

## Chapter Two

### Kinship Systems: Partnership Ethics

#### Introduction

The French feminist Francoise d'Eaubonne coined the term 'ecofeminism' ('*eco-féminisme*') in her foundational text *Le Féminisme ou la Mort (Feminism or Death)* (1974). She introduced ecofeminism as an umbrella term to emphasize the historical association between women and nature's denigration and subjugation by patriarchal structures and worldviews. Ecofeminism mirrors the resistance to this domination as "a mode of inter-human and human-earth relations" (Eaton 327). Ecofeminists like Susan Griffin, Karren J. Warren, Val Plumwood, and Carolyn Merchant, in their works, have centralized the dualism embedded in ecological realities that influence the social and ecological relationships between man/woman and human/nature. In their works, they have provided an insight into feminist thoughts that are ecological and resonate with Barry Commoner's law, "Everything is connected to everything else" (*The Closing Circle*, 1971). Their thoughts acknowledge the ecological interconnection and interdependencies as well as the women-nature nexus. Their works have been most influential in developing the philosophical perspective of ecofeminism. This chapter presents the connection between environmentalism and feminist thoughts reflected in these ecofeminists' philosophical voices. The chapter argues for the necessity of rejecting the patriarchal dualistic framework and directing our environmental awareness towards a holistic partnership platform.

Ecofeminism incorporates perspectives from theology, history, ethics, sociology, economics, and philosophy, etc. These perspectives help to illuminate the ways in which the subjugation and exploitation of women and nonhuman nature are interconnected. Such various modes of interconnection help address the present environmental problems arising out of the exploitation of nature. According to Merchant, an ecofeminist partnership ethic advocates the equity between human and nonhuman nature that helps expand the possibility of sustainable existence: “Nature, traditionally represented as mother, virgin, or witch, is not gendered as female to be managed, controlled, or exploited, but instead is accepted as a partner to humanity. Such cooperation, revealed not only in the exhibits but in the resultant landscapes, presents exciting new opportunities for working with nature” (Merchant 69).

Karren Warren, in her “Feminism and Ecology: Making Connections” (1987), states the basic need for an ecofeminist is to pay heed to the ‘environmental issues and ecological interdependencies’ (qtd in Cuomo 1). Rosemary Radford Ruether (1975), the author of *New Woman/New Earth*, calls for ecofeminism’s aim in advocating unification of women-nature interest:

Women must see that there can be no liberation for them, and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women’s movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this society (Ruether 204).

Susan Griffin, in her *Women and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (2000), summarises the ecofeminist thoughts on the interconnection between women and nature: “I know I am made from this earth, as my mother’s hand were made from this earth, as her dreams come from this earth and all that I know in this earth...” (Griffin 227). The nature-women nexus is the most prolific field of study of ecofeminism as the ecofeminists affirm the femininizing of nature and naturalizing of women and subjugation of both (Ruether 1992, Eaton 2005). Ynestra king (1989) articulates in *Healing the Wounds* that as in ecofeminism, nature is the central category of analysis, the starting point of ecofeminist theory is the analysis of the interrelated dominations of nature, i.e., psyche and sexuality, human oppression, and nonhuman nature and the historic position of women in relations to those forms of domination (117).

The ecofeminists believe that the androcentric, dualistic, and patriarchal thinking is a root cause for the impoverishment of women and environmental degradation. This unjust subordination emerges from the ‘logic of domination’ (Warren 1996) and hierarchical dualisms and binary opposition (Plumwood 1994) between male/female, culture/nature, superior/inferior, order/chaos, mind/emotion, etc. Karen J. Warren (2000) also argues that the connections between nature-women are “historical (typically causal), conceptual, empirical, socioeconomic, linguistic, symbolic and literary, spiritual and religious, epistemological, political and ethical” (Warren 21). Among these, the ‘conceptual framework,’ she states, is oppressive, as it adheres to the patriarchy maintaining locus of dominance and subordination. For Warren, the ‘logic of domination’ is an important characteristic of the patriarchal conceptual framework.

Val Plumwood (1993) states the necessity of a revised view of ecofeminist epistemologies transcending the value dualism and hierarchies (as advocated by Warren in 'value hierarchical' (Up-Down thinking) and 'value dualisms' (either-or thinking). She emphasizes that the western rationalistic tradition sanctions 'dualism,' which is the root of the subjugation of both nature and women. The dualisms, such as reason/nature, human/nature, mind/body, masculine/feminine, reason/emotion, etc., exemplifies oppositional terms having a higher value attributed to the left term and inferior value to the right term. According to Plumwood, the construction of dualized identity has five features, such as backgrounding, radical exclusion, incorporation, instrumentalism, and homogenisation. Plumwood further elaborates that dualism is more than a relation of dichotomy, difference, or nonidentity, and more than a simple hierarchical relationship. In dualistic construction, as in a hierarchy, the qualities (actual or supposed) related to the culture are constructed as superior, whereas the values and the areas of life associated with the dualised other are systematically and pervasively constructed and depicted as inferior (47).

Carolyn Merchant, in her work *Death of Nature* (1980), "traces the history of human perception of nature" (Rangarajan 116). Her main argument is that the domination of nature and women were sanctioned by the scientific revolution that emerged during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. Merchant highlights in *Radical Ecology* (2005), the "organic worldview" the image and identity of the earth as 'nurturing mother' restricts the destructive notion of humans towards nature: "The image of the earth as a living organism and nurturing mother served as a cultural constraint restricting the actions of human beings" (46) and this 'nurturing' image is

transformed into an opposing destructive image of nature. The image of ‘destructive and malevolent nature’, another concept of the ‘organic worldview’, has sanctioned human mastery over nature. Scientific revolutions project the ‘mechanistic worldview’, the image of the dead, and ‘inert nature.’ The mechanistic worldview adds, “The removal of animistic, organic assumptions about the cosmos constituted the death of nature—the most far-reaching effect of the scientific revolution.” (47). Quoting Francis Bacon, Merchant comments that according to Bacon, the new man of science must refrain from the “inquisition of nature and nature must be “bound into service” and made a “slave,” put “in constraint,” and “molded” by the mechanical arts. (qtd in Merchant 46). Thus, with her careful explanations, Merchant provides a definitive introduction to the root of the domination of nature by a human. Warren has been arguing for a “transformative feminism” (Warren 17-20), transforming the ecological world view directed towards a broader social change.

### **Ecofeminist Ethics: The Partnership Ethics**

Karen Warren, in her *Ecofeminist Philosophy* (2000), has outlined the transition from *mainstream Western ethics to feminist ethics to ecofeminist ethics* (emphasis is mine) and states that ecofeminist ethics must be grounded on a “care-sensitive ethics” that resonates with the essence of Merchant’s “transformative feminism”. The “partnership ethics” advocated by Merchant in her seminal works *Earthcare: Women and the Environment* (2014) and *Radical Ecology* (2005) concerns her notions of universality and an “ethics of inclusivity” (Warren 99). Partnership ethics is an alternative to the four forms of ethics: egocentric, homocentric, ecocentric, and multicultural environmental ethics. Her concept of

partnership ethics is analogous to Karren Warren's fruit bowl metaphor of ecofeminist ethical principles, creating "a care-sensitive ethic that is both inclusive and nonhierarchical" (Merchant 82). Warren's fruit bowl is the various ethical principles of western philosophy, according to Merchant, such as self-interest, utility, virtue, duties, rights, and they include both the ability to care and care practices. But they fail to be environmentally sensitive when applied to curb anthropogenic practices that oppress nature and human (indigenous) and nonhuman nature.

Egocentric ethics "permits individuals (or corporations) to extract and use natural resources to enhance their own lives and those of other members of society, limited only by the effects on their neighbours" (Merchant 65), i.e., it works on the principle of remaining engaged with self or in the individual. Based on the Hobbesian approach, egocentric ethics promotes competitive self-interest. Hence, the commons (Garrett Hardin, "Tragedy of the Commons" 1968) cannot be shared but to be fought over. Homocentric ethics, influenced by Bentham and Mills utilitarian ethics, is grounded on society and advocates prioritization of fulfilment of human needs. Homocentric ethics reflects a religious formulation of considering humans stewards and caretakers of the natural world. Ecocentric ethics considers the whole cosmos, the environment, including the inanimate and animate beings, has an intrinsic value. It was formulated by Aldo Leopold in the final chapter, "The Land Ethic", of his most famous work, *A Sand County Almanac* (1949). Roderick Nash, an environmental historian, has elaborated on Leopold's land ethic in his article, "Do Rocks Have Rights?" (1977). He explains the approach that advocates the basic holistic aspect of ecocentric ethic, which is concerned with the good of ecosystems or the planet as a whole. Merchant reflects a similar idea. She believes that one of the

assumptions of holism is grounded in the principle of unity that exists between humans and nonhuman. They cohabit as part of the same planetary system. Merchant, thus, contests the nature/culture dualism and embraces this unificatory assumption of holism. Theoretical ecologists often focus their research on natural areas removed from human impact, “human (or political) ecologists study the mutual interactions between society and nonhuman nature” (Merchant 78). The multicultural ethic proposed by Baird Callicott is embedded in *partnership* promoting mutual interests of both human and nonhuman nature: “Thus the one globally intelligible and acceptable ecological ethic and the many culture-specific ecological ethics may mutually reflect, validate, and correct one another—so they may exist in a reciprocal, fair, equal, and mutually sustaining partnership” (qtd in Merchant 82).

Merchant’s concept of partnership ethics is grounded on relations among the biota and abiota: “A partnership ethic holds that the greatest good for the human and nonhuman communities is in their mutual living interdependence” (Merchant 83). The aim is to restrain human hubris on both humanity and nature and emphasise the fulfilment of the needs of both human and nature communities. The partnership ensures the sustainability of “our common home” (Waldau 294). In her interview with J. Scott Bryson, Merchant advocates that this mutual and sustainable *relation or interconnectedness* is the very essence of partnership ethics as she says:

If you talk about relation, you can talk about similarities and differences, not just identity or identity politics, where you think only of the similarities. Partnership ethics encompasses both similarities and differences. In any partnership based on a relationship, there's a dialogue, there's a give-and-

take, there's a mutual responsibility, a mutual sharing, a holding back for the benefit of the other partner (Bryson and Merchant 127).

Merchant points out five precepts of partnership ethics:

- Equity between the human and nonhuman communities.
- Moral consideration for both humans and other species.
- Respect for both cultural diversity and biodiversity.
- Inclusion of women, minorities, and nonhuman nature in the code of ethical accountability.
- An ecologically sound management that is consistent with the continued health of both the human and the nonhuman communities.

(Merchant 83).

Merchant refers to Val Plumwood's concept of "relational self" (Plumwood 154) that is analogous to the basic precepts of partnership ethics. Plumwood explains that the "relational self" moves beyond the oppositional self/other or nature/culture dualism and embraces "the general structure of a relationship of respect, friendship, or care for the other" (Plumwood 155).

Kingsolver explores in her works this holistic approach of partnership ethics that engages with a mutually respectful, care-based understanding of our ecological existence and interdependence in producing a more sustainable environment. This chapter maps the women-nature connection represented in Kingsolver's creative oeuvre. These works repudiate the limitations of androcentrism and patriarchal



notions of subordination of nature and women. They persuasively present the mutually respectful communication of partnership ethics.

### **The Partnership Platform: Kingsolver's Non-fiction**

Kingsolver's non-fiction web the practices that allow a return to nature that is disrupted by human hubris. This web permits connection between women, women and nature, and human and nature as an essential bond resonating with the ecofeminist thoughts of Karren Warren, Val Plumwood, and Carolyn Merchant. The meaningful communication that these texts engage with is a culmination of the philosophical thoughts of partnership ethics, i.e., the interweaving of human culture and nonhuman nature breaking down the patriarchal dualistic framework. This partnership platform recognizes the potential "to begin a new century by renewing our membership in the Animal Kingdom" to exercise ecological consciousness to actualize the connection.

***Small Wonder (2002): "Small Wonder", "A Forest's Last Stand", and "Called Out"***

***High Tide in Tucson (1995): "High Tide in Tucson"***

The essay "**Small Wonder**" narrates the story of the nomads of the Lori tribe in Western Iran. A husband and wife have lost their only sixteen-month-old child and later find the child in a bear's cave with the sow protecting the child.

Kingsolver recounts the story stating her firm belief in the ‘eternal feminine’ and ‘she-bear’ that cares and protects. She states that nature is replete with such miracles. The bear is found curled around him, protecting him from the fierce-smelling intruders in her cave. Kingsolver does not narrate the end of the story. But she reflects that the rescuers have probably spared the bear and simply reached out to the child. They have quietly taken him up and praised God (Allah) for this strange mother who has worked His will. Kingsolver tries to follow the story with the firm faith that the human “intruders” have not harmed the nonhuman “protector”. She uses the expression “strange mother” for the she-bear exposing us to the non-violent power of nature, the experience of Gaia, where the bear is nursing the child. She questions the inevitable: “What does it mean? How is it possible that a huge, hungry bear would take a pitifully small, delicate human child to her breast rather than rip him into food? But she was a mammal, a mother” (Kingsolver 4). Ecofeminists define women as ecologically conscious of *this* bond that exists among all the species. This interconnection that exists between human and nonhuman community is retold in this small narrative. Kingsolver further continues to contextualize it with the bombing in Afghanistan and the killing of the humanitarian-aid workers. She reflects that these wells of kindness are becoming dry, as humanity has lost faith in the connectedness of all species. The life-changing truth presented by the parable states that “We are all beasts in this kingdom, we have killed and been killed” (Kingsolver 6). Domination exists as an institution, whether it is nature or women, or human. She explores another side of the story that humanity has started taking over the domain of nature, othering the nonhuman, “a careless way of sauntering across the earth and breaking open its treasures, a terrible dependency on sucking out the world’s best juices for ourselves” (Kingsolver 9). This has wiped out all the treasures

of the earth. This narrative is from the mountains of Iran, where Kingsolver points out the sad predicament of the large predators like the bear and the wolf that are already on the verge of extinction in the forests of Europe and North America. They only exist as archenemies in fairy tales, thus, preparing the future generation not to regret their non-existence. Kingsolver states that perhaps salvation lies in the very truth of the parable, i.e., telling a new tale about co-existence: “Some days you have to work hard to save the bear. Some days the bear will save you” (Kingsolver 10).

“**A Forest’s Last Stand**” recounts Kingsolver’s visit to the site of the Mayan giant pyramids of the Calakmul ruins in Mexico. Standing on the permanent peace of the remote, unvisited ruins, she realizes the sacred link that connects the whole world: “In a lifetime—mine, anyway—one is given this blessing only rarely: the chance to stand on high ground, turn in every direction, and see absolutely not one single sign of visible humanity. This is how the world once was, without our outsize dreams and dominion” (Kingsolver 85). The perception of the world without all forms of domination and oppression encourages a holistic world vision and human awareness. This perception refrains from mistreating nature and members of the nonhuman species. Kingsolver’s reference to the Mayan myths or stories grafted in the Mayan glyphs claims this holistic world vision as well. In this green crowded Mayan world, parrots and monkeys are not isolated survivors but citizens of a population. This old Mayan city is a city of animals as surely as each mute temple stood for a city of people, who had once carved their deep reverence for animals in stone. The stories carved in the stone slates of the ruin recount that the pristine forests are deeply revered by Mayans and that reverence has endured the onslaught of time and civilization. The stone slates narratives of Mayan ruins present

Kingsolver's version of ecofeminism—her hope to usher a change, an ecological and social change that extends beyond the ruins of an ancient civilization. Kingsolver states that women's partnership vision focuses on the affinity or kinship between humans and nature. The carved stories in Mayan ruins also resonate similar partnership vision: "Human and beast together may persist in this place, as they have always done, since the days when God was a feather-headed serpent" (Kingsolver 87).

The next part of the essay narrates Kingsolver's visit to the Mexican village, Nueva Vida, or "New Life". Her exchanges with Carmen Salgado, her host, add another facet to her ecofeminist way of thinking. She talks about the Chol, Tzeltal, and other groups fleeing from Guatemalan repression and settling down in these Mexican villages. These refugees are passionate about retaining their connection with the land and nonhuman nature. According to them, this connection is more important than achieving a formal educational degree. These refugees undergo a transformation in their perspective on the Calakmul forest. Instead of using the forest as an instrument and a resource, they deeply engage with the forest for its intrinsic value and promote conservation. Salgado intimates to Kingsolver how the women of her group have voted against the felling of trees for lumber and clearing of twenty-five hectares of land for a cornfield as it provides flowers for beekeeping as well as for an apothecary. Salgado and her group, though refugees and are pressed fighting for their life, reinforce and maintain the spirit of Mayan civilization, the interconnectedness among all species.

**"Called out"** begins with the description of the desert hills and abandoned cotton fields, "the flat salinized ground long since left for dead" (Kingsolver 89),

blooming with flowers in the Sonoran Desert. Kingsolver stresses the ruins of human extraction are replenished with a wealth of nature. This image is interwoven with the Chol, Tzeltal, and other refugees' former tradition of slash-and-burn farming, consuming the land and then abandoning it as dead, before they are ideologically transformed to stand up for the Calakmul forest. The miracle of cataloging a whole new species of wildflowers in the Sonoran Desert is a special event for Kingsolver. For a species, the bloom is just the means to an end. The wildflower show is really about *making seeds*, and the object of the game is persistence through the tough and resilient weather conditions of the desert. *Making seeds* ensures the beginning of another creation story, and it is so important and significant to continue and sustain the ecosystem: "If a little seed begins to grow at the first promise of rain, and that promise gets broken, that right there is the end of its little life. If the same thing happened to every seed in the bank, it would mean the end of the species" (Kingsolver 90). Here, Kingsolver mentions the Navajo myth of female rain of winter affecting spring flowering, as opposed to male rains of late summer that are rowdy thunderstorms. Earlier in the essay "**High Tide in Tucson**" (1995), Kingsolver has referred to these gendered rains from Navajo tradition: "Female rain," it's called in Navajo: the gentle, furtive rains that fall from overcast skies between November and March" (Kingsolver, 1995, 90). The gentle female rain sustains the seed's life. This metaphor of the nurturing rain with the immediate surrounding is both comforting and sustaining. This idea of feminine interconnection speaks up for her "felt experiences" (Warren 30) about nature that Kingsolver has expressed in all her writings. Gerald Hausman, in his seminal work *Meditations with the Navajo: Prayers, Songs, and Stories of Healing and Harmony* (2001), elaborates the concept of gendered rain: "For Navajos, the natural world is divided into

genders. There are male rains—heavy and violent thunderstorms—and there are female rains—soft, gentle showers” (Hausman 3). Hausman associates the concept of the fertility of the Earth and the Changing Woman, one of the principal Holy People of Navajo myth who is often referred to as the Earth Woman or the White Shell Woman. She is the symbol of Female rains and the psyche of lakes, rivers, and mountains. Kingsolver’s reference to the male and female rains reinforces this woman-nature connection and fertility. But, at the same time, her writings highlight the *man-nature connection* that exists in the traditional and native ways of understanding the environment that repudiates the dualistic notion of the man/woman binary. Thus, in these essays, Kingsolver’s voice comes from a belief that is radically different from, and resistant to, the limitations of dualisms like reason/emotion, culture/nature, mind/body, and man/woman. By making such human-nature liaisons, Kingsolver does not refute the basic subordination and exploitation theory of ecofeminism but attempts to present a more inclusive and universal position. This reflects what Karen Warren has stated as “collage or mosaic, a tapestry of voices springing from the plurality of female ‘felt experiences” (Warren 30).

### **The Partnership Platform: Kingsolver’s Fiction**

We are of animal world. We are part of the cycles of growth and decay... We are in relationship with the rest of the planet, and that connectedness tells us we must reconsider the way we see ourselves and the rest of the nature.

Linda Hogan, *Dwellings*, 1995, 114

### ***Prodigal Summer* (2000): “Moth Love” and “Predators”**

Barbara Kingsolver’s *Prodigal Summer* (2000) presents three parallel strands in the novel, namely, “Predators”, “Moth Love”, and “Old Chestnuts”. Seemingly different from each other, the three strands converge to evolve into an interconnected ecological tapestry towards the end. Priscilla Leder (2010), in her article *Contingency, Cultivation, and Choice: The Garden Ethic in Prodigal Summer*, explores the fiction’s three apparently separate but entwined strands:

The novel brings to life the Appalachian ecosystem of Zebulon mountain and creates its own system by interweaving three stories of people enmeshed in systems of their own—the ranger who tends the mountain and the hunter who invades it; a chestnut breeder and an apple farmer, aging neighbors who quarrel about propriety and pesticides; and an entomologist struggling to adjust to life as a farmer’s widow. All of these characters presume themselves to be solitary in some sense, yet each emerges from solitude as the story unfolds (Leder 232).

Kingsolver’s women characters in *Prodigal Summer* present the essence of women-nature liaison in representing environmental interrelatedness and “our embeddedness in nature” (Plumwood 97). “Moth Love” is the story of Lusa Maluf Landowski, a scientist studying moths. She marries the farm owner Cole Widener and moves to the Appalachian farming community with him. Cole’s death in an accident leaves Lusa adjusting with his five sisters’ families and the dying Widener

farm. The *moth love* is a metaphor for her intense love for Cole and her connection with the species that she is a specialist in. Her contact with the moths physically and in her dreams shows her deep connection with this species. In her dreams, her dead husband Cole takes the form of a giant Luna moth. She herself is transformed into a moth as she makes love with the giant Luna: “He was covered in fur, not a man at all but a mountain with the silky, pale-green extremities and maroon shoulders of a luna moth. He wrapped her in his softness, touched her face with what seemed to be the movement of trees.” (Kingsolver 79). Lusa’s metamorphosis into a moth are hinted at by Kingsolver in the following lines where she becomes aware of her dream and arises out of the dream metamorphosis: “She woke in a sweat, her back arched with simultaneous desire and release. She touched her body quickly—her breasts, her face—reassuring herself of her own shape. It seemed impossible, but here she was after everything that had happened, still herself, Lusa.” (Kingsolver 79). Lusa’s transformation into a moth in the embrace of a giant Luna moth in her “dream”, is so real at that she finds it impossible to realize her human shape. This corresponds to Franz Kafka’s *Metamorphoses* (1915), where the transformation from human to nonhuman happened actually: “One morning, when Gregor Samsa woke from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into horrible vermin... His many legs, pitifully thin compared with the size of the rest of him, waved about helplessly as he looked” (Kafka 29). Kafka’s image of a man transforming into an insect appears in his earlier work *Wedding Preparations in the Country* (1907-1908), where the protagonist Raban gets transformed into an insect: “As I lie in bed I assume the shape of a big beetle, a stag beetle or a cockchafer, ..... The form of a large beetle, yes.” (Kafka 12). Here, Kingsolver has presented Lusa’s *non-realistic* transformation different from the Kafkaesque metamorphosis of Raben’s and



Samsa's. Raban's metamorphosis is a kind of departure from his *outer self* as his *inner self* remains as a beetle, and his *outer human self* goes to the wedding. Samsa's transformation is a metaphor for his alienated self and comes as a shock to him. But, Lusa's environmentally sensitive self and her primal love take the form of a moth, transforming her lover as well as herself into a Luna moth. So, symbolically it signifies the 'ecological feminine' in her identifying with the exquisite species. Identification with a nonhuman species coincides with an individual's awareness of nature, transforming and expanding the everyday direct experiences (here Lusa's). Lusa's self-identification with the moths uncovers her own sense of belonging to nature and her experience of what it means to be connected with all life forms. Whenever Lusa has her own intimate or invisible moments with herself, her transformation to a moth is indicated by Kingsolver as something very natural and feminine. Connecting with the moths and her primal love for Cole seem deeply feminine to her. In another situation, when Rickie, her nephew, questions her decision to stay back on Cole's failing farm, she says she is like those moths that she has studied all her life. Apart from the transformation in her dreams: Lusa always identifies herself with moths:

She sighed, crossing her arms across her chest and rubbing her elbows. "If there's any reason or rhyme to what I'm doing, I wish I knew it. I'm like a moth, Rickie, flying in spirals. You see how they do?" She nodded up at the lightbulb, where hordes of small, frantic wings glinted through the arc of brightness in circular paths through the air. They were everywhere once you bothered to notice them: like visible molecules, Lusa thought, entirely filling up space with their looping trajectories (Kingsolver 163).

Kingsolver also points out that it is important to be very sure of the inclusive nature of the human-nonhuman interconnection. The survival of an ecosystem or a community depends on the very interconnectedness of all species. In Kingsolver's writings, exotic species in an ecosystem are considered both damaging and non-inclusive, irrespective of whether it is human or nonhuman. Lusa is considered an outsider or exotic in the farming community with her degree in biology and for her non-Christian background. After Cole's death, she remembers her impractical argument with Cole over the invasive or exotic honeysuckle and her disrespect for Cole's knowledge of the environment. Cole states that it is important to check the growth of weed-like honeysuckle, or it will move in and take over the whole farm. His instincts about this plant have been right. His eye has known things he'd never been trained to speak of. And yet, Lusa ignored this natural knowledge about the environment with the audacity of a city-bred person. Lusa realizes that her audacity and the futility of her bookish knowledge are no match to Cole's experiential knowledge, but ironically, the awareness dawns only after his death. Kingsolver "is at pains to point out that some things in life can be known from experience, without the abstract knowledge of scientific theories" (Jones 88). Lusa's adoption of Lowell and Crys is an attempt not only to become a part of the community but also to overcome this "city person's audacity" and her exotic existence in the Widener farm world. Her connection with the environment becomes more inclusive as she breaks her own limitations to reach for the very farm life and nature in which she was an alien.

Lusa's exploration of the farm world with her sister-in-law Jewel's Son, Lowell, and daughter, Crys, and their gradual acquaintance with the farm plants and insects, is another form of the women-nature connection. Desiring to know all about farm life, they choose a path through the circular path around the lower yard hunting bugs to learn about katydid (an insect that resembles grasshoppers and crickets), monarch butterflies, and poisonous plants. This interconnection actually instigates Lusa's steady movement towards the farming community and towards nature as her scientific brain accepts the direct experience of adapting to a new environment and respecting the knowledge and tradition of rural people or the farming community. This synthesis is done with the greatest care by Kingsolver.

The "Predator" engages the readers with the reclusive wildlife ranger Deanna's effort to save and protect the coyote family from Eddie's and other farmers' acrimonious attitude. The conflict between Deanna as a protector and Eddie as an enemy is expressed by Kingsolver in this novel as a metaphor for male characters' apathy and women's empathy with the nonhuman. Kingsolver's characters are connected with the ecosystem they live in, acting both as a predator and prey. The ideological differences but the physical closeness between Deanna and Eddie is confusing. Deanna is absorbed in the irony of Eddie's life as a bounty hunter: "*Shoot every coyote, screw every woman, see the world*, she thought: the strategy of prolonged adolescence" (Kingsolver 180). Eddie's crusade to exterminate the coyotes, and Deanna's efforts to save them, are interwoven in the plot to depict the linkage between the oppression of both nature and women. The woman saves the coyotes, while a man is paid to kill them. Kingsolver has very subtly portrayed the kinship and solidarity of a woman with animals against the predatory ecological role

of a man. It is the *Otherness* and the oppositional bifurcated hierarchy that is emphasized by the wildlife ranger: “Were male and female from different worlds... Was she nothing but mud-colored female on the inside? *She* who’d always been sure she was living her life bright blue?” (Kingsolver 175).

Deanna knows that there are only female coyotes and cubs in the forest. She equates herself with the coyote women not howling at the moon but snarling quietly in the language of mothers speaking to children. The eternal mother-child relation among humans and nonhumans are paralleled here by Kingsolver. Coyote children are born empty-headed like human infants, needing to learn every skill they’d need for life. The coyote women teach the cubs the skills that they need to survive: “it wasn’t men talking” (Kingsolver 200). After three months of courtship, Eddie disappears from Deanna’s life, leaving her pregnant with a child. Deanna decides to raise her child like the coyote women, alone without Eddie:

DAMN YOU, EDDIE BONDO!” ... Truly, she had needed for him to go before the air got any denser between them. Her secret was getting hard to keep, and keep it she must, there had never been any question about that. Better for this child, better for everybody, that he not know what he’d left behind—and so he never would. She would tell people in Egg Fork, because they sure would ask, that the father of her child was a coyote (Kingsolver 432).

The denouement of the novel shows that Deanna moves in with her foster mother, Nannie Rawley. Lusa plans to adopt Jewel’s children after her disease

proves fatal. *These women* are compared with the *coyote women*, and they continue the creation stories.

Kingsolver in *Prodigal Summer* presents voices springing from the plurality of female ‘felt experiences’ (Warren 30). Both Deanna and Lusa are connected with nature as members of the subordinated groups presenting certain aspects of ecofeminism. Kingsolver’s women interact with the environment, present oppositional or contrasting views with the male characters, who often get converted ideologically like Eddie Bondo, Garnett Walker, Lowell, or Rickie. Kingsolver’s vision with respect to ecofeminism is a complementary and inclusive one. Thus, *Prodigal Summer* emerges with the principles of partnership ethics.

### ***Animal Dreams* (1990)**

*Animal Dreams* (1990) recounts Codi or Cosima’s sense of alienation from her surroundings and her feeling of *otherness* as she returns to the “country of her origin” (Kingsolver 211), a small rural town, the Grace County. Codi suffers estrangement with the place and people of Grace County, as a kind of imbalance because of her own traumatic memories that are associated with the environment and as an extension of her father, Dr. Homer’s own alienation. She has her erratic, traumatic visions signifying her own loss of self-identity, “eyeball dreams” that haunt “just like a sound, like popping glass, and then I’m blind. It’s a very short dream” (Kingsolver 197). Codi’s “eyeball dreams” are symbolic of her past losses and sense of alienation from everything that surrounds her—nature, people, and her

own inner being. Sheryl Stevenson elaborates in “Trauma and memory in *Animal Dreams*” (2010) that Codi’s present crisis elicits memories of unresolved losses in the past—the death of Codi’s mother when she was three and that of a child she secretly miscarried when she was fifteen, a daughter she frequently dreams about (89). Codi’s trauma of losing her child and her hiding this loss from her Pueblo boyfriend Lyod, the father of the still-born, and others are kind of *maternal guilt* (emphasis is mine) that makes Codi think herself sterile and infertile: “I’d come close to having a baby of my own once, but I thought of it now so rarely that the notion of myself as a mother always caught me off guard” (Kingsolver 53). She easily identifies herself with the *poisoned grounds* of Grace county that is also turning *infertile* because of mine pollution. Codi’s trauma-driven past memory blocks and faulty self-image concentrate on her own failure to connect with the abundant and bountiful landscape. Thus, Kingsolver weaves Codi’s loss, miscarriage, maternal guilt, separation from nature and the landscape, and her infertility neatly as symbols of the loss of her feminine interconnections with nature. A woman has lost both her mother and her still-born daughter, and these traumatic experiences have eclipsed the possibility to relate to her natural surroundings. The woman fails to enter a graceful relationship with nature, unable to continue the creation story. She is as poisoned as the poisoned land of Grace county. The woman-nature interconnection is poisoned and sterile.

Theda Wrede, in her seminal work “Barbara Kingsolver’s *Animal Dreams*: Ecofeminist Subversion of Western Myth” (2014), has stressed the importance of an existing connection between land and women, an extension of the women-nature liaison that Codi lacks with the Grace County: “To the women, the land is what

provides food to feed the living; it takes the dead who through flowers and care continue to live on in spirit and memories. In short, the land is the source of the circularity of life. Lacking the connection to both the land and her ancestors, Codi, however, feels excluded from their rites” (51). It is the *fertile, living, and celebrated* landscape that increases Codi’s sense of estrangement and loss of identity. Whereas, she, at once, empathizes with the ‘poisoned grounds’ that are polluted with the chemical extracts, sulfuric acid, from the copper mine, Black Mountain Mine. The trauma of the dying land and trauma of a dying feminine self becomes one for Codi. The river is getting polluted; the ground is losing its fertility, and the trees are dying. Grace is set in a fertile valley, although it being a mining town. So, people grew orchards, and now the orchards are dying because of the anthropogenic industrial expansions. The government EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) is unconcerned about this environmental degradation. With her knowledge of chemistry and biology and as a woman, Codi perceives the destruction of land, and she becomes a part of the women founded “Stitch and Bitch club” who are protesting and organizing demonstrations against this annihilation of their environment. They break out of the town’s patriarchal culture “women talked to women” (Kingsolver 68) and staying invisible to men and unite to serve nature’s cause making their mothers’, caretakers’, and homemakers’ role prominent in a movement. Whereas the men in the town sit and talk for “about nine and ten hours” (Kingsolver 68), becoming more impotent in front of the mine’s capitalistic powers, the women exhibit the spirit to resist destruction: “These men don’t see how we got to do something *right now*. They think the trees can die and we can just go somewhere else, and as long as we fry up the bacon for them in the same old pan, they think it would be...” she faltered, hugging her elbows in earnest...“that it would be *home*”

(Kingsolver 189). Instigating a movement to save the polluted, the poisoned land and the river becomes a means for Codi to get reconnected with nature. She starts to heal herself, her past wounds, and the toxic nature of Grace County.

Codi's revival of her romantic association with Lyod is another façade of her reconnection with nature, and his return in her life reintegrates Codi with Grace county. Lyod's condemnation of commodifying and destroying the land and his Native American or indigenous knowledge of the natural world helps Codi to "recover her sense of self" (Wrede 50), her perception of the land and her fertility, which ultimately eclipses to human integration with nature. Lyod's deep sense of belonging to nature and his knowledge about Pueblo, Apache, and Navajo traditions that he shares with Codi works as a *nature-healing* for Codi and her secret loss. Her trip with Lyod to the Navajo tribal land, Santa Rosalina, serves as a new way of living with the land and her past traumas gracefully. Sheryl Stevenson in "Trauma and Memory in *Animal Dreams*" explains that the "mode of healing can be seen when Loyd takes Codi to Kinishba, an eight-hundred-year-old Pueblo structure with "more than two hundred rooms—a village under one roof" that provides a vision of interconnected life" (Stevenson 100).

The vision of partnership ethics is the essence that Kingsolver returns to again and again in her works. In *Animal Dreams*, Kingsolver portrays her women characters who share an ultimate understanding of women-nature connection, highlighting the *ecological conscience* (emphasis is mine) that is associated with the women of Grace county. She adds another level of complexity in addressing Codi's trauma-driven sense of motherhood and her infertility, as well as the land and river



poisoned by human-driven industrialization. The end of the novel shows the shutting down of the mines and cleaning of the river and *healed* Codi pregnant with Lyod's child. The novel highlights deep personal engagements with the natural world for Codi and the women of Grace county as healers, nurtures, and caring for nonhuman nature. Lyod's indigenous connection enables the readers to cross the barrier of culture/nature dualism and perceive a different vantage point to create more inclusive and integrated forms of co-existence among all species that resonates with the spirit of partnership ethics.

### ***Flight Behaviour* (2012)**

Kingsolver's climate change fiction *Flight Behaviour* (2012) is centred on the life-altering experience of a woman, Dellarobia Turnbow, the frustrated, placid housewife from a small town in southern Appalachia. Her momentary romantic escapade makes her face the unfamiliar territory of planetary transformation in the form of a huge monarch butterfly migration, *a forest on fire*: "Every bough glowed with an orange blaze...Trees turned to fire, a burning bush...The flame now appeared to lift from individual treetops in showers of orange sparks, exploding the way a pine log does in a campfire when it's poked" (Kingsolver 13). Dellarobia's ideological transformation is the most significant part which demonstrates the central component of Kingsolver's ecofeminist thoughts. Dellarobia undergoes successive transformations facing a contradiction, limitations of human vision, and finally, change. Her initial belief in seeing the butterflies as "God's grace" changes as she confronts Ovid Byron, the scientist. Kingsolver deliberately includes various viewpoints (religious, scientific, political, etc.) regarding the migration of monarchs

or King Billies as the locals call them to present the essential culture/nature dualism, and it encourages the reader to erase the distinctions.

Dellarobia's father-in-law, Bear, represents the man/nature disconnections, determined to clear the forest area where the monarchs have taken refuge. Her husband Cub's silent consent to the felling of the forest for monetary benefits reflects their loss of ecological integrity. Kingsolver intentionally represents such gendered value categories of eco-consciousness to focus on the ecofeminist view of "feminine" ways of caring and sustaining the natural world and the need to move away from ecological abuses. Ovid Byron, the scientist, initiates Dellarobia's transformation of conscience as she starts working with him. Her interaction with Byron makes her realize the intertwining of scientific knowledge and ecological values of life that is essential to nurture nonhuman nature. Dellarobia's conversion demonstrates the triumph of *feminine* values negating the patriarchal *masculine* impositions. Dellarobia's decision to continue her college studies and to divorce Cub shows her essential survival from a placid and unconcerned life. It equates her to the Monarchs that too survive the sudden change in the climate. Dellarobia's exchanges with Byron reconnects her with nature in a different way. Earlier after the initial encounter with the monarchs, religious explanation or the "God's grace" theory is the motivating force for her to accept the sudden arrival of the butterflies. But the ideological collision between her reservations and scientific truths is unavoidable:

We are seeing a bizarre alteration of a previously stable pattern," he said finally. "A continental ecosystem breaking down. Most likely, this is due to climate change. Really I can tell you I'm sure of that. Climate change has

disrupted this system. For the scientific record, we want to get to the bottom of that as best we can, before events of this winter destroy a beautiful species and the chain of evidence we might use for tracking its demise. It's not a happy scenario (Kingsolver 125-126).

Her concern for the survival of a whole species is more than the cold, detached scientist to whom a species is an object of study the strange phenomenon. Kingsolver's exclusive ecofeminist focus is on Dellarobia's connection with the nonhuman world. She is devastated by the natural calamities that have occurred both in Mexico and in Tennessee: "She tried to assimilate this news while her brain crashed with thoughts of the Mexican mudslide, the smashed and twisted cars, houses lifted from their moorings, floating downstream" (Kingsolver, 2012, 124). Dellarobia learns to accept the power of human agency that has continuously abused nature. Anthropogenic actions in the form of climate disruption in Mexican land have forced the butterflies to migrate to Tennessee, where they are facing a similar kind of peril. Antonia Mehnert in *Climate Change Fictions: Representations of Global warming in American Literature* (2016) comments that Kingsolver's writing here illustrates the experience of the creative and self-directed power of nature, which allows for new sensibilities and an awareness of what Debora Bird Rose and Thom Van Dooren have described as "situated connectivities that bind us into multi-species communities" (87). Dellarobia's connection with the monarchs and the land takes an ecofeminist turn as she sees that larger stand. Culture and nature, human and nonhuman, man and woman, reason and emotion—all of these cannot exist as dualistic forms. Rather these are interconnected as complementary

halves in a planetary ecosystem where “Everything is connected to everything else” (Barry Commoner, *The Closing Circle* 1971).

## Conclusion

Chris Cuomo claims in “On Ecofeminist Philosophy” (2002) that Karen Warren’s key insight to ecofeminist philosophy is captured precisely in the phrase “it’s all connected” (1). In fact, the major ecofeminists call for paying attention to the ecological as well as social interdependencies that exist in the planetary system. Roger J.H. King also points out in his work “Caring about Nature: Feminist Ethics and the Environment” (1991), the ideological commonality that exists between essentialist and conceptualist ecofeminism and these two strands “presuppose that environmental ethics will benefit from creating theoretical space for human relations to nature, personal lived experience, and the vocabulary of caring, nurturing, and maintaining connection” (p. 76). Merchant in her *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture* (2013) claims that the partnership ethics stresses this very *interconnection*. In her own words: “this cooperative discourse does not claim that women have special knowledge of nature or a special ability to care for nature. Nor is it a case where “some” women are speaking for “all” women or for “other” women who are capable of speaking for themselves. Here women and minorities participate in the process. But nature, which often speaks in a different voice, is also heard at the table” (250). The partnership creates a platform that entails creating a new narrative or set of narratives about the human place in history and nature (Merchant 255). Kingsolver’s fiction and non-fiction can be termed as *new sets of*

*recovery narratives* (emphasis is mine) that resonate strongly with the partnership principles. The liaison between Kingsolver's fictional characters, her acquaintances, and friends in her essays and environment represents the broader precepts of ecofeminist thoughts postulated by philosophers like Carolyn Merchant, Karen Warren, Val Plumwood, and Ynestra King in their works. Kingsolver's works depart from the various dual oppression of the patriarchal domination model and unjust cultural hierarchies and provide the key to understanding ecological realities. These sets of narratives can be designated as "Recovery Narratives" (Merchant 256), presenting what Plumwood voices as "a new relationship with nature" affirming "continuity and kinship for earth-others as well as their subjecthood...and agency. It will be...open to the play of more-than-human forces and attentive to the ancestral voices of place and earth" (qtd. in Merchant 256).