Towards the second draft
An eco-theological and ecocritical analysis of Sheila Heti’s Pure Color and its potential in the EFL classroom

Author: Luis Boaventura Fernandes
Supervisor: Per Sivefors
Examiner: Anne Holm
Term: Fall 2023
Subject: English
Level: Bachelor
Course code: 2ENÄ6E
Abstract

Education on sustainable development and environmental awareness is becoming increasingly important with the current climate emergency. This type of education extends across all school subjects and texts of various kinds are shown to be able to help students gain new insights about the world and themselves. This essay analyzes the eco-theological and ecocritical themes found in Sheila Heti’s novel *Pure Color*, which was published in 2022. Furthermore, this essay illustrates how to use the novel and the ecological theories in the EFL classroom. The results show that there are noticeable spiritual and ecocritical themes in the novel as it depicts existential thoughts about the universe, God, and man’s relationship to nature.

Key words

Eco-theology, ecocriticism, EFL Classroom, *Pure Color*, upper secondary school, literature, teaching literature

Acknowledgments

A big thank you to my supervisor, Per Sivefors, who has given me valuable feedback and wise insights. Love and peace to my partner, Judit, who took care of our children while I wrote this essay.
Table of contents

1 Introduction 1

2 Theoretical background 4
   2.1 Eco-theology 4
   2.2 Ecocriticism 8
   2.3 Eco-theology and ecocriticism in education 12

3 Analysis 15
   3.1 Hard to be a God 15
   3.2 Climate apocalypse 19
   3.3 Voices of the leaf 23
   3.4 Pure Color in the EFL classroom 25

4 Conclusion 30

5 Works Cited 32
1 Introduction

The preface to *Pure Color* describes the novel as a “Contemporary bible, an atlas of feeling, and a shape-shifting epic” (Heti). With this rather striking description in mind, I became interested in analyzing the novel both ecocritically and eco-theologically. According to Bredal-Tomren (2), the field of eco-theology can be seen as “theology developed to motivate religious individuals and institutions to engage in ecological sustainability”. Eco-theology seeks to explore environmental problems and how it can be associated with spiritual issues (Deane-Drummond 10). Furthermore, Deane-Drummond writes that “The rise of religious environmentalism in particular adds its own voice to debate, for it seeks to trace the malaise of environmental decay as rooted in spiritual issues, along with its potential solution to environmental understanding” (ix). According to Lawrence Troster, eco-theology can be seen as a continuation of “new scientific perspectives of the natural world that have developed over the last several centuries. This new knowledge, especially from the sciences of cosmology, biology, genetics, ecology, and evolution, has radically altered our understanding of the human relationship to the natural world” (383). Deane-Drummond synthesizes in many ways the previous perspectives and argues that eco-theology aims to explore the relationship between God, man, and cosmos (13).

Another focus in environment-centered research that possibly adopts literary studies more than the previous concept is ecocriticism. Ecocritical theories is a way of including an environmentally conscious dimension in literary studies. Cheryll Glotfelty describes ecocriticism as ecological criticism and that “human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it” (xix). Moreover, she writes that ecocritical approaches want to emphasize one thing, which is the awareness of the consequences of human actions that have damaged the planet’s “basic life support systems” (xxi). According to Bruhn, literature is an
excellent choice for communicating and illuminating our environment; and thus, make us possibly reflect on our own impact on the environment and what relationship we have to it (118). Writers of all kinds can break through the natural sciences in completely different ways than a scientist does. While scientists intend to use “Denotative language to describe the physical world” (Westling 84), writers use metaphorical language to describe the world around us and our place in it. Literature is thus considered to be able to help readers experience different worlds with different ethical problems. In the case of ecocriticism literature can therefore shed light on the, often invisible, threat that is climate threat and place the reader in worlds where time has run out and where agency exists (84).

In *Pure Color* the protagonist Mira navigates the world after her father’s death. When her father dies, Mira begins a spiritual journey that leads to the questioning of the divine, the universe, and man’s role in it all. There is a kind of appeal for both answers to difficult questions such as climate change, while an existential angst about the self, death, and God drips through the pages. With that in mind, the novel is relevant in our time and emphasizes much of what pervades both young and adult thoughts. As stated earlier, the disharmony regarding spirituality and nature that is shown in the novel is obvious and is therefore suitable to be analyzed ecologically and ecocritically. Since *Pure Color* was published in 2022, previous research about the novel is limited. However, Beth Blum has analyzed *Pure Color* from the perspective of Stoicism and argues that Stoicism is experiencing a revival due to the bleak future we face (187). Furthermore, it is possible to find academic discussions of the novel from significant reviewers; on the other hand, these may not be academic research in the traditional sense. The limited amount of academic research on the novel itself, presents an opportunity to examine the novel from other theoretical perspectives. However, doing so requires a solid theoretical framework upon which to form a coherent analysis. Ecocriticism is a relatively well-established literary movement and has been interwoven with pedagogy and education since its inception.
(Garrard, *Teaching Ecocriticism* 1). At the same time, an understanding of how eco-theology can complement environmental education is still forming (Hitzhusen 10).

Regarding the Swedish school context, the Swedish National Agency for Education writes “It is often pointed out that education has a central role in guiding the rising generation in the meeting with the changes we are facing . . . The most important mission the school must deal with is to teach sustainable development” (“Del 1. Didaktiska perspektiv” 1, translation mine). Furthermore, they believe that the teacher has a great responsibility to clarify connections linked to sustainable development and promote discussion and values through texts of different kinds (“Del 2. Representation” 4). The syllabus for English 5 and English 6 states that teaching should concern “current issues; events and processes; thoughts, opinions, ideas, experiences, and feelings; relationships and ethical issues (“Engelska” 3, 7). The syllabus for English 7 states that teaching should explore societal issues and social conditions, but also ethical and existential issues (“Engelska” 11). As stated earlier, the novel *Pure Color* is as much about nature as it is about God and the spirit. One should therefore have diversity in mind when introducing the novel. Diversity in that sense is about beliefs about spirituality, nature, and man. Regarding eco-theology, there may be difficulties in convincing students of its relevance. When it comes to religion, it is often a sensitive subject that includes prejudices (Bury 519). The curriculum for Upper Secondary School states that the school's task is to promote understanding of other people’s beliefs and thus promote empathy (“Gymnasieskolan” 1). Furthermore, they emphasize that each individual student should be able to “interact in meetings with other people based on respect for differences in religion” (8, translation mine).

The aim of this thesis is to examine Sheila Heti’s novel *Pure Color* within the eco-theological and ecocritical perspectives and its relevance in teaching these literary fields within the Swedish school context. Many of the thoughts that the protagonist Mira has about spirit, God, and the universe are consistent with the narratives of many eco-theologians. Furthermore,
ecocritical appeals about the intrinsic value of nature permeate the novel. *Pure Color* could be effectively included in the EFL classroom as the Swedish National Agency for Education has emphasized sustainable development and ecological reading in Swedish schools for many years. Moreover, interdisciplinary work as well as promotion of different belief systems are merited by the Swedish National Agency for Education. With that in mind, it is believed by the author that *Pure Color* could be effectively brought into the EFL classroom.

2 Theoretical background

As stated earlier, eco-theology and ecocriticism will permeate the forthcoming analysis. Life, nature, spirituality, God, the universe, and death are central themes in *Pure Color* and the next section will highlight concepts that will be incorporated into the analysis. What can be deduced from the chosen sources is that eco-theology focuses on the relevance of nature just as much as ecocriticism and sometimes it is difficult to separate them. What distinguishes eco-theology from ecocriticism is that eco-theology often looks beyond our planet and how we, through our spirituality, are one with the universe. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's theories about a so-called cosmic Christ are as relevant as Leonardo Boff's argument that man must unite with nature in a so-called cosmic community. Furthermore, Aboriginal beliefs are presented below. The inclusion of Aboriginal beliefs aims to highlight how similar many of these eco-theological ideas are. Moreover, a background to ecocriticism and ecocritical concepts such as ecofeminism and deep ecology is presented, which will permeate the analysis. Finally, research on how to approach teaching through eco-theological and ecocritical reading will be presented.

2.1 Eco-theology

According to Deane-Drummond writers in the Northern hemisphere “Became conscious in the early part of the twentieth century that their treatment of the earth was not in tune with natural
ecosystems and ecological cycles, leading to environmental destruction on an unprecedented scale” (32). This concern resulted in many great thinkers beginning to contribute with ideas for ecology and spirituality. The Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was one of the first authors that wanted to combine evolutionary and cosmological science and Christian faith (37). Teilhard was a controversial figure and many eco-theologians distanced themselves from his work because he supported scientific technology among other things (37). Furthermore, his vision was that the fate of the universe is destined to unify into a single being.

In many ways, Teilhard envisioned a cosmic Christ (Deane-Drummond 38). In recent times Teilhard's work has been rediscovered and many theologians have drawn attention to important ideas regarding spirituality that are relevant in the contemporary debate about man and nature. Deane-Drummond writes that “For Teilhard physical matter has psychic properties that eventually flower into complexity and consciousness. Teilhard also comes very close to ‘vitalism’ . . . through his notion of the existence of the cosmic spirit in the natural world” (38). It is obvious that Teilhard de Chardin’s view of man, God and the spirit can be likened to religious mysticism.

Another prominent voice in the eco-theological field is the Catholic priest Thomas Berry who shares many of Teilhard de Chardin’s thoughts about nature, spirituality, and the universe. Thomas Berry weaves much of the thoughts of Plato and Chrysippus into his discourse, which holds that the creator had framed the soul according to his own will and created the soul inside the soul where they live side by side (Berry 194). According to Berry, humans are a way for the universe to experience its creation and ultimately become self-aware (Deane-Drummond 41). Moreover, Berry writes that the “Unity of the universe within itself and with each of its components. It also led to a realization that each component of the universe is immediately in contact with each of the other components of the universe. In this manner it could be said that in a scientific as well as a religious sense the small self of the individual finds its Great Self in
the universe. These somehow exist for each other” (Berry 192). Thomas Berry also expresses regret at how man has lost his symbiosis with nature. He explicitly writes how we no longer see nature as a living being, but as an object. Furthermore, he believes that artistic activities have turned into human-centered expressions, rather than containing a “Intimacy and radiance and awesome qualities of the universe” (17). The universal aspect of existence is thereby lost. Berry argues that with modern science, we began to view the universe as a collection of isolated objects, rather than a collection of subjects that are interconnected. In this way, we have lost the universe altogether (16, 17). Berry believes that we should try to capture aspects of the world, such as nature and the cosmos, and thus recreate a connection with the world outside of the human. Furthermore, he writes that we need to return to participating in the great mysteries that were once exalted through art and religion and writes “We no longer hear the voice of the rivers, the mountains, or the sea. The trees and meadows are no longer intimate modes of spirit presence” (17). It could possibly be argued that Berry’s thoughts on humans, spirituality and nature possess more eco-theological nuances than Teilhard de Chardin’s. Furthermore, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between eco-theology and ecocriticism when reading Berry’s writings. This again shows that the two theories are similar in many ways, which is perhaps not surprising since eco-theology has been influenced by ecocritical positions such as ecofeminism (Troster 383). Nonetheless, Teilhard de Chardin and Berry’s ideas regarding spirituality will be explored in the analysis. God, the spirit, and the universe are one and the same in Sheila Heti’s novel, and several times it is mentioned how the protagonist Mira could feel the universe inside her (Heti 76).

Moving on from writers in the northern hemisphere, the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff emphasizes the cosmic in other ways and argues that all living beings have a cosmic right to have an intrinsic value (Deane-Drummond 47). The essence of Boff’s thoughts on the relevance of nature is that one should repair the gap that has arisen between humans and nature
and individuals and community (47). Leonardo Boff also coined the concept of liberation theology, in which, in accordance with the foundations of eco-theology, one challenges anthropocentrism (47). Many theologians who have had an ecological awakening, regardless of where they are in the world, highlight the same idea; that is, some kind of unification between humans and nature, which is part of a so-called “cosmic community”. These thoughts and theories naturally give birth to criticism against a society that possibly does not embrace the cosmic community. The Irish priest Sean McDonagh introduces themes of liberation theology and is “Critical of much of the tradition of the west that he views as responsible for destructive attitudes to the natural environment” (49). Boff’s concept of liberation theology will be explored in the analysis of Pure Color.

The reverend Stan McKay writes from an Aboriginal perspective and identifies aspects of the Aboriginals belief system in which the land is the mother of all living things and where animals are regarded as brothers and sisters (Deane-Drummond 51). It is this kind of worldview that Thomas Berry appeals to when he laments that we no longer pay attention to the voices of the rivers, mountains, seas, trees, and animals (14, 17). Land rights do not exist according to Aboriginal people; instead, one belongs to the land and is a part of it. African priest Samson Gitu weaves together the ecological wisdom of the Maasai people and the Teke people and urges humanity that they must maintain the cosmic balance (Deane-Drummond 52). Keywords in Gitu’s narrative are interconnectedness, dependence, reciprocity, and community of life (52).

The above ideas and approaches to man, nature, and the cosmos possibly show how religious individuals try to merge Christianity with the ideas of other religions and traditions in the search for a more prominent ecological thinking. Although this may be well-intentioned, Laurel Kearns writes:
There is the risk of the very well-meaning appropriation of other more nature-centered traditions such as those of Native Americans and Australian Aborigines, which replicates past colonialism. For other people around the globe, and for people of color and women in the “first world,” the struggle has been to convince us/them that the religion of the colonizers and oppressors has something to say, or that eco-theology is more than a white “luxury” topic affordable when economic necessity no longer governs one’s life. Perhaps, they suggest, it is time the so-called first world starts listening to them (480).

Kearns emphasizes big questions and one can thus see that there are great opportunities to discuss with students the accessibility and applicability of eco-theology in a socioeconomic context.

One can see shades of social criticism in the eco-theological discourse from the northern and southern hemisphere—especially from Leonardo Boff; at the same time, one can see that much of the discourse deals with spirituality on a macro level. The West, however, has been particularly critical of social development and our debt to nature (Deane-Drummond 69). As mentioned earlier, this text aims to investigate the spirituality of the novel *Pure Color*, but also this debt to nature that Western theologians emphasize.

### 2.2 Ecocriticism

According to Glotfelty ecocriticism is “The study of the relationship between literature and physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender conscious perspective, . . . , ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies” (xix). With that in mind, one can see that the ecocritical discourse analyzes the relevance of nature, but also the political agenda that is prominent. On the other hand, Garrard emphasizes
that ecocriticism studies the human relationship with the non-human throughout history. Moreover, he believes that it involves critical analyses of the term ‘human’ because the environment is ultimately all that compromises life (Ecocriticism 5). Furthermore, Garrard argues that nature is socially constructed because humans have tried to domesticate nature since the dawn of man (13).

The beginnings of environmental thinking linked to literature can be traced back to the Bible, where nature was often illustrated idyllically but where the apocalypse is present (Garrard, Ecocriticism 2). When carrying out traditional ecocritical readings, one can look for how nature is illustrated: Is it pastoral in its description, or can one sense apocalyptic undertones in the prose? (3). Furthermore, Garrard presents several more questions and refers to Glotfelty’s questions, which are: “How is nature represented in this sonnet?”, “How has the concept of wilderness changed over time?”, “How is science itself open to literary analysis?”, and “What cross-fertilization is possible between literary studies and environmental discourse in related disciplines such as history, philosophy, psychology, art, history and ethics?” (3). Richard Kerridge gives more suggestions on how to look at literature from an ecocritical perspective and writes “The fundamental task for ecocritics is to evaluate texts from the viewpoint of environmental concern, and by doing so introduce environmental criteria into general cultural debate. How good is this novel, poem, play or work of non-fiction from the viewpoint of environmental priorities?” (“Ecocritical Approaches” 361). Thus, the teacher has a great responsibility to select suitable literature for ecological readings and this requires a great deal of research.

According to Garrard, climate apocalypse often permeates environmental discourse, and novels that highlight such concerns are called “cli-fi” (109-110). Climate apocalypse is not only about a nullifying event that erases the world as we know it, but it is also about the symptoms that lead to it—which is often us humans (104). Pure Color mentions an impending apocalypse
several times and should be regarded as a cli-fi novel. This apocalypse that the novel mentions, however, will be created by God because man has plagued the world. Moreover, the protagonist in *Pure Color* often mentions how “The ice cubes were melting. The species were dying. The last of the fossil fuels were being burned up” (Heti 21). Garrard writes that “A prevalent motif in climate fiction is what might be called ‘present-shaming’” (*Ecocriticism* 116). Thus, it is common for cli-fi novels to want us to question how we could fail to prevent climate change.

When it comes to the actual analysis of literature, there are several different positions one can take when studying ecocriticism; some of these positions are “Cornucopia”, which implies a belief that humans can overcome the threat of climate change, and that industrialization and capitalism has generated great benefits for people and the planet. Another position that one can take is “Ecological Modernization”, which emphasizes that technology and innovation can and will positively affect nature's continued sustainability (Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 22). Both Ecological Modernization and cornucopian arguments have been labeled far too positive however and ignoring man’s responsibility to nature. A third position one can take in ecocritical studies is “New Materialism”, which is a philosophical theoretical framework that emphasizes that matter is an active force that shapes the world around us. According to Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, New Materialism “examines matter both in texts and as a text, trying to shed light on the way bodily natures and discursive forces express their interaction whether in representations or in their concrete reality” (2). To put it bluntly, “New Materialism” argues that matter and meaning are intertwined and how we speak - for example - affects how we view nature. Furthermore, it is believed that there is no obvious boundary between what is inside us, such as thoughts and feelings, and what is outside of us, such as nature and animals. We interact with nature, influence it, and are influenced by it (5).

A fourth position that one can take in ecocritical studies is “Ecofeminism” that recognizes the “Androcentric dualism, man/woman” (Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 23) and that
women have been synonymous with nature, emotions, and materialism throughout history. In the 1980’s, radical feminists began to attack patriarchy and the various power structures in society by elevating nature, soul emotion and the non-human (24). Ecofeminism emphasizes the self that is connected to all living things (Vakoch and Mickey 16). With that in mind, this position is a direct antithesis to, for example, the position of Cornucopia, which embellishes capitalism. According to Ecofeminism, capitalism exploits women and nature through “feminization and erasure” (16). Furthermore, capitalism strives to promote individualism, which is a direct opposite of what Ecofeminists strive for. With that in mind, colonialism is in many ways interwoven with capitalism because it ultimately concerns the conquest of land and nature and profiting from them. Both colonialism and capitalism ultimately aim to prevent the intrinsic value “in favor of use-value, and, in doing so, objectify nature and women, and turn them into resources for another’s profit” (16). Conquest and capitalism are our cultural heirlooms and ecofeminists aim to illuminate them and possibly destroy them. There is a growing dissatisfaction that intrinsic value is being conveyed around the world, while at the same time choosing to hide in the anthropocentric bubble where nothing ever changes (93).

A fifth position one can take is “deep ecology”. According to Robert Dale Parker, deep ecology is a philosophical orientation (359). Given that eco-theology precedes this section and is already anchored, it may be relevant to point out that deep ecology often takes on a spiritual dimension (359). Moreover, Deanne-Drummond writes that “Deep Ecology’s stress on the unity of the cosmos” (43). The pervasive idea of those that advocate deep ecology believe that humans need to change significantly and strive to live in harmony with nature. Furthermore, deep ecologists argue that the human population should be limited because humans - as it stands today - brings destruction to the natural world (Parker 359). The essence of deep ecology is to demand the recognition of nature’s intrinsic value. Furthermore, deep ecologists want to shed light on the separation that has taken place between man and nature, which is the result of
Western philosophy and culture (Garrard 33). Moreover, it is not uncommon to speak of “anthropocentric” elements, where man is superior to nature, and “ecocentric” elements, where man and nature live in symbiosis (33). This study intends to weave both ecofeminism and deep ecology into the overall analysis of Pure Color.

2.3 Eco-theology and ecocriticism in education

According to the Swedish National Agency for Education, teaching “Should make use of the surrounding world as a resource for contacts, information and learning, and help students develop an understanding of how to search for, evaluate, select and assimilate content from multiple sources of information, knowledge and experiences” (Engelska 1, translation mine). Eco-theological pedagogy emphasizes the concept of “transformative pedagogy”, which means that learning is directed towards significant problems and situations that exist (Rimmer 8). Furthermore, one should strive to teach about the world around us through different voices, such as women, indigenous people, and marginalized groups (8). In this way, it is possible to create new imaginary worlds in the learning process and strengthen the learner’s ability to empathize. By talking and learning about the environment through literature, you place the learner in the environment and Rimmer writes that the environment “And other creatures are teachers of wisdom, care and self-understanding, through the facts of natural science, and the value of theological and spiritual wisdom” (8).

When it comes to ecological literacy Jennifer R. Ayres stresses that it requires an analytical ability and reading comprehension, but it also requires a commitment and interest from the student (205). Furthermore, Ayres writes that “In order to avoid paralyzing despair or guilt, learners need educational models that help them engage, in an embodied way, their ecological context. Beyond engaging their minds, ecological education must engage their hearts
and bodies, as well” (206). As mentioned earlier, the novel to be analyzed should be considered a so-called “cli-fi” novel, which means that it might arouse anxiety in the reader because of ‘present-shaming’. Thus, one should tread apocalyptic notions and man’s depravity of the planet with caution.

Although ecocriticism cannot add substance to scientific debates or physically solve ecological problems, it can define and illustrate ecological problems and raise awareness (Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 6). Thus, literature read with an ecocritical eye is an excellent way to generate discussion and food for thought (6). Regarding the Swedish context, the Swedish National Agency for Education has emphasized sustainable development in schools for many years. Most recently, in 2019, they developed a cross-curricular module that teachers were expected to embrace to gain more knowledge about ecology and pedagogy. The Swedish National Agency for Education argues that teaching for sustainable development should address many different complex perspectives (Del 1: Didaktiska perspektiv 2). As a teacher, one could describe and illuminate the state of the world; what it looks like and what narratives can help us understand what we are facing. Furthermore, the Swedish National Agency for Education emphasizes that you can not only give the students material for what we are facing, but the teacher also needs to illustrate what we should and can do to solve the problems (3). As previously mentioned in the introduction, the Swedish National Agency for Education emphasizes that teachers should strive to teach sustainable development, where texts of various kinds can be used as a basis for exploring thoughts and ideas around the subject (Del 2: Representation 4). Furthermore, they believe that one should work interdisciplinary and challenge students with “interdisciplinary discussions and encourage students to abstract reasoning” (Johansson 10, translation mine). With that in mind, this creates the opportunity to deepen religious knowledge in the EFL classroom by working together with Religion. By exploring eco-theology, students can thus gain broadened perspectives on religion.
Research conducted by Lykke Guanio-Uluru shows that ecocritical literature circles in the context of teaching literature can be a good approach to take when conducting ecocritical studies (17). Ecocritical literature circles are - just like regular literature circles - a collaborative learning situation where students themselves can control the discussion linked to the selected texts (8). This type of teaching promotes students critical thinking and otherwise improves their ability to work together. The goal of the reading circle is for new thoughts and ideas to be formed. Of course, this requires extensive pedagogical planning by the teacher as well, and it is possibly unwise to let the students carry out ecocritical readings without a thorough review of what ecocriticism is and what it means. A well-planned pedagogical approach together with literary circles can thus promote competencies such as analytical ability, critical thinking, and collaborative skills (8).

According to Richard Kerridge, it is important that personal beliefs, including feelings and bodily reactions, and other emotions that are rooted in the person's life at the time of reading should be discussed and encouraged (“Ecocriticism and the Mission of ‘English’” 20). This can be about our bodies and our identities, which may seem far removed from ecocritical discourses. Kerridge argues, however, that these discussions can lead to the formation of a classroom vocabulary that is “Is a priority for ecocritical pedagogy” (20). Furthermore, Kerridge emphasizes the urgency of the ecological crisis and the relevance of helping students understand how to negotiate between two major problem areas: Firstly, climate change is almost invisible and happening slowly. Secondly, paradoxically, the climate changes happen very quickly, thus resulting in us not being able to adapt quickly enough (21). It is not easy to project a simple answer on how to go about helping students negotiate between the previous problem areas. Kerridge, however, states that “The correlative in English Studies of the Deep Ecological approach might be a willingness to read with an openness in which there is a commitment to a long-term engagement with the literary text that will give it the chance to answer back,
Thus, if you apply the Deep Ecological approach, every interaction with a text can possibly enrich our understanding and deepen our connection to it.

3 Analysis

Below, an analysis of *Pure Color* will be presented based on eco-theological and ecocritical themes. The analysis will be presented based on four positions: Spirituality (Hard to be a God), Climate Apocalypse, deep ecology, and ecofeminism (Voices of the leaf). This is followed by a section where pedagogical implications are discussed and how to implement *Pure Color* and eco-theological and ecocritical theories in the EFL classroom.

3.1 Hard to be a God

The novel begins with a kind of fictional creation myth, which resembles *Genesis*, where God - like an artist - contemplates his creation—our world. He never seems to finish it, on the other hand, and continues to paint over it. Finally, God chooses to start a new draft because the first is far too flawed. God’s rejection of his first creation is the reason we see melting ice, floods, warming oceans, dead coral, and critical animal population; it is the first sign that God is removing his first draft from its frame. Furthermore, God divided himself into three beings and manifested as “Three critics in the sky: a large bird who critiques from above, a large fish who critiques from the middle, and a large bear who critiques while cradling creation in its arms (Heti 4). We humans are born from these various critics—and thus, born from God. People born from a bird’s egg are interested in beauty, order, harmony and meaning. They view nature and life from above and are just like birds shy, fragile and strong. People born from a fish egg are interested in the collective, and above all justice on earth. Finally, people born from a bear egg are deeply consumed by love for their loved ones and do not think realistically when it comes to those they love and protect. According to Mira, she is a bird, and her father is a bear.
The novel follows a relatively chronological order, and the reader gets to follow what is always perceived as Mira’s thoughts due to the internal focalization that permeates the first chapter of the novel. As mentioned earlier, the novel begins with a kind of creation myth, which then transitions into an introduction to the character Mira and her life before the “internet age”. From there, the reader follows Mira as significant moments in her life are presented briefly, but concisely. Mira has just been accepted into the American Academy of American Critics and lives in her small apartment and works in a lamp store. It is explicit that Mira herself is not particularly impressed by her choice of career as a critic and in many ways heckles her fellow students’ dreams of great ideas and thoughts that will survive the test of time when Mira in the present day says that they did not “Consider the fact that one day they would be walking around with phones in the future, out of which people who had far more charisma than they did would let flow and endless stream of images and words. They just had no idea that the world would become so big, or the competition so stiff” (Heti 13). One can see how Mira is critical of how the world has evolved. The passage also suggest that she herself feels overwhelmed by the internet age.

Mira’s time as a student is marked by the usual activities such as friends, parties, and seminars. Her two closest friends are Matty and Annie, who is also Mira’s love interest. It is mainly when Annie is explored more in the novel that the Gods begin to enter the narrative. Mira’s dreaming and longing for Annie, she blames the Gods and says: “It is often the gods who are to blame. They slip into a person like an amoeba, and from within one person, they watch another one—the one they have chosen to watch” (Heti 40). This passage could possibly mean that the gods are just as problematic as humans; the gods apparently make choices and can potentially influence our lives. Moreover, it may also indicate that the divine is found everywhere, since the boundary between God and humans is erased. Furthermore, Mira argues that the gods document us by doing this to improve us in the next draft (40). This is reinforced
later in the novel when Mira once again emphasizes that “[The gods] are using your body to watch someone near you, to see what humans are like in this draft of the world, so they can make them better in the next one” (170)”. This is the first example of how humans are a way for Gods and ultimately the universe to experience their creation, which Thomas Berry’s eco-theological theories are based on (Deane-Drummond 41). Pierre Teilhard de Chardin also writes that the universe looks at itself in each individual consciousness (221). The image of a sentient universe is illustrated more clearly later in the novel when Mira contemplates death and how it would soon find her, just as it found her father. However, she does not feel any fear about this because something bigger would hold her in its arms and she visualizes how “You would be held in the universe’s arms, but you would also be its arms. Was she supposed to fear becoming the blood and the electrical impulses in the arms of the entire universe?” (Heti 80). Again, the belief in a sentient universe is clear, which is reminiscent of the theories of Teilhard de Chardin.

Mira’s school years emphasize her eccentric and melancholic personality, and she never really seems to fit in. As a reader, you get a greater insight into her character when she reminisces about her home. At first, a delightful flashback to their moments in their garden is revealed. Quickly, the narrator tells us that it became more difficult to deal with her father’s unconditional love. As mentioned earlier, her father is a bear and the narrator explains how the warmth of his fur “Followed her everywhere—clinging and itchy; but also comforting, home” (Heti 45). Furthermore, the narrator tells us that Mira wanted to live a cold life after her time with her father, as it had been too hot to be hugged by a bear for such a long time (45). This made her afraid of love as an adult. It is mainly when her father dies that the novel begins to shift towards a spiritual journey, in which Mira ultimately turns into a leaf. Chapter two begins with Mira contemplating her father’s death: “She doesn’t know how to think about her father’s death, or even if she should, or how to explain the great joy and calm that settled in her the moment the life left his body, and she felt his spirit enter her, and fill her up with joy and light”
This may possibly be seen as macabre and strangely dark, but at the same time it illustrates Miras’s beliefs—that everything lives on. This view of spirituality is consistent with Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s theories of the cosmic order in which he holds the existence of an unlimited continued life through the spirit (347).

This conviction of her father’s spirit’s existence is obvious and imbues chapter two of the novel:

Her father’s spirit filled up these empty spaces like water filling up a half-empty cup, or an entire table of half-empty cups. Why? It was perhaps one of two things: the last gift her father, in his generosity, gave her, or else this is what the universe always intended to happen, to complete and make whole the life within her with the addition of her father’s spirit, bearing all the gifts and wisdom that her own self was lacking (Heti 67).

Slowly but surely, one can see how Mira’s beliefs change from a possibly limited and rather traditional view of life after death and how Mira’s view of life has evolved into something different and perhaps greater: “Because she had been so aware of the life of her father, she had not been aware enough of how alive the rest of it was . . . She had not understood that the spirit that animated the body of her father animated the body of everything. Trees and the sky were not a backdrop of life, but they were equally life” (72). Later in the novel, Mira’s beliefs unite the spirit and the universe, and she states that she can feel the universe enter her body (76). In Teilhard’s essay *The Phenomenon of Man*, which should be considered a handbook of our evolution, he paints the picture that the goal for man is that the self is woven together with the outside world, with nature and man, and the integration of the different parts of the self with each other. This will ultimately lead to a union he calls “point Omega” (19). Mira’s view of the world in the passages above can possibly be interwoven with pantheism, which is the belief that
divinity permeates everything in our lives and thus the universe. This is evident in the fact that Mira seems to believe that the spirit not only controls her father, but also the sky and the trees. This becomes explicit later in the novel when Mira states that “plants were the grateful recipients of all consciousness—not only of people, but of snails and squirrels and the sun and the rain; that it was their generosity that made them so lush and green, the very color of welcome” (Heti 98). This is consistent with pantheism. It is difficult to say whether the novel wants to convey pantheistic beliefs however, and the passage may possibly represent a sudden realization in Mira. At the same time, it is often clearly expressed that Teilhard de Chardin’s and Thomas Berry’s view of divinity - which has become associated with pantheism - directly correlates with many of the thoughts Mira finds herself with—the universal spirit and how the universe resides in everything (353).

3.2 Climate apocalypse

A narrative is conducted in Pure Color that does not spare the reader from pale contemporary environmental phenomena and at the beginning of the novel, the narrator tells how the ice is melting, how species are dying, and how fossil fuels are being burned unhindered (Heti 21). A particularly bleak statement the narrator brings up is that “New things to die of were being added each day” (21). With this in mind, Greg Garrard writes:

Stories about the end of the world are widespread across historical and present-day societies, though not universal, and they feed into a contemporary apocalyptic trope that is complex and often contradictory. Evangelical Christians draw on the Biblical books of Genesis . . . to dismiss environmentalist concerns about climate change, reassuring us that, ‘While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and a cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease’ (Ecocriticism 94).
This, on the other hand, differs from the creation myth that permeates *Pure Color*, which states that everything will cease to exist with God’s coming action.

As mentioned earlier, the novel begins with a fictional creation myth, which resembles *Genesis* in several ways. This creation myth is difficult to decipher whether it dismisses the climate threat that is current in our time. One thing that is certain is that it removes personal responsibility for the environment. It is a relatively strange approach to write such a narrative because we abdicate responsibility for our actions, because God has given up anyway and “decided that the first draft of existence contained too many flaws” (Heti 4). According to Mira, humans are naturally born “fixers” that want to solve problems and states “we can't fix the way we think we can, by actually becoming fixers. If anyone muddles with creation, God muddles it back again” (Heti 182). This could possibly mean that higher powers in the end always correct imbalances. Perhaps the creation myth that introduces the novel should be seen as a way for the character Mira to deal with her own anxiety about the climate threat and her father’s death. After all, she quotes her father’s last words: “Her father, who had actually lived his life, told her on his deathbed, *None of this matters*” (80). At the same time, the narrator, who seems to convey the thoughts of Mira through a third-person view, calls for self-improvement (21). It is thus not difficult to discern a theme around duality in the novel. The duality here is that the narrative and Mira experience a hopelessness in the face of the coming apocalypse; at the same time, one can see that - despite renouncing responsibility for the end of the earth - Mira often thinks about what could have been done right. Perhaps the second draft that has been mentioned is a way for Mira to convince herself that we humans will become wiser and treat the planet better.

The apocalyptic undertones are neither vague nor unclear, and the narrator concretely tells how “The world was failing at its one task–of remaining a world. Pieces were breaking off. Seasons had become postmodern. We no longer knew where in the calendar we were by the weather” (Heti 21). Furthermore, the narrator emphasizes technological advancements and
how it cannot change the constant emotional responses that are programmed within us. Technological progress has only made us find solutions in medicine and psychiatry (21). This kind of thinking makes one question whether the narrator means that technology has distanced us from ourselves and isolated us from the natural world. Teilhard de Chardin emphasizes that we live in a time of unrest because we have been lost ever since we “cast off the last moorings which held us to the Neolithic age” (214). He believes that the age of industry and the human artifacts that characterize our world contribute to major changes in the individual’s condition, for the worse (214).

Greg Garrard argues that we need to evaluate how we view apocalypses and catastrophes in literature, citing Poetics of Aristotle: “A true catastrophe, then, is not only a terminus but a turning point. In the Poetics, the katastrophe is intimately associated with an anagnorisis: the moment of realization, when the tragic hero or heroine is faced with the collapse of their underlying assumptions about themselves and/or others and is brought, painfully and sometimes fatally, to the recognition of the damage that has been wrought by their ignorance” (Ecocriticism 101-102). This is a nuanced way of looking at the apocalypse as it departs from the traditional image of what the apocalypse is; instead, the real apocalypse should therefore be regarded as the decay of man at its darkest. In Pure Color, the apocalypse is palpable, at the same time it is mainly within Mira that the greatest catastrophes arise. Her inner thoughts can be seen as a surging ocean that constantly alternates between anxiety and faith in the future. This seems like a relevant discussion topic in a classroom context, especially for those students who experience climate anxiety and hopelessness about it. It could possibly be a way of having a conversation about what they think about the world as it is now. Most importantly, it is important to reflect positivity towards the students, which can be difficult to achieve when the novel in question deals with such serious and current topics. These things will be treated in more detail in the last section of the analysis.
*Pure Color* contains gloomy passages and Mira is not particularly ambivalent when expressing what she believes about man and the world. At the same time, one can sense nuances of the ideas that deep ecologists convey in their rhetoric: humans need to change significantly and strive to live in harmony with nature (Parker 359). After turning into a leaf, Mira contemplates how she thinks we will return to subsistence farming after society collapses due to water wars. Furthermore, she marvels that humans are planning to build colonies on Mars and says: “They should be planning things here, figuring out how to live here” (Heti 117). This shows that Mira, like the narrative that pervades deep ecology, wants to repair the symbiosis of man and nature. In the end, the novel is in a way relatively positive about the future, because our world is, as Mira puts it, only the first draft. Life goes on in the second draft. However, this belief requires a lot from the reader, especially if one does not experience a similar spirituality. It is worth connecting it all to an apocalyptic sensibility because after all, Mira states that “one day the lake would flood the whole city from the ice caps melting into the sea, and the whole city would be destroyed, and anyone she had ever called a friend, and that log, and this leaf, and everyone” (Heti 93-94). Again, Mira’s ambivalent feelings and future beliefs are noticeable. Later, Mira states that the plans will take over everything and crush the forgotten concrete from the first draft: “The plans will be everywhere in the second draft of life, and they will have a sublime slowness, and a happy peace. [...] The entire earth will be a garden sprouting fourth, opening with the sun and closing with the moon, and the plants will not remember how we cut them in the first draft. The vegetables will tell no stories. They won't recall pots, or being plucked or eaten” (Heti 113-114). Again, this passage could possible mean that the apocalypse is coming, but at the same time it could – to return to the ambivalence – be a vision of a paradisal world.
3.3 Voices of the leaf

As previously mentioned, Mira has conveyed a kind of ambivalence towards God and the state of the world and all that it entails. In chapter three, however, much of Mira’s mindset changes when she turns into a leaf. When Mira’s father dies, the book takes a particularly interesting turn where the narration changes back and forth between external focalization and internal focalization. The narrative also changes in such a way that much of what is conveyed is so in a manic state, especially when the narrative switches to internal focalization. After her father’s death, Mira visits a park that she and her father frequented. There, Mira swims in the lake and explains how she “… transformed as the sunlight shone down onto the earth like a golden ball, or the tides must have washed her back into the shore, under a branch, which is where some part of her rose up, up, up into a leaf in a tree” (Heti 93). This passage suggests a kind of unity with nature.

There is a great deal of self-observation in Mira when she turns into a leaf and becomes a part of nature. Ecofeminism was coined by Francoise d’Eaubonne in 1974 and argued that ecofeminism was about women's ability to lead the world towards a greener future. In this world, humans would live in symbiosis with nature and the world would not consist of different categorizations—neither biological, nor philosophical (Nhanenge 118). Despite Mira being shaken after her transformation, her anxiety gradually disappears from not being able to communicate in the usual way, to finding peace and big answers. Mira tells us that she had always wanted to be bigger, but that she never knew how to do it. Once she turned into a leaf, she realized that her perfect size “Was the size of a leaf. If she had been told this when she was a child, she could have adapted to it, and led a simple life of little striving, and been happy, rather than hoping and attending school” (96). This passage can possibly be seen as a criticism of instrumentalism and objectification. The expectations from her father and society rested heavily on Mira’s shoulders, depriving her of the simple things in life when she just wanted to
live a simple life and be present in herself. These are the phenomena that ecofeminism wants to emphasize the most: How instrumentalism and objectification deny women, like nature, an intrinsic value. Instrumentalism and objectification in this sense should be equated with colonialism and racism according to Vakoch and Mickey (16) and refer to Jytte Nhanenge who writes “The slave is obliged to put aside his or her own interests for the interests of the master. The slave is the master’s instrument, a means to the master’s ends. Hence, the master defines the slave’s needs only in relation to his own needs. This objectifies the other. The slave is a resource for the master” (132). With that in mind, her father and society’s expectations should be considered her masters. As I previously indicated, Mira felt suffocated by her father, which was not only about his unconditional love (Heti 45), but also because of his expectations.

Moreover, Mira’s thoughts when she is a leaf led to passages such as “The plants have learned, over millions of years, how to be the audience of creation. They know how good it feels to be the open, accepting audience of the show, which humans could never be, and wouldn’t even understand, for our purpose comes from being critics” (Heti 115). This passage suggests that nature’s patience, commonality, and uncritical attitude towards all that exists is something that man should strive for. It is obvious that Mira, despite her choice of education, does not really want to criticize, nor categorize the world around her. Teilhard de Chardin argues that modern humans constantly try to standardize or depersonalize their surroundings, which is part of our personality; our ego, which should be seen as a prison from which we must escape (258). Thomas Berry also highlights an Edenic world where we exclude our contemporary life choices and live in symbiosis with nature (Deane-Drummond 42). This is what we should strive to realize and is possible way to repay man’s debt to nature. Again, one can see that eco-theological ideas and thoughts are similar to ecocritical ones. At the university, Mira tells how her professor had lectured on Edouard Manet’s “A Bundle of Asparagus” and how he explained how Manet ultimately lacked “qualities which in the end make the artist”
(Heti 16). During the lecture, Mira experienced a “exquisite quivering in her chest” (16) and “She felt ashamed at the gap between what Albert Wolff was saying and how the painting made her feel” (16). These passages may possibly emphasize how humans constantly criticize nature and each other, instead of seeing the beauty and value of nature and each other. Mira’s professor sees the motif as a product, whereas Mira sees it as deeply evocative.

In addition to the ecofeminism aspect, deep ecology permeates the novel as mentioned earlier. In the previous cited passage from the novel, one sees how nature is given an intrinsic value, which happens regularly throughout the plot. In the following passage, this happens again: “It is our relation to spirit that makes us alive. The clouds don’t have a father, yet they still live. The trees don’t have a mother or father, yet they live as much as we do” (Het 69). Garrard puts it bluntly: “Deep ecology demands recognition of intrinsic value in nature” (Ecocriticism 33). In Mira’s reflections when she is a leaf, you can see that she is attacking the Western tradition of how we view nature. As mentioned earlier, deep ecologists believe that Western philosophy is the origin of the environmental crisis that we experience today. Western philosophy can be summarized as the objectification of nature, where its utility is seen as instrumental. This seems to be the direct opposite of Mira’s thoughts about nature. In addition to deep ecology, one can see the eco-theological ideas that imbue Leonardo Boff’s liberation theory, in which one charges anthropocentrism and that we should strive to live in a so-called cosmic community (Deane-Drummond 49). Again, many of the ideas presented by eco-theologians and ecocritics converge.

3.4 Pure Color in the EFL classroom

Through literature, one can convey an understanding of life and all that it entails. On the other hand, it may be difficult to introduce a novel like Pure Color and assume that students will apply eco-theological and ecocritical theories when reading it. It is not impossible that a great
deal of skepticism towards the novel and the theories permeates the classroom, which is likely to be difficult as a teacher to deal with. However, it is important to remember that skepticism can be a great asset in student learning and enable critical thinking.

As stated earlier, *Pure Color* should be regarded as a cli-fi novel, which wants us to question how we could fail to prevent climate change, but also our spirituality and place in the universe. The novel presents different points of view on life, and one should therefore have diversity in mind when introducing the novel. Diversity in that sense is about beliefs about spirituality, nature, and man. Regarding eco-theology, there may be difficulties in convincing students of its relevance. When it comes to religion, it is often a sensitive subject that includes prejudices (Bury 519). Students often see religious elements in teaching as a “vehicle for religious conversion”, but their approach to religion is often based on “Extant attitudes toward religion and culture presented by religious extremism, racist attitudes, and the inability to think selflessly (520). As stated earlier, skepticism can be a great asset in student learning and enable critical thinking and Bury writes that “Young people cannot be expected to deal sensitively with the challenge of diversity unless they are given the opportunity to do so; the classroom, with its intercultural context, is often the primary place that this might happen” (520). The essence of what Bury suggests is that one should include difficult subjects, such as religion, to ultimately create positive attitudes toward others (520).

With this comes another problem, which is about students who experience climate anxiety. Estella Carolye Kuchta emphasizes the problem very well and writes that students already may be “Consumed with their own personal disasters, already literally twitching with anxiety or else morose with depression that doctors chalk up to brain chemistry” (191). It is therefore important to discuss the novel and its content beforehand, which hopefully allows for a deeper and richer discussion with the students. Today, young people are bombarded every day with news and doomsday scenarios tied to the environment, and it is not unreasonable that
this leads to a kind of feeling of helplessness, which in turn leads students not seeing the benefits of ecological readings. Panu Pihkala believes that both teachers and researchers need to acquire more knowledge about the phenomenon of “eco-anxiety” and how it affects learning; at the same time, Pihkala writes:

Real-life situations are complex. For example, it may well be that a student, say a young person who feels strong climate anxiety, suffers in his or her learning outcomes for quite some time because of such anxiety. However, what if this anxiety is part of a developmental process where the student re-evaluates priorities in life and eventually builds more resilience? … In our unprecedented times of ecological upheaval, we should be ready to critically examine the plurality of possible aims in education (18).

Furthermore, Carolye Kuchta argues that - in addition to these students who experience climate anxiety - there is often a group of students who have no knowledge about nature and climate change at all and writes “Some have never been introduced to the concept of ‘the environment’ as a topic, and most do not understand our species’ complete interdependency on nature’s systems and processes” (192). A major challenge is to convince both groups of the benefits of ecological readings.

Reading fiction can stimulate the imagination in a completely different way than non-fiction and in many ways activates the brain into thinking that the reading experience is a real experience. Furthermore, reading enables the reader to imagine future and alternative worlds. However, it would be bold to expect a literary work to immediately change students’ imaginary worlds just by dropping the novel in front of them. One could design a larger lesson plan that extends over several weeks and leads up to Pure Color. It might be wise to introduce the subject of eco-theology and ecocriticism first and analyze shorter poems with the theories in mind. In
this way, the students acquire an understanding of how eco-theological and ecocritical readings are done and thus *Pure Color* becomes easier material for the students to analyze more closely. Hopefully, one can create important discussions through the knowledge that is acquired and in this way one can minimize the anxiety for, for example, students who experience climate anxiety. Pihkala writes that fiction about eco-anxiety can help students understand the experiences of others and their own. At the same time, the teacher needs to carefully select these stories. Sometimes it can be far too much for students who experience climate anxiety to read “heavily emotional eco-anxiety” fiction (22). At the same time, such material may provide opportunities for “transformative learning” (22). Besides discussions and lectures on ecocriticism and eco-theology, the teacher should also be prepared to include emotions in the classroom and share their feelings and experiences regarding the environment and climate, which has been shown to be something that works very well when it comes to environmental education (Pihkala 19, 20). However, it is important to find a good balance around overly emotional elements in education. Teachers’ own thoughts and feelings about the environment can be instructive elements–if the students feel safe. At the same time, Pihkala warns that there is a fine balance between “Constructive sharing of vulnerability and problematic displays of despair” (20). It is clear that teachers need to take this into account when teaching ecocriticism and eco-theology.

Regarding eco-theology, it is perhaps most appropriate working together with Religion. By exploring eco-theology, students can thus gain broadened perspectives on religion by taking a closer look at the religious themes presented in the novel. According to Christina Osbeck, one can choose to start from one or more “religious didactics” when exploring religion together with the students (translation mine). One of these didactics implies that the study of religion can be regarded as a means to achieve existential development. Furthermore, the teaching could serve the interests of the students, thus once again emphasizing the importance of discussing
ideas and thoughts with them. Additionally, Osbeck emphasizes the importance of allowing students to “analyze religious artifacts on their own and to work with uninterpreted material that raises questions and challenges” (Osbeck, translation mine). Teaching can ultimately take the pupil’s own life perspectives in consideration, while at the same time defining the perspectives of religious traditions. What one could strive to emphasize about different traditions is what it means to belong to a specific community. Furthermore, a central part of teaching could be about defining the shared human experience, which can be defined as “the dilemmas that arise from the limits that life itself sets for what it means to be human” (Osbeck, translation mine). The shared human experience is a profound concept, and if one can promote discussions about this experience, it can lead to opportunities for growth and understanding.

Given *Pure Color’s* heavy subject matter and sometimes explicit language, the relatively complex subjects of ecocriticism and eco-theology, it is perhaps wisest to conduct such a reading with students studying English 7. The Swedish National Agency for Education emphasizes in the syllabus for English 7 that discussions are held with the students about “Theoretical and complex subject areas, also of a more scientific nature, related to students' education, chosen specialization area, societal issues and working life; thoughts, opinions, ideas, experiences and feelings” (Engelska 11, translation mine). As previously mentioned, the Swedish National Agency for Education has created modules for teachers who intend to teach sustainable development and environmental thinking. These modules and the English syllabus make it possible to bring *Pure Color* to the EFL classroom. Through close reading, one can take a closer look at the relevance of nature in the novel. Furthermore, Mira’s attitude to the climate threat can be discussed, which in turn can lead to personal discussions regarding the present and the climate. *Pure Color* also includes other passages that make it possible to create discussion questions in the classroom such as: “She doesn’t know why she spent so much time of her life thinking about such trivial things, or looking at websites, when just outside her
window there was a sky that was not trivial. Had it been wrong of her not to understand that the sky was more valuable than a website?” (Heti 86). This should be considered a relevant question in a classroom context that can be reasoned and discussed considering all the time most of us spend online. From an eco-theological perspective, one could, based on the different religious didactics that Osbeck presents, create an environment that promotes that student's own life perspectives, while at the same time encouraging discussions about the existential nature of what it means to be a human being.

4 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to examine Sheila Heti’s novel *Pure Color* within the eco-theological and ecocritical perspectives and its relevance in teaching these literary fields within the Swedish school context. The analysis shows that there are distinct eco-theological and ecocritical themes in the novel and the protagonist Mira shows melancholy regarding the separation of man from nature. Mira often deplores man’s anthropocentric approach and appeals for an ecocentric approach where humans live in symbiosis with nature. At the same time, there exists a plea for higher powers in the form of God and the universe. Mira often speaks in a stream of consciousness where she tries to rationalize the state of our world and issues such as death. According to her, we are only living in the first draft of God's creation and in the second draft, everything will be better. One can see how Mira moves between different thoughts that sometimes can be perceived as contrary. Nevertheless, Mira laments the planet's decay at the hands of humans while acknowledging humans as an extension of the universe and thus, God. According to her, the second draft will be much better because humans will no longer conquer. One possible interpretation is that Mira chooses to protect herself with the help of her spirituality and faith in the face of the invisible apocalypse that is ongoing and threatens humanity.
From a purely didactic point of view, *Pure Color* is an excellent choice for eco-theological and ecocritical readings because it in many ways emphasizes the existential problems that permeates our society today. Hopefully, the students will be able to understand or relate to the thoughts about nature, God, and the universe that Mira conveys in the novel, and thus it will be easier material for them to take part in. As mentioned earlier, the thoughts that Mira has are very common today. However, one needs to approach eco-theology and ecocriticism carefully in the classroom. Firstly, religion is a sensitive subject and is often met with skepticism by students. Secondly, there are students who experience climate anxiety and who feel helpless about the climate and these students will possibly not see the relevance of conducting ecological reading of literature. On the other hand, research shows that fiction can help students understand other people’s experiences and imaginary worlds. Furthermore, ecological readings of various kinds are considered to lead to transformative learning where students can possibly re-evaluate their values and thoughts. By conducting close reading of *Pure Color* while offering the students an environment where feelings and thoughts about nature, God, and the universe are encouraged, one can hopefully create beneficial discussions about the novel and the student’s own thoughts.

This essay has only covered a small part of the novel and there are several positions that one can take when analyzing it. For further studies of *Pure Color*, one can possibly apply theories of sexuality and analyze Mira’s relationship with Annie and take a closer look at how they are portrayed. Furthermore, one can see a greater technological pessimism in the novel, which could also be studied more closely. While technological pessimism could possibly be linked to ecocriticism, there is enough material to concentrate on that alone.
5 Works Cited


——. “Engelska”. 2022


