




Nature's Daughters: Empowerment and Environmental Stewardship in Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behavior*

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Abstract

In the twenty-first century, women are empowered through natural elements, and they nurture and preserve their environment. 'Nature's Daughters' likely refers to the female protagonists in Barbara Kingsolver's novels *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behavior*, who demonstrate a strong bond with nature and play significant roles in environmental activism and conservation efforts. These characters embody the interconnectedness between women, nature, and empowerment, reflecting the idea of women as agents of change in ecological stewardship. The first discussion concerns how female protagonists, Deanna, Lusa, and Nannie, navigate challenges and empower through nature while preserving the natural environment and its beings in Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*. The second discussion concerns how the female protagonist, Dellarobia, tackles her adversities and is empowered through the migrated monarch butterflies and the conservation of the endangered species in Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior*. Kingsolver highlights the themes of empowerment, oppression, Sustainable environmental management, and discrimination in society. Female characters have an intimate relationship with nature rather than men because women have the role of mothers who care for or protect family members, natural beings, and their surroundings.

Keywords: Female Fortitude, Interconnectedness, Conservation, Oppression and Exploitation

Introduction

Barbara Kingsolver wrote two excellent books - *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behavior*. In these books, she talks about how important it is for us to take care of nature and society and have good relationships with them to live a sustainable life. Kingsolver discusses women, environmental justice, and injustices and uses biological terms such as endangered species, coyotes, and monarch butterflies to create societal awareness. She urges women to protect them and make efforts to educate people about the conservation of the environment. Kingsolver presents strong female characters who empower and educate

people on environmental stewardship. Both novels explore the connection between human and non-human nature, emphasizing the importance of embracing a sustainable and caring relationship with the environment. Brendan T. examines these books from an ecofeminist perspective, considering how people and animals interact and how female characters deeply understand and appreciate the environment and its diversity (Hawkins, 2015).

Barbara Kingsolver is one of the most contemporary novelists in America. Kingsolver is a noted writer based on the theme of environmental and women's issues and how both are interconnected based on patriarchal structures, societal challenges, climatic change impacts, and consequences reflected in their lives. Kingsolver expressed in their twenty-first-century works, *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behavior* based on the significant theme of protecting the environment, especially women, who took over the part of preserving nature and extinct species, volunteering themselves to sacrifice and make more effort to protect the lives of the species for future generations as well. Kingsolver, a biologist well-versed in ecosystem dynamics and species conservation, articulates through her novels the deep affection and compassion exhibited by the Appalachian community towards their land, underscoring the imperative of its preservation and sustainable management. She advocated for preserving and maintaining all ancestral lands for the benefit of future generations.

The choice of *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behavior* for the topic of discussion in this paper is due to more reasons: first, to highlight the adversities faced by every female character in various situations; second, to preserve their ancestral land is not to destroy the trees even avoid toxic substances like pesticides, third, to protect and maintain their level of population of the endangered species of coyotes and the monarch butterflies, fourth, how women become resilient through their super-power of confidence and positive thought, and also get empowered due to nature, and how women are active to work with nature.

Male characters often perpetuate traditional and exploitative practices towards the environment. Kingsolver's books explore the connection between people and nature, highlighting the importance of taking responsibility for the environment. The stories are set in rural communities and delve into the intricacies of human relationships, ecological balance, and the consequences of environmental damage. The research aims to achieve two main objectives. The research has two main objectives.

1. To analyze the portrayal of empowerment in Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behavior*, focusing on how characters assert power in their personal lives and environmental activism.

2. To examine the theme of environmental stewardship in Kingsolver's novels, exploring how characters engage with nature, confront ecological challenges, and advocate for sustainable practices.

Kingsolver highlights that the female characters are empowered through natural elements, including biophilic design, green spaces, natural landscapes, wildlife, and

conserving those elements of their surroundings. She expresses that the female characters are strong enough to face challenges, become resilient, and empower themselves through confidence, motivation, friendship, and a deep connection with nature. Kingsolver expresses her characteristics through the protagonists of *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behavior*, how women face challenges and tackle her struggles through nature because she is already a good biologist. Through her scientific knowledge, she acknowledged being precise and resilient from all her adversities and empowered herself to work with nature and survive in her land of independent power.

Adversities of the Female Protagonists in Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behavior*

In Kingsolver's novels, women face challenges from cultures that men dominate. These cultures exploit both women and nature. Women characters face problems from their community members, their husband's family, and men. The female protagonists understand that human and non-human life are connected. They appreciate the importance of plants and animals in the natural world. The women resist the oppressive and exploitative environmental practices and mindsets of men. They recognize and understand the variety of life forms in nature and oppose traditional, male-dominated cultures that try to control nature. Kingsolver also includes environmental issues such as climate change, species extinction, and pesticide use in her novels. Through her characters' experiences, she encourages readers to consider the special bond between women and nature. Kingsolver's writing is a powerful tool for social change, raising awareness, and promoting ecological consciousness.

The interconnected narratives within *Prodigal Summer* serve as poignant exemplars of resilience in the face of adversity. Deanna, Lusa, and Nannie have their lives narrated through three different stories. The chapters are titled 'Predator,' 'Moth Love', and 'Old Chestnut'. Manhota argues about the character Deanna is portrayed as someone who prefers solitude, but the book *Prodigal Summer* suggests that solitude is just a human idea. The book also explores how everything in nature is interconnected, a theme that is consistent throughout the novel (Manhota, 2015).

Solitude is a human presumption. Every quiet step is thunder to beetle life underfoot, a tug of impalpable thread on the web pulling mate to mate and predator to prey, a beginning or an end. (*Prodigal Summer*, p.444)

Among these narratives, the journey of Deanna stands as a testament to the transformative power of perseverance. Initially wedded to a professor with whom mutual antipathy thrives due to disparate interests and ideologies, Deanna finds herself adrift in a sea of societal expectations following their subsequent divorce. Undeterred by the

constraints imposed by gender norms, she embarks on a path of self-discovery that culminates in her appointment as a forest ranger within the expanse of the National Zebulon Country in Southern Appalachia. Yet, Deanna's newfound sense of purpose is tested when ensnared in an ill-fated affair with Eddie Bondo, a hunter harboring clandestine designs to eradicate the imperiled Coyote family. Unwavering in her commitment to conservation, Deanna confronts Bondo's deceit head-on, resolute in her mission to safeguard vulnerable wildlife. Through her discernment of Bondo's capricious nature, characterized by impulsive and erratic behavior earning him the epithet of a 'mad birdbrain', Deanna attains a lucidity that extends to her prior relationship with her ex-husband. Recognizing the shared propensity for disparagement and discouragement between the two, Deanna emancipates herself from the shackles of toxic influence, emerging emboldened and fortified in her dedication to the preservation of the natural world.

The character of Lusa, an entomologist by profession, undergoes a significant transformation as she navigates the challenges inherent in married life, particularly within the context of her husband Cole Widener's family and their agricultural practices. Despite her initial reservations regarding Cole's tobacco cultivation, Lusa ultimately seizes agency following his passing, assuming control of the land and transitioning towards a sustainable farming model. Her journey towards sustainability is marked by a commitment to learning and adaptation, as evidenced by her acquisition of knowledge in vocational agriculture from Mr Walker, albeit in modern agricultural methods. Concurrently, Lusa's sister-in-law, Jewel, grapples with her tribulations, both women contending with the stifling influence exerted by their community and respective familial ties. In a poignant display of solidarity, Lusa extends her trust to Jewel during moments of vulnerability, drawing upon her own experiences of widowhood and the associated struggles to articulate her connection to the land. *Prodigal Summer* elucidates the profound impact of communal dynamics and familial expectations on individual agency and self-realization in pursuing sustainable livelihoods through these intersecting narratives.

Nannie Rawley, a pioneering generational farmer renowned for her commitment to sustainable agriculture, achieved distinction as the inaugural certified organic farmer in Zebulon County. However, her endeavors were not without impediments, chiefly embodied by her neighbor, Garnett Walker, who adheres staunchly to conventional farming practices. Maintaining an American Chestnut Orchard for commercial gain, Walker employs copious quantities of chemical herbicides, insecticides such as Sevin, and pesticides like Malathion in his agricultural pursuits. His aversion to weeds, particularly the robust American pokeberry weed, drives him to relentless chemical intervention. In stark contrast to Walker's chemical warfare on pests and vegetation, Rawley espouses a philosophy of ecological balance, encapsulated in the aphorism, "Good fences make good neighbors" (*Prodigal Summer*, p.88), drawn from Robert Frost's poem 'Mending Wall.' Despite Rawley's earnest entreaties and admonishments regarding the escalating

environmental degradation wrought by Walker's chemical onslaughts, her counsel is brushed aside. Walker's obstinate disregard for her warnings prompts Rawley to deride him as an 'alligator,' symbolizing his rapacious exploitation of nature and intellectual rigidity. Aptly christened the 'Death Angel' by Rawley for his inadvertent decimation of songbirds, Walker's indiscriminate chemical warfare exacts a toll on the ecosystem, exacerbating pest proliferation and disrupting ecological equilibrium. Rawley's resilience in the face of Walker's obstinacy manifests through her steadfast adherence to sustainable farming practices, abstention from aggressive encounters, and cultivation of crops, vegetables, and fruits through organic methods. Through her unwavering commitment to ecological stewardship, Rawley exemplifies the efficacy and viability of sustainable agricultural methodologies in fostering both environmental health and rural prosperity.

In Barbara Kingsolver's novel *Flight Behavior*, the protagonist Dellarobia grapples with the repercussions of a youthful indiscretion, namely an affair with Jimmy, a decision influenced by her vulnerability and his exploitation of her naivety a decade prior. This entanglement leaves Dellarobia feeling ensnared and disillusioned, compounded by the weight of societal expectations bearing down upon her. The narrative unfolds against an environmental anomaly—a mysterious fungus infesting the local trees—a tangible manifestation of Dellarobia's internal turmoil and discontent. Javkar proves Dellarobia's mind is full of the burden of adultery, and she thinks in her mind that the shame and loss would infect her children too. She prays to God "to secure her hearts against things that lure us wrongly". Her heart bears the sin (Javkar, 2018, p.131). Central to the story is Dellarobia's odyssey, which serves as a lens through which to explore her discontentment with societal norms and ecological degradation. Her eventual union with Cub, a discontented rural Tennessee farmer, further underscores the theme of disillusionment as they navigate the challenges of matrimony and parenthood amidst a milieu of societal judgment. Through her relationships with both Jimmy and Cub, Dellarobia confronts the pervasive forces of oppression and exploitation, grappling with their impact on her identity and aspirations.

Bindu argues human activities have caused harm to the environment, leading to abnormal natural occurrences such as floods, cyclones, heavy rain, and unexpected weather conditions (Bindu, 2020). Due to climate change, many natural things, like climatic conditions and butterflies' mitigation, also change drastically. Kingsolver mentions in *Flight Behavior* that changes such as natural disasters arise immediately in unreasonable periods, including drought, cyclones, floods and earthquakes, and ice melting. Many consequences occur due to climate change, and both human and non-human beings face challenges in their lives and even lose their lives. Kingsolver quoted, "As good as gone" creatures are doomed (*Flight Behavior*, p.341). Environmental critic Alex Goodbody investigates the portrayal of climate change risk in the novel, emphasizing Kingsolver's endeavor to personalize the phenomenon and accentuate its consequences. Goodbody

contends that through narrative techniques, Kingsolver disrupts dominant modes of attention, perception, and moral frameworks, thereby facilitating readers' envisioning of a potentially alarming future. This narrative strategy underscores Kingsolver's conviction in the transformative potential of literary imagination amidst an era marked by fragmented awareness and desensitization to climate-related hazards (Goodbody, 2014, pp. 4, 5, 22).

In Kingsolver's narrative, a thematic undercurrent emerges wherein female characters grapple with the pervasive dominance exerted by their male counterparts, mirroring a broader societal paradigm of gendered power dynamics. This portrayal is juxtaposed with a parallel exploration of humanity's relationship with the natural world, wherein male characters exemplify a pattern of exploitation and prioritization of profit over preserving ecological integrity. Characters such as Garnett, Eddie Bondo, Cub Turnbow, and Cole Widener epitomize this ethos, displaying selfishness and hubris as they assert control over women and the environment. Their actions reflect a systemic pattern of prioritizing short-term gains and resource extraction at the expense of long-term sustainability and the well-being of the ecosystem's human and non-human inhabitants. Through these characterizations, Kingsolver invites critical reflection on the interconnectedness of gender oppression and environmental degradation within the larger tapestry of societal power dynamics.

Female Fortitude in Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behavior*

In Barbara Kingsolver's literary works, *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behavior*, the thematic intersectionality between the natural environment and female protagonists emerges as a salient motif. Through the nuanced portrayal of characters such as Deanna, Lusa, Nannie, and Dellarobia, Kingsolver intricately examines the profound symbiosis between women and nature, elucidating how their interactions with the environment imbue them with a sense of empowerment and resilience. In *Prodigal Summer*, Deanna, a reclusive wildlife biologist, epitomizes this connection as she immerses herself in the rhythms of the natural world, finding solace and purpose amidst its verdant expanse. Similarly, Lusa, the wife of a farmer, grapples with her challenges, finding solace and strength in her intimate bond with the land. Likewise, in *Flight Behavior*, Dellarobia Turnbow's encounter with a colony of monarch butterflies triggers a transformative voyage during which she not only nurtures a deep respect for the natural world but also gains acute awareness of the environmental challenges it faces. Through the narrative arcs of these female protagonists, Kingsolver underscores the reciprocal relationship between women and nature, wherein the latter serves as a source of healing, resilience, and empowerment, fostering a profound symbiotic bond that enriches both the individual and the ecosystem. Thus, within the thematic framework of Kingsolver's literary oeuvre, the convergence of female agency and environmental consciousness emerges as a potent testament to the

enduring interdependence between humanity and the natural world.

Deep Love with Nature

In Barbara Kingsolver's novels *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behavior*, the female protagonists exemplify a profound affinity for nature and its myriad inhabitants, akin to familial devotion. Deanna Wolfe, Lusa Landowski, Nannie Rawley, and Dellarobia ardently cherish, nurture, and advocate for the preservation of the natural world to an extraordinary degree. Deanna's fervent attachment to coyotes, as depicted in *Prodigal Summer*, is emblematic of her staunch commitment to their safeguarding, as evinced by her impassioned admonition of Eddie Bondo, 'DAMN YOU, EDDIE BONDO,' upon learning of his intention to harm them. Lusa Landowski, a widowed farmer and proficient entomologist, derives profound satisfaction from her stewardship of her crop fields and the distinction she achieves as an organic gardener. Meanwhile, Nannie Rawley, the pioneering certified organic farmer, inherits from her father a profound reverence for cultivating apple orchards and exhibits an unwavering devotion to the myriad species under her care. Dellarobia, a stalwart defender of monarch butterflies, selflessly forsakes familial ties to champion their cause. The depicted female characters derive solace, healing, and emancipation from their communion with nature, leveraging its therapeutic qualities to surmount personal trials. Their harmonious relationship with the natural world catalyzes the fulfillment of their aspirations, transcending traditional gender roles and affirming nature as their wellspring of contentment and serenity.

Deanna, portrayed in Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*, emerges as a poignant emblem of reverence for the natural world, embodying a profound connection with its myriad inhabitants. As a devoted lady wildlife ranger, her ethos is underscored by a deep-seated compassion towards both the tangible manifestations of nature and its intangible essence. Immersed in her vocation, she maintains an unwavering vigil over the arboreal expanse, attuned to the minutiae of every tree, animal, and bird that graces her purview. Her custodial role extends beyond mere observation, as she patiently awaits the unfolding of each botanical and zoological phenomenon, from the tender unfurling of blossoms to the elusive movements of creatures long vanished from the mainstream. Through keen observation, Deanna attains a nuanced understanding of the natural world, discerning the language of species through their ocular expressions and bodily comportments. Her encounters with the denizens of Appalachia, such as coyotes, evoke a sense of euphoria, albeit tempered by a steadfast commitment to non-intrusion. This reverence for wildlife is further evidenced by her meticulous cataloging of their dietary preferences, a testament to her holistic appreciation of their existence. In essence, Deanna's ethos epitomizes a harmonious coalescence with nature, marked by a profound respect for its inhabitants and an unyielding dedication to their preservation.

Remeena argues that Deanna has a deep connection to the environment around her. She lives in the forest, and it's not just a house to her – it's a place of safety and comfort. She knows the forest like the back of her hand, and she's always watching out for the animals that live there. Deanna can easily tell animals apart by the signs they leave behind. She loves to listen to the birds and enjoys the sound of their songs. She takes care of the Southern Appalachia range and works hard to stop people from hurting the animals or destroying the forest. She won't accept any bribes because she cares too much about the environment. Deanna is a guardian of the forest and all the animals that call it home. She wants to make sure that future generations can enjoy it, too (Remeena, 2023).

In the realm of horticultural engagement, Lusa assumes a pivotal role, wielding her expertise to impart the principles of sustainable agriculture to her compatriot, Jewel. Demonstrating a keen attentiveness to the interplay between botanical stimuli and resultant vegetative responses, Lusa diligently catalogs the application of various substances upon the verdant tapestry of her garden. Such meticulous endeavors are undertaken to discern their efficacy and benefit to the cultivated flora. Yet amidst this conscientious pursuit, Lusa's countenance assumes a visage of enraptured contemplation, as she revels in the arrival of novel creatures within the precincts of her cultivated domain. Jewel, beholding this tableau, finds herself transfixed by the intensity of Lusa's gaze, likening its descent to the graceful descent of "azure-hued butterflies" alighting upon her countenance (Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*, p. 382).

“Lusa smiled, self-conscious but proud of herself. The truth is, I like doing it. I won't have to spend money on food this year. And it seems like hard work is the only thing that stops my brain from running in circles.”
(*Prodigal Summer*, p. 404)

As Lusa stands amidst the expanse of her agrarian domain, a profound sense of pride and tranquility pervades her consciousness. Immersed in the bucolic splendor of her farmland, she finds solace and fulfillment in the communion with nature that agricultural stewardship affords. Whether engaged in the meticulous curation of her agricultural yields, the nurturing of her crops and livestock, or the contemplation of the verdant landscapes enveloping her, Lusa discerns an innate harmony between her labors and the fundamental rhythms of the earth. Her agrarian pursuits not only cultivate sustenance but also nurture a profound psychological equilibrium, imbuing her existence with purpose and cognitive clarity. As she surveys the fertile expanse before her, Lusa is cognizant of the profound significance inherent in her endeavors, validating the enduring efficacy of her toil and dedication.

“Bugs I mean. I know you all laugh at me, but I'm so fond of bugs, that I can't stand to use a general pesticide like Sevin. I use different things. I use Bt on the tomatoes. 'B-T?' It's a germ, *Bacillus thuringiensis*. A

bacterium that gives hornworms indigestion when they eat tomatoes but doesn't hurt bees or ladybugs. ... Well, bad indigestion – the hornworms die. It works on cabbage whoopers, too.” (*Prodigal Summer*, p.378)

Lusa, cognizant of the principles of sustainable agriculture, imparted her knowledge to Jewel, elucidating the efficacy of *Bacillus thuringiensis* in combatting hornworm infestations on tomatoes while concurrently ameliorating nematode populations in the root systems. Recognizing the pernicious impact of cabbage loopers on agricultural ecosystems, Lusa judiciously directed Jewel in the application of *Bacillus thuringiensis* to cabbage crops, thereby effectuating a reduction in pest proliferation and mitigating deleterious repercussions on cruciferous cultivations. Such judicious utilization of this bacterium underscores a commitment to environmentally conscientious agricultural methodologies, thereby advancing the cause of sustainability in agricultural practice.

Nannie exemplifies a profound reverence for the myriad forms of life that inhabit our world, extending her admiration even to the most diminutive creatures. With a remarkable ethos of respect and empathy, she regards each pest, bug, small insect, and worm not as mere nuisances, but as vital constituents of our ecological tapestry. Her approach is characterized by a profound recognition of the intrinsic worth inherent in every living being, regardless of size or stature. Rather than succumbing to the prevalent sentiments of disdain or disgust often associated with such organisms, Nannie instead embraces them as cherished companions, worthy of protection and preservation. Her commitment to safeguarding these creatures is not merely a personal predilection, but a noble endeavor aimed at ensuring their continued existence for the benefit of future generations. In her unwavering dedication to the cause of conservation, Nannie emerges as a beacon of enlightenment, inspiring others to emulate her profound reverence for the natural world. Nannie expresses her love in her words, “And every time you spray, it gets worse” (*Prodigal Summer*, p. 278). Nannie exemplifies a commendable dedication to sustainable agricultural practices, as evidenced by her successful cultivation of broccoli and eggplant sans the utilization of pesticides or chemical sprays. Her commitment to working in harmony with nature underscores her profound care for the environment and an astute understanding of ecological balance within agricultural ecosystems. Furthermore, the flourishing growth of her corn crop, marked by the emergence of tassels, is a testament to her adept navigation of natural processes and ability to foster optimal conditions for plant development. Nannie's conscientious approach fosters agricultural productivity and embodies a profound ethos of environmental stewardship and ecological mindfulness.

Kingsolver's novel *Flight Behavior*, the protagonist Dellarobia Turnbow emerges as a poignant emblem of societal consciousness amidst ecological turmoil. Through her character, Kingsolver deftly explores the intersection of individual agency and environmental activism, particularly in climate change and its repercussions on the

migratory behaviors of Monarch butterflies. Dellarobia's acute awareness of the imminent threat to these delicate creatures symbolizes a broader concern for the fragile balance of ecosystems worldwide. Her advocacy and collaborative efforts with Ovid Byron reflect a shared anguish over the prospect of Monarch butterflies facing extinction, compelling both characters to confront the urgency of ecological stewardship. At a critical threshold of ambient temperature, the migratory habits of monarch butterflies necessitate a nuanced understanding of climatic conditions conducive to their survival. As depicted in Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior*, the migratory monarchs epitomize the resilience of species confronted with existential challenges. In seeking refuge within artificial habitats, researchers and conservationists exhibit a profound commitment to mitigating the impending spectre of extinction. Kingsolver's poignant assertion, "Not everyone has the stomach to watch an extinction" (*Flight Behavior*, p.440), encapsulates these efforts' visceral urgency. Byron and Dellarobia are trying their best to create a natural landscape of lab and climatic conditions so they would survive; their concern and knowledge lead them to survive.

"She slowed to a crawl before she felt comfortable taking her eyes off the track, leaning forward to peer up into the trees." (*Flight Behavior*, p.127)

When Dellarobia sees the massive swarm of monarch butterflies on the mountain near her home, she is so entranced by the sight that she has to slow down and carefully take her eyes off the path to look up into the trees and fully take in the spectacle before her. Goodbody discusses the number, color, and behavior of monarch butterflies, as well as the impact of epiphanic experiences on Dellarobia's character's emotional, cognitive, and moral aspects. Kingsolver expresses the ecology, actions, and vulnerabilities of monarch butterflies, (Goodbody, 2014, p. 8). Kingsolver expressed her love towards monarch butterflies, "I love butterflies, but these butterflies were just like, hello, notice me, there's a message here. And so, the butterflies kept fluttering like over my head" (*Flight Behavior*, p.138). The number of monarch butterflies is countless, it has an eye-catching color with an impressive flight deed. "They rested and crawled even on the path around her feet, giving the impression of twitchy, self-automated leaves" (*Flight Behavior*, p.53). Dellarobia has never seen such a large number of living organisms in one place. Secondly, the butterflies' glittering orange color intensifies her experience in a meaningful way. The color of their wings is so charming that "those golden darts filled the whole of the air, swirling like leaves in a massive form" (*Flight Behavior*, p.52). Their orange color dominates the woods to the extent that "every tree on the far mountainsides was covered with [what looked like] trembling flame." The metaphorical use of fire illustrates what Dellarobia has gone through: "The fire was alive and incomprehensibly immense, an unbounded, uncountable congregation of flame-colored insects" (*Flight Behavior*, p.53). Finally, the butterflies' flight behavior in the air has further deepened Dellarobia's

emotional experience. As if in a trance, “she noticed little darts in the trail... Little V-shaped points, like arrows, aimed in every possible direction as if scattered here for sheer confusion” (*Flight Behavior*, p.52). Their movement in the air and their shadows “rolling like pebbles along the floor of a fast stream” have given her a vertiginous feeling that “looking down at her feet made her dizzy” (*Flight Behavior*, p.56). Kingsolver expresses her experiences through the character, Dellarobia, who sees many butterflies that are very beautiful with their colorful wings. They move around in different directions and make everything around them look gorgeous. Dellarobia feels dizzy while watching them, and their shadows on the ground look like pebbles in a fast-moving river. The story shows how powerful nature can be, and it makes Dellarobia emotional. “The only insect capable of flying great distances and even over the ocean” (*Flight Behavior*, p.116). The butterfly is an insect that travels far distances and differs from other insects.

As the story progresses, Dellarobia’s humble abode transforms into a dazzling sight, resembling a majestic creature at peace. The tree trunks are draped in a vibrant orange hue, with swarms of monarch butterflies resembling the scales of a shimmering fish. The fluttering wings of these delicate creatures move in perfect unison, creating a mesmerizing spectacle. However, the arrival of these butterflies is not a mere coincidence; it is a sign of the looming threat of global warming. The eventual ice storm that ravages their habitat and destroys their home serves as a stark reminder of the dire consequences of climate change that the characters must confront.

Barbara Kingsolver, renowned for her literary works such as *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behavior*, has established herself as a prominent figure in biology. Through her novels, Kingsolver delves into profound discussions on the extinction of endangered species and the intricate interplay between environmental issues and human society. Her narratives intricately weave together ecological conservation themes, accentuating nature’s intrinsic value. Particularly notable is Kingsolver’s portrayal of female characters who exhibit a deep-seated love for the natural world, showcasing a profound respect for the ecosystem’s resources and species. Through her characters, Kingsolver eloquently conveys the significance of nature, offering poignant insights into the interconnectedness between humanity and the environment.

Healing Power

In *Prodigal Summer*, Deanna embodies empowerment as she finds solace and strength in her connection to the Appalachian wilderness, shaping her identity and choices. She is empowered by living with the wild species; Coyotes inhabit the woods around Deanna’s cottage and captivate her as a forest ranger. She pays great attention to them and develops a bond of kinship with them. Through nature, she finds solace, purpose, and strength in the natural world around her. Her deep bond with the environment, particularly

with the creatures she studies and protects, reflects her empowerment through nature.

Lusa, a city girl who marries a farmer, beautifully portrays the interdependence of the farm's flora and fauna. As Lusa spends more time on the farm, she becomes increasingly aware of the healing power of nature. The fresh air, the chirping of birds, and the lush greenery around her not only fill her lungs but also invigorate her to work harder. In one instance, Lusa closes her eyes and takes a deep breath, feeling the presence of nature in the Zebulon mountains, located in the Appalachian region. The book beautifully captures how Lusa's connection with nature grows stronger and how she finds solace amidst the chaos of her personal life.

Nannie Rawley specializes in creating green spaces such as gardens and orchards for personal or commercial purposes. She has experience maintaining an apple orchard for large-scale fruit production and a vegetable garden. Her orchard is located on the west side of the Appalachian region.

“The orchard trees planted by her father were all good strains, true to type, carefully grown out from cuttings so they'd be identical to their parent tree.” (*Prodigal Summer*, p.393)

She attributes her success as a gardener to the teachings of her father, Old Rawley, who planted fifty-one trees in his own green space. Nannie is a fervent supporter of organic farming techniques and a person who is deeply worried about ecosystem vulnerability and the harmful effects of chemical pesticides. She is portrayed as an ecofeminist who employs scientific evidence and biblical scriptural references to advocate for more environmentally sustainable agricultural methods. On the other hand, her neighbor, Garnett Walker, is heavily dependent on chemical insecticides. She packed apples and sold them to some company in Atlantica Georgia with a silly name, for apple juice without pesticides, earning an amount for her honest work. She healed and benefited from her apple orchard and garden. Nannie spends her time with the bees and farmland.

In *Flight Behavior*, Dellarobia has the luck of living among Biophilic design near Monarch Butterflies. Dellarobia and Ovid Byron built a 'butterfly lab' along with Bonnie, and Mako is a young second-year graduate student of Professor, Byron. She faces the media and utters that “it's a beautiful sight” (*Flight Behavior*, p.503). So, she felt happy and relaxed there. She had felt a different, peaceful experience there. The inspired sayings of the eighteenth-century English poet Samuel Johnson cleverly stated, “Deviation from nature is a deviation from happiness.” Kingsolver weaves the natural environment into the lives of her characters in these works, exemplifying the idea of biophilic design, which aims to foster human connection with nature via design. Kingsolver creates an environment but ignores several societal ramifications. The heroine, Dellarobia Turnbow, discovers a strange occurrence involving monarch butterflies while living in a remote area of Tennessee. A key component of communicating the effects of climate change and human

activity on the environment is the portrayal of gardens and the natural landscape. *Flight Behavior* is set in a forest and explores species interdependence and the impact of change on the natural equilibrium. Monarch Butterflies occupy the protagonist's farmland, it becomes a garden alike, and everyone visits her place: scientists, even the media, and reporters. Tina and her assistants also visit her farm place, which excites everyone. It lets others know about the migration of the species and its extinction due to climate change. Naturally, Dellarobia has a chance to create a beautiful landscape, change her life, live an independent life, and heal in a better way.

Kingsolver has the experience of the healing power of nature. Nature plays a significant role in women's lives. Kingsolver has chosen to study evolutionary biology and master to equip knowledge of biology which will heal when she gets depressed or marginalized by somebody else. Like Deanna, Kingsolver has the experience of divorce which mentally weakens her, she overcomes those events with nature. Nowadays women are living independently like Kingsolver and develop their skills and move further to reach their purpose.

Female Protagonist Advocates for Environmental Conservation

Mahota suggests that mitigating ecological catastrophes can be effectively pursued by elevating environmental consciousness or awareness, enabling individuals to conceive of a world emancipated from ecological crises. The researcher contends that beyond mere cognizance, a comprehensive approach necessitates acquiring knowledge and practical experience and implementing requisite measures. Kingsolver, in alignment with Mahota's assertion, accentuates the proactive role assumed by women in undertaking initiatives and assuming risks aimed at mitigating ecological disasters while fostering resilience to the impacts of climate change. The researcher accepts that in one of Kingsolver's interviews, she asserts that literature is a potent instrument for effecting social change and rousing individuals to acknowledge their societal obligations (Mahota, 2015, p. 632). Kingsolver often explores the intersection of women and environmental conservation in her works, portraying female characters who play central roles in protecting and nurturing the natural world. The female protagonists serve as strong voices for environmental conservation. Her novels explore the themes of nature, ecology, and environmental activism in her work, advocating for sustainable living practices and respect for the natural world. Kingsolver believes in the interconnectedness of all living beings and ecosystems, emphasizing the importance of preserving biodiversity and addressing environmental challenges such as climate change, habitat destruction, and species extinction. The characters Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behavior* are deeply committed to preserving the natural world around them and developing sustainable farming practices that will protect the land for future generations.

Deanna is passionate about protecting the coyotes from hunters, she maintains the secrets of the animals and looks over the mountains and valleys, no harm against the endangered animals especially coyotes. Because she is a forest ranger who has the responsibility to protect all-natural beings and their surroundings. Kingsolver, through the character Deanna, conveyed an affinity for science, exemplified by a profound enthusiasm for scholarly pursuits and extensive consumption of literary material, surpassing that of her acquaintances. She is so peculiar in protecting the river's endangered species like shellfish and muskrats and land species like Coyotes and grey wolves.

Lusa's profound affinity with nature, coupled with her distinctive affection for moths and insects, underscores her commitment to environmental stewardship. Her burgeoning appreciation extends beyond mere admiration, encapsulating a deep reverence for the intricacies of the natural world. She began to love "The trees, the moths, the foxes, all the wild things that live up there" (*Prodigal Summer*, p.123). Lusa's sentiment embodies a holistic embrace of biodiversity, reflecting her conscientious and environmentally conscious ethos. While Lusa works to develop sustainable farming practices that will protect the land for future generations. "Lusa's concern for the overall environment – including the trees" (*Prodigal Summer*, p.34). Lusa is more concerned about her ecosystem. She cares for her land resources, crop fields, and garden.

"I don't use pesticides. They kill everything, not just the bugs. The birds, the bees, the earthworms. You can't just kill part of a system and expect the rest of it to keep working." (*Prodigal Summer*, p.133)

Nannie Rawley is older than most, having lived in the Appalachian Mountains her entire life. She is the 'first certified organic grower' in Zebulon County. For this reason, she opposes the use of pesticides and is in favor of local marketing. Rawley insisted on having a 'NO SPRAY ZONE' established. She was the sworn companion and guardian of all creatures, keeping her pastures unsprayed. Nannie Rawley expresses her views on Pesticide drift, which occurs when pesticides move from the target area to unintended areas due to factors like wind. It can negatively affect neighboring properties like orchards. To minimize risk, follow proper application practices and adhere to label instructions. Her aim is to unsprayed pastures and takes a revolution of 'NO SPRAYED ZONE'. It is important not to spill any chemicals on the apples. Failure to do so can result in losing certification. Modern agricultural practices include monoculture, especially using pesticides like Malathion and Selvin or insecticides, fertilizers, herbicides, and other chemical substances that impact the environment. It leads to the extinction of the species and environment. It will not improve the soil or increase the crop level; it will need more nutrition. Gafar urges insisting on specific environmental impacts, mainly in the land area (Gafar, 2013).

"She was the sworn friend and protector of all creatures and small, right down to the ticks, fleas, and corn maggots evidently." (*Prodigal Summer*,

p.88)

Nannie Rawley is portrayed as a passionate supporter of organic farming methods who profoundly cares about the delicate balance of ecosystems and the harmful impacts of chemical pesticides. She even extends her protection to the tiniest creatures, such as ticks, fleas, and corn maggots, considering them crucial parts of the natural ecosystem. Nannie Rawley had a child out of wedlock, Jack Robinson, who became mentally challenged due to exposure to chemicals from modern agricultural foods. Therefore, Nannie decided to refrain from using chemicals in her apple orchard. Remeena argues about Nannie's character and concern for the environment, citing that she patented some trees under the name Rachel Carson, which shows that she agrees with Rachel Carson's ideology.

In *Flight Behavior*, Dellarobia is one of the ecologically conscious women and she grew personally independent. Dellarobia made efforts to protect and preserve their environment. She discovers a valley of monarch butterflies in the southern Appalachian Mountains, which symbolizes the displacement of the butterflies from their established winter habitat in Mexico due to climate change. The butterflies' presence in the novel also represents the larger implications of climate change and the need for environmental conservation. Javkar claims many disasters and consequences are raised due to men's deeds. Kingsolver insists on the impacts of the environment seriously by men and their actions and desires, through Dellarobia who resist men for their actions, men pollute the sky and it turns against them which creates a disaster. Kingsolver raised her voice for upcoming disasters due to climate change like global warming, winter storms, landslides, floods, and migration of monarch butterflies (Javkar, 2018, p.154).

A scientist and professor of entomology, Dr. Byron expressed her attitude toward the preservation of species. Byron and his students help him build the monarch butterfly lab, and Dellarobia do assistant work for him. He acts as a superhero who is trying to save the people and the endangered species, the monarch butterfly from disaster. He strongly insists that animals are losing their habitats due to human negligence.

“He picked up a brittle monarch from the muddy ditch at the edge of the gravel and brought it over, flipping it with his thumb onto her notebook.”

(*Flight Behavior*, p.433)

Dr. Byron's simple yet powerful gesture of presenting the brittle monarch butterfly to Dellarobia was a poignant reminder of the urgent need to protect and preserve our planet's endangered species. With ecological threats looming large, it is our responsibility to take all necessary steps to ensure the survival of these delicate creatures. The fragility of the brittle monarch, coupled with its vital role in maintaining the ecological balance, underscores the importance of concerted efforts towards conservation and sustainable living. Mahato claims the character, Dellarobia contemplates the implications of the

elucidation regarding the waning vitality of coral reefs and the declining insect populations, expressing her profound contemplation. She reflects upon the lamentation conveyed by her interlocutor, who articulates a poignant sentiment: “What was the use of saving a world that has no soul left in it. Continents without butterflies and sea without coral reefs” (*Flight Behavior*, 438). Society’s anthropocentric attitude towards nature is highlighted in these poignant lines. The extinction of species from the terrestrial realm poses a formidable threat to the intricate biodiversity inherent within ecosystems (Mahato, 2015).

Kingsolver explores themes of ecological disruption and the interconnectedness of the natural world, providing a rich backdrop for the novel’s narrative. Her novels emphasize the importance of understanding and respecting the language of other species in the ecosystem and the impact of human behavior on the natural world. She promotes sustainable practices and addresses environmental challenges to ensure the survival of both native and introduced species.

Conclusion

Exploring the ecofeminist themes of Barbara Kingsolver’s *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behavior* and how female characters are more interested in managing the environment to a far greater extent. Even though the female characters face many challenges or adversities in their lives in society or the Appalachian community, men become resilient because of their confidence. Naturally, they have the power to overburden themselves. Later, women get empowered minds to behave or think independently through the great support of nature and its being; when women are initiated to work or spend some time with nature, they feel the fresh air and relax in their minds and souls; women can live on their own with the help of nature, even attaining their destination. Kingsolver highlights the men’s reaction against nature, which she proved through the female characters of her work, *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behavior*. Deanna, Lusa, and Nannie are raising their best awareness in society or the community on how to protect the land from pesticides, herbicides, and insecticides that abolish the food chain of the ecosystem. Deanna and Dellarobia characters are giving their best awareness to the society or community on how to observe every movement, sign, or symbol and make more efforts to protect the family of the endangered species, the coyote, and the monarch butterfly. Protecting or maintaining the environment and its species is a great role for women, and it also pleases them to empower and do whatever is necessary for future generations. The research will look at different themes such as love, sex, family, gender inequality, environmental justice, and injustice. It will also study the meaning behind symbols such as birds, animals, insects, and trees. The research will look at how female characters resist men’s actions. The discussion in textual analysis draws upon various elements including linguistics, cultural and biographical contexts, literary theory, and criticism in literature, encompassing

structuralism, formalism, historicism, and new historicism.

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