow feathered against the sky” (“Plumes” 104). I have quoted these sections at length not only to show how the birds of the Everglades construct Florida as idyllic, but also to indicate how the animals transform under Pinder’s gaze from commodified objects to revered individuals.

While contemplating Two-Gun’s claim to the egrets, Pinder refers to the animals as “nit-witted handfuls of feathers” (“Plumes” 98). He attempts to emulate the language of the townspeople, who use synecdoche by identifying the birds as “long whites” and other epithets that avoid acknowledging them as living subjects. As the narrator observes, decades of poaching in South Florida have decimated egret populations; taking this for granted, most residents of Flamingo perceive the animals as little more than commodities destined to be harvested for their feathers. To borrow from Critical Animal Studies scholar Carol J. Adams, the townspeople make the referent (the birds) absent in order to justify hunting them, thus divorcing the whole creature

from the commodity it becomes.²⁸ However, in Pinder's rhapsodic descriptions of his trek upriver, repetition of "birds," "herons," and "egrets" reinscribes the animals as autonomous subjects. Douglas illustrates the power of naming when Pinder identifies the many species in his immediate surroundings, providing him with "the recurrent pleasure of recognition" ("Plumes" 104). He can name "the little blue herons, and the white herons in their thousands, the green heron, and Ward's heron, and the black-crowned night heron, and the graceful thing they called the lady of the waters" ("Plumes" 104). Pinder goes on to admire "the stately, fine craft of the ibises—the white ibis and the black-and-white wood ibis, trailing their long legs, and the water turkey" ("Plumes" 104). Douglas uses her protagonist's viewpoint to question those who see the birds only as commodities to be harvested. Instead of blanketing the animals under this exploitative gaze, Pinder discerns the nuances between multiple species and reveals the variegated prism of animal life in the Florida Everglades. He regards the animals aesthetically as whole beings, inseparable from the land. Their mere presence brings him "a clear kind of happiness" ("Plumes" 103). More than simply affirming the beauty of Shark River, Pinder's idyllic reflections persuade him to defend the birds living there.

Doing so entails great personal risk; where he initially chooses his fellow humans over the animals Two-Gun intends to kill, Pinder now realizes that the residents of Flamingo "were nothing to him" ("Plumes" 105). After deciding to protect the egrets, and still aware that "this was the one thing in the world he must not do," Pinder seeks help from the local Audubon Society at their houseboat ("Plumes" 105). He informs a ranger of Two-Gun's plans, to which

²⁸ See *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Manifesto*, Chapter 2: The Rape of Women, the Butchering of Women, p. 66

the man responds, “For twenty-eight years I’ve raged up and down this country trying to make the people save for themselves one of the rarest things they’ve got” (“Plumes” 106). “Nobody cares,” laments Pinder, emphasizing the importance of public involvement in environmental protection efforts (“Plumes” 106). Significantly, it is the townspeople who fail to stop poachers and who take for granted the harmful commodification of their land. Through Pinder, an outsider, Douglas suggests that we must view our surroundings with new eyes to respect the ecological relationship between Florida’s idyllic places and their nonhuman animals.

Intrigued by Pinder’s concern for the birds, the ranger suspects that he is “not from around here” and asks, “What are these egrets to you?” (“Plumes” 106-107). Pinder replies, “Nothing...What should they be? Only it seems to me a shame to let them be killed” (“Plumes” 107). This is perhaps the story’s most important exchange, highlighting the deep ecological sensibility which can inspire environmental ethics. By deep ecological, I mean the recognition that non-human nature holds inherent value in and of itself, regardless of its benefits to people.²⁹ But of course the birds *do* benefit Pinder by giving his life a purpose; in fact, the determination to protect them affords him a new identity altogether. Near the story’s climax, Two-Gun arrives at the rookery with a warden, who knows that Pinder is on the run from a Pennsylvania prison and that his real name is James D. Evans. After this announcement, “Old habits of obedience ran...along his tensed muscles. But that was when he had been only a number. His name was John Pinder, he told himself desperately. He was the warden of this rookery” (“Plumes” 116).

²⁹ This assertion is the first of eight points made by Arne Næss in his article, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement,” originally published in *Inquiry*, vol. 16, 1973, pp. 95-100. Næss distinguishes between “shallow” and “deep” ecology; the former seeks to conserve the environment based on its instrumental value to humans. My analysis of Douglas’s writings does not engage with other, more controversial, tenets of deep ecology, such as reducing world population, or its perceived misanthropic privileging of “nature” over “culture.”

Shakily, Pinder articulates his new identity and responsibility to protect the egrets: “My name’s John Pinder...I’m warden of this rookery here, and you can keep out—you and your warrants. I shan’t let the Johnsons shoot up my birds” (“Plumes” 116). Here, Douglas shows how Pinder’s connection to place has fundamentally altered his sense of self, demonstrating the process of place identification.

The story ends tragically with Pinder murdered at the hands of poachers, as Guy Bradley was in 1905, but not before offering a final set of animal ethics tied to idyllic Florida. Pinder waits at the rookery for several days before Two-Gun’s approach. His solitary camp allows him to witness nature unmarred and free of human intervention. As the egret eggs have recently hatched,

The life of the rookery was noisier, more vital, more preoccupied than ever.

Father and mother birds joined in hunting food for the fledglings that now bobbed and squawked from every nest. The raucous fish crows were active, gobbling up stray minnows and little birds. There was a sense of life renewing itself, perpetuating itself, with purpose and with passion. And behind the slow beat of wings, the going and coming of the birds, the days were serene. (“Plumes” 114)

In this tranquil portrait of animal life thriving and regenerating “with purpose,” and outside of human manipulation, Douglas submits that idyllic Florida should be left alone: observed, but not touched; admired, but not harmed for our gain. However, she does not condemn all interference, but indeed pleads with us to defend nature from human threats. Pinder’s final moments underscore the rewards of selflessly protecting the “rarest things [we’ve] got” (“Plumes” 106). Douglas parallels Pinder’s death with that of a small bird. Fatally shot by poachers, the man and

the animal seem to watch one another as they die. The story concludes as Pinder “rested, smiling a little, his eyes upon the dead bird in the water. How much were they paying for plumes? That, too, was unimportant. He had seen them for a little while, glistening in the sun” (“Plumes” 121). Here, Douglas reminds us that human greed is to blame for the destroyed rookery and for the loss of human life. Moreover, she leaves Pinder with the sense of joy he feels for the birds and upholds the mere act of glimpsing their beauty above anything to be earned from harming them.

In terms of population loss, plume birds were Florida’s most exploited species until the early twentieth century. As Davis explains in “The Despoliation of Florida’s Living Aesthetic,” alligators were a close second. Nearly “2.5 million alligator hides were harvested from the Florida wilds between 1880 and 1894” (“Despoliation” 242). In her 1959 novel, Douglas does for alligators what she accomplished for shore birds with stories like “Plumes” and “A Flight of Ibis.” Set mostly in the Whitewater Bay estuaries, *Alligator Crossing* exposes the maltreatment of wild Florida animals while showcasing the natural beauty of Douglas’s beloved Everglades. Similarly to John Pinder, thirteen-year-old protagonist Henry Bunk faces the difficult choice of risking his life to defend a threatened animal species. Through Henry, Douglas once again reveals how attachment to idyllic Florida can foster an ecological awareness and an ethics of care toward nonhuman nature.

The novel begins with a sharp distinction between urban and rural. Henry flees his home in Miami—“the narrow noisy room crowded with younger children” set above “the roaring traffic of cars and trucks like a clanking metal river”—for a real one leading to Whitewater Bay (AC 6-7).³⁰ Douglas portrays Henry’s home as part of a concrete jungle, where “there was no

³⁰ AC is an abbreviation for *Alligator Crossing* to be used in parenthetical citations.

room for anybody, any child, to have anything of his own that would not be snatched from him, or to be anything except what they all were—pushing and screaming children” (AC 7). These descriptions of inner-city poverty reflect Douglas’s concern with social justice and urban ecology. They also serve as contrasting the safety and relief offered by Henry’s secret den along the river, in which he “breathed deep and slowly and looked around him at his world, letting his mind enjoy the difference between what lay behind him and this” (AC 7). The den, carved out of the riverbank, embodies Henry’s attachment to place. He feels a benevolent ownership of and individual connection to “the cool smell of earth...the hot sunshine sparkling on the water where the gully ended in a shelflike beach and rock” (AC 5). The presence of birds, such as blue jays, and fish hopping in the stream contributes to Henry’s sense of peace here.

His river den offers more than an idyllic retreat for Henry. It in fact saves him from a life of crime that, according to Douglas, the city streets often produce. Henry suffers from bullying by a neighborhood gang, and “maybe he would have been happy enough to have tagged along...and tried to do what they did...helping them steal things and thinking up crazy things to do that would make them think he was somebody to admire. Maybe—if he had not remembered the river” (AC 8). Henry imagines a pastoral future along the river in which he lives off the land: “How wonderful if he could just stay right here and never go back at all...he would live on the fish he caught, sleep when he wanted to, explore along the canal bank...he was happy in the sun, half-staring at the rippling water, taking deep easy breaths” (AC 10-11). The text enlarges this fantasy into a real possibility for Henry, who must later decide if he can survive alone in the Everglades. Most important to the personal growth inspired by his attachment to place, however, is George—an alligator who regularly visits Henry to receive gifts of food (a fish head, for

instance) and whom the boy regards as a kind of pet. Henry conceives of his den as a kind of home he shares with the animal, reminiscent of Lanier's "very honest and worthy saurian, of good repute" who occupies "a little cove of water, dark green under the overhanging leaves" (265). Henry, like Lanier, imagines that the alligator has attached itself to a particular spot along the river. Being privy to this niche as human visitors strengthens their sense of place and prompts introspection about the life of the animal, a critical step in developing ethical attitudes toward nature.

Henry's relationship with George has already generated place identification for Henry when the novel opens. Douglas writes, "the boy began to feel that he really was Henry Albert Bunks, strong and sure, bigger, more important. The warm heady happy thing rising in him was pride. Certainly there was no one he knew exactly like him, who had found out *such a place* as his here and had risked everything for it; no other boy he had ever heard of had *his own alligator*" (AC 14, my italics). This passage exemplifies the interstices between animals and place, and how respecting both can transform one's sense of self. Understandably, Henry is devastated when he arrives one morning and finds George's skinned torso floating in the river, with his salted hide draped across a nearby fishing boat. The death of "the best thing he ever had" deflates Henry's identity transformation, reducing him to "only a small-sized boy who knew well his own helplessness...empty now of everything but misery" (AC 26; 28). Without a definitive plan, Henry sneaks aboard the small boat and remains trapped inside a cupboard as George's killer sails for the bay.

Alligator Crossing suits the goals of this chapter for its idyllic portrait of the Everglades following Henry's departure on the boat. Douglas also illustrates, as does Rawlings even more

poignantly, the convergence of wild and pastoral spaces in Florida literature. In other words, vast wild regions not typically regarded as meaningful places taken on personal value, becoming worthy of protection efforts, partly due to our pastoral enjoyment of them. In *The Everglades: River of Grass*, Douglas sought to translate the public's image of the Everglades as a static, swampy blight on the Florida landscape into a dynamic prism of moving water, myriad animal species, and ecosystems integral to our own ways of life. Henry's perception of the Everglades fulfills this trajectory. Initially frightened by the sheer expanse of wetlands, untold creatures in the black water, and the ominous *squawking* of birds in the night, Henry eventually sees his surroundings as a larger manifestation of his river den: an idyllic, healing place capable of quenching his thirst for freedom.

After the poacher, Dillon, discovers Henry, he permits the stowaway to stay onboard despite the child's obvious anger toward him. Reluctantly, Henry finds himself enjoying Dillon's company and the scenery of the Everglades. As he stands on the bow while it leaps atop the water, "his whole body was battered and warmed and delighted by it... The morning sea was brilliant, pale green glass, streaked and shadowed with more kinds of green than he could think of the names for, jewels he had never heard of streaking beyond the shining snow of spray. In his whole life, he had never known anything so wonderful" (AC 39). This placid depiction of Florida mirrors those found in *The Everglades: River of Grass*, evincing Douglas's ability to portray the multifaceted region as she saw it firsthand. As in "Plumes," the appearance of animals, particularly birds, enhances Henry's pleasure and attachment to place: "Birds rose over them and flapped and fished in shallows between them—white birds that he thought were gulls and great gray-brown pelicans hurling themselves beak down like dive bombers, at some fish below. Two

great dark birds with forked tails and huge arched spreading wings seemed to float in the air over the treetops with no motion at all” (AC 40).

The close attention to their physiology, colors, and movements is characteristic of Douglas’s writings about shore birds, as is the parallel between animals and her protagonists. Like Pinder, Henry watches “white birds sailing free on free white wings” and yearns for their sense of liberty (AC 43). Dillon teaches his young companion about the birds they see and about plume hunting, which he laments has been outlawed. Henry “didn’t get all of it, except somebody was killing birds the way Dillon killed his alligator... Taking what they wanted, smashing the rest. Henry’s spine was prickling with anger. He knew what it was to be hunted. He hated them all, those big boys and this narrow-faced man. They were all the same kind” (AC 54). Henry not only identifies with animals; he aligns the philosophy behind exploiting them with callous displays of power, such as bullying. Watching the animals of the Everglades allows Henry to learn more about himself and to ultimately take a stand against the despoliation of Florida’s nonhuman nature.

As a *Bildungsroman*, the novel traces Henry’s awakening to the larger environment outside of his cramped Miami home. He is baffled by Dillon’s casual acknowledgement of (and participation in) evils such as poaching. Initially, the Everglades—“this world he could not have imagined... wide and quiet, windy, free”—pose an alternative to the unsatisfying childhood Henry has endured, though he also recognizes that “men here were untrustworthy, too” (AC 57). In his creation of place, Henry divorces the idyllic scenery and the animals inhabiting it from threats posed by humans like Dillon: “He had no words for what, suddenly, the wide water and the sky, the fish—above all, the birds—had begun to mean to him. He knew that if he had to

leave it now, something in him that had started to grow would never live” (AC 57). This passage voices his burgeoning place identification, the understanding that places encompass a crucial part of the human spirit. The fishing boat becomes a liminal space for Henry to contemplate returning “to that crowded back room and those streets” or remaining in the Florida wilds, perhaps learning how to survive from a man he hates (AC 57).

As their first full day on the water draws to a close, Dillon leaves Henry with a woman residing in Flamingo. Mrs. Pearl chides her guest for running away from home, imagining Henry’s mother sick with worry. Henry dismisses her concern, believing that she does not know what living in the inner-city is like. In his house, “No one knew how many children there were or whose they were. Nobody like her...in this place where there were miles and miles with no people at all, only birds and fish, could know what people were like when they lived jammed in together” (AC 63). Here, Douglas suggests that one trait of idyllic Florida is the absence of people, or at least the manmade structures which keep them confined. When she wrote *The Everglades: River of Grass*, many considered the region useless empty space—antithetical to places that might inspire attachment. However, to Henry, who has only ever known his small, cluttered home, the Everglades are idyllic *for* their vast emptiness. Even after their potential benefit to humans via drainage was discovered, Douglas argued against conserving the Everglades for this purpose, insisting they be preserved as-is, not only for the pastoral experience of relaxation and retreat, but to protect the animals—both beautiful and beastly—living there.

Henry has an opportunity to alert a park ranger about Dillon’s illegal killing of alligators, but he refrains from doing so. Instead, he sneaks back on to the fishing boat in order to have more time in the Everglades. Henry thus compromises his desire to avenge George to avoid

returning home. After much hesitation, Dillon allows him to stay onboard again, and Henry knows that he may witness more acts of killing animals. The titular chapter, “Alligator Crossing,” contains some of the most compelling examples of Henry’s coming-of-age, all of which are linked to his idyllic surroundings. While Dillon naps, Henry paddles the dinghy and marvels at the environment, enjoying his solitude: “He was completely, entirely, utterly alone. When he looked around him at the green leaves on the pond, the water rippling in the wind that bent the tall yellow grasses beyond the nearer shore, he had in his life never been so filled with sheer, mindless, unutterable delight” (AC 114). The nearby, colorful birds augment this delight. Henry realizes excitedly that he is beginning to know their names: roseate spoonbills, gallinules, coots, and buzzards. Douglas writes,

Everywhere he looked, he could see birds, paddling at the water’s edge, hanging on the farther reeds, chirring or flying over low and busy, standing on long legs in the shallows, like a heron over there with its long sharp beak extended like a lance at the ready. Up there higher in the sky, birds crisscrossed it with wings floating, turning, dipping, or soaring high—high up like the buzzard, swinging on the point of one black wing rung against the dazzling breast of a cloud rising up snowy into the sun.

When he brought his eyes down they were swimming with too much light. It was as if, from this moment, he wanted never to move again. (AC 115-116)

This dynamic illustration of animal behavior features Douglas’s close attention to spatial movements while invoking our perception of sight and sound. She then describes Henry’s growing ecological awareness: “the alligator, the little fish and big fish, the turtles, the frogs, the dragonflies—lived on something alive that was here...only the alligator was not killed and eaten

by anything—except man. But man was different. Man frightened Henry, but not these strange bright living things as intensely alive as he was” (AC 117). Douglas intimates that the ecosystems of the Everglades thrive without human intervention, painting mankind as a force of disruption.

That Henry’s respect for nonhuman nature correlates with his growing misanthropy is somewhat problematic. Though cognizant that humans can save as well as destroy nature, Douglas focuses more on the latter. Minor characters, such as the wise and compassionate Dr. Trotter, restore Henry’s faith in humanity to a degree, and he and Dillon reconcile at the end of the novel despite their differences. Still, Henry continues to prefer animals and open spaces over people and wrestles with an uncertain future after his ordeal. I would argue that the most salient aspects of Douglas’s work involve what Henry learns while aboard Dillon’s boat about animals, human nature, and himself. If the pastoral invites self-reflection and relaxation, Henry takes full advantage of idyllic Florida. He comes to believe that “perhaps there were things as fine as this waiting for him somewhere...He had a new, strong sense of hope that was not a boy’s imagining” (AC 117). His pastoral surroundings foster Henry’s maturation from child to young adult, evinced by his new determination to escape the inner-city for good.

Conclusion

In “Plumes,” *Alligator Crossing*, and her other works set in the Everglades, Douglas shares her visions of a relatively untouched Florida paradise. Her euphoric descriptions of birds, fish, water, and trees mirror Bartram’s accounts of the state written over a century earlier. Animals comprise a significant part of their narratives, all of which can be read as defense

against violence toward nonhuman nature. Douglas and Bartram highlight the idyllic regions of Florida to show how making places in natural settings can enrich the human spirit and shape our identities. It is worth noting that an idyllic appreciation for the environment does not always translate into ethical relations with nature. Lanier celebrated Florida for its aesthetically pleasing flora and fauna, but also because—like Hemingway—he delighted in the plentiful “fresh fish of one’s own catching and game of one’s own shooting” (Lanier 635).³¹ Idyllic Florida sometimes invites Garrard’s third definition of the American pastoral, which views land as a resource to be cultivated and even exploited. Hunters, fishermen, loggers, and others seeking a profit from Florida’s land—whose perspectives I examine in Chapter Three—may see the state as pastoral, but they do not uphold the respectful animal ethics that stem from place identification. Bartram and Douglas share a benevolent recognition of idyllic Florida, one in which humans acknowledge its diverse ecosystems and the interconnectedness of plants, animals, soil, and water. To preserve our sense of delight while immersed in places such as the Everglades and the St. Johns, we must also preserve the lifeforms who depend on idyllic Florida for their survival.

³¹ Hemingway’s “On the Blue Water” (*Esquire*, 1936) is one of many works in which animal presences figure prominently in celebrations of Florida’s natural beauty, but mixed with these celebrations is the author’s exploitative attitude toward animals, which he regularly harmed for sport.

CHAPTER TWO: “WILD THINGS OUT IN THE WOOD”: AMBIGUOUS ANIMAL ETHICS IN RAWLINGS’S *CROSS CREEK* (1942)³²

Introduction

In 1928, Marjorie and Charles Rawlings purchased a modest farmhouse in the Alachua County scrublands along with 72 surrounding acres.³³ At Cross Creek, with its colorful citrus trees and other abundant vegetation, they sought refuge from the hectic urban lifestyles of Rochester and Louisville. In 1970, the home and land became an Historic Florida State Park. The farmstead was restored to its appearance when Rawlings lived there, and guests can tour the area with a ranger in period garb for a near-authentic “cracker” experience.³⁴ A tenant house sits nearby, modeled on the one in which Rawlings’s servants resided and where Zora Neale Hurston once stayed.³⁵ According to Leslie Kemp Poole, many “flock to [Rawlings’s] home in search of the rapidly disappearing Florida created before air conditioning, mosquito control and interstate

³² Parts of this chapter appeared in my article titled “‘The Metamorphosis of Live Creatures’: Animal Ethics in Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings’s *The Yearling*,” *The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Journal of Florida Literature*, vol. 24, 2016, pp. 130-137.

³³ Broadly speaking, the scrublands refer to an endangered sand and pine ecosystem in northern Florida dominated by dry shrubs. *The Yearling* is set in the Ocala Big Scrub, about 50 miles southeast of Cross Creek. When Bartram first traversed the area where Rawlings would settle, he called the scrub an “endless wild desert,” a descriptor Belleview claims does not capture the region’s ecological nuances: “All of nature is vernacular, of course, special to the place it populates. But the Florida scrub may be the most vernacular of all...the plants and their aromas, the specialized tortoise and blue jay, the truncated trees and plants that have transformed to survive here. Diversity is notoriously low, but endemism—the number of species unique to this place—is almost off the charts” (Bartram 148; Belleview 19).

³⁴ In 1954, the year after Rawlings’s death, her second husband Norton Baskin turned the property over to the University of Florida. In 1970, UF transferred ownership to The Florida State Parks.

³⁵ The original Rawlings Tenant Home was removed from the property around 1970, after its acquisition by Florida State Parks. Its replacement, the Brice Tenant House, was added to preserve “the park’s cultural resources and cultural landscape” (“MKR Historic State Park” 19).

highways” (346). The Florida Division of Recreation and Parks offers the following advice for visitors: “Before you come, you might enjoy picking up a copy of one of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings [sic] books and use her words to travel back to frontier Florida—and then come see us at the park and explore her farmyard, grove, seasonal garden and trails. Her book about her life here, *Cross Creek*, will take you directly back to life on this land and in this community” (“Welcome”).

The primary appeal of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and her home at Cross Creek is the nostalgia evoked by her intimate relationship with the land, which Rawlings herself describes as “returning to the pioneer aspect of the state” (CC 322). According to Rawlings, this pioneering, “frontier” spirit primarily involves hunting animals for food, which survival at the Creek depended on (“Welcome”). Rawlings relished the necessity to hunt and fish. A 1943 *Saturday Evening Post* article by Vernon Pope, featuring photographs provided by Lofman-Pix, portrays Rawlings in the act of frog gigging, receiving a live, muzzled alligator from a neighbor, hunting crabs from her boat, and preparing the table with the day’s fare. For Gordon Bigelow, these photographs depict Rawlings as “a kind of great white huntress, complete with breeches, boots, and bird dogs,” and “her own ironic willingness to be pictured in this light [is] testimony to how prominent a part the wilderness has played in her best-known writings” (Bigelow 299). Hunting in the wilderness is characteristic of the environmentalism espoused by John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and Theodore Roosevelt, argues ecofeminist Karen Davis. Davis uses Leopold’s distinction between domesticated (things “unnatural, tame, and confined”) and wild animals (things “natural, wild, and free”) to contrast environmentalism with animal rights (Leopold ix). As J. Baird Callicott indicates, Leopold never seemed to regard the plight of domesticated

factory farmed animals as an ethical dilemma (whereas animal rights activists do). According to Davis, environmentalism “is infested by a macho mystique, whereby ‘things natural, wild, and free’ continue to be celebrated and phallicized as corresponding to the ‘human’ order of existence. Activities such as hunting, fishing, and meat-eating are extolled...as part of the challenge posed by Leopold to ‘think like a mountain’” (Davis 196). Davis asserts that thinking like a mountain neglects the lives of individual animals, especially domesticated and farmed ones. While environmentalists seek to protect natural spaces so they may be enjoyed and wild animal populations so they may be hunted, advocates of animal rights work to defend all animal life from the industries and practices that harm them.

Scholars generally locate Rawlings within environmentalism, lauding her participation in the traditionally masculine pursuits of hunting and fishing offered by wild Florida. The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings State Park highlights this part of Rawlings’s legacy, celebrating her ability to “inspire others to live in harmony with the land” through her writing (“Welcome”). Florence Turcotte outlines a trajectory in Rawlings’s identity from a city dweller who was somewhat appalled by her harsh new environment to a veritable cracker environmentalist who lamented the disappearance of wilderness: “Rawlings came to appreciate and sound a call for better stewardship of the environment on the part of its human inhabitants...By 1942, when she wrote *Cross Creek*, Rawlings had grown to understand the beauty of the natural world around her and the finite resources available for human consumption” (488; 500).³⁶ Susan Schmidt underscores the relationship between place and Rawlings’s sense of self, while Bill Belleville indicates that

³⁶ See also Poole, Leslie Kemp. In “Marjorie’s Wake”: A Film Voyage Into Florida’s Nature Consciousness.” *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, vol. 90, no. 3, 2012, pp. 331-353.

nonhuman nature serves as a character, rather than backdrop or setting, in Rawlings's fiction. Rawlings subscribes to many tenets of environmentalism, but she also voices regret about hunting and eating certain animals throughout *Cross Creek* and through some of the characters in her novels. According to Turcotte, "As her appreciation for the beauty and fragility of her surroundings and her respect for the preservation of natural spaces increased, Rawlings's enthusiasm for hunting and fishing correspondingly declined" (499). Chapter Three of her memoir summarizes this shift well: "I...practic[ed] with a .410 on the gray squirrels that whisked up and down the tree trunks. There was a great sport at first in all the hunting. Then it came to sicken me, and now I go to the pines as a guest and not as an invader" (CC 44). Rawlings celebrates hunting and fishing, constructing her new cracker identity around the demands of wild Florida, but she also questions the need to commit violence against certain animals. Her relationship with the Florida wilderness and its animals features more nuances than Rawlings criticism has thus far acknowledged. The tension in her writing between environmentalism and animal rights makes Rawlings a profoundly ambiguous figure in ecocritical studies, and her interactions with individual creatures of the wild deserve more scholarship. This chapter examines how living in the Florida wilderness, which necessitated close contact with nonhuman nature, fostered an animal ethics for Rawlings that anticipated many ideals of animal rights, namely that humans should not harm animals for personal gain. I conclude by addressing opportunities afforded by Rawlings's legacy to reevaluate our own relationships with and consumption of nonhuman animals.

In ecocritical terms, wilderness holds a variety of meanings. Roderick Frazier Nash explains how American perceptions of the wilderness have changed, from the Puritan fear of

Satanic wild spaces through efforts to preserve Hetch Hetchy Valley and John Muir's founding of the Sierra Club. In the 1930s, Aldo Leopold strengthened the wilderness preservation movement with his scientific study of wilderness as the key to good health and ethical attitudes toward land. His "The Conservation Ethic," first published in 1933 in the *Journal of Forestry*, popularized the science of ecology for those hoping to protect the American wilderness. William Cronon, along with Callicott, critiques the privileging of wilderness over urban settings. According to Cronon, the wilderness myth is a cultural construct that reflects white masculine values and erases the native populations who resided there in order to claim a pristine, original earth that cannot exist. Celebrating wild nature also marginalizes concerns of environmental justice and leaves "little hope of discovering what an ethical, sustainable, honorable human place in nature might actually look like" (Cronon 19). Belleville, whose *The Peace of Blue* discusses traveling through Florida's watery regions, offers a more contemporary take on wilderness. He reflects on the presence of animals in early perceptions of wild Florida: "I figure if the exotic lushness of this place wasn't enough to overwhelm the senses of early visitors, artists, and writers, then the surreal opportunity of being attacked by giant lizards, cougars, and assorted vipers likely was. If La Florida wasn't too pretty and too luxurious and too ripe, then it was too dangerous" (14). "If wilderness were safe and domestic," he asks, "what would be the point?" (Belleville 24). *Cross Creek* reflects this "surreal opportunity" of encountering danger at every turn (Belleville 14).

One writer who also closely captures Rawlings's attitude toward the wilderness is Edward Abbey. In *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*, released in 1968, Abbey savors "the lonely, sweet, remote, primeval world, far from anywhere familiar to men and women"

(207). He also refers to the Utah desert, where he worked as a park ranger, as “paradise,” but “not the banal Heaven of the saints” (208). Abbey embraces the truly wild and hostile aspects of Utah’s wilderness, including scorpions, rattlesnakes, Gila monsters, sandstorms, and flash floods. Similarly, Rawlings cherished the quietude of her farmhouse while underscoring in *Cross Creek* the presence of “wild things out in the wood” (165). In *Cross Creek*, animal lives, juxtaposed with storms and food shortages, construct place as a wilderness. Rawlings devotes many chapters in the former, including “Toady-frogs, Lizards, Antses, and Varmints,” “The Ancient Enmity,” and “Our Daily Bread” almost exclusively to her encounters with and, in some cases, fear of panthers, snakes, lizards, wild-cats, scorpions, frogs, bear, raccoons, and skunks. Other sections detail her pursuit of less repellent creatures, such as birds. Animal presences dominate Rawlings’s writing, serving as key components in her translation of wild space into meaningful place.

Just as William Bartram and Marjory Stoneman Douglas treat Florida as distinctive types of idylls in the classic and romantic pastoral mode, Rawlings also viewed the scrub as a refuge from urban life where humans might develop a healing relationship with nature. Portrayals of the farmstead that stress its peace and beauty are not difficult to find in *Cross Creek*. In the introduction, for example, Rawlings writes of the quiet road by her home: “I have walked it in ecstasy, and in joy it is beloved. Every pine tree, every gallberry bush, every passion vine, every joree rustling in the underbrush, is vibrant...For all such things were on earth before us, and will survive after us, and it is given to us to join ourselves with them and to be comforted” (CC 14). Likewise, animal presences play a significant role in constructing Cross Creek as idyllic. For example, Rawlings discusses the sound of frogs singing, or “the frog Philharmonic of the Florida

lakes and marshes” as “unendurable in its sweetness” (CC 152). Their music is an integral part of the landscape and Rawlings’s attachment to the “long moonlit night[s], with the scent of orange blossoms palpable as spilled perfume on the air” (CC 152). However, though she celebrates the “relatively unspoiled nature” surrounding her home and identifies it with certain traits of the pastoral, Rawlings also recognizes the danger in “living precariously on the fringe” (Bigelow 302). Like the idyllic settings depicted by Bartram and Douglas, wild Florida was idealistic for Rawlings, but without the relative tranquility and safety of the St. Johns or the Everglades. She indeed discovered a kind of paradise at Cross Creek, complete with serpents. Risks posed by storms, hostile animals, food scarcity, and other uncertainties of her hand-to-mouth lifestyle distinguish *Cross Creek* from literature celebrating the state as an uncomplicated Eden.

Of course, Florida has been portrayed as a wilderness long before Rawlings. For all of the travel writings that represent Florida as an idyllic paradise, many texts exhibit just the opposite. Anne Rowe describes how explorers, lured by “stories of untold riches...met with Indian attacks, disease, and a climate that offered no riches and little in the way of basic subsistence” (8). Promised an idyll flowing with treasures, they found instead a hostile wilderness. Jonathan Dickinson, the only Englishman to publish an account of his travels in Florida following a shipwreck in 1696, “depicts the territory as an unmitigated hell” (Rowe 8). Strange and venomous animals contributed significantly to visions of Florida as a wilderness. During the Second Seminole War (1835-1842), army surgeon Jacob Rhett Motte composed a particularly scathing account of his time in the Everglades.³⁷ Titled *Journey into Wilderness*, Motte’s book

³⁷ Descended from an early Charleston Huguenot family, Motte was educated at Harvard and just twenty-six when he served as a physician during the Seminole Wars. Part of his disgust toward Florida involved the numerous injuries and diseases he saw resulting from the state’s hazardous vegetation. As Michael Grunwald explains, “The Americans had to drag their canoes, rifles,

paints Florida as a veritable wasteland filled with “Indians, alligators, frogs and every other kind of loathsome reptile” (199). Motte animalizes Florida’s indigenous people, aligning them with the dangerous and repulsive creatures that mark the state as a wilderness. He did not consider Florida worth fighting over, asking “why not in the name of common sense let the Indians keep it?” (199). More than any other region in Florida, the Everglades were long viewed as a wild wasteland. Jack E. Davis notes that the European disdain for wilderness allowed indigenous peoples living there to escape the violent march of conquest, if only temporarily. In 1937, Elizabeth Bishop wrote to Marianne Moore,

From the few states I have seen I should now immediately select Florida as my favorite...it is so wild, and what there is of cultivation seems rather dilapidated and about to become wild again. On the way down we took a very slow train from Jacksonville here. All day long it went through swamps and turpentine camps and palm forests and in a beautiful pink evening it began stopping at several stations. (*Poems* 742-743)

Each of these writers construes Florida as a wilderness, but Bishop illustrates the ambiguity of this label as well as the interchange between wild and idyllic. For Bishop, ‘wild’ seems to connote the triumph of nature over attempts to tame it; here, wilderness is beautiful and thrilling—quite a shift from the wild Florida of Motte, who uses wilderness to define dangerous conditions that are antagonistic to humans.

Rawlings writes wild Florida in all of these modes, but critics disagree on how to characterize her attitude toward the land beyond emphasizing her strong attachment to it. In her occasionally conflicting illustrations of Cross Creek, Rawlings subverts the distinction between

ammunition, and provisions through razor-edged sawgrass that ripped their clothes and sliced their skin, through muck so deep and sticky that one private dropped dead in his tracks from exhaustion” (43).

idyll and wilderness. Bigelow uses the terms “sylvan, bucolic, pastoral—rather than brute, savage, untamed—to describe Mrs. Rawlings’ wilderness” (309). Still, Rawlings herself nearly went hungry while awaiting royalties for *South Moon Under*, having only crackers and a can of soup.³⁸ Additionally, Turcotte observes, “Rawlings did not consider her new surroundings to be idyllic. Indeed, she became immediately aware of the harshness of the land, the weather, and the lives of her Florida neighbors...she wanted her readers to feel the malevolence of the place toward human intruders” (491). According to Monica Berra, “the Big Scrub is hardly a bountiful Eden. Its sandy soil is fruitless; its enveloping heat is unquestionably inhumane; its various inhabitants, including alligators and bears, are vicious and unwelcoming” (1). Berra affirms the importance of predatory animals to the scrub’s wild reputation. The disparity within commentary on Rawlings’s relationship to Florida speaks to the difficulty of categorizing this diverse region.

“Where the Snakes Cross”: Self-Defense in the Florida Wilderness

Much scholarship on Rawlings concerns her attachment to Cross Creek, or topophilia, meaning love of place. For W.H. Auden, topophilia applies to places with a rich sense of history. Yi-Fu Tuan uses the term to describe close links between a person’s identity and a specific place, much like David Seamon’s notion of place identification.³⁹ According to Schmidt, Rawlings “felt an immediate, elemental recognition for the land and water at Cross Creek” (50). The Florida scrub supplied an integral part of Rawlings’s identity, influencing her ideas about nonhuman

³⁸ Other Creek residents often went hungry as well. Before writing *The Yearling*, Rawlings lived with several families in the scrub to obtain material for her novel. One of her letters to Maxwell Perkins provides an account of the Long family: “They are hard put to it to make a living, principally because the deer and foxes eat their crops almost faster than they can raise them...When I asked Mrs. Long what to bring with me when I came, she chuckled and said, ‘Something to eat—’” (qtd. in Bigelow and Monti 75).

³⁹ See also Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Beacon Press, 1969 and Gibson, James. *A Reenchanted World*. Holt, 2009.

nature and serving key roles in her writing. As Belleville observes, “Unlike landscapes used by writers as a backdrop for their narratives, the scrub and sandhill became a character in Rawlings’s stories. It was a primeval, mysterious force that evoked solitude and ruggedness and singularity, providing insight into the way her human characters were shaped by the landscape” (22-23).⁴⁰ As Bigelow has noted, the Florida wilderness took on such an importance for Rawlings that she quickly embraced the necessity to hunt for survival. Adopting this rustic, pioneer lifestyle even had a moral dimension. Rawlings characterized the scrub, with its dependence on subsistence living, as encouraging a more honest way of interacting with the land than urban places. She brought two pets to Cross Creek, a dog and a cat. The dog adapted poorly to its new environment, but the cat thrived. Rawlings “makes it clear that her own reaction was like the cat’s, and she implies that the cat was somehow good because he loved the wildness of the Creek, the dog somehow bad because he hated it and preferred cities” (Bigelow 301). Put in moral terms, Rawlings’s distinction between good/bad applies to the scrub/city, respectively.⁴¹ Wildness, as used here, incorporates the need to hunt (an activity the cat thoroughly enjoyed). Thus, Rawlings uses wild Florida to develop an initial land ethic that sanctions the killing of animals at Cross Creek. However, subsistence living also cultivated Rawlings’s reluctance to hunt and consume some animals, meaning that, had she never moved to Florida, Rawlings would

⁴⁰ Rawlings would be glad that the flora and fauna of Florida are acknowledged as characters, rather than accessories, to her writing. She did not consider herself a regional writer and mistrusted the genre for exploiting certain peoples and their customs. In a 1940 article for *College English*, Rawlings denounces regional authors who treat the South as a profitable novelty: “Regionalism written on purpose is perhaps as spurious a form of literary expression as ever reaches print. Regional writing done because the author thinks it will be salable is a betrayal of the people of that region. Their speech and customs are turned inside out for the gaze of the curious. They are held up naked, not as human beings, but as literary specimens” (“Regional Literature” 384).

⁴¹ Like the dog, Charles Rawlings strongly resisted this new way of life. He left Florida in 1933 when the couple divorced. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings remarried in 1941, to hotel owner Norton Baskin.

likely not have developed an affinity for nonhuman nature or the respect for animals that living alongside them inspired.

In constructing the Florida scrub as a wilderness, Rawlings often highlights the abundant “hazards” surrounding her home, including dangerous or “appalling” animals (CC 67). “Spiders, lizards, toads and thin squeaking noises made by bats” accompany her adjustment to the dark Florida night (CC 67). Chapter 14 recalls her discussion of the unfamiliar term “varmint” with fellow Cross Creek resident Martha Mickens, who associates these animals with their wild properties: “Why, a wild-cat be’s a varmint...Skunks be varmints, an’ ’coons an’ foxes an’ ’possums. Minkses, too. A panther be’s a varmint, an’ a bear. All them wild things...out in the woods” (CC 164). In Chapter 3, Rawlings equates wandering through nearby hammocks with “a trek into the wilderness...where...the snakes cross” (CC 43). As previously noted, one reason Cross Creek residents relied on hunting was to protect themselves against these predatory or otherwise repulsive animals, and for Rawlings, no animal was as repulsive as the snake.

The emotion in *Cross Creek* distinguishing it from works about idyllic Florida is fear. In Chapter 15 of *Cross Creek*, “The Ancient Enmity,” she suggests that humans are born with an inherent hatred and fear of snakes. “Over all the dark hours hung the fear of snakes,” Rawlings observes of her arrival to the creek (CC 67). She adds, “It would be impossible for me to ever feel affection for a snake. One may be ever so interested and tolerant, but prefer...almost any living thing at all, to snakes” (CC 184). Worst of all for Rawlings was the diamond-back rattlesnake, which “represented the last outpost of physical fear” (CC 177). However, most snakes exploring her home were harmless, as she acknowledges, “but none the less revolting” (CC 176). She “felt feeble-minded to find [herself] screaming at the sight of a king snake that

asked nothing more than a chance to destroy the rats that infested the old barn” (CC 176). Most interactions with snakes in her memoir stress her fear of snakes, but Rawlings also describes moments in which her power as a human allows her to violently exploit them. For instance, she kills a coral snake because she finds its skin “as beautiful as a necklace” and turns it into a riding crop (CC 177). Another wild Florida animal Rawlings feared is the panther. “To hear a panther scream,” she writes, “is to add a new horror to the catalogue of evil” (CC 165). She compares the sound to “the shriek of a vampire woman” and remembers her neighbor, Fred Tompkins, shooting what he believed to be a panther’s ghost deep in the woods (CC 166).

Whether real or imagined, these abrupt encounters with her sources of terror significantly influence how Rawlings viewed her home and demonstrate *place release*, another form of place attachment as defined by David Seamon. According to Seamon, *place release* occurs when unexpected or serendipitous events at familiar places temporarily disrupt that familiarity, prompting us to view the place with new eyes. In her Pulitzer prize-winning novel *The Yearling*, published in 1938, Rawlings depicts her *ophidiophobia*, or fear of snakes, through Penny Baxter’s rattlesnake attack, which nearly kills him: “The rattler struck him from under the grape-vine without warning. Jody saw the flash...saw his father stagger backward under the force of the blow...He stood rooted to the sand and could not make a sound. It was lightning that had struck, and not a rattler. It was a branch that broke, it was a bird that flew, it was a rabbit running” (TY 172).⁴² The sight of the animal shocks Penny and Jody into seeing their surroundings with vivid—albeit terrified—sensory perception. Both *The Yearling* and *Cross Creek* use *place release* as a tool for reinforcing the threats posed by wild Florida—for

⁴² TY is an abbreviation for *The Yearling* to be used in parenthetical citations.

reminding us that despite the many quaint descriptions of Rawlings's "enchanted land," the cracker lifestyle meant accepting a heightened impression of peril (CC 15).⁴³

Residents of Cross Creek undoubtedly led impoverished lives threatened by the occasional wild intruder, but killing predatory animals need not be the first line of defense unless directly embattled with one. Rawlings herself eventually denounced the indiscriminate killing of snakes, panthers, and other animals inhabiting wild Florida. About a wild-cat often seen around her home, she declares, "I am not personally acquainted with the animal. I should like to be, and should not be afraid, for it is I who would be the object of terror" (CC 168). Still, she and her fellow creek residents often act in harmful ways toward the environment out of fear. For Rawlings, overcoming this fear served a vital role in strengthening the attachment to her new home.

"My Hypocritical Gun": Hunting at Cross Creek

In addition to self-defense, Rawlings hunted for food and for sport. By the time she wrote her memoir in the 1940s, Rawlings had changed her attitude toward hunting most species, but *Cross Creek* glamorizes the activity just enough to avoid a place in animal advocacy literature, instead resembling more closely the environmental immersion characteristic of Leopold. Rawlings's perspective on hunting varies wildly throughout *Cross Creek* so as to leave a profound ambiguity about Rawlings's true beliefs. This ambiguity stems not only from her

⁴³ Snakes were certainly not the only threat to their way of life. Unpredictable Florida weather also posed a risk, as Rawlings writes in the Introduction to *Cross Creek*: "We go our separate ways and meet only when new fences are strung...or when the weather is so preposterous, either as to heat or cold, or rain or drought, that we seek out excuses to be together, to talk about the common menace" (12). *The Yearling* also shows the devastating effects of Florida weather when a heavy storm (modeled on the nor'easter of 1871) obliterates the Baxters' food supply.

constant oscillation between delight and regret but also from the uncertainty behind her reason for hunting, whether for pleasure or for subsistence. *Cross Creek* illustrates several examples of what ecofeminist Marti Kheel refers to as happy hunting, or hunting for recreation alone, and hungry hunting, or hunting for food.⁴⁴ Rawlings “believe[s] in killing game only for one’s needs,” though she also exhibits a certain zeal for ending an animal’s life (CC 244). Rawlings’s memoir blurs the line between these categories, demonstrating the enjoyment one might take in needing to kill an animal for consumption.

Like Leopold and other environmentalists, Rawlings took great pleasure in hunting certain animals, valuing her hand-to-mouth lifestyle as integral to her Cracker identity. In Chapter 21, “Winter,” Rawlings explains that the Creek residents “announce winter with the crackling of a gun shot” (CC 322). She compares this day, November 20, to a state holiday, when even the children race off to capture turtles, squirrels, and ducks. “I have no compunction here about killing...for our breakfast depends on it,” she declares (CC 327). Here, Rawlings relishes the “pioneer” history of Florida, “when all men took a portion of their living from the hunt” (CC 322). She evokes the pastoral nostalgia for an undeveloped frontier, which she and her neighbors access through life in the Florida wilderness. She also idealizes hunting elsewhere in the text. In Chapter 11, Rawlings kills a pig who regularly eats from her petunia bed and remarks, “I know...that I pulled the trigger with joy and looked down at my fallen foe with delight and triumph” (CC 107). Chapter 19, “Summer,” features Rawlings’s depiction of idyllic

⁴⁴ In total, Kheel identifies six types of hunting and divides them into two categories based on how justifiable they are: happy (hunting for sport), holist (hunting to conserve species), and holy (hunting for spiritual affirmation). Kheel rebukes these for acting out of desire, rather than need. The second set, hungry (hunting for food), hired (hunting for profit), and hostile (hunting to dispose of threatening animals) are more justifiable (assuming that the hired hunter needs to earn money to survive). In addition to happy and hungry, Rawlings practices hostile hunting, as discussed in the previous section.

summer evenings in Florida, during which those at the Creek “swim...fish...and fox hunt” (CC 297). She contrasts this particularly Floridian brand of hunting with fox hunting in England: “We fox hunt as we do everything else in the summer, leisurely and comfortably. We are interested in the chase and in the fox hounds, in the beauty of the night, and we hope always that the fox will get away so that we may run him another night. For we fox hunt in Florida of nights, and added to the delights of the hunt we have the tropical moonlight” (CC 297). This is perhaps the clearest example of happy hunting in *Cross Creek*, and it highlights Rawlings’s attachment to place while glorifying the killing of wild animals. While she eventually regrets the killing of some animals, such as ducks and other birds, Rawlings never reflects on her violence against pigs with anything other than pleasure. She casts an overwhelmingly positive light on hunting additional species throughout the text, including frogs, bears, and squirrels.⁴⁵

Interspersed throughout these romanticized descriptions of hunting are moments of skepticism and regret from Rawlings about her treatment of wild animals. Interacting with snakes and other “varmints” prompted a shift in how she perceived them. The major turning point in her relationship with snakes occurs when Rawlings joins herpetologist Ross Allen on a snake hunt. Eager to see more of Florida, Rawlings journeyed with Allen and “a big Cracker named Will” to the upper region of the Everglades to collect rattlesnakes and other serpents for an unspecified scientific study (CC 119). Determined to overcome her fear, Rawlings even allows Allen to hand her a small snake; a revelation follows. Rawlings recalls, “It was not cold, it was not clammy, and it lay trustingly in my hands, a thing that lived and breathed and had mortality like the rest of us. I felt an upsurge of spirit” (CC 180-181). Interestingly, the next

⁴⁵ See pages 153, 245, and 328, respectively.

day of hunting “was magnificent,” with “crystal” air and an “aquamarine...sky” (CC 181). Allen guides Rawlings in capturing rattlesnakes as they emerge from gopher holes, with none of her residual fear to cloud the experience. Rawlings writes,

Having learned that it was we who were the aggressors...that the snakes, for all their lightning flash in striking, were inaccurate in their aim, with limited vision; having watched again and again the liquid grace of movement, the beauty of pattern, suddenly I understood that I was drinking in freely the magnificent sweep of the horizon, with no fear of what might be at the moment under my feet. I went off hunting by myself, and though I found no snakes, I should have known what to do. (CC 182).

Fear serves an important evolutionary purpose, but Rawlings discovers that killing a threatening animal is not always necessary.⁴⁶ After taming her ophidiophobia, Rawlings perceives the Everglades much like Douglas, constructing the region as an idyllic place instead of a hostile wasteland. This shift in her vision reveals the possibilities offered by wild Florida for cultivating ethical relations with animals as well as the importance of managing fearful or harmful responses to the environment.

Rawlings’s newfound appreciation for snakes strengthens her attachment to the scrub at home. “Back at the Creek,” she enjoys “a new lightness,” and is able to watch the king snake with fond amusement and with respect for his unique personality (CC 184). Once afforded the designation of friendly house guest, certain animals were exempt from harm by Rawlings. She distinguishes between wild animals living in the scrub, which she often hunts, and animals closer

⁴⁶ A worthwhile comparison might be made between the depictions of ophidiophobia by Rawlings and by her friend Zora Neale Hurston in “Sweat,” another story set in Florida that focuses on the heroine’s intense fear of snakes.

to her in proximity. For instance, she admits, “I am hypocrite enough...not to shoot at birds who live on my place” (CC 260). Rawlings then describes a covey of quail who reside in her groves and whom she regards as “co-inhabitants” (CC 260). She continues, “The human ego is a fearful thing and we consider those things, friends, relatives, stock, that touch our lives, to be somehow different because they are close to us” (CC 260). Here, Rawlings shows that attachment to place can alter how we care for animals close to us. She demonstrates her fondness for the Mallards that live in a pen by releasing them, “with...compliments and...apologies,” and hoping they are not hunted (CC 263). The ducks refuse to leave her property, so Rawlings enjoys their company and grows “glad [to have] spared them” (CC 265). However, the same cannot be said for other animals, even additional ducks and quail, which Rawlings hunts regularly, further from her farmhouse.

Rawlings’s cognitive dissonance about killing animals emerges elsewhere throughout her memoir. For example, after portraying the fox hunt at length, which includes waiting for hours as the hounds pursue a fox, she writes, “It seemed to me that he was done for and I sickened at the thought of the kill” (CC 299). Here, she sounds quite different from the Rawlings who shoots a pig “with joy and...delight and triumph” (CC 107). Likewise, though she eagerly joins fellow Crackers Uncle Barney and Hubert on a bear hunt, Rawlings “hoped the bear would not come” and “decided that if he came [she] should shoot high over him,” pretending to miss (CC 302). Similar observations accompany her recollection of duck hunting: She writes, “The sport pleased me particularly because, in the great beauty of the surroundings, there was not a chance that I should ever bring down one of the swift-flying birds” (CC 332). Similar to the bear hunt, Rawlings accepts the invitation though she hesitates to ultimately kill the quarry. Outwardly, her

heart appears with the hunt, but narrating the excursions after-the-fact suggests otherwise. She continues, “I loved the swift whirl of the approaching ducks, the sharp slicing of the air overhead. I lifted my hypocritical gun obediently and fired” (*CC* 333). Here, Rawlings implies a tension between her conscience and the social pressure to enjoy hunting—not unlike John Pinder’s predicament in Douglas’s “Plumes.”

Some of the most intriguing reflections on Rawlings’s relationship with Florida wildlife concern not just the hunt itself, but her eventual objection to consuming certain species. Chapter 17 is devoted to Rawlings’s favorite recipes for preparing the animals she caught (though she offers several dishes featuring mostly fruits, vegetables, and grains as well). Rawlings shows no remorse over cooking some animals, such as turtles, pig, crab, fish, and possum. However, in almost every other account of consuming meat at the Creek, she experiences a degree of guilt, shame, or an outright inability to finish her meal. Surprisingly, rattlesnakes are one species Rawlings cannot consume, which she explains by comparing this aversion to that of Bartram, who “could not swallow” the meat made from a snake he kills during a trip to St. Augustine with his father (Bartram 225). Rawlings attributes her disgust of rattlesnake flesh to her familiarity with “the heavy, rolling black and yellow bodies” that frequent her home (*CC* 217). In describing her love of alligator meat, she also references what animal activist Johnathan Safran Foer calls the species barrier: “It is no doubt absurd to balk at rattlesnake steaks and enthuse over alligator, for the saurians are not much removed from the reptiles. Drawing a line between dangerous rattlers and harmless alligators is as though a cannibal said he would eat a friend but would not

eat an enemy. But surely we may all be allowed our prejudices” (CC 236).⁴⁷

For Foer, the species barrier is subjective—reinforced by social conditioning but ultimately random in its privileging of some life forms above others. It also informs the arguments against consuming meat espoused by animal rights supporters. Rawlings’s distaste for some animals and her acknowledgement that the line drawn between certain species is arbitrary anticipates many tenets of animal rights. Regarding the beloved Mallards on her farm, Rawlings writes, “My friends hint...that I have too many ducks. When I give in to them and announce a duck dinner, I find myself unable to eat, and must have a poached egg on the side” (CC 249). She also mentions having a jar of venison in the icebox and adds, “After it is gone, I think I shall eat no more of it, for I have lost stomach for the meat of animals that I once studied, to use for an emotional purpose in a book. I have never killed a deer, holding my shot several times in wonder at their beauty and fluid grace of movement” (CC 247). On one hand, this remark highlights the anthropocentric notion that animals deserve special consideration based on their worth in human eyes (in this case, deer used “for an emotional purpose”). Rawlings spares deer from being hunted but not other Florida wildlife with which she lacks a personal connection. On the other hand, this passage shows the power of studying animals to create beneficent attitudes toward them and demonstrates the transformation occurring in Rawlings’s interactions with nature.

As additional examples from *The Yearling* show, Rawlings voiced an emerging animal ethics on the fictional plane through characters like Penny and Jody. One evening, after Flag has become a member of the Baxter household, Ory dines on boiled yearling horns, “but Penny and

⁴⁷ Foer writes about Knut, a beloved polar bear at the Berlin Zoo, and compares his treatment to that of slaughtered animals: “If you go to see Knut and get hungry, just a few feet from his enclosure is a stand selling ‘Wurst de Knut,’ made from the flesh of factory-farmed pigs, which are at least as intelligent and deserving of our regard as Knut. This is the species barrier” (76).

Jody had no taste for them. They could see too plainly the big eyes under the new horns” (*TY* 265). The Baxter men show more sympathy for the deceased buck based on their relationship with Flag; Ory, who from the start views Flag as both a pest and a threat to their food supply, finds it more difficult to form such a relationship. Her confessions about deer and duck mark the strongest evidence for Rawlings’s changing attitude toward animals, as her sympathy for some species leads to tangible changes in her diet. Furthermore, Penny and Jody practice both happy and hungry hunting, though Jody regrets the need to kill animals more than his father does.⁴⁸ After Penny finishes off a buck that his son injures, Jody confesses, “I wisht we could git our meat without killin’ it,” to which Penny responds, “Hit’s a pity, a’right. But we got to eat” (*TY* 128). Jody often exhibits a profound discomfort after the hunts, when wildlife must become his supper. While examining a deer that Penny brings home, Jody contemplates what must now happen:

The game seemed for him to be two different animals. On the chase, it was the quarry. He wanted only to see it fall. When it lay dead and bleeding, he was sick and sorry. His heart ached over the mangled death. Then when it was cut into portions, and dried and salted and smoked; or boiled or baked or fried in the savory kitchen or roasted over the camp-fire, it was only meat, like bacon, and his

⁴⁸ Gender is important to Penny and Jody’s excitement about hunting. According to Kheel, “happy hunters saw hunting not only as a pleasurable activity, but also as a way of developing character, and, in particular, male character” (94). Rawlings depicts their hunting trips as masculine endeavors, from which Ory Baxter is excluded. Penny often conspires with his son against Ory, as when covering for Jody’s ramblings in the forest or withholding information about his sickness after eating brierberries, but no such partnering occurs between Jody and his mother.⁴⁸ As Penny states, “your Ma, now...don’t hold with ramblin’. Most women-folks cain’t see for their lives, how a man loves so to ramble” (*TY* 12). Their masculine privilege grants Penny and Jody the opportunity to immerse themselves in wild Florida. Interestingly, Rawlings was quite vocal about preferring the company of men to women. Her desire to live as men did, by hunting, fishing, and enjoying pursuits outside the home, explains her willingness to be portrayed as a renowned huntress. For more commentary on Jody’s masculine development, see Lowe, John. “The Construction and Deconstruction of Masculinity in *The Yearling*.” *Mississippi Quarterly*, vol. 57, no. 2, 2004, pp. 231-246.

mouth watered at its goodness. He wondered by what alchemy it was changed, so that what sickened him one hour, maddened him with hunger, the next. It seemed as though there were either two different animals or two different boys. (TY 85)

When Slewfoot kills the Baxters' largest hog, prompting Penny to proceed with slaughtering the younger ones for food, Jody "again...marveled at the metamorphosis of live creatures in whom he had felt interest and sympathy, into cold flesh that made acceptable food. He was glad when the killing was over" (TY 327). Developing animal characters in her writing inspired Rawlings to rethink her killing and consumption of them; living alongside "creatures in whom he had felt interest and sympathy" produces the same unease in Jody (TY 327).

Laying Down Arms: Rawlings's Ecological Turn

The previous section illustrated equivocal remarks by Rawlings about hunting that complicate ecocritical readings of her work. *Cross Creek* also includes more straightforward instances of animal advocacy that have inspired relatively recent, though incomplete, praise from critics. These instances often reflect a transformation in how Rawlings perceived her relationship to nonhuman nature and her place in the ecological community of wild Florida. In Chapter Three, when she portrays how hunting came to "sicken" her, Rawlings illustrates how giving up hunting altered how she experienced the land around her home; walking the pines as a "guest" evinces a radical turn in how she viewed the place of humanity within nature (CC 44). Her changing attitude toward blackbirds also reveals a strengthening animal ethics, including the commitment to stop some acts of violence against the creatures at Cross Creek. Rawlings explains, "The blackbirds were exquisite morsels of sweet and tender dark meat. Then I began to

be ashamed of shooting the cheerful chirruping things that were so ornamental in the marshes. I decided I would do no more of it” (CC 243). Similarly, she decides to “not shoot another” limpkin after learning of “their vanishing history,” despite “never [having] eaten a more delectable fowl” (CC 244). That she could be influenced by the limpkins’ dwindling population evinces Rawlings’s ecological sensibility, as does the following comment in her chapter on insects and varmints: “The balance of nature is a mysterious thing, and man must fight on one side or the other with caution, or he will find that in his battle he has exterminated some friendly element” (CC 160).⁴⁹ Most profound are her remarks about shooting quail in Chapter 21. “The birds I have downed,” she observes, “would not make a respectable covey. Some day I shall lay down my arms entirely” (CC 330).

Referencing these and other statements from Rawlings’s texts, scholars like Schmidt, Poole, Turcotte, and Bigelow stress not only her insistence that the wilderness fostered a more ethical relationship with the environment than urban living, but also the value of her writing as ecologically sound. Turcotte even compares Rawlings to Marjory Stoneman Douglas in her devotion to Cross Creek, which mirrors Douglas’s affinity for the Everglades. However, Rawlings’s “call for better stewardship of the environment” did not materialize immediately, but evolved over the course of her residency in Florida (Turcotte 488). According to Turcotte, “In her early works, she glamorized the unlawful trapping, fishing and hunting that took place in the wild places of Florida, with the underlying assumption that the earth was the object of human domination” (499). Aside from Turcotte’s indication that roughly 5-10 years pass between the

⁴⁹ Rawlings was not the only Cracker to demonstrate this ecological understanding. In Chapter 21, she describes a hunt with Fred Tompkins, insisting, “We shoot no more than we shall need, and according to whether other hunters are to join us for breakfast. The signal to meet comes from Fred, who has gauged the number of our shots, and knows when we have enough meat” (328). Tompkins therefore ensured that they hunt for subsistence only and would not significantly deplete animal populations.

events of *Cross Creek* and their narration, praise of Rawlings's environmental tendencies often neglects the role of genre. Memoir theorist Marcus Billson cautions against accepting memoirs as accurate recollections of the past, underscoring a lack of methodology for verifying their contents. Rawlings's story hybridizes memory and history, providing neither an objective retelling or factual truths. It is difficult to know, for instance, whether Rawlings considered her gun "hypocritical" while duck hunting, or if she overstates the degree of sickness she feels so as to strengthen the impact of her memoir and newfound environmentalist philosophy (CC 333). Certainly, however, wild Florida played a vital role in the tension between her environmentalist tendencies—her willingness to embrace the popular image of herself as "great white huntress," for instance—and her eventual regret about harming animals.

Ethics of Eating: A Tale of Two Yearlings

Rawlings's legacy demonstrates the enduring power of literature as a cultural force. Part of that legacy is The Yearling Restaurant, established in 1952 less than a mile from her home, which purports to serve the wild Florida experience through cuisine and cracker ambiance. Like Rawlings's attitude toward nonhuman nature as expressed in *Cross Creek*, the Yearling Restaurant is couched in ambivalence. It attempts to recreate certain dishes inspired by Rawlings's skill for capturing wild Florida game, but must contend with contemporary ways of raising animals for food, which violate Rawlings's sustainable land ethic. Another tension exists between the animal bodies displayed around the restaurant and their connection to Rawlings's fiction. This section explores the contradictory messages circulating in the restaurant's menu,

décor, and setting; I also highlight the possibility offered by the ambiguities in Rawlings's legacy to effect real-world change.

The Yearling Restaurant markets Cross Creek as “a little bend in the road, enchanting in its unspoiled beauty” where “you’ll find yourself back in time. In the canopy of granddaddy oaks, tall palms, and lush citrus groves, wildlife abounds” (“About Us” par. 4). Its website also advertises the freshwater fishing available at the nearby Orange and Lochloosa Lakes. Founded in 2010 by journalists Bob Rountree and Bonnie Gross, Florida Rambler serves as a visitor’s guide to “authentic Florida.” According to Gross, when touring the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park, “the best way to get the most of the experience is to eat like a cracker” at the Yearling Restaurant (par. 1). She continues, “The ambiance of the place...is old Florida hunting lodge. It’s decorated with antique outboard motors, old guns...Stuffed fish and mounted deer heads abound” (Gross par. 5). These remarks illustrate how The Yearling Restaurant, as Rawlings sometimes does, endorses violence against animals as a means of experiencing the Florida wilderness. The “flavor and spirit of old Florida” is undoubtedly wild, the restaurant declares (“About Us” par. 8). Animals on the menu range from chicken, fish, and cow to the less conventional alligator, gopher, quail, frog, and turtle. Many dishes served are recipes from Rawlings’s *Cross Creek Cookery*, a southern cookbook published the same year as *Cross Creek*.

Relics of Rawlings’s cracker lifestyle adorn the restaurant. Upon entering The Yearling, guests may note a display case on the right containing early editions of Rawlings’s novels and a taxidermied fawn. This replica of Flag sits atop a bed of moss in a lifelike position, underscoring the central role of animals in Rawlings’s works. Along with the fish and deer heads mentioned by Gross are bobcats, ducks, and various birds. Most noteworthy is the “Fodder-wing’s Creeturs”

exhibit, located in the back of the restaurant. As explained by an adjacent chart, the exhibit is named after Jody's friend Fodder-wing Baxter in *The Yearling*, who collects wild pets—many of them captured by his brothers during hunting trips.⁵⁰ Owner of The Yearling Robert Blauer created the display with artist Gayle Prevatt and animal collector Jim Stephens in 2017. “Fodder-wing’s Creeturs” consists of forty taxidermied wild animals (most in verisimilar poses), with a wall depicting the north Florida wilderness as a backdrop. An adult deer is portrayed leaping over a wire fence. A bobcat claws at a quail. An opossum hangs from a branch, and an alligator lounges on a slab of wood. Even a Florida black bear stands on its hind legs as if taking a stroll. Prevatt’s mural features royal palm trees, oaks adorned with Spanish moss, a creek, and a lake, with a fisherman in a small boat. A stuffed fish hangs from the painted fishline, as if emerging from the wall. Illustrated animals join the real ones as well, such as an eagle, a heron, and another bear. Arranging the wild animals in lifelike poses against a rustic backdrop glamorizes Rawlings’s treatment of place, concealing and the acts of violence against the creatures displayed within along with problems posed by keeping them captive. “Fodder-wing’s Creeturs” disregards certain events in the novel, such as the death of Fodder-wing’s eagle and the neglect his pets suffer after his death. The exhibit combines the arts of painting and literature to idealize—and tame—wild Florida. To represent fictional animals, real animals were harmed and their bodies manipulated to highlight their exotic, natural interactions with each other through a profoundly unnatural performance. In short, the exhibit appeals to environmentalists and happy hunters who display their prey like trophies, indicating a conquest over things “natural, wild, and free” (Leopold ix). However, it is a remarkable sight to behold and may inspire visitors to read *The*

⁵⁰ I discuss Fodder-wing’s pets as part of opportunistic Florida in Chapter Three.

Yearling and recognize the nuances in Rawlings's writing that problematize killing animals and keeping wild ones as pets.

"Fodder-wing's Creeturs" and the taxidermied Flag produce one source of ambiguity in the restaurant's messages for its guests. Another area of tension and concern for ecocritics involves the menu. Rawlings's ability to live off the land nurtured her attachment to Florida and figures prominently in her writing. Her literature of place affords a valuable opportunity for discussing the relationship between animals, food, and the environment, particularly as the eating establishment named in her honor aims to recreate the Cracker lifestyle, which relied on harmony with the land. (The *Yearling* restaurant even offers cabins along Cross Creek in their Secret River Lodge for guests wanting to extend the wild Florida experience beyond cuisine.) The restaurant advertises "food rural Floridians have hunted, fished, and prepared for generations" ("About Us" par. 2). Yet, animal bodies—particularly chickens, fish, and cows—served by the establishment are not sourced by Crackers hunting and fishing nearby. As Berra indicates, "The days of the Florida Crackers, in their true, authentic existence, have essentially disappeared" (19). The restaurant sources high quality meats for some of its dishes. The filet mignon and the steak burger, for instance, use U.S.D.A. prime steak, a designation afforded only to two percent of all beef produced in the United States. Free range venison is served along with local quail. The "Cross Creek Traditions" portion of the menu offers alligator, frog legs, catfish, crab, duck, and more, and seeks to recreate "regional favorites cooked in time-honored traditions" (*Yearling* Restaurant). However, descriptions of these and other meat-based menu items—the pork ribeye, chicken, and seafood—do not comment on sourcing, sustainability, or quality.

Food sourcing serves a vital role in *Cross Creek*, *The Yearling*, and Rawlings's *Cross Creek Cookery*; it should play an equally important part in her legacy. Berra examines Rawlings's anticipation of modernity in the form of economic change, arguing that her works do not seek a return to the pre-capitalist practices of the Crackers, but rather the preservation of ecological values. Rawlings "under[stood] that modernity was inevitable," as was the commercial development of Florida (Berra 21). In "Florida: A Land of Contrasts," a 1944 article for *Transatlantic Magazine*, Rawlings writes,

Those of us who prefer Florida's lush wildness to profitable commercialization regret the increasing so-called 'development.' But it would be selfish to deny a share in the bland sunshine, in the enjoyment of the palm trees, the exotic birds, the fishing and the hunting, to 'transients,' and it is only to be hoped that while more and more travelers come inevitably to the State, the natural beauties, the native flora and fauna, will be preserved. ("Florida" 16)

Rawlings ponders the future of wild Florida as the state's popularity increased, hoping that the Cross Creek she knew might not be lost. The Yearling Restaurant fulfills this wish to an extent, as does the park created in her name. These institutions, along with the literature they promote, invite us to consider how a growing demand for the Florida experience influences our relationship with nonhuman nature. Generally, modernity is seen as driving a wedge between humans and the land, changing how we consume resources, including food. The Yearling Restaurant may serve some sustainable and locally-sourced meals, but it also relies to an extent on mass animal agriculture. As more customers visit The Yearling to indulge in "the flavor and spirit of old Florida," the restaurant must adapt by serving animals not necessarily sourced in true

Cracker fashion (“About Us” par. 8). The Yearling Restaurant offers a compelling means of experiencing Cross Creek as place, but in its attempt to emulate Rawlings’s Cracker lifestyle, it tames the wilderness into a safe dwelling while exploiting the nonhuman species living there. Still, the restaurant, along with Rawlings scholarship, holds an opportunity to examine the ecological soundness of Rawlings’s legacy and of our own reliance on natural resources.

Bigelow asserts that for Rawlings, “the wilderness theme is closely associated with a developed doctrine concerning the relation of man to his environment” (300). As noted, Rawlings often stresses the ethical superiority of country to city. Her ecological awareness and commitment to stop harming animals owes much to the transformative influence of wild Florida. Humans residing in cities are, for the most part, more removed from their food sources and do not experience a closeness with wild nature, often preventing them from evaluating their behaviors that harm other living creatures. The Yearling Restaurant has the opportunity of doing for its visitors what wild, “authentic” Florida did for Rawlings and what her literature can do for readers—that is, nudging them to make the connection between practices of daily life and environmental impact. The results of understanding that connection—a more harmonious way of eating, food sourcing, and of experiencing the wild places around us—may satisfy both environmentalists and animal rights advocates alike.

Conclusion

Today, Rawlings is remembered as both a great white huntress and an animal lover; her stories depict the Florida scrub as both idyllic and wild, peaceful but filled with danger. The same contradictions persist about Florida as a whole. Her feelings toward the wild animal

presences inhabiting Cross Creek are ambiguous at best. Aside from critical scholarship that recognizes her ecological sensibilities, Rawlings is not generally characterized as a proponent of animal ethics. Yet, wild Florida facilitated her ethical attitude toward animals by requiring daily interactions with creatures normally considered dangerous or repulsive. By the mid 1940s, when Rawlings had lived in Florida for nearly two decades, her appreciation for animals and their natural habitats was clear. As Florida's population grew during the early 20th century, Rawlings continued to advocate for environmental preservation efforts. For instance, she wrote about rural subsistence farmers who were threatened by increased poaching, logging, urban development, and soil depletion. In "Florida: A Land of Contrasts," Rawlings observes, "It remains to be seen whether the Florida of Bartram will survive, or whether the Chamber of Commerce will kill the goose that lays the golden egg" ("Florida" 17). The "Florida of Bartram" is wild, uninviting, open only to the most responsible stewards of the land. Her time at Cross Creek encouraged Rawlings to rethink her relationship with nonhuman nature, so that the animal lives sharing her farmstead became worthy of protection. As they depend so firmly on the idea of closeness, Rawlings's animal ethics cannot be divorced from her topophilia. The question thus becomes how to make all animals, wild and domestic, feel close enough to us that we might spare them, like Rawlings's Mallards and other "cheerful chirruping things...in the marshes" or "wild things out in the wood" (CC 165; 243). In finding the answer, we may discover that cherishing nature does not require a taxidermist or artificial backdrop. A land ethic that sees animals and the environment as interwoven with our own lives and deserving of care offers hope for sustaining the "Florida of Bartram" still left to us.

Her attachment to the Florida wilderness and the ability of her writing to inspire others to care about Cross Creek are Rawlings's most valuable attributes. When Bill Belleville walked past the Long family cemetery, where the Crackers who inspired the Baxters are buried, he felt that "being here...is akin to being inside of an author's imagination, or perhaps somewhere inside the residual spirit of the Baxters themselves. It is a place at once mythic and very real, a landscape and culture that have become more 'visible' because of the generosity, skill, and grace of a single tenacious author" (26). Literature of place reaches not only across time, but across the dimensions of real and imagined to connect readers with the land and those who occupy it—both human and animal. There resides a certain power in reading a text and then visiting its setting (or practicing both simultaneously), but those unable to do so can still benefit from a writer's message, such as the importance of treating animals with an ethics of closeness and deciding to reduce our harmful interactions with them, by reflecting on our own attachment to places and the natural world. Though she hunted for survival and enjoyed consuming certain animals, Rawlings's topophilia produced ethical perceptions of nature. For her and her characters, the Florida scrublands necessitate intimate encounters with "wild things out in the wood," transforming those "things" from objects into sentient beings (*CC* 165). This transformation also changed her role in the wilderness from "invader" to "guest," a key component of Rawlings's land ethic (*CC* 44). She concludes *Cross Creek* by describing the shift in her philosophy toward nature, asking,

Who owns Cross Creek? The red-birds, I think, more than I, for they will have their nests even in the face of delinquent mortgages...But what of the land? It seems to me that the earth may be borrowed but not bought. It may be used, but not owned. It gives itself in

response to love and tending...But we are tenants and not possessors, lovers and not masters. Cross Creek belongs to the wind and the rain, to the sun and the seasons, to the cosmic secrecy of seed, and beyond all, to time. (CC 380)

As Belleville concludes, Rawlings's stories "show how the human heart and the land are so closely intertwined" (23). *Cross Creek* demonstrates the power of place attachment to inspire us to advocate for animal lives and the environment during a time when wild spaces seem increasingly difficult to discover.

CHAPTER THREE:
“A GOOD PRICE...FOR LIVE CREETURS”:
OPPORTUNISTIC FLORIDA IN ELIZABETH BISHOP’S “THE FISH” (1946),
RAWLINGS’S *THE YEARLING* (1938), AND JOHN HENRY FLEMING’S *FEARSOME*
***CREATURES OF FLORIDA* (2008)⁵¹**

Introduction

Animals serve an important role in the human enjoyment of Florida as both idyll and wilderness. From beautiful birds to the beastly alligators, animals help define the state as natural paradise or thrilling hinterland. As demonstrated by Henry Bunk’s journey through the Everglades and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings’s attachment to Cross Creek, the idyll and wilderness modes often intertwine. Both are also frequently marked by violence against animals for human amusement, advancement, or profit. This chapter discusses Florida as seen through a lens of opportunity for human benefit—typically at the expense of other humans, animals, and the environment. Paraphrasing Florida State University professor Leo Sandon, Susan Cerulean indicates that people usually come to Florida seeking “a legitimized opportunity to raid and pillage, and an invitation to experience a tropical Eden” (“Restorying” 3). The “opportunity to raid and pillage” dates back to the arrival of European explorers in the sixteenth century

⁵¹ Parts of this chapter appear in my article titled “‘The Metamorphosis of Live Creatures’: Animal Ethics in Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings’s *The Yearling*,” *The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Journal of Florida Literature*, vol. 24, 2016, pp. 130-137.

(“Restorying” 3). In the centuries that followed, humans exploited Florida’s native animals for commercial gain and harmed them for sport. Today, this opportunistic view persists in unchecked urban development, which has wreaked havoc on natural spaces (mangrove swamps, beaches, the Everglades), in the commodification of ‘exotic’ animals at theme parks, and in Florida’s hunting and fishing industries. Much attention has been paid to the destruction of nature and animal habitats, resulting in protection measures for alligators, sea turtles, the Florida panther,⁵² manatees, and more. However, little work has been done on how Florida literature critiques the speciesist behaviors stemming from the vision of Florida as an economic or recreational opportunity. Elizabeth Bishop’s “The Fish” questions the personal enjoyment of fishing through a transformative human-animal encounter. John Henry Fleming’s *Fearsome Creatures of Florida* critiques hunting, rapid urbanization of natural spaces, abusing animals for entertainment, and even sending monkeys into space. Finally, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings’s *The Yearling* renounces hunting solely for amusement and cautions against collecting wild animals as pets. These texts exhibit how the anthropocentric perception of nonhuman nature as a resource perpetuates contemporary forms of animal violence often seen as axiomatic to the Florida experience.

As in Chapter One, the works I examine here are diverse in genre and historical period. They are connected by place, by their profound focus on nonhuman animals, and by their critique of using Florida as a land of opportunity for human benefit. Many activities drawing visitors to Florida (and keeping its residents here) directly harm animals for profit or personal

⁵² Linda Hogan’s 1998 novel *Power* fictionalizes the impact of Endangered Species laws (specific to the Florida panther) on a tribe of Taiga people residing in the panhandle.

enjoyment, including fishing, hunting, and the captivity industry. Commercial motives do not always drive violence toward animals; when Penny and Jody hunt deer in *The Yearling*, they do so not to make money, but to put food on the table. Like Rawlings, they also hunt for recreation and amusement. The image of Rawlings “pull[ing] the trigger with joy and look[ing] down at [her] fallen foe with delight and triumph” resonates with Garrard’s classic pastoral, in which rural spaces provide relaxation and pleasure (CC 107). That she moves to Cross Creek to escape the city also satisfies Garrard’s criteria for the romantic pastoral. These influences are not commercial; Rawlings does not harm animals for profit. She, along with her characters, do commit acts of violence toward Florida’s creatures for personal advancement, however. These pastoral modes are fundamentally anthropocentric, viewing nature as a resource to benefit humans. Therefore, I use opportunistic Florida to examine violence against animals that, while not always fueled by the prospect of financial gain, arises from the search for personal improvement or enjoyment. I also explore exploitation committed for profit, in which animals are commodified as tradeable or displayable objects.

An exemplary vision of Florida as ripe for opportunity belonged to Spanish admiral and first Florida governor Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, who founded St. Augustine, the oldest city in the United States, in 1565. To declare St. Augustine for Spain, Avilés defeated French naval officer Jean Ribault and sailed to Fort Caroline, a French holding, where he executed all of the men present. Avilés sought to claim Florida to fulfill economic and political opportunities. According to historian Michael Gannon, Florida’s “conquest and settlement were undertaken as a commercial enterprise. Mendéndez, an entrepreneur, aspired to be Florida’s first great land developer, industrialist, and agribusinessman” (8). Other settlers held a similar view of Florida,

hoping to turn a profit through the commodification of its flora and fauna. Anne Rowe describes the opportunistic vision of Florida as “an untapped natural resource, an untapped imaginative resource, waiting for economic and spiritual (or imaginative) exploitation ... And it would be in the conflicting/complementary goals implied thereby (a land of enchantment/a rich land to be exploited or raped) that a drama would unfold that would elicit significant literary responses in the years to come” (9). Rowe identifies how pastoral attitudes toward Florida—especially the American pastoral, which sees nature as a resource—can sometimes be synonymous with the harmful, opportunistic treatment of both humans and animals.

Perhaps the most well-known instance of Florida as “an opportunity to raid and pillage” is the genocide and forced removal of nearly all Seminoles from their native lands during the 50 years following the War of 1812 (“Restorying” 3). Pursuing military and political advancement, Andrew Jackson invaded Florida in March of 1818 to secure the territory from Spain. Florida Seminoles were unsuccessful at resisting the encroachment on their lands by United States forces. Roughly 400 Native Americans survived the three Seminole Wars by fleeing into the Everglades, which their opponents considered too wild to claim. Albery Whitman’s 1885 poem *Twasinta’s Seminoles; or, Rape of Florida* depicts the removal of Florida’s Seminole population as an allegory for the plundering of the New World by European settlers. As Rowe explains, “For Whitman, Florida represented an unspoiled Eden which for centuries had resisted the fortune hunters of Europe. Now this land was finally being sacked... Thus, Florida evoked for Whitman a vision of an idyllic land that, sadly, must succumb to the greed of fortune seekers” (20). Rowe’s analysis demonstrates how the ideas held by those in power about a place—in this case, that Florida affords many opportunities for wealth and political power—can determine

history.

When Albery Whitman wrote his poem, Florida had recently entered what Larry Youngs calls the leisure revolution. The opportunity to hunt, fish, and participate in outdoor sports brought tourists to Florida from within and outside the United States, particularly during the winter. According to Youngs, “Development of Florida between 1870 and 1930 can be seen partly as a consequence of the emerging significance that industrialized nations’ business and professional classes placed on sport and outdoor recreation” (58-59). Florida’s reputation as a place of healing, both from poor health and the ills of urbanization, contributed to the growth of sporting during the winter season. “Affluent men and women put increasing value on the quality and meaning of their time away from work and home,” believing that “participating in outdoor recreation...helped to immunize against the unhealthy aspects...of modern urban life” (Youngs 59). However, as Rowe notes, “No longer the haven for invalids that Sidney Lanier had observed, Florida...was becoming a playground for the rich” (58).

Henry James witnessed this flourishing sporting crowd during his 1905 visit to Palm Beach and was disheartened by the display of “Vanity Fair in full blast” (181). Rowe explains, “What James saw in Florida was perhaps the culmination of all that he had come to despair of during his tour of America. Everywhere Americans were creating blights upon the environment, and everywhere the almighty dollar was creating a new social strata that was pushy, brassy, and ignorant of even the most basic social forms” (64). James lamented that visitors to Florida were too preoccupied with sporting and pursuing commercial opportunities to appreciate the region’s natural beauty. He termed these visitors “boarders,” stressing their temporary status in Florida as patrons of hotels. James’s account thus suggests a link between fleeting attachment to place and

environmental harm. Youngs writes, “the Florida frontier offered sportsmen marvelous opportunities to hunt and fish,” which they considered “harmless diversions” (62-63). Many descriptions of shooting animals for sport, especially alligators, were penned during Florida’s leisure revolution.⁵³ Violence toward animals thus accompanied the rise of recreation for humans in Florida. Killing for sport by white tourists largely replaced subsistence hunting and fishing practiced by indigenous peoples. The exploitation of animals continued throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, assuming a vital role in Florida’s promise for abundant recreational and economic opportunities. Florida literature responds to the prevalence of hunting, fishing, and other forms of harming animals in diverse ways, from heartily endorsing these activities to outright condemning them.

Returning the Stare: Fishing in Florida’s “Boundless Natural Aquarium”

Visit Florida, established in 1996 as Florida’s “official tourism marketing corporation,” hails fishing as the quintessential Florida pastime (“Home” par. 1). Its description of fishing is remarkably idyllic and relies on unique aspects of Florida’s physical geography:

Florida’s 1,350 miles of saltwater coastline sports diverse fish habitats that support more well-managed fish species than you could probably catch in a lifetime. Anglers catch hundreds of brawny, beautiful and delicious species in teeming estuaries, off gorgeous beaches and in the deep blue oceans surrounding the Florida peninsula. At least 7,700 freshwater lakes and 10,550 miles of rivers also serve up world-class freshwater fishing.

⁵³ See Brinton, Daniel, *A Guide-Book of Florida & The South: For Tourists, Invalids, and Emigrants*; essays by L.A. Beardslee and Charles Kenworthy in *Camp Life in Florida: A Handbook for Sportsmen and Settlers*, edited by Charles Hallock.

It's no wonder that more world-record fish are caught in Florida waters than anywhere else in the world. ("Florida Fishing")

The subsequent advertisements of fishing from Visit Florida name additional identities of the state discussed by my dissertation. Wild Florida offers fishing that "brings you close to nature, so close you shake off a primordial shiver as an alligator bellows on a sunny bank near Kissimmee or Gainesville" ("Florida Fishing"). This description evokes the thrill of a prehistoric glimpse of nature, in which alligators mark a boundary not to be crossed. Even mysterious Florida, the focus of Chapter 4, receives a nod: "Our Florida ecosystems are unique and magnificent ... There's a bass or bream around just about every mysterious cypress knee" ("Florida Fishing"). As a popular attraction for both tourists and residents, Florida's fish unknowingly contribute to many attitudes toward the state. Whether kept or returned to the water, they serve as key parts of idyllic, wild, and mysterious Florida. The act of fishing, however, is not inherently any of these, but it does belong to the many opportunities Florida offers for both personal enjoyment and commercial enterprise.

Indeed, it is difficult to find representations of Florida that do not paint fishing as an idyllic or inevitable aspect of experiencing the state. Hemingway's "On the Blue Water" glorifies the "excitement" of deep-sea fishing for "strange and wild things of unbelievable speed and power and a beauty, in the water and leaping, that is indescribable, which you would never see if you did not fish for them" (67). Hemingway portrays fishing as an opportunity for recreation and for experiencing the thrill of nature; he objectifies fish as vessels for entertaining humans with their physical properties of speed and beauty, rather than seeing them as subjects deserving freedom from human control. In addition to the allure of fishing for personal thrill, Hemingway

indicates its commercial ties: “For pride and because the fish is worth plenty of money in the Havana market, you gaff him at the boat and bring him on board, but the having him in the boat isn’t the excitement; it is while you are fighting him that is the fun” (66-67). Here, fishing serves as a means of uplifting the human ego and reinforcing our domination of the environment; fish are also commodities to be sold for a profit, reflecting the economic opportunities of exploiting Florida’s marine animals. So inseparable is fishing from Florida’s many identities that texts advocating for animals and the environment often do not award fish a place in their protection efforts. For instance, Marjory Stoneman Douglas’s “Plumes” makes a compelling case against poaching birds for their feathers but remains silent on the “mackerel money” earned by John Pinder and other residents of Flamingo (“Plumes” 98).

Even *The Wild Heart of Florida*, despite its eloquent case for preserving Florida’s natural beauty, commences by celebrating and idealizing animal violence, as Debbie Drake reminisces about “the smell of fresh salt air on deep-sea fishing trips and afternoons spent exploring hardwood hammocks” (ix). The anthology includes an essay by Carl Hiaasen, “Last of the Falling Tide,” in which he warns against the despoliation of the Florida Keys caused by population growth, algae blooms, and the negligence of institutions like Big Agriculture. Hiaasen also depicts fishing as a primary reason to save what remains of the Keys. On his first trip at the age of six, Hiaasen raced to the pier with his fishing rod; he reflects, “This was an honest-to-God wilderness, as pure and unspoiled and accessible as a boy could imagine ... To wade the banks was to enter a boundless natural aquarium: starfish, nurse sharks, eagle rays, barracuda, bonefish, permit, and tarpon, all swimming literally at your feet” (92-93). Hiaasen transforms Florida’s clear and teeming waters into a personal opportunity for experiencing wild nature. The

oxymoronic effect of “natural aquarium” attempts to confine the diverse species before Hiaasen into an idyllic reservoir for human enjoyment, depriving the fish of agency and subjectivity. Hiaasen also complains about the disappearance of baby lobsters from the Keys, creating an immense burden for crawfishermen. However, his text lacks an ecocentric consideration for the lobsters as the immediate victims of overfishing.

As noted in Chapter Two, ecofeminist Karen Davis addresses this trend of ignoring the welfare of individual creatures (in this case, fish) while advocating for the environment. She distinguishes between environmentalism and animal rights, the latter of which seeks to protect all animal lives, while environmentalism supports the management of species (through selective hunting, for instance) to maintain ecosystems. In the spirit of John Muir, Roderick Nash, Aldo Leopold, and other renowned environmentalists, environmentalism often celebrates hunting and fishing as part of experiencing nature.⁵⁴ The difference between environmentalism and animal rights is noticeable in many works of Florida literature. Jeff Ripple offers one example of this difference in his recollections of traveling along the Suwannee River:

Nearly all federal lands—parks, wildlife refuges, forests, preserves, monuments—are mandated to accommodate a variety of personal and commercial human uses, some incredibly intrusive, including jet-skis, powerboats and airboats, snowmobiles, mining, logging, and military flyovers, that in my mind discourage attempts for more personal, spiritual explorations, such as hiking, canoeing, wildlife observation, or ethical hunting and fishing. Worse still, the welfare of the land and its wild inhabitants—the underlying

⁵⁴ See also Knox, Margaret. “The Rights Stuff.” *Buzzworm: The Environmental Journal*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1991, pp. 31-37.

reason for the purchase of federal conservation lands—is often compromised as a result.

(“Suwanee” 104)

Ripple indicts several practices currently damaging Florida’s land and animals, and he is right to do so; he also demonstrates the environmentalist tendency of enjoying place attachment through the “ethical” killing of animals while simultaneously expressing concern for their welfare. What my work advocates is a deep ecological approach to Florida’s animals, both beastly and beautiful, that considers them not for their commercial value or what they might offer in the way of personal or spiritual enhancement, but for their sentience and equal right to life—even fish.⁵⁵ Literature of place can strengthen this approach by challenging readers to see animals in new ways and by critiquing the anthropocentric ideologies that continue to support fishing, hunting, and other forms of animal exploitation.

Elizabeth Bishop’s “The Fish” (1946) questions the personal enjoyment gained from fishing through a contemplative encounter between human and animal. Bishop was born in 1911 in Worcester, Massachusetts. She traveled extensively with an inheritance from her father and moved to Key West in 1938. That year, Bishop caught a fish with three hooks in its mouth.⁵⁶ The poem inspired by this event, like most of Bishop’s works, transforms an ordinary experience into an imaginative narrative.⁵⁷ Bishop’s speaker seizes “a tremendous fish,” spends an indeterminate

⁵⁵ I use the term “deep ecology” as it was first defined by Arne Næss in 1973, to mean that every living creature has intrinsic worth for its own sake, regardless of its use-value to humans. Deep ecology rejects hierarchies based on species, viewing humans as equal members of the biotic community. I do not wish to associate this term with certain political connotations it carries, such as the privileging of wilderness and the de-prioritization of urban ecology and environmental justice.

⁵⁶ See *Conversations*, p. 42.

⁵⁷ In 1947, Bishop sent a postcard featuring a jewfish to Robert Lowell and claimed it was the species of fish she had caught. Carol Frost questions the accuracy of Bishop’s claim, exploring the interstices between Bishop’s memory and creative powers. Frost offers additional guesses at the type of fish in the poem. See “Elizabeth Bishop’s Inner Eye.” *New England Review* (1990-), vol. 25, no. 1/2, 2004, pp. 250-257.

amount of time scrutinizing its features, focusing on five hooks grown into the fish's mouth, and returns it to the water (1). The poem begins by situating the fish in a liminal space, "half out of water," with the speaker's "hook / fast in a corner of his mouth" (3-4). Bishop's narrator also occupies a liminal space in her choice to keep the fish or release it. Her prolonged act of holding the animal out of water generates tension as the fish's survival becomes less and less certain. The text produces this anxiety over how long the speaker gazes at her catch by illustrating the fish's "gills...breathing in / the terrible oxygen" (22-23). The unknown length of time spanned by the poem maintains this suspense.

Bishop also uses time to underscore the fish's role in place-making. The fish seems quite old: she portrays him as "battered and venerable," with "brown skin...like ancient wallpaper" (8; 10-11). The speaker envisions "shapes like full-blown roses / stained and lost through age" on the fish's scales, which contain barnacles and sea-lice as well (14-15). As Pred, Tuan, and additional scholars have observed, the passage of time is important to fostering a sense of place. By underscoring the fish's old age, the poem casts the animal as a kind of historical record, particularly concerning the prevalence of fishing in Florida. The five hooks piercing the fish's mouth are old, like him, prompting the speaker to imagine a long history of violence against the animal. Enough time has passed that the hooks have "grown firmly" into the fish, creating "a five-haired beard of wisdom / trailing from his aching jaw" (62-63). In addition to the "terrible oxygen" assaulting the fish, Bishop's persona stresses the violence inherent to fishing by depicting the five hooks as "weaponlike" and through the diction of "strain," "snap," and "broke" used to imagine the animal's previous struggles against being caught (23; 49; 58-59). "Strain" connotes the fish's physical resistance of the fishing line, while the onomatopoeic effect

of “snap” emphasizes the force of breaking free (58-59). If, as Tuan asserts, “objects anchor time,” the fish with its hooks serves as evidence of human violence against nature, anchoring Bishop’s speaker to a moment in which she recognizes her complicity in this treatment of the animal (187).

Critics disagree on whether or not “The Fish” lends itself to animal advocacy. The conclusion, in which the speaker releases the fish, is often the focus of this contention. Jerome Mazzaro offers a rather simple explanation for the release, maintaining that Bishop’s narrator is both disappointed in the lack of an exciting struggle—the fish “hadn’t fought at all”—and distracted by the oil rainbow forming around the boat (3). Mary Elkins finds empathy in the speaker’s close examination of her catch, arguing that “the oxygen is ‘terrible’ to him, the gills are ‘frightening’ to her. The juxtaposition of these adjectives, the blending of suggestion of suffering for the fish whose gills are ‘crisp with blood,’ the same gills that can ‘cut so badly,’ with the potential suffering of the speaker highlights the sympathetic identification here” (50). Still, Elkins dismisses sentimentality and environmental politics as motivation for releasing the fish, pointing out that the conjunction of the last line does not imply cause-and-effect (“And I let the fish go,” rather than “So I let the fish go”). Elkins also underscores the speaker’s failure to connect with the animal, positing that the fish “remains itself, and the poet, regardless of degree of sympathetic identification, remains aware of the otherness of the fish” (50). Susan McCabe makes a similar point. “What she discovers,” McCabe writes, “is not identity, but difference...a coming into, but not quite, illumination” (95).

Indeed, in addition to the speaker’s ambiguous attitude toward her catch and the lack of a definitive stance against fishing offered by the text, the poem anthropomorphizes the fish in

ways that are problematic for those seeking to highlight its animal ethics. The fish is not only “battered and venerable,” but wears his hooks “like medals with their ribbons / frayed and wavering,” creating the aforementioned “beard of wisdom” (8; 60-62). That the poem uses male pronouns for the fish contributes to the extended metaphor of a bearded and seasoned war-hero. Bishop’s narrator glorifies the violent conflicts between the fish and humans, rendering the animal a wise veteran experiencing bravery and triumph where there was likely only fear and pain.

Willard Spiegelman’s reading comes a bit closer to aligning the poem with the interests of animal advocacy. He believes the speaker relinquishes her catch as an act of “natural heroism,” which he defines as “the embracing, subsuming, and internalizing” of nonhuman nature (110). The “victory” filling up the boat refers not to the catch itself, but to interspecies connection, harmony, and the embodiment of natural beauty (65). Spiegelman thus reads “The Fish” as an aesthetic experience and its titular subject as a symbolic reminder of God’s covenant with humanity, signaled by a rainbow. Like Spiegelman, McCabe sees the fish as a vehicle for the speaker’s self-realization in a visionary moment of unity with the natural world. However, where Spiegelman perceives internalization and connection across species, McCabe stresses a tension between identification and difference, suggesting that the encounter ultimately reveals the fragility of relationships and communions. These readings share a concern about what catching the fish means for the narrator, whether it be an opportunity for self-realization, for strengthening her empathy, or for discovering the beauty in the natural world. However, the interpretations are fundamentally anthropocentric. Overall, scholarship on “The Fish” does not take into consideration Bishop’s own remarks on human-animal relationships, nor does it regard

the fish's subjectivity as central to the poem.

That "The Fish" may be used to advocate for Florida's marine animals is somewhat strange given that Bishop once quite enjoyed fishing. In 1937, while in Naples, she wrote to Marianne Moore, "[fishing] is very good here... The other day I caught a blow-fish, who began to puff up as I pulled him in. Three pelicans immediately rushed over, holding up their tremendous bills, and by chance the blow-fish, who was just snagged, fell off the hook right into one's mouth" (*PPL* 742).⁵⁸ This rather whimsical account of a fishing trip differs substantially from her later observations about the activity. As I note in Chapter One, Bishop critiqued Ernest Hemingway's treatment of animals, especially hunting and deep-sea fishing. In her 1964 letter to Anne Stevenson, she admits to still participating in the occasional fishing trip, but "without much pleasure" (*PPL* 859). She also opposed circuses and bullfights, more profitable forms of animal exploitation.⁵⁹ Like Rawlings, who expressed a change of heart toward hunting in *Cross Creek*, these remarks suggest that Bishop developed an animal ethics while living in Florida which included fish. It is plausible, then, to read "The Fish" as a work of animal advocacy. If, as McCabe asserts, the speaker wants readers to join her in gazing at the fish, and, as Elkins declares, the poem highlights this act of seeing, then Bishop displays the abused animal for us to question our treatment of the nonhuman world, just as she came to recognize fishing as more than a harmless method of enjoying Florida's recreational opportunities.

⁵⁸ *PPL* is an abbreviation for *Poems, Prose, and Letters* to be used in parenthetical citations.

⁵⁹ In 1934, Elizabeth Bishop attended the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus at Madison Square Garden with Marianne Moore, who hoped to steal some elephant hairs to repair a bracelet she owned. Moore brought bags of bread to the circus so that Bishop could help her distract the elephants with food while she (Moore) leaned into their pen and cut off some hairs from a baby elephant. In her memoir of Moore, Bishop reflects on their visit: "I hate seeing animals in cages, especially small cages, and especially circus animals, but I think that Marianne, while probably feeling the same way, was so passionately interested in them, and knew so much about them, that she could put aside any pain or outrage for the time being" (qtd. in Schwartz 120).

The speaker believes the fish is in pain, as indicated by her awareness of “the terrible oxygen” he has no choice but to breathe in, and the fishhooks lodged inside “his aching jaw” (23; 63). “Grunting” and “battered,” he hangs from her fishing line while she inspects “his sullen face” (7-8; 44). Though this understanding of the animal’s sensations does not yield an explicit admission of guilt from the narrator, it does contradict the common view that fish do not feel pain. Additionally, Bishop’s persona “thought of the coarse white flesh / packed in like feathers, / the big bones and the little bones, / the dramatic reds and blacks / of his shiny entrails, / and the pink swim-bladder / like a big peony” (27-33). Someone who has eaten and perhaps even cleaned a fish firsthand could readily provide such a description. Concentrating on the fish’s flesh and innards suggests an intent to consume the animal. Releasing the fish and thereby ending his pain may imply the narrator’s change of heart. In the final line, the choice of “And,” rather than “So,” is not significant enough to invalidate the possibility of this change of heart: that the narrator’s close interaction with the fish prompts her to free him instead of ending his life, or that the narrator means to release the fish all along but has still experienced an epiphany in which she acknowledges the fish as a feeling subject.

Human-animal interaction in the poem revolves around the speaker’s gaze, with which she attempts to connect with the fish: “I looked into his eyes / which were far larger than mine... They shifted a little, but not / to return my stare” (34-35; 41-42). As Elkins and McCabe indicate, the poem thus emphasizes a rift between Bishop’s speaker and her catch. Scholars have not commented on the significance of this rift, however. The fish does not possess human understanding—despite the speaker’s use of anthropomorphism—and is incapable of meeting his captor’s eyes to plead for his life. Moreover, the animal has no interest in studying the narrator,

who compares the fish's glance to "the tipping / of an object toward the light" (42-43). This simile may be misleading, for the poem treats the fish as a subject more than an object. Its strengths as a work of animal advocacy include the recognition that fish can suffer, the narrator's decision to "let the fish go," and her effort to connect with him (75). The poem extends to fish a degree of consideration and mercy not afforded to them by most recreational and commercial fishermen, who catch fish for sport and collect them as trophies.

In his study of the many ways place attachments are formed, Tuan asserts that "place is whatever stable object catches our attention," and "While it takes time to form an attachment to place, the quality and intensity of experience matters more than simply duration" (161; 198). In Bishop's hands, the ordinary experience of catching a fish becomes extraordinary: a protracted, vivid analysis of a captured animal rendered through poetry. As the "stable object" of Bishop's attention, the fish is a catalyst for place attachment, but the poem is needed to fulfill that attachment by creating an intense literary experience. "The Fish" affords readers their own imaginative encounter with the marine animal; through poetry, we can experience those brief moments atop the waters of Key West that inspired Bishop to write on behalf of a species often exploited to enhance Florida's recreational appeal.

For Pleasure and For Science: Animal Violence in *Fearsome Creatures of Florida*

Elizabeth Bishop's poem portrays fishing in a radically different light than most advertisements about Florida, encouraging readers to look more closely at their own interactions with nature. John Henry Fleming's *Fearsome Creatures of Florida* shares this conceit with Bishop's text by holding a mirror to Floridians so they might acknowledge their role in

misunderstanding, underestimating, and harming the environment. With his riveting sketches of frightening and mystical “monsters,” Fleming combats the banal idea of Florida as home to theme parks, gated communities, golf courses, and their manicured lawns. He parodies Florida’s opportunity for “comfort and ease that draws so many to the state,” as it excludes and ignores “everyday human riff-raff, your one-armed vets God-blessing America...vacant-eyed streetwalkers...all the lowly unfortunates who can’t afford a home on the links” (Fleming ix). In Fleming’s book, the dreaded and neglected aspects of Florida lurking outside of our walled neighborhoods become the Skunk Ape, who torments stranded drivers on the Tamiami Trail with his horrible stench, or Sand Lions, who draw unsuspecting beachgoers into their tunnels on the beach for a meal.

According to Shawn Alff, every eco-conscious Floridian should read Fleming’s work. “An environmentalist’s heart beats behind these stories,” agrees Colette Bancroft, “but instead of lectures Fleming artfully draws us into the kind of campfire tales we almost believe” (par. 7). These tales disturb Florida’s reputation as a contemporary paradise offering easy access to theme parks, beaches, and nature walks. *Fearsome Creatures of Florida* also exposes the many forms of animal exploitation resulting from opportunistic attitudes toward the state. Fleming addresses how Florida’s unique circumstances enable the forms of violence portrayed in his book:

At the beginning of the 20th century, the population of Florida stood at half a million, making it one of the least populous states. It’s now over 20 million and the third most populous state. Florida’s explosive growth in that span discouraged any long-range plans for environmental protection. Just the opposite: it incentivized schemes for making the land more developer-friendly...In that economic climate, it’s easy to see how wild

animals can be viewed as a nuisance—and not just the fearsome ones like alligators and panthers. Once protected, the mere presence of Scrub Jays, Burrowing Owls, or Gopher Tortoises can hinder development. (Interview 1)⁶⁰

Fearsome Creatures of Florida exposes the schemes and ideologies responsible for harming animals and destroying their homes. In shaping his stories around the mistreated animals and prioritizing their expressions of fear, loneliness, despair, and rage, Fleming gives nonhuman nature a voice where those taking advantage of Florida's recreational and commercial opportunities would silence it.

In addition to fishing, hunting serves as a popular recreational activity in Florida. Chapter Two examines the importance of hunting to the Cracker identity along with Rawlings's fluctuating stance on killing animals for sport. For many Floridians, hunting remains integral to their culture, history, and sense of place. Clarence Gohdes explains that the prevalence of hunting in Florida grew after the Civil War, as game animal populations were nearly depleted in other Southern states. Furthermore, according to Kathryn Seidel, "Florida was still a wild place, not yet settled with cities, nor promised of large plantations...Not only was Florida's game abundant, after the Seminole wars, it was free from those native peoples who did not appreciate the presence of these interlopers," namely white hunters (427). Hunting persisted as a popular recreational activity throughout Florida's leisure revolution. As hunting for pleasure alone, rather than strictly for subsistence, continued to increase, canned hunting ranges were built in Florida to attract the patronage of wealthy sportsmen.

Fleming describes one of these ranges, established on St. Vincent Island in 1908 and

⁶⁰ Fleming, John. Personal interview. 18 Nov. 2017.

1948, in “The St. Vincent Sambar.” Various “exotic” animals were brought to the island, including zebras, black bucks, elands, and Asian water birds so that hunters could be guaranteed a kill (Fleming 33).⁶¹ “The St. Vincent Sambar” illustrates how Florida’s physical geography strengthens the thrill of the hunt: “Isolated, yet a short boat ride from shore, the island seemed perfect for new owners” seeking “a Florida-style safari between ridges and the oyster-shell middens of prehistoric aborigines” (Fleming 33). On the St. Vincent Island range, caged hunting furnished one way of performing place attachment to wild (albeit contrived) Florida by pursuing decisively non-Florida animals. As in his other stories, Fleming uses “The St. Vincent Sambar” to demonstrate nature’s power to fight back against the species responsible for its destruction. For unknown reasons, the Sambar is the only animal to survive on St. Vincent Island following the closure of the canned hunting range. They now “stalk the human visitors, turning the tables on decades of human predation” (Fleming 33). By imagining an encounter between the Sambar and an unsuspecting camper, Fleming blurs the line between human and animal to disturb the idea of Florida as an idyllic paradise:

You may sense its anger, its unease. You may be frightened, and yet not nearly so frightened as after the brief moment of stillness when you find yourself contemplating the nature of the beast’s existence, how it was brought here long ago to this subtropical paradise, how for a short time life seemed easy. And then the hunters came, food grew scarce, and survival became no less a struggle than back home... You, too, are an outsider, having been lured to Florida with attractive images of sunsets and easy living

⁶¹ The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission still offers permits for hunting Sambar on St. Vincent Island’s National Wildlife Refuge.

and the seduction of a clean break. Later, the house of postcards collapsed, along with both the life you knew and the one you were promised. You felt taken. (Fleming 34)

The use of second-person perspective reveals how opportunistic attitudes toward Florida have exploited nonhuman nature; it also identifies the reader with Floridians who have fallen victim to the idyllic “postcard” promises of the state. If the previous excerpt unsettles the line between human and animal, Fleming’s next paragraph collapses it. He writes, “So it’s not hard for you to imagine life in the Sambar’s four hooves...when a roam in any direction brings you to the water’s edge, your life starts to feel small and cut off. The other Sambar you once knew have died...and now you are lonelier than you’d ever thought possible, even in the midst of a herd. Seeing your own kind only reminds you of what you’ve lost” (Fleming 34). The effect of conflating readers with hunted animals suggests that harming nonhuman nature in the name of industrialization or sport may offer short-term pleasures, but environmental damage is detrimental to all living things. The unforeseen consequences of treating Florida’s environment as a resource, whether for personal amusement or economic opportunity, including species loss, pollution, deforestation, and beach erosion, impact both animals and humans. Yet, the comparison only goes so far: the unsuspecting camper who encounters a Sambar has not been hunted, but belongs rather to the species responsible for exploiting nonhuman animals. The reader is both victim and perpetrator of the opportunistic vision sanctioning violence against nature. By making the reader complicit in these practices, even if that complicity rests in simply ignoring the despoliation of nature, Fleming provides a new understanding of our agency to affect change and encourages us to reconsider the necessity of harming animals in order to enjoy Florida.

Like the St. Vincent Sambar, Key deer have endured human violence as a result of tourists pursuing recreational opportunities in Florida. Fleming sets “Key Deer” in the Florida Keys, where residents and vacationers sometimes become stranded during hurricane season if a storm approaches: “The evacuation can take up to 24 hours, and drivers from the southern keys can expect to spend all day in dense traffic” (55). Some motorists “may find their way blocked by a steely-eyed gang of Key Deer” (Fleming 55). Unlike the Sambar, Key deer first arrived in North America of their own volition by crossing the land bridge. Fleming compares them to humans trapped in the Keys during a hurricane; when the last ice age ended, the deer “got stranded like unlucky tourists and became easy game for Native Americans and European explorers” (56). When the Keys became a popular travel destination, Key deer “were roadkill for vacationers in rented convertibles and sportsmen hauling oversized fishing boats” (Fleming 56). The text refers to Florida as a tourism and fishing opportunity with its focus on U.S. Highway 1, which was extended through the Keys along the Overseas Highway. During the Florida land boom of the 1920s, the Miami Motor Club proposed constructing a highway to the Keys to attract fishermen and those with real estate interests. The newest segment of U.S. Highway 1 was built atop the Florida East Coast Railway, which incurred significant damage during the Labor Day Hurricane of 1935. David Willing describes the railway as “a marvelous work of construction which ranks among the wonders of the world as an example of man’s ability to transform a wilderness into civilization” (287). This “ability to transform” responded to an economic opportunity of bringing more humans into the Keys (Willing 287). As space developed into place, the Keys’ identity shifted from tropical wilderness to recreational haven, with a concomitant increase in harm to animals.

According to Fleming, poaching and habitat loss almost eradicated the Key deer despite laws against hunting them. The “rented convertibles” and “oversized fishing boats” that pose additional threats to their numbers are icons of Florida’s opportunistic appeal for vacationers (Fleming 56). Running over a Key deer is symbolic of industrialization’s destructive impact on nonhuman nature. However, as in most tales from *Fearsome Creatures of Florida*, the deer have grown vengeful and discovered a means of resisting humans. They prey upon the most vulnerable travelers during a hurricane by forming a blockade across the highway. Fleming writes, “you won’t see them unless you’re one of the foolish and scared, trying to escape while the storm’s underway” (56). As in “The St. Vincent Sambar,” he also further aligns humans and animals foiled by the allure of Florida: “Perhaps all those years at the mercy of humans have put a chip on the Key Deer’s tiny shoulders: If I’m not getting out, neither are you” (Fleming 56). Confronted by a gang of deer on U.S. 1, travelers “detect an almost supernatural strength of will, a collective determination that only a tribe of survivors can know. They’ve been hunted and slaughtered and crushed and starved, and still they live” (Fleming 57). Here, the text critiques how Key deer have been treated by Floridians pursuing the state’s economic and recreational opportunities. As the hurricane continues to rage, Key deer attempt to push the vehicles into the ocean. Fleming concludes, “In the big scheme of things, your will to live is nothing compared to the Key Deer’s. They’re going to live; you won’t. And maybe that’s their point” (58). Animals thus overpower humans in the push for survival. In this text, violent tropical storms characteristic of Florida facilitate the objectives of animals against people who believe they can outsmart nature. “Key Deer” thus checks the notion of human superiority by exhibiting unintended consequences of pursuing anthropocentric opportunities in Florida with little regard for the

natural environment.

Recreational activities in Florida often harm animals, but they are not the only kind of opportunities to do so. In “Ghost of the Monkeynaut,” Fleming depicts the maltreatment of animals used in scientific endeavors, such as space travel. This story is based on the death of Gordo, a monkey launched into space from Cape Canaveral in 1958, who presumably died when his parachute failed and his rocket crashed into the ocean. Minimal efforts were made to recover Gordo’s body. Fleming’s tale portrays the forgotten monkey as a bitter ghost, haunting the Space Coast by biting the ankles of beachgoers or pounding fiercely on the glass doors of their condos. Gordo “walked the beach mournfully at night, tail dragging in the sand, whimpers fading in and out with the ocean breeze” (Fleming 30). Fleming uses a typically beautiful Floridian image, a breezy beach at night, to enhance the sorrow of his simian hero. Fleming critiques sending monkeys into space as a form of animal experimentation by describing Gordo’s training at the hands of NASA scientists and subsequent abandonment after his launch: “He’d done what they’d asked and been promised so much more than treats, though he’d never wanted it. Now, when he’d given his life to the program, the least they could do was pay respect to his feat” (30-31). This feat, according to Colin Burgess and Chris Dubbs, was providing “respiratory and heartbeat telemetry signals” affirming that “a human being could have survived a similar journey” (130). He also imagines Gordo’s loneliness while the animal perished alone as a sacrifice to advance human science: “Life and death is of little concern to a monkey who has stared down the empty depths of the universe and fallen to earth without the consolation of fame—or even so much as a pair of warm arms to run to and hide” (Fleming 30). Gordo’s ghost was last seen in 1970. In the story’s most compelling line, Fleming speculates about why the monkeynaut has disappeared:

“One likes to think he abandoned his bitter quest for attention, fame being small consolation for a monkey who never wished to climb higher than a tree” (31).

The story’s melancholy tone and criticism of exploiting Gordo for space travel contradicts what Burgess and Dubbs assert about NASA’s treatment of its research animals. They write, “The use of animals in research is a responsibility and a privilege, one that requires all participants to conduct research in ways that reduce pain and distress...NASA has developed bioethical principles for all those individuals who participate in life science research...Animals act as surrogates for the human in life science research and as such have a greater moral status” (xxvii). Fleming suggests that well-meaning rhetoric offers little in the way of consolation for the animals when their lives are risked to advance human knowledge. According to Fleming, *Fearsome Creatures of Florida* “asks readers to consider the damage done not only by unchecked development but by the unchecked attitude of human dominion over the natural world. If the natural world is merely a ‘resource’—for profit, for entertainment—its value is defined solely by its usefulness to humans” (Interview 1). “Key Deer” depicts unchecked development in the convertibles and fishing boats trampling through the Keys. “Ghost of the Monkeynaut” underscores Gordo’s sentience to challenge the use of human dominion in justifying violence against animals, however benign the intentions.

As in “The St. Vincent Sambar,” Florida’s physical landscape enables Gordo’s exploitation at the hands of humans. NASA chose Cape Canaveral (known as Cape Kennedy from 1963-1973) as a site for launching rockets to benefit from the earth’s rotation. Rockets can fly fastest toward the equator, and Cape Canaveral launches to the east to align with the direction of rotation. Furthermore, the ocean downrange from Cape Canaveral makes an ideal bumper for

any accidents (like Gordo's). Though Florida was not the only place where monkeys were used for space travel, human scientists took advantage of the state's geography to serve their own interests, and many animals died as a result.⁶² Ultimately, as Fleming's story suggests, Gordo served as little more than a resource for NASA during the Space Race. Both scientific and political opportunity, set in Florida, led to his death.

Fearsome Creatures of Florida demonstrates how opportunities for recreation and expanding human knowledge often harm animals. Hunting and over-fishing, along with "rented convertibles" and "oversized fishing boats" are well-known in Florida, as is Kennedy Space Center (Fleming 56). Another Floridian attraction, the circus, exploits animals for human amusement as part of Florida's many opportunities for entertainment. Fleming's final story supplies a compelling rebuke of animal captivity through the story of Gilda, an escaped circus elephant. Gilda flees the Zabriskie-Laforge Big Ring Circus after its train derails in rural central Florida. The accident kills "a ringmaster's understudy, two cooks, four members of the tent crew, a soccer-playing Arabian stallion, a boxing black bear, two chimpanzee clowns (mother and child), and an elderly Bengal tiger on his way to an exotic animal retirement zoo in Polk County" (Fleming 71). This list of casualties aligns humans and animals as equal losses for the circus company, but it also characterizes the animals as employees, serving functions similar to preparing food or setting up the show. The text creates sympathy for the animals by indicating their contrived and unnatural occupations. Furthermore, the label of "mother and child" for the chimpanzees asks readers to identify with these animal performers, who, like Gordo, likely

⁶² France, the Soviet Union, and Russia also used monkeys to test the impacts of space travel. Thirty-two monkeys total were sent into space between 1948-1996. Most died during the launch or from the after-effects, such as overheating. Other animals used in space travel include dogs, mice, tortoises, insects, frogs, and a guinea pig. For more, see Burgess, Colin and Chris Dubbs. *Animals in Space: From Research Rockets to the Space Shuttle*. Springer Praxis Books, 2007.

“never wished to climb higher than a tree” (Fleming 31; 71).

Additional deaths and injuries occur after the derailment as workers “struggled to round up spooked zebras, panicky chimps, and the chillingly callous lions watching with steady eyes. Packing the animals together onto the least-damaged cars resulted in bites and maulings” (Fleming 71). Here, Fleming emphasizes the dangers of handling wild animals. Circuses offer the thrill of exotic animal performances in a controlled environment while downplaying the instincts encouraging the creatures to resist. During “one final sympathy show in Tampa...the injured animals performed with limps and winces and half-healed wounds, and the audience gave them a standing ovation” (Fleming 72). Fleming uses some irony here, as circus animals perform in these conditions regardless due to their training methods, which he denounces in his descriptions of Gilda; she bears “welts from the whippings...burns from the cattle prods...puncture wounds from the bullhooks” (73). The “standing ovation” parodies circus goers who enjoy Florida’s opportunities for personal entertainment at the expense of animals (Fleming 73).

Out of all the stories in *Fearsome Creatures of Florida*, “Gilda, The Elephant Who Makes Boys Disappear” presents the strongest example of animal advocacy for its poignant descriptions of animal abuse. “This was how they’d trained her,” Fleming explains, “and in between training sessions, they’d kept her in a cage so tight she could not even turn away from her tormentors” (73). Furthermore, the text celebrates Gilda’s ability to fight back. She rebels during shows by throwing performers off of her, charging the crowd, and once “took three bullets to the shoulder” before handlers restrain her (Fleming 73). Fleming reveals that Gilda herself caused the deadly train accident to give her a chance of escaping. “Is it any wonder,” he

writes, “she survived the wreck, or that she had the wherewithal to camouflage herself and sneak off into the woods when her tormentors were busy saving themselves and their unhappy chattel?” (Fleming 73-74). The human circus employees are tormentors; the animals are chattel, or property. Fleming affirms the intelligence of Gilda and her fierce determination to free herself from a life devoted to entertaining humans. He challenges the notion that animals are less rational than humans or even that they enjoy performing in shows.⁶³ By recognizing the agency and complex emotional lives of animals, “Gilda, The Elephant Who Makes Boys Disappear” critiques exploiting nonhuman creatures for human entertainment. Circuses and other animal shows thrive not just in response to the public’s demand for amusement; their owners pursue economic opportunities, which are encouraged by Florida’s recreational notoriety.

The roots of many popular circus shows run deep in Florida. The most well-known, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, contributed to Florida’s commercial and recreational appeal on its way to becoming the Greatest Show on Earth. In 1927, John Ringling moved the Winter Quarters of the circus to Sarasota from Bridgeport, Connecticut to help the region recover from plummeting land sales. As Ruthmary Bauer explains, “The move to Sarasota... would save the circus money since the animals would be able to remain outdoors during the winter months. The county commissioners provided the circus with 160 acres and tax incentives. In exchange, the circus provided free advertisement for Sarasota in the circus programs and on the circus train” (136). Florida real estate developers offered John Ringling an economic opportunity, which he used to strengthen the city’s tourism. By the mid-1930s,

⁶³ The belief that captive animal lives are somehow enriched by training and performing is a common justification for circuses and other captive exhibits. See McPherson, Douglas. “Circus Animals – 10 Reasons the Show Must Go On.” *Huffington Post*, 3 Feb. 2015.

Sarasota's climate, beaches, sport fishing, hunting, two excellent golf courses, professional baseball spring training, and other outdoor activities made the city an attractive winter destination. The city was also able to offer cultural activities and entertainment. In addition to the performances at the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus Winter Quarters, tourists enjoyed the John and Mable Ringling Art Museum. (Bauer 138)

Bauer highlights the importance of animal exploitation to the growth of a place; the circus joined recreational hunting and fishing to attract visitors to Florida, much like the leisure revolution described by Youngs. The subsequent attachment to place privileged sport and entertainment during the warm Florida winters with little consideration for the nonhuman lives, both native and nonnative to Florida, sharing that place.

The four stories I have discussed from *Fearsome Creatures of Florida* confront opportunistic attitudes sanctioning animal exploitation, whether for recreation, science, or entertainment. In each, the animal victims can strike back. Fleming asks, "What if that world and the creatures in it had agency beyond that granted to it by humans? In some cases, the creatures in *FCoF* respond to exploitation and mistreatment by striking back against humans—the hunted become the hunters in 'The St. Vincent Sambar.' At other times, their natural behavior poses a threat to humans that requires wariness or accommodation" (Interview 1). The creatures' ability to defy their human oppressors is vital to Fleming's goal of prompting readers "into reconsidering the natural world and their place *in* it, rather than above it" (Interview 1). That the animals want to fight back highlights the cruelty of activities like canned hunting and forcing animals to perform. Fleming's portrayal of animal moods, emotions, and behaviors raises the

subject of anthropomorphism. Any text featuring animal characters or an animal's perspective risks misrepresenting animal behavior by describing it in human terms. According to Greg Garrard, anthropomorphism "has until recently been used exclusively as a pejorative term implying sentimental projection of human emotions onto animals" (154). Supporters of zoos and other forms of captivity, for instance, often accuse liberationists of attributing the human desire for freedom onto the animals.

Recently, the field of cognitive ethology, which studies animal emotions and consciousness, has validated certain anthropomorphic frames for understanding animal behavior. Cognitive ethologists like Marc Bekoff are interested in animal expressions of intelligence, love, play, laughter, and embarrassment. Bekoff asserts, "Animal emotions are a matter of importance in their own right, but the very presence of animals—with their free-flowing emotions and empathy—is also critical to human well-being... It's because animals have emotions that we're so drawn to them; lacking a shared language, emotions are perhaps our most effective means of cross-species communication" (15). In her foreword to Bekoff's *The Emotional Lives of Animals*, Jane Goodall explains the significance of cognitive ethology for animal rights:

There are countless people among both the scientific and lay communities who still genuinely believe that animals are just objects, activated by responses to environmental stimuli. And only too often these people... reject our attempts to persuade them otherwise. After all, it is easier to do unpleasant things to unfeeling objects—to subject them to painful experiments, raise them in intensive factory farms, and hunt, trap, eat, and otherwise exploit them—than it is to do these things to sapient, sentient beings. (xiii)

Fleming's compelling depictions of animal emotions—Gordo's fear and loneliness, the anger

and vengefulness of the St. Vincent Sambar and Key deer, Gilda's rage—serve important roles in his critique of several practices mentioned by Goodall that many consider integral to Florida's anthropocentric opportunities.

Goodall also suggests that understanding animal emotions in terms of human ones can actually dismantle the species hierarchy that positions humans as separate from and superior to animals. Field studies on wolves, elephants, monkeys, dolphins, and other animals “made it clear that animal behavior is far more complex than was originally admitted by Western science. There was increasingly compelling evidence that we are not...the only creatures with minds capable of solving problems, capable of love and hate, joy and sorrow, fear and despair. Certainly we are not the only animals who experience pain and suffering” (xiii). For Goodall, the emotional similarities between animals and humans affirm that “there is no sharp line between the human animal and the rest of the animal kingdom. It is a blurred line, and becoming more so all the time” (xiii). As my analysis of *Fearsome Creatures of Florida* has shown, Fleming unsettles the human-animal divide to convince readers that environmental harm affects us all and to expose the misleading nature of Florida's paradisiacal reputation. Human readers can understand Gordo's despair and Gilda's tenacity in freeing herself from constant torture. Fleming uses anthropomorphism responsibly, to critique the opportunistic practices which cause the animals' fear and anger in the first place.

“We got to eat”: Ethics of Hunting in *The Yearling*

In *Fearsome Creatures of Florida*, caged hunting and poaching contribute to the decline of Key deer and Sambar populations while the circus causes severe mental and physical anguish

in its animal performers. Fleming examines these practices from the animals' point of view to illustrate how opportunistic visions of Florida have influenced readers and to suggest our complicity in harming the environment. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's *The Yearling* depicts similar practices in Florida from the human perspective, demonstrating various motives for killing and capturing wildlife that persist today.⁶⁴ The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission describes hunting as a "safe, relaxing and exciting way for friends and family to spend time together while experiencing Florida's natural beauty" ("Why Hunt?" par. 1). Once more, language evoking the pastoral tradition of relaxing in idyllic Florida is used to promote violence against nonhuman nature. In *Cross Creek*, Rawlings traces her changing attitudes toward killing for sport and even mentions her inability to consume some species. *The Yearling* offers further insights into Rawlings's beliefs about hunting and illustrates how not all hunts (or hunters) are created equally. Through Fodder-wing's maternal relationship with his wild pets, the novel also problematizes the domestication of certain animals. Many consider circuses and other forms of captivity, such as animal shows at theme parks, axiomatic to Florida's recreational identity. *The Yearling* features early examples of humans commodifying Florida animals and exploiting them for personal enjoyment. The text also unsettles the belief in human dominion over nature that has sanctioned hunting and controlling animals. If, as the field of ecocriticism maintains, literature can be used to initiate conversations about real injustices affecting nonhuman nature, *The Yearling* offers a fruitful starting point. Thus, in this section, I contrast the hunting ethics of Penny Baxter against those of the neighboring Forrester clan to exhibit Rawlings's opposition of hunting for recreation alone. Additionally, I explore how Rawlings's

⁶⁴ Abbreviated to *TY* for parenthetical citations

literature of place reveals the impulse to confine and tame wild animals long before Florida theme parks began trafficking in the captivity industry.

Scholarship on the novel praises Rawlings for her determination to preserve the vanishing Cracker identity through literature, contrasting her way of life at Cross Creek with the approaching wave of industrialization. Tarr writes, “A seemingly prescient Rawlings could see the backwoods Florida environment being encroached upon by future ‘progress’—what we now know to be the Orlando Air Base in 1945 and Disney World in 1971 which turned central Florida into one big strip mall—and felt an urgent need to maintain what she considered the unspoiled, frontier aspect” (44). However, critics generally do not acknowledge that this “unspoiled, frontier aspect” affords opportunities for exploiting nonhuman nature that mirror, if only in the anthropocentric philosophies behind it, the drive to profit from progress. Scholars disagree on whether or not *The Yearling* offers an ethical guide for human-animal relationships. Jean McClure Kelty argues that to teach *The Yearling* as a coming-of-age novel is to solidify the destructive connection between reaching manhood and enacting violence. She describes Jody’s killing of Flag as “a contradiction of the very foundations of ecology” (61). On the other hand, Kathryn Seidel believes Rawlings affirms “the idea that animals may have rights, and that humans have responsibility toward them” (435). These readings do not fully consider the role of place in the interactions between Rawlings’s human characters and animals, namely how the anthropocentric drives for profit, entertainment, and personal fulfillment can be satisfied by the Florida wilderness. I consider how the novel portrays Florida as a place of opportunity for human advancement to supply a nuanced critique of the characters’ motives for killing and capturing wildlife.

The Yearling takes place during the 1870s in the Ocala National Forest to the west of Lake George, roughly fifty miles southwest of Rawlings's home. The Baxters practice subsistence living by hunting for meat and growing their own crops. Penny and Jody's excursions into the Florida wilderness bring them face to face with dangerous animals; they must hunt for both sustenance and self-defense. During these excursions, Penny teaches Jody about how to engage responsibly with nonhuman nature. As Tarr explains, these teachings include "never killing animals when they are mating, and always leaving enough behind, such as turtle eggs and quail, so that another generation can begin" (52). Penny also kills only when necessary, "for meat or to destroy dangerous animals like Slewfoot" (Tarr 52). Jody absorbs his father's philosophies and lessons throughout his coming-of-age, which culminates when he must kill Flag, his pet fawn, to save the Baxters' food supply.⁶⁵ Afterwards, Penny tells his son, "You've done come back different. You've takened a punishment. You ain't a yearlin' no longer" (*TY* 507). Hunting in the Florida wilderness plays a central role in Jody's maturation.

Ecofeminist Marti Kheel divides hunting into six types: hungry (hunting for food), hostile (hunting to eliminate threatening species), holy (hunting for spiritual fulfillment), happy (hunting for personal enjoyment), hired (hunting certain species for profit), and holist (hunting to conserve species). For the most part, Penny and Jody practice hungry and hostile hunting, but they enjoy the hunts as well. Hunting is their primary source of recreation, and Rawlings depicts the activity as a thrilling and wholesome way of experiencing their environment. For Jody, "the hunting talk of men was the finest talk in the world. Chills went along his spine to hear it" (*TY*

⁶⁵ As Seidel notes, deer were often kept as pets throughout the nineteenth century, particularly in frontier Florida. Cal Long, with whom Rawlings lived while gathering material for the novel, actually had to kill his pet deer after it ate through the family's corn.

307). According to Kheel, “hunting involves a momentary reversion to an earlier period of time before humans became removed from the natural world” (89). Rawlings and her neighbors mimicked the Baxters’ lifestyle at Cross Creek, celebrating the pioneer spirit of hunting and fishing for sustenance. As *Cross Creek* suggests, however, Rawlings did not consider all forms of hunting equal.

By the time she wrote her memoir in the early 1940s, Rawlings had begun to regret killing and even eating certain animals. At times, Penny Baxter’s zeal for hunting is tempered by a similar regret that their survival depends on it. For example, after Penny finishes off a buck that his son injures, Jody confesses, “I wisht we could git our meat without killin’ it,” to which Penny responds, “Hit’s a pity, a’right. But we got to eat” (TY 128). When Slewfoot, a massive, predatory bear, attacks the family cow, Penny remarks, “He ate no more’n a mouthful. A bear’s stomach is shrunk when he first comes outen his winter bed. That’s why I hate a bear. A creetur that kills and eats what he needs, why, he’s jest like the rest of us, makin’ out the best he kin. But an animal, or a person either, that’ll do harm jest to be a-doin’—You look in a bear’s face and you’ll see he’s got no remorse” (TY 30).⁶⁶ Here, Penny endorses hungry hunting as the only acceptable kind and denounces happy hunting. Analyzing Penny’s hunting philosophy, Seidel observes, “The code of the hunter does not include killing for no reason, and even worse, killing animals as amusement” (431). However, Rawlings sanctions a combination of hunting for food and for pleasure, both in *The Yearling* and *Cross Creek*.

Penny and Jody take full advantage of the need to hunt in wild Florida, turning this

⁶⁶ The character of Slewfoot reflects some problematic anthropomorphism; bears do not “harm just to be a-doin,’” especially in the same sense as humans who kill solely for personal amusement (TY 30).

obligation into an exciting recreational opportunity. Jody prefers their wild home to more developed towns such as Volusia, where he and Penny often visit Grandma Hutto. While spending the night at her cottage, Jody “pictured the cabin in the clearing. Hoot-owls would be crying, and perhaps the wolves would howl, or a panther scream. The deer would be drinking at the sink-hole, the bucks alone, the does with their fawns... There was something at Baxter’s Island that was better than white tablecloths and counterpanes” (*TY* 144). This attachment to place relies strongly on the wild setting of Baxter’s Island, including the abundant animal presences and the need to hunt them. Penny and Jody experience the thrill of being surrounded by wildlife, but they must also kill many of the animals to survive. *The Yearling* thus merges wild and recreational Florida along the line of animal violence.

In addition to happy and hungry hunting, the novel also portrays hostile hunting. After a week-long storm obliterates their food reserves, Penny and Jody depart for a hunting trip with the Forrester clan, their closest neighbors with whom they trade but do not always get along; this trip first reveals the differences between the hunting ethics of the two families. According to Tarr, The Forresters personify the most unfavorable traits giving Crackers a poor reputation, including a penchant for violence and vengeance. They “have little respect for the environment and often kill animals for pleasure, not for food” (Tarr 51). While riding toward Silver Glen and Lake George, the men see that few game animals have survived the storm: “Farther down the road the toll of small animal life began to show. Skunks and ’possums seemed the heaviest sufferers. Their bodies lay by the dozens on the ground, where the waters, receding, had deposited them, or hung with the trash in the limbs of trees” (*TY* 289). Thus, when “a bear lumber[s] across in plain sight,” the Forresters are eager to kill it (*TY* 293). Penny objects, reminding them that they will

need its meat even more in a few months. Rawlings writes, “The Forresters agreed reluctantly. A shot to them was a shot, whether or no they could use the game” (*TY* 293). In contrast, “Penny would shoot nothing for which he could not see a use” (*TY* 293). While Penny hunts out of need, the Forresters often practice happy hunting, killing animals for recreation alone. Attempting to teach his son restraint, Penny informs Jody, “I’ve helt back my shot and contented myself with watchin’ many a time when Creeturs was feedin’ harmless and innocent. It goes again me to crack down a sich a time....And don’t you grow up like the Forresters, killin’ meat you got no use for, for the fun of it. That’s evil as the bears” (*TY* 50).

Penny’s respect for Florida’s wildlife distinguishes him from the Forresters, as demonstrated by his remarks to Jody and his response to the raid upon Baxter’s Island by predatory wolves. The storm has threatened their livelihood as well: “A band of them, three dozen or more, milled about the enclosure. Their eyes caught the light in pairs, like corrupt pools of shining water. They were emaciated and rough-coated. Their fangs glistened as white as gar-fish bones” (*TY* 336). The Forrester clan suggests poisoning the wolves, but once again, Penny disagrees. He tells Jody, “We cain’t see it the same way about killin’ ’em. I want a couple o’ good hunts, and traps around our lot and their corral. But the Forresters is bent on pizenin’ ’em. Now I ain’t never pizened a creetur and I don’t aim to” (*TY* 342). Jody argues with his father: “Pizen’s no worse’n them tearin’ up the calf, Pa” (*TY* 343). Penny replies, “Tearin’ up the calf was nature. They was hongry. Pizen jest someway ain’t natural. Tain’t fair fightin’” (*TY* 343). Penny understands that his position as a human offers an advantage over animals—in this case, access to a deadly substance and knowledge of how to trick the wolves into consuming it. He also recognizes that the Forresters’ plan disrespects nonhuman nature by denying the wolves a

chance to fight back. Interestingly, Penny invokes the recreational appeal of hunting to spare the wolves from being poisoned. He wants to enjoy “a couple o’ good hunts” as a means of eliminating this newest threat, even if doing so involves more danger and less certainty than the Forresters’ scheme (TY 343).

Rawlings voices her own hunting ethics through Penny Baxter and contrasts them with those of the Forresters. Like Slewfoot, the Forresters “do harm jest to be a-doin’” (TY 30). They exploit the need to hunt in wild Florida through reckless and indiscriminate killing. Rawlings once noted that outsiders unfamiliar with Cross Creek would hunt there “with an alarming abandon” (qtd. in Bigelow 302). Lacking Penny’s ecological awareness or forethought about sustainable hunting, the Forresters demonstrate a similar disdain for the lives of Florida’s wild animals. To use Kheel’s terms, *The Yearling* endorses happy hunting only when it accompanies hungry hunting. In their recreational enjoyment of hunting even when they have enough food, the Forresters resemble many who hunt in Florida today.

A final comparison between Penny and those who indulge their desire to kill animals for sport reveals the nuanced animal ethics espoused by *The Yearling*. As Kheel asserts, most contemporary hunters hunt not for survival but to indulge the nostalgia for a pre-industrial way of life. Owners of canned hunting ranges in Florida, such as the one on St. Vincent Island that Fleming critiques in his story, profit from the state’s reputation for mirroring such a time in what remains of its wild and undeveloped landscapes. For example, Ross Hammock Ranch, located near Crystal River, is likely the most popular caged hunting range in Florida. They offer both native and exotic animals for visiting hunters, including wild boar, antelope, water buffalo, ram, mountain goat, and many species of deer. Florida’s official tourism corporation advertises

fishing as an opportunity to experience the wilderness by promising visitors a close encounter with alligators. Interestingly, Ross Hammock Ranch does the same with regards to hunting: “Can you think of any species that is more ‘Florida’ typical than the alligator! Most adult Florida Alligators usually measure in the 8 feet to 12 feet range. However, the state record is over 14 feet in length. Add to that the fact that a big gator will eat just about anything that comes into its path, and you have the recipe for one exciting hunt!” (“Hunting Native Game” par. 6).

Stressing the dangerous, wild nature of alligators is an important part of commodifying the animal and transforming the act of killing them into a means of place attachment specific to Florida. According to Karen Davis, hunters pursue the thrill of dominating exotic, predatory animals, often exaggerating the danger they pose to justify and glamorize hunting them. In *The Yearling*, Penny Baxter provides an alternative to this narrative of exoticism and fear. While hunting with the Forresters after the storm, Jody awakens to discover that an alligator has entered their campsite. He asks Penny if they should kill it, to which Penny replies, “No use...’Gators is harmless things” (TY 308). Jody’s father then scares the creature away by running toward it and remarks, “There. He’s back with his kin folks. Now do he be polite enough to stay there, we’ll not bother him” (TY 309). The Forresters’ opportunistic attitude toward nature resembles discourse used by those hoping to profit from Florida’s wild, recreational allure, who portray alligators and other animals as aggressive, deadly, and deserving of human violence. Just as Rawlings learns not to immediately kill a snake just because she fears them, Penny recognizes that the lone alligator does not pose a significant threat to his life. Therefore, he leaves the animal unharmed, further illustrating the difference between ecologically sound hunting ethics

and “do[ing] harm jest to be a-doin’”, the latter of which objectifies, commodifies, and even demonizes animals to justify their deaths (*TY* 30).

“Too Wild to Pen”: Problems with Pet-Keeping in the Scrub

Through Penny and the lessons he offers to Jody about respecting nonhuman nature and killing animals only when necessitated by the family’s survival, *The Yearling* sets limits on opportunities for recreational hunting in Florida; Rawlings puts the onus on humans to adopt an ecological sensibility in their relationship with the wilderness, which she maintains can be enjoyed conscientiously. However, this sensibility in the novel does not extend to another form of animal exploitation: capturing wild animals for personal amusement. The youngest Forrester, Fodder-wing, collects animals from the wild to keep as pets. Fodder-wing acquired his name in attempting to fly off of the barn by attaching light materials to his arms. He “survived, miraculously, adding a few broken bones further to contort the hunch-backed frame with which he had been born” (*TY* 59). Rawlings stresses the association between Fodder-wing and Florida’s animal life by comparing him to “the body of a chameleon or a ’possum” and attributing his accident to the desire to “float...as gently as any bird” (*TY* 59). Fodder-wing does not share his brothers’ aggression toward the natural world; he loves animals and wants to protect them. In animalizing Fodder-wing, Rawlings underscores his gentleness and innocence compared to the meaner aspects of human nature reflected in his brothers. Despite his innocuous intentions, Fodder-wing’s treatment of animals results in neglect. When Jody visits the Forresters, Fodder-wing “led him back of the cabin to a collection of boxes and cages that sheltered his changing assortment of birds and creatures” (*TY* 60). These include a raccoon, eagle, bear cub, fox-

squirrel, and a pair of rabbits. Jody is especially fond of Racket, the raccoon, whom Fodder-wing treats “maternally, as demonstrated when he lets Jody feed Racket a “sugar-teat”; the raccoon “lay on his back, cupped in Jody’s arm, and clutched the sugar-filled cloth with his fore feet. He closed his eyes blissfully. His small paunch was already round with milk and shortly he pushed the sugar-teat away and scrambled to be free. Jody lifted him to his shoulder. The ’coon parted his hair and felt along his neck and ears with his small, restless hands” (*TY* 61; 62).

Seeing Fodder-wing with his animals makes Jody yearn for a pet of his own. He tells Penny, “Pa, I wisht I had me somethin’ to pet and play with, like Fodder-wing. I wisht I had me a ’coon, or a bear cub, or sich as that” (*TY* 100). Penny leaves it up to Ory Baxter, admitting that he “love[s] the creeturs” and would like Jody to have a pet, but “times has been hard and rations scarce, and...Ma’s the one to say” (*TY* 100). Penny then assures his son that all wild animals can be tamed, including bears, panthers, and raccoons, especially “do you git ’em young” (*TY* 100). Penny and Jody’s reasons for wanting a pet are fundamentally anthropocentric. They imagine the pet bringing them joy and entertainment with little consideration for the pet’s desires, particularly considering that “git[ting] ’em young” would require orphaning a baby animal (*TY* 100). Jody asks his mother, “Cain’t I get me a leetle ol’ fawn for a pet? ... I want a ’coon, but I know a ’coon gits mischievous. I’d love a bear cub, but I know they’re liable to be mean. I jest want something...all my own. Something to foller me and be mine...I want something with dependence to it” (*TY* 115-116). Jody acknowledges the unequal relationships formed by pet-keeping; he aspires to have control over the life and wellbeing of another sentient creature. Flag fulfills this yearning for Jody; the fawn “was willing to follow him. It belonged to him. It was his own” (*TY* 205).

When Jody arrives at the Forresters to find that Fodder-wing has died unexpectedly, he discovers his friend's "pets...caged and forgotten" (TY 244). The bear cub, "brought no doubt to amuse him in his illness, was chained to a stake. It had walked its dusty circle, around and around, until its chain was tangled and it was held tight against the stake. Its water-pan was overturned and empty. At the sight of Jody, it rolled on its back and cried with a sound like a human baby" (TY 245). The fox-squirrel "ran his endless treadle. His cage had neither food nor water," while "Preacher the red-bird hopped on his one good leg and pecked at the bare floor of his cage" (TY 245). Jody responds to the desolate scene before him by feeding the pets and giving them water, and "it relieved him to care for the animals, to give them, for the time, the comfort that their master could never offer them again. He wondered sorrowfully what would become of them" (TY 245).

Most criticism on *The Yearling* takes for granted the notion that Fodder-wing shares a special connection to nature, from Rawlings's descriptions of his body to his many wild pets. Pa Forrester asks Penny to speak at Fodder-wing's funeral, knowing that his friend had a Christian upbringing. In his speech, Penny maintains that Fodder-wing's gift with animals has divine origins:

We'd not of brung this pore boy into the world a cripple, and his mind teched...But in a way o' speakin', Lord, you done made it up to him. You give him a way with the wild creeturs. You give him a sort o' wisdom, made him knowin' and gentle. The birds come to him, and the varmints moved free about him, and like as not he could o' takened a she wild-cat right in his pore twisted hands. (TY 254)

According to Penny, animals flock to Fodder-wing because they sense that he is worthy of their

company and can offer a safe environment, in which they will not be harmed or killed for food. He also claims that Fodder-wing's mental handicap makes him worthy of his rapport with nature, and that wild animals "moved free" toward the youngest Forrester (*TY* 254). However, the novel provides scant evidence to support the idea that Fodder-wing possesses such a gift with animals. The bear is brought to him as a source of amusement; it and other animals are confined to prevent their escaping. Granted, Racket the raccoon roams freely around the Forrester home and remains there after Fodder-wing's death. However, biologists Jane Dalgish and Sydney Anderson indicate that raccoons will often return to a consistent food source and are highly social animals, capable of forming close, affectionate bonds with humans. Racket instantly trusts Jody, whom Rawlings does not portray as having a unique ability with animals, and seeks him out in Fodder-wing's absence. The bear cub does the same, rolling onto his back and crying out for food when he spots Jody. These circumstances suggest that Fodder-wing collects wild pets not as the result of an affinity with nonhuman nature but because his cages allow him to do so.

The funeral speech places Penny in a long tradition of using Western religion to endorse human control of the environment. In Genesis, God grants dominion over the earth and its animals to Adam and Eve; whether he intends for them to act as gentle stewards or ruthless opportunists remains up for debate. Still, many have cited this biblical decree to justify exploiting the environment for personal or corporate gain, including in Florida. For example, Richard Judy was a top supporter of building a jetport in the Everglades during the Nixon administration. In a letter to Chuck Hall, then mayor of Dade County, Judy wrote, "We will do our best to meet our responsibilities and the responsibilities of all men to exercise dominion over the land, sea, and air above us as the higher order of man intends" (qtd. in Grunwald 256). The

flora and fauna humans find useful become objects, robbed of any individual agency. Garrard observes that the “dangerously anthropocentric religion” of Christianity has sanctioned not only industrial development at the expense of the land but also the exploitation of animals for food, labor, clothing, and entertainment (96). Likewise, Paul Maltby asserts, “Dominionist philosophy does not recognize natural entities and species as autonomous life forms; rather, it perceives them as artifacts designed to satisfy human needs” (120).⁶⁷ A lonely, crippled child, Fodder-wing longs for affection and for a way to exert some degree of control over the natural world. The animals in Florida’s Ocala National Forest come to satisfy these desires.

Florida’s Big Scrub, with its abundant wildlife, provides ample opportunities for capturing animals. In addition to pet-keeping, which attempts to confine and domesticate animals for personal amusement, animals are captured as commodities to sell or trade. After the Forresters poison “thirty wolves in one week, there was a pack left of a dozen or two that was wary and avoided the poison” (TY 347). Penny agrees to help kill the rest by “legitimate means of trap and gun” (TY 347). On the hostile hunting excursion, they discover a large group of young bears, a few of which are frightened by the men’s gunfire and climb into the trees. Despite his respectful hunting ethics, Penny is the first to suggest capturing the bear cubs: “Look at what them young bears has done. They’ve treed. What say we have a go at ketchin’ ’em alive? Ain’t there a good price on the east coast for live creeturs?” (TY 355). While many see Rawlings’s literature as a force against those “eager to make a profit on Florida’s exotic wilderness,” as Anita Tarr does, Penny himself, along with the Forresters, fits this description (Tarr 44). The

⁶⁷ See also White, Lynn. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis.” *Science*, vol. 155, no. 3767, 1967, pp. 1203-1207; Leiss, William. *The Domination of Nature*, McGill-Queen’s UP, 1994.

Forresters are also experienced bear-catchers, having brought one to Fodder-wing as a pet. Jody watches as “Three of the spring cubs, motherless, perhaps, long enough to have forgotten discipline...sat on their haunches, crying like babies. They made no effort to escape. Penny tied the three together and looped the end of the rope around a large pine” (*TY* 355). He then joins in on the capture by chasing the treed bears, who “climbed higher above him, then scrambled out on a limb...He poked it at the cubs. They clung as though they had grown to the limb. At last they dropped” (*TY* 355). Rawlings portrays the treed bears’ fear of humans along with the expected reaction of trying to escape. That the bear cubs allow Penny to tie them up does not mean they wish to be taken; they do not know any better, as Rawlings indicates. Penny and the Forresters thus take advantage of a financial opportunity by imposing their will onto the bears.

Jody stresses the humans’ power over the bears when, after the men kill two of the more combative ones, he remarks to the cubs, “Now ain’t you-all proud you goin’ to git to live?” (*TY* 356). The bears will likely be sold into captivity. During an earlier hunt with his father, Jody also observes some young bears climbing a tree. He asks to take one home and “imagined them sitting on their haunches and begging, as Oliver Hutto described trained bears as doing” (*TY* 121). Oliver lives toward the east, in Volusia, and seems familiar with the commercialization and training of animals. Capturing the bear cubs also enables the expression of more direct human cruelty, as Lem Forrester “picked up a stick and began to tease one of the cubs. He poked it in the ribs to make it bite the stick. He knocked it over and it squealed in pain” (*TY* 356). Penny recommends, “Now kill the thing, Lem, if you’re goin’ to torment it” (*TY* 357). Penny and the Forresters take advantage of wild Florida to profit from selling the animals living there, perceiving the bears as “things” and holding little regard for their welfare or desires. While *The*

Yearling offers a firm stance against happy hunting and harming animals solely for human amusement, the novel remains neutral on the subject of capturing and selling live animals. However, in its depiction of Fodder-wing's "pets...caged and forgotten" and Jody's tragic relationship with Flag, the text does caution against attempting to tame wild nature (TY 244).

During their first visit in the novel, Fodder-wing tells Jody, "My eagle died...He was too wild to pen" (TY 60). This observation foreshadows the climax of *The Yearling*, in which Jody must kill Flag out of mercy, who has been shot by Ory. The Forresters, capable of hunting beyond their needs, have little reason to stop the youngest brother from keeping wild creatures. As Pa Forrester tells Jody, "You cain't have a thing eatin' the crops. Lessen you got boys like mine, has got other ways o' makin' a livin'" (TY 483). On the other hand, Ory Baxter refuses her son a pet of his own, fearing an inability to feed it. The distinction between domesticated and wild animals is vital to Rawlings's warning against exploiting nonhuman nature for recreation or amusement. There is a reason that Jody must shoot Flag but not Old Julia. When Flag begins to trust Jody by following him in the woods, Jody interprets Flag's voluntary approach as a sign of submission and the animal's readiness to be raised as a pet, despite the probability that wild animals lack this understanding. Though he willingly follows Jody around, sleeps with him, and leads a content life with the Baxters, Flag is still wild. Jody mothers the fawn, much like Fodder-wing assumes a maternal relationship to his pets, but no amount of Jody's nurturing can leave Flag completely tame, trained, and predictable. Jody has no way of teaching Flag not to eat the Baxters' crops. Seeing their food supply nearly destroyed, Ory admits, "I was a fool to give in before" (TY 478). Subsistence living in the scrub cannot accommodate the hunger of a growing yearling. The Baxters' poverty is equally responsible for moving the novel toward its tragic

outcome as Flag's wild nature. The opportunity to collect animals from Florida's wild forests provides Fodder-wing and Jody personal fulfillment, but both prove unable to care for their wild pets.

The pastoral journey to Florida in search of relaxation and recuperation, as described by Bartram, Lanier, Stowe, Emerson, and others, has evolved into visiting theme parks, zoos, and additional vacation spots for personal amusement. In addition to hunting and fishing, the captivity industry emerged from and contributes to the notion of Florida as a land of recreational opportunity. My ecocritical reading of *The Yearling*, with a focus on how human characters treat animals, regards the text as an early representation of the imperial attitudes sanctioning this exploitation. Because the novel ultimately reveals the unsustainability of captivity, it offers a critique of the same attitudes supporting the confinement and commodification of animals today. As Greg Garrard explains, hunters and farmers practiced direct contact with the animals they consumed during the pre-industrial era. Agribusiness, the development of factory farms, created a gap between humans and farmed animals that allowed for mass consumption of meat on the basis that animals may be controlled and exploited as objects. This rationale continued to influence other forms of animal subjugation for human benefit. For Garrard, this hierarchical treatment of animals results in further marginalizing some species as entertainers, puppets, and spectacles for human amusement: "It is only through industrialization that most animals are removed from everyday life...Once marginalized in this way, the few animals still visible to us can be only 'human puppets' as family pets or Disney characters, or else the objects of spectacle" (152). Florida theme parks and zoos profit from these "objects of spectacle" by displaying animals for personal amusement. Similarly, Fodder-wing's pets and the bear cubs

captured by the Baxter and Forrester men serve as spectacles—to be gazed at, trained, sold, or prodded with sticks. Jody’s comments about allowing the bear cubs to live underscores their subjugation, as does his desire to own “something with dependence to it” (TY 116). *The Yearling* illustrates many of the same justifications for exploiting Florida’s animals that persist today; Rawlings’s novel questions these justifications through its critique of happy hunting, attempting to tame wild pets, and “do[ing] harm jest to be a-doin’” (TY 30). Thus, a recreational ethic modeled on Penny Baxter’s hunting practices should challenge animal violence and control as a means of enjoying Florida.

Conclusion

Taking advantage of Florida’s opportunities for recreation, entertainment, and economic advancement often harms the natural world and destroys, through death or captivity, the lives of many wild animals. Still, visitors of Florida hunt, fish, and attend theme parks to experience the best of what they believe this state has to offer. Florida thrives off tourism; tourism here thrives off animal exploitation. The anthropocentric ideologies which sanction our use of animals for personal benefit are not new, but have rather guided human treatment of nature since European explorers saw in Florida opportunities for acquiring wealth and political power. Florida literature both illustrates these ideologies at work and critiques them for positioning humans above nature. The texts I have examined rely on “old stories that sprang from intimate contact with land,” which Cerulean believes can counter anthropocentric narratives used to endorse paving away nature in the name of progress (2). In “The Fish,” Elizabeth Bishop records her attachment to place through poetry, fulfilling Tuan’s criteria for place as an intense, intimate engagement with

the land. John Henry Fleming revives stories about Florida—the Sambar hunted on St. Vincent Island, Key deer who arrived long ago and survived reckless industrialization, Gordo’s sacrifice to advance space travel—to give animals a voice for challenging human control over their lives. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings preserves the old Cracker tradition in *The Yearling* through stories and lessons passed on to Jody Baxter from his father. Rawlings depicts opportunities for recreation, personal fulfillment, and profit at the expense of wild animals, but the novel also contains teachings on how to respect nonhuman nature while enjoying Florida.

These authors belong to “a solid contingent of artists and writers [who] elevate both the plight and the beauty of nature in the public eye so that all may understand and delight in the connections between art and nature” (Ripple and Cerulean xviii). Through their writings, Bishop, Fleming, and Rawlings show the multifaceted identities of opportunistic Florida and exhibit ways to resist the perception of animals as unfeeling objects. “The Fish” gazes closely at an old, hurt animal in an attempt to understand its history and pain, ending with the suggestion that Bishop’s narrator recognizes her complicity in harming the fish. Through symbolizing the pain that opportunistic Florida often causes animals in the fish’s five hooks, the poem questions the practice of fishing as central to the state’s recreational appeal. Fleming portrays the effects of hunting, space travel, circus training methods, and unchecked tourism on animals by emphasizing their emotions of rage, fear, loneliness, and the fierce determination to survive. Through the Sambar, Key deer, Gordo, and Gilda, Fleming challenges the anthropocentric hierarchies sanctioning our abuse of nature. *The Yearling* illustrates nature as both beautiful and dangerous, reflecting the interstices between idyllic and wild Florida, but also as an invitation for personal growth, recreation, and even profit. Animal presences are inseparable from these

opportunities. Rawlings's characters do not treat the animals as unfeeling, though they are, at times, objectified for personal use. Still, the novel evinces that art can inspire a profound appreciation for how to live in harmony with the land while honoring the wild nature of Florida animals.

CHAPTER FOUR:
“MISTY GREEN VISTAS OF A STRANGE, NONHUMAN WORLD”:
MYSTERIOUS FLORIDA IN BISHOP’S “FLORIDA” (1946), RACHEL CARSON’S
***THE EDGE OF THE SEA* (1952), AND**
FLEMING’S *FEARSOME CREATURES OF FLORIDA* (2008)

Introduction

Treating Florida as a land of opportunity for profit, recreation, or for advancing human knowledge—whether by clearing away natural spaces to build a theme park or capitalizing on the state’s wild reputation to promote a canned hunting range—often harms animals by viewing them as expendable objects. Literature of place illustrates the detrimental attitude toward nature which endorses these industries: the anthropocentric belief that humans are superior to other species and can use their environments as a resource without considering the welfare of its nonhuman inhabitants. Idyllic Florida presents one alternative to this view, but as the previous chapters have shown, admiring the land’s beauty and hurting animals are not mutually exclusive. Privileging wild Florida can also sanction unnecessary acts of violence against nature in the name of preindustrial nostalgia. Florida literature offers a fourth, transformative way of seeing our place within the natural world capable of inspiring us to respect nonhuman creatures enough to leave them unharmed. Florida is beautiful, wild, and affords many opportunities for advancement, but it is also mysterious and occasionally unpredictable, defying our attempts to

understand or tame its land and animals, thereby subverting the anthropocentric notion of human superiority. This chapter explores three constructions of mysterious Florida that showcase monstrous, mythological, or largely invisible animals: Elizabeth Bishop's "Florida," (1946) Rachel Carson's *The Edge of the Sea* (1952), and John Henry Fleming's *Fearsome Creatures of Florida* (2008). As in Chapter One, the texts I examine here are diverse in historical periods; they also differ in form, from poetry to nonfiction to a collection of short stories and illustrations. Bishop, Carson, and Fleming share a fascination with the unfamiliar and invisible traits of Florida's natural world that do not appear in tourist brochures, advertisements, or prevailing histories about the state. By preserving a sense of magic about the unknown, their imaginative representations of mysterious Florida encourage an ecocentric worldview that treats animals as sentient and autonomous, rather than as sources of entertainment, objects to be studied, or commodities to trade.

Mystery connotes the defiance of human understanding and scientific study. Something is *known* when our sensory perception can ascertain it; through touch, sight, sound, smell, and taste, we explore and analyze the nonhuman world around us. Sensory awareness supplies a vital component of place-making as well. As Tuan affirms, "most people function with the five senses, and these constantly reinforce each other to provide the intricately ordered and emotion-charged world in which we live" (11). Places are typically known intimately through our senses. Home, for instance, carries familiar smells, sounds, and sights. The "elemental recognition" Rawlings held for Cross Creek involved her detailed sensory knowledge of its flora and fauna (Schmidt 50). Mystery may seem anathema to place-making, as this would require forming an attachment to spaces that defy our comprehension or perception. On the contrary, the awe and

curiosity mystery inspires can promote place attachment by demonstrating the limits of human intellect and promoting respect for nonhuman nature. Anthropocentric opportunities in Florida typically involve interfering with animals. Gordo and others were collected from their native habitats to further our understanding of space travel. Fish, deer, bears, and birds are killed for human sustenance and entertainment. However, perceiving Florida as a land of mystery, rather than opportunity, can dissuade humans from meddling in the natural world. Out of respect for its nonhuman creatures, the view of mysterious Florida promotes an ethics of leaving animal life unharmed.

Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) offers an example of place attachment resulting from the celebration of mystery. The return of geese to Leopold's Wisconsin farmland marks the beginning of spring. Contemplating why the geese prefer prairie corn to other food sources, Leopold writes, "If I could understand the thunderous debates that precede and follow these daily excursions to corn, I might soon learn the reason for the prairie-bias. But I cannot, and I am well content that it should remain a mystery. What a dull world if we knew all about geese!" (20). For Leopold, life is richer not knowing everything about nature. A scientist himself, he counters the impulse to study animals, thereby dismissing that humans are superior to other lifeforms because we possess rational thought. Referring to evolutionary biology, J. Baird Callicott notes, "The unstated assumption...is that animals are somehow imperfect and inferior beings. Leopold seems rather to believe that other animals are admirable beings and that our kinship with them ennobles and expands our humanity, rather than diminishes it" (375). As *A Sand County Almanac* shows, that kinship flourishes when we honor the unknowns of nonhuman

nature. Accepting the mysterious habits of geese allows Leopold to strengthen his attachment to the land around his home.

Florida has long been characterized as a land of unknowns. In 1930, Alfred Hanna attributed the state's allure to its enigmatic landforms and rich colonial history. He writes, "Florida possesses a powerful appeal. There is mystery in the swamps, the rivers, the bayous, the inlets and the still lakes. There is a spell in the gleam of the sandy, sparkling beaches; memories of prosaic Anglo-Saxon colonizer, of French crusader, of Spanish grandee, lurk in every prairie, bay, ancient oak, and coquina ruin" (Hanna 221). Hanna excludes animal presences from his otherwise compelling description of mysterious Florida. On the other hand, animals figure prominently in Sidney Lanier's *Florida: Its Scenery, Climate, and History*. Lanier often depicts Florida as idyllic, but this beauty sometimes takes on a transformative, enigmatic charm at the appearance of Florida's beasts. He records this scene from his travels along the Oklawaha River: "Startled birds suddenly flutter into the light, and after an instant of illuminated flight melt into the darkness. From the perfect silence of these short flights one derives a certain sense of awe. Mystery appears to be about to utter herself in these suddenly-illuminated forms, and then to change her mind and die back into mystery" (337). The sight of birds inspires Lanier to contemplate the unseen lifeforms of Florida's uncharted regions by personifying them as Mystery. Paul Brooks notes Lanier's ability to convey the "mystery and enchantment" of Florida's natural world (79). Florida animals play a significant role in Lanier's enchantment and "awe," causing him to wonder about the land he traverses. As Mystery "dies back into mystery," he accepts that the river and nearby animals may defy the scope of his understanding (337). In

another memorable passage, Lanier contemplates walking beneath trees “as powerful as they are still,” revealing that

One glides insensibly out of the notion that these multiform beauties are familiar appearances of vegetable growths and of water expanses; no, it is Silence, which, denied access to man’s ear, has caught these forms and set forth in them a new passionate appeal to man’s eye; it is Music in a siesta; it is Conflict, dead, and reappearing as Beauty; it is amiable Mystery, grown communicative; it is Nature with her finger on her lip, —gesture of double significance, implying that one may kiss her if one will be still and say nothing about it. (94)

In this almost meditative moment, Lanier dismisses the knowledge provided by his sense of sight. Seeing trees as more than pedestrian objects that humans are often quick to destroy and imagining the presence of forces beyond the scope of rational thought inspires Lanier to contemplate the benefits of mindfulness in a natural setting. The image of Nature offering secrets to the deserving visitor is analogous to the enigmas of Florida being enjoyed best by one who does not wish to exploit or erase them.

This chapter reveals the pervasive interest in what we do *not* know about Florida, resulting in speculations expressed through various literary modes and styles that, like the excerpts from Lanier’s work, attempt to deepen our perception of the natural world. These speculations enact what Cerulean and Ripple refer to as “restorying” a place, or filling in gaps left behind by traditional histories. Restorying can encourage readers to care about a place, including its flora and fauna, and to engage with conservation efforts. As a subversive enterprise, restorying involves looking below the surface to understand what might have been covered up.

Writers who evoke Florida's enigmatic side express concern for the unseen animals here that are harmed or displaced by industrialization and tourism. They may also simply wish to safeguard the natural mysteries of Florida, believing, as Ripple and Cerulean do, that Florida's "wild heart" of untamed spaces, urban legends, strange animals, and green swamps should be treasured and preserved.

Careless and Corrupt: Bishop's Mysterious "Florida"

I opened Chapter One with an excerpt from a 1943 letter written by Elizabeth Bishop to fellow poet Marianne Moore, in which she records the idyllic scene of herons and mangroves before her. Three years later, Bishop published "Florida," a rather bewildering poem which transforms the state's natural beauty into something mysterious and complex. It ranges in scale from a cartographic image of "the state that floats in brackish water" to mosquitoes, who "go hunting to the tune of their ferocious obligatos" (2; 36-37). Animal presences fill the poem; Bishop depicts "long S-shaped birds," "enormous turtles," buzzards, and alligators (8; 17). Idyllic visions of beauty, including flowers and "sun-lit evenings" in "the state with the prettiest name," are interspersed amongst sketches of decomposition (16; 1). Mangrove roots turn to skeletons, something dead in the swamp attracts a flock of buzzards, and dead trees bear "charring...like black velvet," all along a coastline "sagging" with decay (35; 28). Most uncanny is the buried Indian Princess of the poem, an allusion to the forceful removal and genocide of Seminole tribes in Florida throughout the nineteenth century. Bishop's poem captures the long history of human violence in Florida elsewhere; when mangroves die, they "strew white swamps with skeletons,/ dotted as if bombarded, with green hummocks/ like ancient cannon-balls

sprouting grass” (5-7). Cannons were used extensively during colonial warfare in Florida, such as the battles for St. Augustine fought between Spanish and British forces throughout the eighteenth century. Civil War soldiers also used cannons. Establishing a base to fire weapons often required disturbing the natural environment. Steven Cooper discusses a Confederate stronghold constructed at Fort Walton Beach in the Florida Panhandle. The soldiers, also known as the Fort Walton Guards, built their camp alongside a temple mound. Cooper explains, “With little to do most days, the soldiers...used their shovels to do some primitive exploration of the mound” (118). The Guards recovered skeletons and other artifacts that they displayed at their camp. The soldiers also dug into the mound to mount their cannons, inadvertently desecrating a place seen as sacred by an indigenous culture. Bishop thus threads Florida’s violent history into the landscape of her poem, alluding to skeletons of plants, animals, and humans, and using figurative cannon balls to evoke literal ones.

Nearly every image in the poem juxtaposes beauty and decay. The “enormous turtles, helpless and mild / die and leave their barnacled shells on the beaches” (17-18). Bishop’s use of enjambment abruptly changes an alluring scene of turtles, with their innocent and peaceful personalities, toward death and decomposition. The turtles’ skulls have “round eye sockets/ twice the size of a man’s,” a jarring comparison that invites readers to compare human and animal bodies and to recognize our common fate (19-20). Bishop names beautiful shells like *Junonia* and the miniscule *Job’s Tear*, but they are “fading” (23). They also dot the shoreline, “arranged as on a gray rag of rotted calico,” further stressing the enigmatic amalgam of dazzle and decay (26). The “monotonous, endless, sagging coast-line” is “delicately ornamented” with these shells and “the buried Indian Princess’s skirt” (27-29). “Ornamented” implies a charming decoration.

Bishop's poem turns this relic of colonial violence into an ornamental accessory to adorn the Florida shoreline, an historical site of war and genocide. The princess is buried, but her skirt is not, suggesting that it may have been removed before her death and the woman subjected to sexual violence. The limits to our sensory perception prevent us from seeing the princess; her presence below the shore is mysterious, as is her story. Her skirt may gracefully "ornament" the beach, but it also serves as a grim reminder of the Seminole Wars and the bloodshed that marks Florida's settlement by Europeans. Bishop places the skirt at the surface, mixed amongst beautiful shells in another dissonant image. This dissonance produced by juxtaposing contrasts fuels the mystery of Bishop's poem and the ambiguity of its message.

These contrasts persist in the second stanza, in which Bishop deepens Florida's mysterious nature. Thirty buzzards drift "down, down, down,/ over something they have spotted in the swamp,/ in circles like stirred-up flakes of sediment/ sinking through water" (30-34). The "something" remains unnamed, but its implication of decay is obvious, underscoring the fecundity of Florida's waterscapes—the prevalent cycles of life and death that also fill the poem. Bishop reverses sky and sea in her vertiginous simile comparing the buzzards to sediment. Nightfall does not yield an idyllic moonlit scene; rather, the moonlight is "cold white, not bright" and illuminates "the careless, corrupt state" with "black specks/ too far apart, and ugly whites" (40-42). This mystifying, unsettling image gives way to an even more puzzling one. An alligator with "five distinct calls:/ friendliness, love, mating, war, and a warning—/ whimpers and speaks in the throat/ of the Indian Princess" (44-48). The poem thus concludes with this inscrutable yet gripping depiction of an alligator roaring anthropomorphic emotions through the skeletal throat of a buried indigenous woman.

Understandably, “Florida” defies most critics’ attempts to ascertain a stable meaning. Stephen Stepanchev finds it disorderly and resistant to interpretation, complaining that Bishop overwhelms the reader with obscure details that fail to support a larger message. Scholars such as David Kalstone and Jerome Mazzaro, on the other hand, defend the poem by lauding its tendency to subvert reader expectations. According to Kalstone, “Florida” demonstrates Bishop’s “apparent lack of insistence on meanings beyond the surface of the poem, the poem’s seeming randomness and disintegration” (53). He observes the changing scales in Bishop’s depiction of the entire state, then an organism (the mangrove), then small fauna, like oysters, and finally skeletons mingling with seashells and barnacles. The range of subjects awakens “memories of geological change that stretch far before and beyond...The strange shifts of scale—of size and space—in a seemingly timeless, self-renewing present remind us constantly...of the fragility of our merely human observer” (Kalstone 55). This view, to use Leopold’s language, casts Bishop’s speaker as an equal member of the biotic community and witness to ecosystems that will come and go after her—lest human activity destroys them. Kalstone thus reveals Bishop’s environmentalist tendencies as he discovers meaning in the cycles of growth sustained by organic detritus transforming the “monotonous...sagging coast-line,” but states that the poem ultimately, like the state it portrays, recedes into mystery (Bishop 28).

According to Lloyd Schwartz, the animal presences in Bishop’s poem contribute to its motif of the coexistence of life and death. He concludes that “there is nothing civilized about what happens in ‘Florida,’” summarizing the flora and fauna drawn by Bishop as “driven by pure instinct, the id, ‘careless, corrupt’” (Schwartz 43). Aside from “the point of view of the poet who is actually living through this scene,” Schwartz indicates an absence of humans in “Florida” (43).

The coexistence of life and death persists without us, serving as a humbling reminder that nonhuman nature will surpass humanity—an important attribute of literature about mysterious Florida. With its illogical procession of images, inconsistent verb tense, abstract descriptors, and dazzling array of ecosystems, “Florida” lacks a coherent theme. Likewise, Florida itself sits atop porous limestone infiltrated slowly by water; the state slides, sinks, and surprises visitors by defying the easy categorization of peaceful tourist haven that brought them here. For Carolina Hospital, who describes Florida as a “paradox,” the state “is both illusion and reality” (2). Bishop embraces these mysterious, paradoxical traits of Florida’s watery natural world to such an extent that her poem confounds both the casual reader and experienced scholar. However, I contend that “Florida” does have an intelligible message when read through the lens of place and understood as an act of restorying.

Restorying supplies a counter narrative to traditional or popular histories about a place. While most of the essays in Ripple and Cerulean’s anthology restory forgotten human lives—through retelling erased cultural phenomena of Florida and mourning the loss of wild spaces—restorying can and should consider the lives of nonhuman animals. With its ecocentric focus on nonhuman nature (save for the Indian princess), “Florida” differs from other iterations of the state that prevailed when Bishop wrote the poem calling Florida “the poorest/ post-card of itself” (42-43). Many postcards depicting Florida in the 1940s feature sandy beaches, flamingos (the archetypal bird of family vacations), neat palm trees, cresting waves, and svelte women in bathing suits. This idealized, commercial paradise drawn to attract tourists tends to exclude parts of Florida that are truly wild—the “varmints” described by Rawlings, for instance, or the sprawling, labyrinthian Everglades. Postcards can dictate how we view places and what we

expect from visiting them. As John Jakle and Keith Sculle explain, “The scenic postcard was a most important medium for communicating about places early in twentieth century America. Postcards offer scholars today an important means for understanding how Americans in the past viewed and understood landscape” (4). The story of Florida as a warm haven for relaxation or recreation, stemming from its early depiction in travel brochures, influenced postcard illustrations that rarely do justice to the dynamism and mysteries of nonhuman nature here. Bishop’s poem, however, seeks to restory Florida by calling attention not only to unseen wild animals, but also to the violence against Native Americans that these sunny portraits of the state ignore. The Indian princess’s skirt is “buried”; the “corrupt” state is blurred beneath “cold white, not bright” and “coarse-meshed” moonlight (27; 41; 40). Florida might be “the poorest/ post-card of itself,” unable to live up to the two-dimensional advertisements of its most idyllic qualities, but Bishop’s poem emphasizes this place as something more by celebrating the enigmatic mixture of dying and thriving lifeforms that fill forests, coastlines, lakes, and rivers (42-43).

Their attachment to Florida as a meaningful place undoubtedly nurtured an environmental sensibility in Bartram, Douglas, Lanier, and Rawlings. I argue that for Bishop, it was no different. She shows a remarkable sympathy for and identification with animals in “Florida” and other poems, such as “The Fish” and “The Bight.” By the mid 1960s, this sympathy appears to have evolved into a strong animal ethics. In a 1969 letter to Marianne Moore, Bishop denounces the treatment of circus animals. Equally compelling is her 1964 letter to Anne Stevenson, in which she critiques hunting, deep-sea fishing, and bullfighting.⁶⁸ Though her works do not explicitly argue for animal rights, Bishop’s poetry does reveal an ecocentric

⁶⁸ I quote this excerpt from the letter in Chapter One.

attitude toward Florida, exhibiting the connection between place and animals—in this case, mysterious and unseen nonhuman lives inhabiting what is left of the state’s wilder regions.

Patricia B. Wallace underscores the importance of the wilderness to Bishop’s poetry, expanding on Helen Vendler’s observation of “the alien” in Bishop’s work, or “the sudden intrusion into the poet’s world of something powerfully strange” (Wallace 95). Bishop makes the fish alien in the poem of the same name. In “Florida,” Bishop’s similes, enjambment, and use of juxtaposing contrasts transform ordinary animals like turtles and buzzards into the alien.

According to Wallace, “Wildness, unexpected and unknown, necessarily eludes definition... While [Bishop’s] poems are rich in the familiar and even the ordinary, she always holds her world open to what is incapable of prediction or control. Wildness in Bishop is like the ocean, or the wind, or the unstoppable flood of feeling: when it breaks into her world it threatens the boundaries she has so skillfully created” (95). Wallace offers a compelling description of wildness in Bishop’s poems, but she does not acknowledge the role of animals in “Florida”—one of Bishop’s most wild texts. Additionally, this explanation of wildness resonates with my treatment of mysterious Florida. Bishop paints Florida as idyllic and wild, but also unknowable. Representing Florida animals as alien estranges readers and can inspire us to look more attentively at the nonhuman world and at what we deem space versus place, important aims of restorying. Like Douglas and Rawlings, Bishop blurs the line between space and place by inferring that her speaker attaches to parts of Florida that may be considered empty and without value: a bare coastal palimpsest of racial violence occupied by wild birds and the corpses of turtles. The poem suggests that these spaces are worth preserving because they play a key role in the restorying of Florida and in the development of a land ethic that respects these enigmatic

animals as subjects, rather than as objects to be displayed for human amusement or postcard-worthy attractions.

“Just Beyond Our Grasp”: Carson’s Search for Meaning in the Florida Keys

In 1949, Rachel Carson accompanied a team of biologists at the Miami Marine Laboratory to explore the waters of southern Florida. Describing the trip, Carson writes, “How exquisitely delicate and varied are the colors displayed by the animals of the reef...I got the feeling of the misty green vistas of a strange, nonhuman world” (qtd. in Lear 169). Here, Carson records her encounter with mysterious Florida. That animals comprise this “exquisitely...misty” world hints at two important themes of her 1955 work, *The Edge of the Sea*: that parts of nonhuman nature are unknowable and that we should celebrate, rather than resist, this uncertainty.⁶⁹ Carson is best known for her 1962 nonfiction work *Silent Spring*, a groundbreaking critique of the chemical industry and its widespread use of dangerous pesticides, such as dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT). The book marked a culmination of Carson’s lifelong fight to protect the environment. Her love for nature began in childhood, spurred by many outdoor walks with her mother, Maria, along the Allegheny River in Pennsylvania. According to Linda Lear, Maria Carson also shared her interest in bird lore with Rachel and taught her children to respect the natural world by observing—not disturbing—its plants and

⁶⁹ *The Edge of the Sea* consists primarily of three parts based on the type of shores discussed within: rocky, sandy, and coral. Carson’s reflections on Key West appear in Part III.

animals.⁷⁰ It makes sense, then, to situate Carson alongside other writers interested in the plight of animals, but her place within Florida literature is not as clear.

Unlike Rawlings and Douglas, she did not call the state home and spent less time there than Bishop or Bartram. Carson performed field research along Florida's Atlantic coast between 1950 and 1955, focusing in particular on the Keys, to develop what would become the third segment of *The Edge of the Sea*. She also visited the Everglades with her classmate and co-worker Shirley Ann Briggs. Like Douglas, Carson perceived the Everglades as more of a sea than solid ground; Carson records in her field notes, "The feeling here is of immense space, from the utter flatness of the land and the great expanse of sky... There is the feeling that the land has formed only the thinnest veneer over this underlying platform of the ancient sea. The feeling of space is almost the same as at sea" (qtd. in Lear 166-167). Her writings exhibit Carson's appreciation for the landforms, waterways, and animals of Florida, and *The Edge of the Sea* should be considered Florida literature for its extensive ecological study of the Keys.

Moreover, *The Edge of the Sea* belongs with other works of mysterious Florida due to Carson's interest in animals occupying "a world so small that our human senses cannot grasp its scale" (131). She is curious about the unseen lives below the sand but, like Leopold, insists that we cannot know everything about them. One perplexing Florida creature is the onchidium, an air-breathing sea slug that evolved to occupy the land, but together they often make their home on the shore at low tide. Carson asks, "How has it acquired this behavior, attracted yet repelled

⁷⁰ By the age of ten, Carson knew that she wanted to write literature that would inspire environmental protection efforts. Her first short story, "A Battle in the Clouds," was published by *St. Nicholas*, a children's magazine that campaigned against sites of animal oppression, including game preserves and zoos. Carson continued to use her pen in defense of the environment while she attended school and throughout her career at the Fish and Wildlife Service. Another of her well known works, *The Sea Around Us*, won the National Book Award for Nonfiction in 1952.

by the sea? We can only ask these questions; we cannot answer them” (210). Like Bartram, her curiosity about Florida’s small coastal animals leads Carson to study them using naturalist methods of observation and data recording. However, she also acknowledges that many aspects of these animals’ lives remain mysterious, unable to be viewed or comprehended by human intelligence without more invasive scientific techniques that may cause harm. For the most part, Carson is unwilling to dissect the animals or remove them from their habitats for further study, exhibiting her respect for their autonomy and wellbeing. She celebrates the mysterious nature of these miniscule animals, and her scientific approach to them demonstrates an ethical means of learning about our fellow creatures.

Part III of *The Edge of the Sea*, “The Coral Coast,” portrays the flora and fauna of the Florida Keys’ tidal zone and coral reefs, including microscopic organisms usually ignored by beachgoers and coastal management teams but which play important roles in their ecosystems. In her opening to this section, she celebrates the uniqueness of the Keys, which possess “an atmosphere...strongly and peculiarly their own” (Carson 191). For Carson, this atmosphere is enigmatic as well as idyllic: “In the multicolored sea gardens seen from a boat as one drifts above them, there is a tropical lushness and mystery” (191). The invisible, interstitial fauna she goes on to describe (including moon snails, sea mice, heart urchins, ghost shrimp, lugworms, and whelks), unlike Rawlings’s deer or Douglas’s egrets, hardly contribute to most acts of place attachment, but they are vital to the processes that form the Florida shoreline, perhaps helping to create the alluring places we visit. *The Edge of the Sea* makes readers aware of their lives and their dependence on the water and sands that we both enjoy and pollute. Carson raises questions

about which lives deserve our attention and protection—what is too small to earn a place in the conservation conversation?

Studying the Florida coast allows Carson to learn more about herself in addition to the tidal organisms. She declares, “where the casual observer would say there is no life, it lies deep in the sand, in burrows and tubes and passageways. It tunnels into solid rock and bores into peat and clay...It exists minutely, as the film of bacteria that spreads over a rock surface or a wharf piling” (Carson 2). Connecting with these lifeforms strengthens Carson’s attachment to Florida, once again illustrating the critical relationship between animals and place. She writes, “Like the sea itself, the shore fascinates us who return to it, the place of our dim ancestral beginnings. In the recurrent rhythms of tides and surf and in the varied life of the tide lines there is the obvious attraction of movement and change and beauty. There is also, I am convinced, a deeper fascination born of inner meaning and significance” (Carson xiii). Carson identifies with the earliest lifeforms to emerge from the sea. The shoreline of Florida inspires her to connect across species and across time, a cognitive ability exclusive to humans but which also has the potential to humble the impression of human superiority by emphasizing geologic forces outside of ourselves. Watching the sea contributes to Carson’s place identification, or renewed understanding of herself as tied to a physical location. Like Nikolay Mihaylov and Douglas D. Perkins, she recognizes her attachment “is based on our symbolic dependence on a place, the extent to which it serves a meaning-making function about who we are” (Mihaylov and Perkins 67). Carson links “who we are” to “the primeval meeting place of the elements of earth and water,” where “Life first drifted...reproducing, evolving, yielding that endlessly varied stream of living things that has surged through time and space to occupy the earth” (Carson xiii). Her

travels through the Florida Keys and observations of shoreline fauna inspire Carson to make these connections, showing how place-making and animal presences can enrich a person's sense of self.

As Bishop's "Florida" ranges in scale from tiny mosquitos to lumbering alligators to an image of the whole state, Carson's cosmic reflections often give way to intricate descriptions of the miniscule—mysterious due to their invisibility. For instance, Carson writes,

[T]he beach has a lifeless look, as though not only uninhabited but indeed uninhabitable.

In the sands almost all is hidden. The only clues to the inhabitants of most beaches are found in winding tracks, in slight movements disturbing the upper layers, or in barely protruding tubes and all but concealed openings leading down to hidden burrows. The signs of living creatures are often visible, if not the animals themselves, in deep gullies that cut the beaches, parallel to the shore line, and hold at least a few inches of water from the fall of one tide until the return of the next. (131)

This passage underscores Carson's awareness of the limits to our sensory knowledge. The shore appears "lifeless" to the inadequacies of human sight, but Carson shows interest in the land which surpasses that of the casual observer and respects that Florida conceals mysterious animals whose comings and goings can strengthen her appreciation of nature (131). The invisibility of these creatures alone is enough to restrain the notion of human superiority by hinting at sentient lives beyond our understanding. Evidence of these hidden creatures is apparent only to those perceptive enough to look closely and meaningfully at their environment. Visitors to Florida's beaches "who merely glance at the surface of the sands and declare them barren" miss "the finding of food, the hiding from enemies, the capturing of prey, the producing of young, all that

makes up the living and dying and perpetuating of this sand-beach fauna” (Carson 132). Carson, like the speaker of “Florida,” is privy to the “living and dying” of these unseen animals because she values their mysterious nature enough to watch and record them but not inflict harm. Her observations elicit complicated questions about our relationship to miniscule lifeforms, including how human activities (anthropogenic beach erosion, coastal construction, sand dredging, and jetties, for example) affect them and whether or not we should care. “This is a coast not formed of lifeless rock or sand,” Carson notes, “but created by the activities of living things which, though having bodies formed of protoplasm even as our own, are able to turn the substance of the sea into rock” (191). She also points to the critical involvement of underwater lives in the maintenance of Florida’s coral reefs: “The world of the reef flats is inhabited by echinoderms of every sort: starfishes, brittle stars, sea urchins, sand dollars...All are important in the economy of the marine world—as links in the living chains...the processes by which rock is worn away and ground to sand, by which the sediments that carpet the sea floor are accumulated, shifted, sorted, and distributed” (Carson 221). Florida’s “Lilliputian beings” play a substantial role in the very creation of the beaches we enjoy (Carson 2). Carson’s text suggests that these animals deserve a place in conservation efforts, which are increasingly urgent in light of what Debbie Drake refers to as the disappearance of the Keys’ wildlands: “In the Keys, much has changed in the last twenty-five years. Now, driving down U.S. 1, my eyes are drawn to shell shops, motels, and gas stations...The coral reefs are dying from overuse and pollution. I have to wonder what legacy we are leaving for our children. Will they have the opportunity to experience the natural beauty of the Florida Keys as I had?” (x). Drake describes a Florida scene robbed of mystery, in which

tourists who have influenced the surge of motels and souvenir stores hardly recognize the importance of the creatures Carson studies.

Though Carson encourages conservationists to include all coastal organisms in their work, she does not insist that we need to learn everything about them. Carson critiques scientific and commercial motives driving the collection of the small sea animals she observes. For example, she recalls her enchantment with a basket star in Key West: “For many minutes I stood beside it, lost to all but its extraordinary and somehow fragile beauty. I had no wish to ‘collect’ it; to disturb such a being would have seemed a desecration” (Carson 225). Her goal is not to explain objectively every detail of a creature’s existence. According to Vera Norwood, Carson doubted the capacity of science to fully understand the natural world and “confronts the epistemological hubris involved in all naming and human pattern making” (742). In *Radical Ecology*, Carolyn Merchant explains how modern science can be used to endorse human domination of the environment:

Before the scientific revolution, most ordinary people assumed that earth was the center of the cosmos, that the earth was a nurturing mother, and that the cosmos was alive, not dead... The removal of animistic, organic assumptions about the cosmos constituted the death of nature – the most far-reaching effect of the scientific revolution. Because nature was now viewed as a system of dead, inter particles moved by external rather than inherent forces, the mechanical framework itself could legitimate the manipulation of nature. (47)

As Michael Bryson notes, Carson rejected “mechanistic metaphors for nature...rooted in misunderstandings of nature’s character as well as hubris about the capacity for scientific

understanding. For Carson, nature is active, complex, multifaceted, ever-changing. No mere machine—devoid of life, mystery, or unpredictability—nature instead is a powerful unifying force” (376). Bryson makes an important connection between preserving some of nature’s mystery and respecting nonhuman lifeforms as autonomous subjects that may elude human comprehension.

Though a scientist herself, Carson was keenly aware of the potential harms that disciplines such as biology could inflict on animals. According to Lynda Birke, biology “has a tradition of experimentalism” in which “animals become a tool, part of the apparatus of science” (41). On the other hand, “observing the behavior of wild animals allows them, partly, to be subjects” (Birke 41). Birke thus offers a useful distinction between biological experimentation and observation, the latter of which Carson upholds as an ethical means of engaging with nature. Carson hoped that her descriptions of the intricate life forms within the tide pools would inspire preservation measures. Her background as an aquatic biologist allows Carson to describe the organisms factually, covering their reproductive habits, diet, life span, and any social interactions. According to Bryson, Carson was not a bench scientist, “bound to the sterile confines of the laboratory,” but rather embraced the naturalist tradition of entering the field to observe habitats and collect, without harming, the occasional specimen (378). In preparation for writing *The Edge of the Sea* and her other works on ocean life, Carson thus “spent long hours in quiet observation of mudflat or rocky cove, regularly using her microscope to inspect organisms (which she usually returned to the point of collection), and wrote notes about her findings” (378). Perhaps remembering her mother’s lessons, Carson rarely handles and never injures an animal in her effort to study it.

Furthermore, observing the small marine lifeforms inspires Carson to reflect on their sentience and worth as individual beings. Her interactions with crabs, an iconic Florida species, exhibit this trend well. Carson witnesses a ghost crab (named for its paleness) wetting its gills by anticipating wave heights, and her description paints the crab not as an unthinking “lower” animal, but as intelligent and rational, capable of understanding tidal patterns:

Instead of wading directly into the water, they take up a position a little above the place where, at the moment, most of the waves are breaking on the beach... Human bathers know that in any surf an occasional wave will tower higher than the others and run farther up the beach. The crabs wait, as if they also know this, and after such a wave has washed over them, they return to the upper beach. (158)

Another excerpt recalls a ghost crab caught by Carson’s flashlight: “Suddenly I was filled with the odd sensation that for the first time I knew the creature in its own world—that I understood, as never before, the essence of its being... the little crab alone with the sea became a symbol that stood for life itself—for the delicate, destructible, yet incredibly vital force that somehow holds its place amid the harsh realities of the inorganic world” (5). Carson believes she unexpectedly apprehends “the essence of its being,” which, by making the crab “known” to her, seems contradictory to respecting the its mysterious nature (5). She connects with this essence of being not through empirical knowledge or even sensory perception; in fact, her sudden understanding of the crab is puzzling in and of itself, seeming to emerge solely from a contemplative gaze. Still, the animal remains mysterious to her, for it “*somehow* holds its place amid the harsh realities of the inorganic world” (Carson 5, my italics). As Norwood explains, Carson suspends her position as a human being just enough to imagine the crab’s life experience. Yet, “this is not the

identification with animal life...but, rather, a recognition of the impossibility of such identification” (Norwood 751). Carson connects with the crab as another living being, but the impossibility of identifying with the crab’s struggle against its particular “harsh realities” affirms the limits of human understanding. Because Carson accepts these limits and respects the tidal animals’ autonomy, she does not seek to learn any more about the crab than can be determined through naturalist science.

Chapter Three examines John Henry Fleming’s depiction of NASA scientists who exploit animals solely for human advancement. Carson’s scientific practices differ from those belonging to opportunistic Florida, as she performs field research to better understand the environment and to advocate for its protection. Fleming explains the compatibility between science and mystery that drives Carson’s journey along the Florida coasts:

How can we appreciate the mystery if we don’t witness it firsthand? ... Contemplating the truth...engages us in the pursuit of mystery, and that’s the point. Perhaps the value of science is as much the illumination of mysteries as it is the illumination of scientific truth. And sometimes we just have to stand there and observe, letting the mystery wash over us until we become a part of it. (Interview 2)

Carson “stand[s] and observes” the mysterious animals of Florida’s coasts (Fleming 2). Their teeming presence in the “elusive and indefinable boundary” of the sea prompts Carson to become part of that mystery as she reflects on her own place in evolutionary time (2). Acknowledging the limits of natural science and of her own sensory perception increases her respect for the organisms and her fascination with place. As evinced in the conclusion of her work, Carson illustrates the value of mystery in creating meaning and how Florida allows us to contemplate

that meaning. “Some universal truth...lies just beyond our grasp” nestled in the tidal zone (Carson 250). In the afterword, she muses,

What is the message signaled by the hordes of diatoms, flashing their microscopic lights in the night sea? ...And what is the meaning of so tiny a being as the transparent wisp of protoplasm that is a sea lace, existence for some reason inscrutable to us—a reason that demands its presence by the trillion amid the rocks and weeds of the shore? The meaning haunts and ever eludes us, and in its very pursuit we approach the ultimate mystery of Life itself” (Carson 250).

The pursuit of meaning is essentially scientific, but in Carson’s hands, this pursuit affirms the power of Florida’s mysteries, rather than solving them. By asking these questions, Carson reflects on her own role in the biotic community, and by failing to answer them, she finds purpose, revealing that even miniscule Florida animals we do not see can strengthen our attachment to place if we adopt a new, ecocentric sensibility to the “strange, nonhuman world” around us (qtd. in Lear 169). Susan Power Bratton compares Aldo Leopold’s land ethic to Carson’s approach to nature, or what she calls her “sea ethic” (6). In Leopoldian fashion, Carson believes that protecting the mysteries of Florida’s waterscapes makes life richer.

As many critics have acknowledged, Carson’s celebration of mystery is reflected by her writing style. American writer and naturalist Henry Beston, whose writing Carson had always admired, reviewed her prose favorably:

The poetic sense is the justification of man’s humanity; it is also the justification of his inexplicable world. No matter what astronomers make of the sun, it is always more than a gigantic mass of ions, it is a splendor and a mystery, a force

and a divinity, it is life and the symbol of life. It is Miss Carson's particular gift to be able to blend scientific knowledge with the spirit of poetic awareness, thus restoring to us a true sense of the world. (100)

Like Bartram, Carson uses both empirical observation and lyricism in her documentation of Florida's "marginal world" (Carson 1). *The Edge of the Sea* exemplifies Lanier's advice for writers hoping to attract audiences to a specific place. "Two methods" might be used, "the poetical or descriptive and the practical or guidebook methods. It would seem that one need not hesitate to adopt both: they have the singular advantage that if successful they merge into each other; for if the poetical method draw men to nature, then it becomes practical, and if the practical method draw them there, it becomes, at least in its results, poetical" (Lanier 113). As John Jungck and Rodger Bybee note, most early reviews of *The Edge of the Sea* "support the talent [Carson] had for expressing a sensitivity toward nature while presenting scientific information in an interesting manner" (302). Lisa Sideris agrees: "Carson evokes a reality that is best apprehended not through facts but as an experience of enchantment and mystery, a sense of wonder or reverence that is more real than facts" (335).⁷¹ However, her adoration of enigmatic waterways and marine life would give way to more pragmatic efforts as she grew increasingly concerned with the limits of scientific knowledge about nature. "Faced with the crises of pollution and the nuclear age," Norwood explains, Carson's later work reflects her growing interest in the welfare of nonhuman life and emphasizes our lack of knowledge "rather than celebrating nature's lessons" (752). William Howarth finds in *The Edge of the Sea* "a bolder,

⁷¹ Carson resisted the description of her prose as poetic, remarking in her acceptance speech at the 1952 National Book Awards, "If there is poetry in my book about the sea, it is not because I deliberately put it there, but because no one could write truthfully about the sea and leave out the poetry" (n.p.).

more confident sensibility that enabled Carson to become a public advocate” (50). In other words, though this text does not have the political impact of *Silent Spring*, it lays the foundation for Carson’s groundbreaking impact on government policy. Bryson offers a compelling description of Carson’s voice in *The Edge of the Sea*, explaining the importance of her writing style: “Carson’s narrator-teacher is an effective rhetorical vehicle for infusing an environmental ethic into her scientific discussion of marine ecology. She is a benevolent presence in the landscape, a citizen of the earth, one whose purpose is merely to observe and teach rather than catalog, map, and conquer” (379). In sharing her scientific knowledge alongside poetic descriptions of Florida’s mysterious beach animals, Carson invites us to learn about them so that we may support efforts to protect their welfare.

Remnants of Mystery: Fleming’s Monstrous Florida

Though stylistically disparate, “Florida” and *The Edge of the Sea* challenge popular, familiar conceptions of Florida by celebrating its mysterious and unseen animals. John Henry Fleming’s *Fearsome Creatures of Florida* takes an even more imaginative approach with the same goal in mind. Chapter Three explores Fleming’s treatment of opportunistic Florida and its impact on nonhuman nature through the stories of Gordo, Gilda, the Key deer, and the St. Vincent Sambar. This section revisits Fleming’s work to explore how literature of mysterious places can strengthen our respect for the land by restraining notions of human superiority. “The Skunk Ape,” “The Mangrove Man,” “Storm Devils,” “Creatures of the Beach,” and “Peat Fairies” deliver compelling looks into the unknown, charming, and downright horrific enigmas of Florida’s natural world. Furthermore, these texts demonstrate the capacity for literature to

renew place attachment by emphasizing what we cannot know about nonhuman nature and the creatures prowling beyond the safety of our homes.

The second story of the book, “The Skunk Ape” aptly demonstrates Fleming’s keen sense of enigmatic Florida. It opens with references to mysterious urban legends, such as Sasquatch and the Yeti, monsters known only “by grainy video” or “secondary anonymous reports” (Fleming 5). Its horrific stench, comparable to “the uncleaned cage of an elephant with intestinal trouble,” is the characteristic trait of the Skunk Ape, who creeps along the Tamiami Trail in South Florida (Fleming 5). Fleming did not create the Skunk Ape; the creature belongs to popular Florida lore. In *Weird Florida*, Charlie Carlson describes various sightings of Skunk Apes, dating back to early Native American legends. Skunk Apes have been reported by a group of Boy Scouts in 1959, a team of archeologists in 1971, motorists along U.S. Highway 27 in 1974, and visitors to the Ocala National Forest in 1967, just to name a few incidences. According to Carlson, “In almost all Skunk Ape encounters, witnesses describe an obnoxious odor, a stench similar to that of rotten cabbage or a skunk. It’s this skunklike stink that gives the Skunk Ape its name” (80). “Who can explain it?” Fleming asks, joining Bishop and Carson in celebrating the mysteries of Florida’s natural world (5). Fleming stresses the importance of sensory perception to navigating our environments by suggesting that the Skunk Ape is the only urban legend—an “evolutionary might-have-been”—that we “know mainly by smell” (5). Accounts of Fleming’s Skunk Ape involve smell more often than sight, and to experience this particular Florida mystery, Fleming’s story encourages us to “roll down your window and breathe in the reek that churns your stomach and floods your mouth” (6). A willingness to encounter the Skunk Ape through smell requires us to “be brave, and lose [our] preconceptions” (Fleming 6). Sight must

not be relied upon. “Close your eyes,” Fleming writes, “Flare your nostrils. Let your nose sift through the bold, ripe collection of nauseating tones that will soon make your guts convulse” (6). Only then can Floridians “appreciate the technique of the Skunk Ape, the infamous artist of the stink” (Fleming 6). The Skunk Ape desires “to be famous and left alone” to practice his art of the stench, revealing the theme Fleming shares with Carson against interfering with nonhuman nature (Fleming 6).

This conceit is especially vital to the next story, “The Mangrove Man,” in which the titular monster consumes human blood for survival. The Mangrove Man occupies Florida’s coastal regions, “rests on a set of woody spider legs, and filters salt to receive liquid nourishment” (Fleming 8). However, this creature would also starve before venturing out to find food, as “its *raison d’être* is to hide itself away,” creating “a prickly environmental paradox seen nowhere else on earth: preserving its habitat means threatening the monster with extinction; preserving the monster means allowing developers...to encroach on its dwindling habitat” (Fleming 9). As the Mangrove Man attacks only after coming in direct contact with a human, its survival depends on human intervention. “If its habitat went undisturbed for as little as a year,” Fleming writes, “the Mangrove Man would not emerge to feed and would surely grow extinct” (9). At this paradox, “smoke pours from an environmentalist’s grain-fed ears” (Fleming 9).

The environmental ethics espoused by this story are complex. Fleming describes the deliberate contamination of Florida’s waters by humans: seeking to build on their habitat, a development company pours gasoline on mangroves to kill them. This is opportunistic Florida at work. A more well-meaning form of human interference drives the environmentalists mentioned by Fleming. They hope to preserve endangered species and their habitats, and although the

Mangrove Man “wants simply to be left alone,” he will die without people to feed on (Fleming 8). Fleming does not critique environmentalism, but rather the notion that humans always know best for nature. This story checks the anthropocentric hierarchy placing humans above nature with the environmentalists’ failure to understand the Mangrove Man along with the creature’s ability to fight back, another motif prevalent in *Fearsome Creatures of Florida*. Fleming warns against human meddling in the figure of a boater whose “curiosity gets the better of him” while resting on the beach (8). The Mangrove Man assails the boater only because the latter gets too close, “shov[ing] his way through” the swamp in pursuit of a snapping sound made by the monster (8). Had he remained on the beach in his contemplative mood, the boater would not be harmed. This idyllic repose in a natural space constitutes a responsible means of enjoying Florida, but Fleming portrays the boater’s intrusion into the mangrove swamp as an act of violence, to be met with one of greater fury. The boater crosses a line distinguishing the respectful admiration of Florida’s mysteries from harmful practices arising out of our desire to understand them.

“The Mangrove Man” affirms the mysterious qualities of Florida’s land and animals in other ways, beginning with the creature’s name. The Mangrove Man is both plant and human; it defies scientific categorization. Fleming describes its “angled, sad-looking eyeballs” and “the crab-like twitches of its spindly legs,” painting the monster as an amalgamation of human, animal, and vegetable (8). As the stench of the Skunk Ape cannot be explained, so too are the Mangrove Man’s thoughts elusive: “Who knows what the Mangrove Man thinks as it crouches among the mangroves? Does it even matter?” (Fleming 9). With its primary aspiration to “starve

in peace,” the Mangrove Man seeks to remain a mystery, undisturbed by human interference (Fleming 9).

Familiar Florida motifs—beaches, golf courses, mangroves, citrus trees, and even the mermaids of Weeki Wachee—become strange in Fleming’s hands. Violent Florida thunderstorms and hurricanes mark the setting of “Storm Devils,” in which ordinary undomesticated animals, such as raccoons, skunks, rabbits, and crows, transform into giant, house-trampling monsters when it rains. As Fleming illustrates, “When the thunder quakes across their feathers, fur, or scales, they tremble as if coming to life for the first time. They soak up the downpour like a dry sponge, growing in size and fury” (16). Storm devils are invisible to Floridians only because we hunker down indoors, frightened or even bored by the storm, instead of taking a peak outside. For this reason, their presence remains a mystery:

As if a hurricane’s damage isn’t enough by itself, think of the giants stomping around outside while you huddle under a mattress in your shuddering bathtub. Are those limbs falling on your roof or the smacks of a giant possum tail? ... In the aftermath, when rows of manufactured homes look stomped upon and entire neighborhoods’ worth of trees look shoved aside, who’s to say they haven’t been? (Fleming 17)

This excerpt underscores the impossibility of knowing what lifeforms enigmatic Florida might host. Once again, Fleming evokes the limits of human perception, in this case, sound, and the degree to which we can trust our senses. “Who’s to say,” he asks, that the thuds of a thunderstorm are not the doings of an enraged, giant beast? (Fleming 17). Tuan’s theory on mythic space helps to explain the estrangement produced by “Storm Devils” and other stories in *Fearsome Creatures of Florida*. According to Tuan, “myths flourish in the absence of precise

knowledge...Myth is not a belief that can be readily verified, or proven false, by the evidence of the senses” (85). Our senses cannot be relied on in “Storm Devils”; the enormous, violent animals outside our homes become mythic. Tuan also asserts that “mythical space is a fuzzy area of defective knowledge surrounding the empirically known” (86). This “hazy ‘mythical’ space...to which we do not consciously attend...is yet necessary to our sense of orientation—of being securely in the world” (86). Tuan offers the example of a man in his study, a room familiar to him, surrounded by his neighborhood and then his city. The man’s knowledge of his mythic space—knowing the location of certain streets or the direction his front window faces, for instance—orients him and “gives the man confidence in the known” (87). Fleming disturbs our mythic space, questioning our certainty of that which our senses cannot prove, thus leading to disorientation and an unsettling suspicion about places we thought were familiar. “Your mother told you to have more sense than to play in the rain, and in Florida, at least, she was right,” Fleming states with some irony (16). “Storm Devils” suggests that the mystery and fascination of Florida’s natural, mythic world—in this case, our weather—might be enjoyed if we dared to venture outside the safety of home, or at least to rediscover our enchantment with rain and wind.

Some stories are more foreboding than others, reflecting Fleming’s goal of “scar[ing] people away from Florida,” as reported by Kevin Walker (par. 2). One of these, “Creatures of the Beach” complements Carson’s observations about unseen shore animals in intriguing ways. Both explore lifeforms hidden below the tides and seek to challenge the imaginations of “those who merely glance at the surface of the sands and declare them barren” (Carson 132). Fleming’s creatures practice an invisibility of a different sort. Where Carson offers a scientific and idyllic examination of microscopic beach lifeforms, Fleming envisions the downright horrifying,

bloodthirsty activities of the Atlantic Sand Snake, Killer Sand Fleas, and Sand Lions. “Creatures of the Beach” opens with the same conceit in most of the stories: the assertion that we simply cannot know what exists outside our controlled, safe spaces: “Even a child knows not to lay a beach towel over a crab’s hole. But is that hole really a crab’s? And even if a crab does emerge, might it not be because something has scared it from below, and the crab finds you the lesser of two monsters?” (Fleming 41). Fleming then describes the average Florida beachgoer, oblivious to “the dangers lurking directly beneath their cushioned heads” (41). Their pursuit of “carefree living” is an illusion, Fleming declares, and their perception of Florida rather dull (41). Mysterious Florida then takes an alarming turn, as monsters toiling below the sands devour these unsuspecting tourists alive.

Perhaps the most important story for demonstrating Fleming’s celebration of enigmatic Florida is “Peat Fairies.” Fleming bases this sketch on the legend of the Wakulla volcano, supposedly located in the Wacissa Swamp. According to Carlson, “For nearly two centuries stories have been handed down about the mysterious Wacissa Smoke,” which “varied from thick black, like coal smoke, to the bluish white of wood smoke and usually swirled upward” (35). The smoke “was visible from far out on the Gulf of Mexico, and ships sailing into the port of St. Marks often relied on it as a navigational aid” (Carlson 35). In addition to a volcano, explanations for the smoke include the campfires of runaway slaves, moonshine operations, and even “the devil stirring his tar kiln” (Carlson 35). The smoke has not been seen since September of 1886, after the tremors of an earthquake in South Carolina reached parts of northern Florida, leading some to suspect that the volcano had been stopped up. “Peat Fairies” offers another explanation.

The Peat Fairies are “smoldering, egg-shape creatures about the size of small dogs” with “huge teardrop eyes” and “thick, coarse hide[s]” composed of decayed vegetation (Fleming 27). During their “waddling, ritualized dance,” they strip off their flesh and “flames shoot from their cranial chimneys,” producing the fiery column seen over the Wacissa Swamp (Fleming 27). In Fleming’s story, only a select few know that Peat Fairies are the true source behind the smoke. These individuals “understood the swamp and saw her thorny plants and venomous reptiles not as hindrances to be slashed and burned on a march to glory, but as an opportunity to flirt, to test the swamp’s dark waters when the waters allowed it, to retreat when they did not” (Fleming 26). Here, Fleming refers mostly to “former slaves and hermits,” who have cultivated an ecocentric place attachment to Florida, unlike those who would exploit the land for profit (26). In Cerulean’s words, Native Americans and runaway slaves, who sought refuge in Florida during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, “were threaded into their landscape like the palm fiber they wove into rope, and they knew well the plants and animals with whom they shared space, and had a name for each, and a story” (2). Fittingly, Fleming allows those who cherish Florida’s nonhuman nature to keep the secret of the Peat Fairies. He suggests that cultures often considered primitive or dull, compared to supposedly enlightened champions of progress, hold a more ethical attachment to the environment because they celebrate, rather than interrogate, the mysteries of nature. These cultures also hold “an old, old knowledge of how animals, including the human animal, can interact and cooperate with one another in a sustainable fashion” (Cerulean 2). Fleming attributes the disappearance of the smoke to the extraction of oil and timber from the Wacissa Swamp, which inadvertently has made it “tame enough now for family vacations,” and has pushed the Peat Fairies further into hiding (28). “Another mystery solved,”

Fleming bemoans, “and the fanciful explanations about witches and volcanoes seem now only the child-like imaginings of a primitive people” (28). However, Peat Fairies can still be spotted “shooting little flames like mysteries into the sky” by some who “aren’t in such a hurry to get where [they are] going” (28). Those privy to the Peat Fairies’ dance today serve as a reminder that mysterious Florida may be glimpsed if we build a meaningful relationship with the land that respects, rather than ignores, the nonhuman lives in our midst.

In a passage eerily reminiscent of Penny and Jody’s fascination with the crane dance in *The Yearling*, Fleming writes, “We don’t know why they dance. We don’t know what they want. But a viewer lucky enough to see them is mesmerized anyway. It’s as if each moment of their dance renews a mystery without ever giving hope of solving it” (27). Penny and Jody leave the woods mesmerized, with a newfound respect for its creatures, just as the humans in “Peat Fairies” must harbor a beneficent land ethic to earn a view of the mysterious dance. Inherent to this land ethic is the promise to protect Florida’s mysteries by keeping the dance a secret, as Penny and Jody do when Ory Baxter asks them about their latest hunting trip. Glimpsing the Peat Fairies or the dancing cranes evokes “Nature with her finger on her lip,” to use Lanier’s phrase, as the enigmas of Florida may be observed but must stay concealed (94).⁷²

Idyllic Florida prompts Bartram to wax poetically about the importance of nonhuman nature and allows Henry Bunk to see the Everglades as place, rather than space. Living in wild Florida inspires Rawlings to lay down her arms and treat animals as equal residents at Cross Creek. Mysterious Florida as portrayed by literature of place can also teach harmonious ways of

⁷² The conceit of nature as secretive also appears in Patrick Smith’s *A Land Remembered*, when Zech stumbles upon a magnificent tangle of vines on the outskirts of Lake Okeechobee: “As he made his way down the leafy incline and onto solid ground again, he trembled with excitement, feeling he now had a newfound secret not to be shared, like a baby eagle no longer earthbound, drunk with the exhilaration of its first flight” (16).

belonging within nature. But Fleming worries that mysteries are vanishing. In the opening of “Peat Fairies,” he writes, “we no longer allow ourselves the seduction of half-veiled truths. We don’t linger on their mystery” (Fleming 25). “The cold fingers of science” and our own “insatiable curiosity” have driven out mysteries by attempting to solve them, and “their remnants are a thin mist now, the dark matter of our everyday lives” (Fleming 25). *Fearsome Creatures of Florida* attempts to awaken our imaginations about mythical spaces by restorying the “promise of comfort and ease that draws so many to the state of Florida” (Fleming ix). Just as Carson and Leopold find that mysteries make life richer, Fleming hopes that his work will “gather these remnants into your cupped palms, so you may drink them in again” (25). Peat Fairies and Storm Devils are not real, but literature is, and literature of Florida can enliven our fascination about this place through narratives of forgotten urban legends, stories that make us remember the awe of thunderstorms, or tales of a little-known smoky plume.

When our senses fail, urging us to solve and to test the limits of human perception, we can intrude upon nature, using science to understand and to perhaps dominate, or we can imagine. Literature offers a means of seeing what may be lurking beyond the scope of sensory knowledge, and of envisioning the beauty and beasts that surround us. We may never see a crane dance for ourselves, but reading *The Yearling* can lend some of its transformative power. Residents of Polk County will likely never see an elephant ambling through the tall grasses, but Fleming hopes that his tale about Gilda will embolden readers to seek out the mysterious and to renew their attachment to Florida. As Bishop calls Florida “the poorest/ post-card of itself,” Fleming encourages us to “live in a state of charmed uncertainty rather than in a picture postcard or a development brochure” (42-43; Fleming xi). Like Carson, Fleming concentrates on the

creatures that remain hidden to oblivious Floridians who cannot see beyond their safe, commercialized visions of the state. Additionally, where Carson provides the more scientific view of miniature animals living within our waters and sand, Fleming hopes “to make at least some readers...turn their heads to the man-monster’s shadow next time” with his disarming narratives of creatures who have learned to resist forms of violence against the natural world (Fleming x).

Conclusion

Bishop, Carson, and Fleming tell stories about Florida and its animals that challenge traditional representations of the state often circulated in advertisements and postcards. Through poetry, Bishop writes Florida as beautiful, ugly, teeming with life, and strewn with death, emphasizing it as a “land of contrasts,” to use Rawlings’ words (“Florida” 17). Carson studies the unknown interstitial fauna of Florida’s coasts, painting them as mysterious but vital contributors to tidal ecosystems. Fleming supplies what our senses cannot by imagining mythical and monstrous Florida creatures to awaken our fascination with nonhuman nature. Susan Cerulean summarizes the important role of Florida literature that “restories” the land:

What we need in Florida today, in theologian John Cobb’s words, are new stories that “serve wellness, that move us towards a new narrative of restoration and hope, that recognize terrestrial intelligence”...the real stories of Florida are so powerful, so gripping, so various, and so enriching that if we were to somehow reclaim them and weave them into our culture, things would be very different in our state. (31)

Cerulean describes the potential of literature to effect change—in this case, to promote environmental protection efforts and to defend what remains of Florida’s undeveloped regions. Each text I explore, not just in this chapter, is gripping, various, and enriching, but the most compelling literature of place for saving our environment values enigmatic Florida over other iterations. As Bishop, Carson, and Fleming show, the animals, legends, and landscapes here are mysterious because they defy human understanding; respecting this “terrestrial intelligence,” rather than the superiority of our own, prompts us to adopt an ecocentric approach to our place within nature. According to the writers I have studied here, such an approach acknowledges the benefits of leaving nature unharmed. Their imaginative portrayals are critical to preserving Florida’s beauty and beasts because “without a story, without specifying the sacred, we can hold nothing holy, or whole” (“Restorying” 3). The animals, skeletons, monsters, and microscopic lives depicted by Bishop, Carson, and Fleming each have a story, which their storytellers recreate while preserving the mysteries enveloping them. Respecting these mysteries can take many forms, such as working to protect microscopic beach animals, joining efforts to defend our mangroves, or simply watching “amiable Mystery, grown communicative” through the beauty of a pelican drying its wings along the shore (Lanier 94).

CONCLUSION: WEAPONS

Lolita (Tokitae) inspired me to begin this dissertation, so it is only fitting that I end with her. The alluring interplay between idyllic and wild Florida drew opportunists to the state since the Age of Exploration. That spirit of opportunity soon involved animals, whether through agribusiness, trade, or entertainment. Investors and men of vision cleared away Florida's grassy and watery wilderness to construct theme parks, business, homes, and farms, permanently altering ecosystems and, at times, creating environmental catastrophe. Literature rarely offers a voice to the specific nonhuman animal victims of opportunistic Florida, such as Lolita, but the authors I have examined here, in addition to illustrating four ways of seeing the state, sought to expose the many forms of violence against animals and, in varying degrees, worked to stop it. Real and imagined animals, both beautiful and beastly, fill the pages of Bartram, Douglas, Bishop, Carson, Rawlings, and Fleming: Gordo, a magnificent fish, ghost crabs, Slewfoot, alligators (both skeletal and robust), Gilda, a basket star, Sambar, wading-birds, Flag, tanagers, Racket, an orchid, and more. Telling these animals' stories constitutes restorying traditional accounts of Florida by critiquing the power dynamics responsible for the exploitation of nonhuman nature.

In some cases, the authors themselves occupy positions of power and enact violence against their animal characters. Bartram shoots alligators; Rawlings hunts birds and bears; Bishop catches a fish. However, the transformative influence of place attachment prompts them

to reconsider their harmful behaviors. Each writer attaches to Florida differently and to varying extents. Some, like Bartram and Carson, experienced the state vividly but fleetingly. Bishop lived in Florida sporadically for roughly ten years but wrote movingly about the state's charms. Arguably, the strongest attachments to Florida belong to Douglas and Rawlings, whose memories can hardly be separated from the lands on which they lived and advocated for, and whose connection to nonhuman nature enabled their *place identification*. Bishop demonstrates Tuan's hypothesis that a brief, intense experience can create place just as effectively as residing in the same location for a long period of time. Fleming defamiliarizes readers by disturbing our known, "mythical" space, thereby reinvigorating sensory perception of our immediate surroundings while also encouraging us to delight in uncertainty. Bartram and Carson, in the naturalist tradition, combine lyricism and science in their reports of Florida's flora and fauna. Bartram affirms Florida as a kind of paradise because of its multitude of animal lives, while Carson toes the line between discovery and mystery in her observations of invisible creatures that play vital roles in coastal ecosystems. Regardless of the degree to which they found place where others saw space, all of these writers generated compelling portraits of Florida which showcase the diverse landforms, waterways, and species comprising this dynamic region.

Any scholarly work on Florida involves categorization. Content must be separated and partitioned out to accommodate an effective written structure. By nature, however, Florida literature defies easy categorization. Florida writers transform the beautiful into the beastly and vice-versa. Many who set out to produce objective studies of Florida find it difficult to avoid waxing poetically about the enchantment of nonhuman nature or the state's incredulous human dramas. In the Everglades, where white military officers saw danger and pestilence, industrialists

envisioned a blank canvas for progress and profit, albeit with too much water. Still others viewed the same region as an idyllic harbor for birds, alligators, fish, and numerous other animals, invaluable in its raw, wild state. Long before these perceptions emerged, of course, the Everglades housed humans who knew how to live peacefully and sustainably with their environment. Florida entertains all of these impressions, and I hope my analyses have shown that the four categories that guide the chapters of this dissertation are somewhat arbitrary and certainly not definitive or comprehensive. Examining how literature casts Florida as idyllic, wild, a land of opportunity, and mysterious is one of countless ways to discuss place attachment and its interstices with animal lives. Inarguably, Bartram found Florida both idyllic and wild, as did Rawlings and Bishop. Fleming exhibits a keen sense of Florida's opportunities for human advancement as well as the power of its residual mysteries to inspire an imaginative and healing relationship with nature. Carson was also aware of the opportunities for profit and development that threatened the populations of interstitial fauna, which she portrays as beautiful and mysterious. In Douglas's hands, the Everglades are idyllic, wild, and enigmatic; they are also subject to drainage, urban development, poaching, and other anthropocentric opportunities. The identities of Florida I have discussed affect most of the places depicted by these authors; they also impact the writers themselves, transforming how each related to their environment.

Florida literature possesses a remarkable capacity for affecting how residents and visitors perceive the state, particularly as illustrated by the accounts of early explorers and nineteenth century travel writing. Whether it was promises of eternal youth, fertile soil for limitless crops, undeveloped expanses for industrialists, or a warm climate that promoted relaxation and recuperation, visions of Florida have created a set of expectations revolving around the state's

idyllic and wild qualities. Those expectations, to the degree they are met, then reinforce and perpetuate Florida's various reputations through writing, via journals, letters, postcards, essays, fiction, and other genres. In popular imagination, Florida is consistently defined and redefined by conflicting and contradictory experiences of place. This synergy between expectation and reality offers transformative possibilities that challenge notions about what literature should do. In the Epilogue to *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, Terry Tempest Williams describes protesting at the Nevada Test Site in response to the atomic testing that has given most of the women in her family terminal reproductive cancers. Williams is arrested and frisked; an officer finds a pen and some paper tucked into Williams's shoe and asks what they are for, to which Williams responds, "Weapons" (290). One of the most powerful narratives of place and its connection to human identity, *Refuge* highlights the potential for literature to expose and combat corruption. Many of the authors I have examined resemble Williams in their use of writing to advocate for human rights, animal rights, and the environment.

Douglas used her pen to save what remained of the Everglades from further drainage and development. Rawlings's works shined a positive light on the Florida Crackers, who "were uneducated, impoverished, and traditionally ostracized by scholars and sophisticated urbanites for their antiquated customs" (Berra 2). The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park seeks to inspire visitors to live more sustainably as the Crackers did. Carson combined her skills as a scientist and her respect for nonhuman nature to improve our understanding of intricate shoreline ecosystems. Aside from the real-world impacts these works of Florida literature engendered, the stories themselves can transport readers to unfamiliar regions and to locales they thought they knew so as to reawaken our experience of place. Often, that reawakening involves compelling

tales of literary animals, some based on the real and others on the fanciful, which we otherwise may never meet.

In showing how critical animal presences are to our experience of Florida, I hope to encourage readers to care more about them—to take a second look beyond the quotidian golf courses, fishing boats, beach umbrellas, surf shops, gated communities, and other common Florida hallmarks, to ponder the unseen animal lives nearby. Florida literature can promote a shift from human-centered perspectives to ecocentric ones, encouraging us to see humans as part of the state's ecosystems and to enact responsible stewardship which recognizes that if animals and the environment flourish, so may we all.

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