

**ECOLOGICAL CRISIS VIS. A VIS. IDENTITY CRISIS: BARBARA KINGSOLVER
ENVISIONS ECOCENTRIC IDENTITY IN *PRODIGAL SUMMER***

Dr. Ansul Rao

Associate Professor

Bhagini Nivedita College

(University of Delhi)

ansul_rao@yahoo.co.in

Abstract

*Now that we have completed more than two decades of the twenty-first century, facing an unprecedented pandemic, getting hurled into what has come to be known, though informally, as the Anthropocene, it becomes imperative to revisit the age-old notions of our relationship with the "more-than-human world." This revision will take some radical thinking and overhaul our modes of sustenance. American writer and environmentalist Barbara Kingsolver has reflected through her writings that this radical revision is possible in our everyday lives. Though she is known for a keen sense of place in all her writings (fiction and nonfiction), *Prodigal summer* is an absolute delight and inspiration as an ecologically conscious novel. She has profoundly produced a world filled with the natural world's sights, sounds, and smells, which brings our alienation from the land to the foreground. In *Prodigal Summer*, Kingsolver denounces the thinking that separates the self from the natural world. Her use of detailed sensual imagery makes the land alive and becomes a powerful strategy for this purpose. This paper postulates that by interweaving the ecological crisis destroying the Appalachia and the identity crisis of her protagonists, Kingsolver provides us with the functional models of ecocentric identity.*

Keywords: Natural, Ecocentric, Identity, Crisis, Ecological

Formation of Ecocentric Identity and Ecological Self

And so we are by no means divided, or readily divisible, into environmental saints and sinners. But there are legitimate distinctions that need to be made. These are

distinctions of degree and of consciousness. Some people are less destructive than others, and some are more conscious of their destructiveness than others. For some, their involvement in pollution, soil depletion, strip-mining, deforestation, industrial and commercial waste is simply a “practical” compromise, a necessary “reality,” the price of modern comfort and convenience. For others, this list of involvements is an agenda for thought and work that will produce remedies. (Berry 20-21)

The notions of identity and self have always been considered within the parameters of social structures. Though the geography of a place has always been intertwined with the identity and formation of self, the natural environment as an active agent is usually not considered a factor in constructing the identity. Ecocentric identity outlines our engagement with the natural world and generates a sense of responsibility toward it. As ecocentric identity entails how we connect with the natural world, it can make even the seemingly distant global ecological issues (such as climate change) more immediate and intimate. It can inspire people to choose a course of responsible actions that become a part of who they are. Many thinkers, scientists, and writers have contemplated the intricate connections between the human self and the nonhuman world. Biologist E.O. Wilson floated the idea of biophilia, suggesting that humans are genetically hard-wired to love nature. He defined biophilia as "the connections that human beings subconsciously seek with the rest of life" (350). He also explains, "Humanity coevolved with the rest of life . . . other worlds are not in our genes. . . . it is reckless to suppose that biodiversity can be diminished indefinitely without threatening humanity itself" (347). According to Andrew J. Weigert, environmental identities "refer to experienced social understandings of who we are in relation to, and how we interact with, the natural environment as other" (159). The people of Egg Fork in *Prodigal Summer* look at the natural world as a means of livelihood. The failing farms that can no longer provide even meager sustenance contribute to their apathy toward the natural world. Susan Clayton and Susan Opatow propose a model of environmental identity as "occurring along a dimension anchored by minimal and strong levels of social influence." (Clayton 9-10). The novel's protagonists under discussion can be said to have varying degrees of minimal levels, and the other characters can be seen as having a strong level of social influence. These levels mark their response toward the nonhuman world. For example, Lusa, the entomologist wife of a

farmer, abhors the very idea of harming weeds and wild animals. Her dislike for her husband's family is partly because of their indifferent attitude toward natural beings. Her husband's family, in return, thinks her an outsider who is unable to understand the demands that farming requires. Eddie Bondo, a descendant of the sheep ranchers, treats the coyotes as his mortal enemies though his chances of inheriting his father's ranch are debatable.

The main contribution to the idea of ecologic self came from Arne Naess. Floating the idea of ecological self, he says: "The *ecological self* of a person is that with which this person identifies" (83 "Self-Realization"). While elaborating on this, he puts the onus on the "process of identification" (83). The core is "self-love, the love of a widened and deepened self" (85). The Self is not bounded just by the physical constraints of the body. In *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*, he proffers: "The identity of the individual, 'that I am something,' is developed through interaction with a broad manifold, organic and inorganic. There is no completely isolatable I, no isolatable social unit" (164). Notable writer Wendell Berry also considers ecological crisis originating from flawed identity (Berry). Taking into account both ecological and social aspects, a new term, ecocultural identity," has been defined by Tema Okun (2002):

In illuminating ecological dimensions of identity, the importance of culture also cannot be overlooked as identities are always materially and discursively constructed. We are made of, part of, emerging from, and constantly contributing to both ecology and culture-producing, performing, and constantly perceiving and enacting through the both. (xix)

The present paper argues that Kingsolver's three ecologically enlightened protagonists discover their true selves by extending their sense of self to include their social and ecological roles and anchoring themselves in the place. Thomashow writes:

Ecological identity refers to all the different ways people construe themselves in relationship to the earth as manifested in personality, values, actions, and sense of self. Nature becomes an object of identification. For the individual, this has extraordinary conceptual ramifications. The interpretation of life experience transcends social and cultural interactions. It also includes a person's connection to the earth, perception of the ecosystem, and direct experience of nature. (3)

This novel's protagonists' life experiences are defined by what Thomashow suggests. For Deanna, the direct experience is closely defined by her relationship with the coyotes; for Lusa, moths hold the center stage, and she is always compelled by smells. For the elderly Nannie Rawley, her organic orchard is her direct connection with the earth. But all three women have a keen sense of preserving the wholeness of the ecosystem instead of focusing on any individual animal. They directly connect their lives with the rest of the natural world and realize their real place in it. Kingsolver's other characters also have evolving degrees of ecological identity. Eddie Bondo drops the idea of hunting coyotes, at least, on the Zebulon Mountain. Garnett Walker begins the process of familiarizing himself with his hitherto neglected grandchildren through his project of reviving the American chestnut trees. Lusa manages to discourage her teenage nephew and the rest of the family's males from hunting in the Widener woods and by creating awareness for the beauty and mystery of nature in her terminally ill sister-in-law's two children whom she is planning to adopt.

Prodigal Summer

Prodigal Summer appeared in 2000. The novel interweaves three narratives set in a small town, Egg Fork, in rural Kentucky, and is spread over one summer. The chapters are grouped under three headings: "Predators," "Moth Love," and "Old Chestnuts." The chapters are narrated alternatively (not in a fixed order), focusing exclusively on different protagonists and their lives. The last chapter is not given any title and follows a female coyote. The "Predators" section is about Deanna Wolfe, who is living in a cabin on the mountain working as a forest ranger, a job she managed to get after bringing the Forest Service, the Park Service, and the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries on board to restore the damaged ecosystem of that land. She is a divorcee in her mid-forties and way over-qualified for this job. She is a Ph.D., and her passion and thesis center on the behavior of the coyotes. When the novel begins, she has spent almost two years on the mountain having minimal contact with the human world. She had grown up in Egg Fork, then went to a city to attend college, and ended up marrying a much older professor. During the present spring, she has seen signs of a nursing coyote family in the mountains. She is excited to witness their re-inhabiting this place and filling a niche in the ecosystem, falling vacant after the grey wolves and the red wolves were hunted into extinction. Completely dejected by the human company, she runs

into Eddie Bondo, a hunter in his late twenties, and goes on to have a passionate affair with him. Eddie shares the traditional contempt toward the predators, especially the coyotes. "Moth Love" part of the novel narrates the story of Lusa Landowski, an entomologist from Lexington, now living in Egg Fork on the Widener farm as the wife of its owner Cole Widener. She fell in love with Cole when he was attending a workshop on farming at the university where she worked. She loves and is passionate about moths, a fact much ridiculed by Cole's five older married sisters. Her in-laws also abhor her education and her outsider's ignorance of the local customs. She, in turn, treats them as ignorant country folks lacking any wisdom. When Cole dies in an accident at the beginning of the story, Lusa, overcome with grief, is left with an uncertain future. She inherits the farm, a fact disliked by Cole's sisters. The farm is not producing enough to provide a decent living. After an internal debate about whether she should leave, she decides to stay and connects with the farm and Cole's youngest sister, Jewel.

The "Old Chestnuts" part narrates the story of eighty-year-old Garnett Walker and his constant bickering with his seventy-five-year-old neighbor, Nannie Rawley, an organic farmer. Their farms are next to each other, and Nannie always manages to save the whole area, including Garnett's side, from getting sprayed with pesticides by putting up a sign of "No Spray Zone" on Garnett's side of the fence. Garnett is entirely orthodox and thinks women should not be allowed into colleges or to reproduce outside matrimony. His aim is to teach Nannie a few things about man's superiority over all other creatures mandated by God. His attempts to teach her only result in his getting lectures from Nannie about ecology and humans' place as one of the components in the interconnected web of life.

Many critics have deliberated upon the myriad thematic aspects of this rich text. Christine M. Battista explores it as an ecofeminist text in her article "Cultivating our Bioregional Roots: An Ecofeminist Exploration of Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*." In "Contingency, Cultivation, and Choice: The Garden Ethic in *Prodigal Summer*," Priscilla Leder reads the novel as a manifestation of the garden ethic presented by Michael Pollen and calls for responsible treatment of the natural world. In "Celebrating a Lively Earth: Children, Nature and the Role of Mentors in *Prodigal Summer*," Susan Hanson explores the role of childhood experiences of nature in shaping the author's attitude. She discusses Kingsolver's

childhood memories in conjunction with the children in *Prodigal Summer*. Peter S. Wenz, in his article, "Leopold's Novel: The Land Ethic in Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*," reads *Prodigal Summer* as a version (upgraded in some instances) of Aldo Leopold's "land ethic" postulated in *Sand County Almanac*. He shows that Kingsolver's novel assimilates Leopold's principles of ethics of care in its narrative threads and promotes the same in a contemporary context. Suzanne W. Jones, in her article, "[The Southern Family Farm as Endangered Species: Possibilities for Survival in Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*](#)," shows that the failing agriculture depicted in the novel is in part because of orthodox ideas and suggests that survival depends on the balance between human and natural; native and non-native. Dilia Narduzzi, in "Living with the Ghosts, Loving the Land: Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*," focuses on Kingsolver's use of the "non-linguistic and non-material" aspects of the ghostly and the natural in the novel, and thus, providing an unconventional reading of nature through her strong female characters. Narduzzi draws upon Derrida and Catriona Sandilands to establish her arguments. But *Prodigal Summer* has not been explored to understand the formation of ecological identity, which forms the base of the ecological self. Kingsolver discusses her motivations behind writing this novel in her essay, "Taming the Beast with Two Backs." She writes, "This novel is about life, in a biological sense: the rules that connect, divide, and govern living species, including their tireless compunction to reproduce themselves" (223). Her use of sexual imagery functions as a powerful strategy to connect humans with nature. She further explains: "Our religious and cultural heritage is to deny, for all we're worth, that we're in any way connected with the rest of life on earth. We don't come from it, we're not part of it; we *own* it and were put down here to run the place" (226). *Prodigal Summer* contests this attitude by making the natural world an indispensable part of one's self which is necessary if humans are to have a harmonious existence in a biosphere without which they cannot exist.

Deanna's Solitude and her Self-renewal

Deanna, the forest ranger in the Zebulon National Forest, has a certain attitude toward the natural world. She has inherited this attitude from her polite nature-loving father. She has struggled to maintain relationships with other human beings throughout her life, especially men of her age. Her deep-rooted love for the wild and her failure to adhere to pre-determined

norms of feminine behavior has turned her into an isolated soul. Her much older husband had divorced her because of “her skills and preference for the outdoors” (*Prodigal Summer* 21). So when she takes up this job, she does not feel any need for human interaction. When Eddie comments on her unique existence, she replies, “It takes a certain kind of person. You’ve got to appreciate the company” (*Prodigal Summer* 14). The company she keeps and enjoys is that of Magnolia warbler, bear, bobcats, maidenhair ferns, hemlock, chickadees, and everything else that is thriving in the forest. Her conversations with Eddie Bondo focus on the health of the ecosystem. She identifies mainly with the predators, “Keeping tabs on the predators tells you what you need to know about the herbivores, like deer, and the vegetation, the detritivores, the insect populations, small predators like shrews and voles. All of it” (13). Due to her dedication and efforts, an extremely damaged ecosystem is becoming whole.

When Eddie wanders into her life, her attraction to him is like an animal thing during this fecund season when all forms of life on this mountain are busy in the act of reproducing themselves. But her relationship with Eddie is complicated because she is bent on protecting the coyotes, and he is here as a participant in the Mountain Empire Bounty Hunt organized to exterminate the coyotes. Deanna identifies with the natural world in such an intense way that she feels one can never remain isolated. The following lines occur in the first chapter and then slightly modified in the last chapter of the novel: “But solitude is only a human presumption. Every quiet step is thunder to beetle life underfoot; every choice is a world made new for the chosen. All secrets are witnessed” (3). These lines occur once from Deanna’s perspective and once from the Coyote’s perspective, and thus, connect both Deanna and the coyote in one complete self. Deanna understands the limitations of the human self and sees the wild animals as a significant “other.” Following the trail of the coyotes, she wonders about the behavior of the animal in human terms and realizes that it is “hard for a human ever to know that mind” (8). Thus, she provides agency to the wild, untamed nature and accepts it as an equal force striving for existence just as humans. This wild nature has become part of Deanna’s self, but she lacks her place in the human world from which she has isolated herself. Her ruptured self becomes whole when she becomes pregnant and decides to come to the town to have and raise her baby. In this way, she joins the two parts of her identity, the ecological and social parts, and becomes whole in the process, realizing that

“*solitude* was the faultiest of human presumptions” (437). Deanna’s narrative is alive with the sights and sounds of the natural world and locates humans as just a part of the whole. Kingsolver creates a striking parallel by comparing the perseverance of the human world with that of the coyotes. The story of coyotes comes through the eyes of Deanna, the most active sympathizer of their persistence. Though Lusa also condemns the act of killing the animal’s family, Deanna identifies most with the coyote family. The unique feature of the coyotes is that they are social animals. The young ones are raised and trained by the females, the alpha, and her sisters. Deanna also realizes that she needs to reclaim her place in human society to raise her child. Hers will also be a family of females as she is coming to live with Nannie Rawley. Nannie was her father’s girlfriend and considered Deanna as her daughter. She decides not to tell Eddie about her pregnancy and lets him leave her. The coyotes are enough to fill any space in her life.

For Eddie, a sheep rancher, a coyote is an enemy irrespective of where it lives. Deanna tries to explain his misplaced animosity toward coyotes through human notions. She tries to explain that facts do not back his prejudice. The sheep presumed to be killed by the coyotes could have been killed by some other animals. She says, “A coyote is just something you can blame. He’s nobody’s pet; he doesn’t belong to anybody but himself. So, great, put a bullet in him” (178). She is like the coyotes; she does not belong to anybody but herself. It is not just the coyotes that preoccupy Deanna’s mind. Every step she takes in the forest reminds her of the violence unleashed by humans on nature. She feels the presence of the ghosts of all the lost species that once thrived there. If we are to understand who we are and how we reached here, it is crucial to understand the natural history of the place. Deanna feels pain for lost animals and rejoices at their re-inhabitation:

On her way back up the mountain she consciously slowed her step. She heard another magnolia warbler—a sign and a wonder, it seemed to her, like something risen from the dead. So many others never would rise again: Bachman’s warbler, passenger pigeon, Carolina parakeet, Flint’ stonefly, Apamea moth—so many extinct creatures moved through the leaves just outside her peripheral vision, for Deanna knew enough to realize that she lived among ghosts. She deferred to the extinct as she would to the spirits of deceased relatives, paying her quiet respects in the places where they might

once have been. Little red wolves stood as silent shadows at the edges of clearings, while the Carolina parakeets would have chatted loudly, moving along the riverbanks in huge flocks of dazzling green and orange. (61-62)

Deanna's identification with nature defines her every thought and action. She is witnessing the process of one predator species (coyote) moving to a new ecosystem to occupy the niche lying vacant due to the extermination of an earlier predator species from there. And she wants to witness this without interfering, and certainly without the interference of a permanent coyote-hater. Despite having Eddie there, who seems to know wild animals from other places, she yearns for the company of someone who will have the same outlook toward these animals. The absence of a family for herself makes her extra sensitive toward any animal who loses a family. When she cries for the dead babies of the phoebe, knowing that now it is too late for the bird to reproduce again in this season, she is also experiencing her grief, her fear of reaching menopause without having produced an offspring. The rejuvenation in her life in the form of pregnancy uplifts her spirit enough to make her focus on the living instead of the ghosts of the past: "These dispossessed creatures were beside her and always would be, but for today she noticed instead a single bright-red berry among all the clusters of green ones covering the spicebushes. This sign seemed meaningful and wondrous, standing as a divide between one epoch of her life and the next" (389).

When Eddie leaves, she feels hurt most by the fact that she could not make his heart change to include a place for the coyotes. But later, she is able to decipher his intriguing parting message, "*It's hard for a man to admit he has met his match*" (435). She finally understands that he means he accepts both Deanna and the coyotes as his equals and probably will have a changed outlook toward the predators.

Lusa's Transformation through Farming and Gardening

After the tragic death of her husband, twenty-eight-year-old Lusa Landowski embraces her life as a farmer in Zebulon County. Grieving her loss, she finds hope in her connection with the mountain and the woods behind her farm, the moths, and the scent of honeysuckle. Lusa is an outsider to Egg Fork, a descendant of Jewish- Palestinian parentage, and has struggled to find a place in her husband's large family. Taking one day at a time, she decides to stay, finding strength through a dream in which the shape of a mountain cum moth

tells her that he has always known her. She realizes, “What she’d loved was here, and still might, be if she could find her way to it” (82). What she desired most was an active engagement with the land and belonging to it. She begins to feel the presence of the mountain as a man in her life, feeling its breath on her skin. Unfortunately, Lusa is caught among strangers as far as her husband’s family is concerned. She cannot keep up with their conversations and country manners and finds it hard to forgive that she is looked upon as a usurper of the Widener farm. Her feelings are “having wandered into a country where they spoke English but all the words meant something different” (104). She initially identifies with the nonhuman world, gets her bearing, and works toward establishing her relationship with the family starting with Cole’s youngest sister, Jewel.

Human company is the primal need of any person. Lusa feels it, and to battle her loneliness, she calls Jewel to help her with canning the cherries. The two women bond while working in the kitchen. Lusa befriends Jewel and her two kids. Facing an uncertain future, she begins her life as a farmer to fulfill the various needs required for the farm's upkeep. Her farming attitude is in sharp contrast with the other family males. Struggling with the failing farm and burrowed in debt, she refuses to log the woods behind her farm because she cannot imagine human life as disconnected from everything else in nature. She tells Jewel that she loves "the trees, the moths. The foxes, all the wild things that live up there. It's Cole's childhood up there, too. Along with yours and your sisters" (125). Struggling with the failing farm and burrowed in debt, she refuses to log the woods behind her farm because she cannot imagine human life as disconnected from everything else in nature. Her idea of nurturing is holistic, which involves the child's participation in the surrounding world. When the whole family considers Crystal unmanageable, Lusa bonds with her, she identifies with Crystal as both are "finding their ways of living with the judgment of the righteous" (352). The child reminds her of her childhood. Due to her passionate interest in insects since a young age, Lusa has always felt insulted because people thought of her as a freak. While involving Crystal with her in moth catching exercise, she reminisces, "Any girl who pursued the study of insects had learned to ignore public opinion. But what she couldn't bear, then or now, was the implied belief that she was a curiosity, a nonsense of a woman" (45). Like Deanna, Lusa's love for natural beings has impacted her relationships. Though she loved Cole, their quarrels

arose due to their contesting attitudes toward wild things. She entertained the romantic idea that every being has the right to exist, whereas Cole had the farmer's view of keeping the farm clear of harmful things.

Lusa stays on her farm to find solace in the natural world, encounters the challenges that farming requires, and consequently finds bonds with Cole's family. She spends the summer gardening various vegetables, refuses to grow tobacco, gets rid of the cattle, and invests her efforts in raising goats which is an innovative idea for the locals. Her intelligent calculation about the holiday season of three main religions colliding and her connection in New York gives her hope that she will make a living through the goats, at least this year. She feels at home growing vegetables in her garden as she had never had this opportunity in her life before marriage. But she refuses to use pesticides in her garden. Her scientific knowledge equips her to deal with pests in innovative and natural ways. Her love for insects and other wild animals directs her actions. While talking with Jewel about why she doesn't use pesticides, she remarks, "It kills too many of my friends" (378). As Jewel is losing her battle with cancer, Lusa offers to adopt her children and changes her name to Widener, which she had not got changed after marriage. The name change appears to her as the most natural thing, like an animal marking its territory. Lusa's section of the novel is replete with references to the power of smell repeatedly. Proclamation of her husband's undying love for her comes to her through the smell of a honeysuckle flowering branch which she saw him breaking for her one day after a bitter fight. She is able to understand Cole's (by extension, every farmer's) dislike for honeysuckle when she finds her garage walls completely invaded by the weed. She finally sees that honeysuckle is an invasion on "all the green places where humans and the wilder creatures conceded to share their lives" (443). She realizes that this weed is an invasive outsider like the Japanese beetles that caused the destruction of all the American chestnut trees on Zebulon Mountain a century ago. She understands that she might have been seen as an invasive outsider by the family. Finally, by immersing herself in the farm work and solidifying her bond with the farm through Jewel's children and her love for it, she becomes whole and joins her social and ecological identities. Her ecological self gives her confidence to preserve the integrity of her land, and, for this, she is ready to work extra hard.

Lusa finds the meaning of her life in a passage from Darwin that describes the life of the Saturniid moth, whose only purpose in adult life is to couple with a mate. She considers her brief marriage with Cole in these terms that he was a means to call her to this land she will love. Descending from a family that has lost their land (on both sides), she finally reclaims her place in "the history of a family that had stayed on its land" (440). She also caught a glimpse of a coyote as her woods lay next to the National Forest. But she firmly discourages her teenage nephew from trying to hunt the animal. Deanna and Lusa have never met each other, but their beliefs ensure the survival of the coyotes on the mountain. Their efforts are combined to make the scarred land whole again, and in the process, their own lives find meaning.

Garnett Walker as the Rooted and Uprooted

The "Old Chestnuts" section is occupied by the squabbling elderly neighbors Garnett Walker and Nannie Rawley, who is the "first organic grower to be certified in Zebulon County" (88). Garnett is obsessed with the idea of restoring the old American chestnut to this landscape. He is trying to cross the American chestnut with the Chinese chestnut to produce a breed of American chestnut resistant to the blight, which caused the demise of these trees in his grandfather's lifetime and sank his family's fortunes. Garnett's attitude is that of an orthodox Christian. Though he had been a science teacher in the county school, he fails to see value in anything natural that does not prove beneficial to humans. His dream of restoring the American chestnut is a way of bringing the glory of his grandfather's days back and not for the ecosystem of the place. His dislike for Nannie is old and deep-rooted. He disapproves of the Church that she attends as it discusses "evolution, transcendentalism, things of that nature" (133). His bickering with Nannie presents the two constantly contrasting viewpoints regarding humans' place on this earth. Garnett considers men superior to women and animals. His dislike for Nannie's attempts to keep her orchard pesticide-free causes him to have a word with Nannie. His attempts invariably backfire, with Nannie giving him lessons on the intrinsic worth of all living creatures. The letter exchanges between Garnett and Nannie are humorous and insightful. Nannie does not have any romantic notions about the natural world; she believes that humans' existence is co-existing with other creatures. She hates goats and snapping turtles but does not feel the need to destroy them to please her. Garnett is so

opposed to the natural that he had never wandered through Nannie's land, believing that a piece of land belongs to a person and one should not put a foot there without the owner's permission. He is surprised to find two living American chestnut trees on her land while he has been reaching out to people in distant places for samples of these trees. Contrast it with the coyote's movements. The coyotes will never realize where National Forest ends, and farms begin. We need to acknowledge this interrelationship of things if we plan to save the biosphere, which is our only home. Garnett is the grandfather of Lusa's adopted children, whom he has always ignored. But Lusa comes in contact with Garnett when she starts her goat project asking him for help. She finally persuades him to meet his grandchildren and show them his breed of chestnut trees.

Though the bantering between the two neighbors continues, they finally reach a truce and begin to help each other, and Garnett realizes Nannie's wisdom and kind nature. Kingsolver manages to become preachy and gets away with it without damaging the novel's aesthetics. Nannie's retorts to Garnett are directly aimed at the reader to explain the intricate connections between the human and nonhuman world. Nannie's life is an inspiration as she does not isolate herself from the community. On the other hand, Garnett slowly learns to become open to both fellow humans and the idea of the ecological system. He is on his way to embracing his ecocentric identity. Nannie is looking forward to welcoming a grandchild (Deanna's baby). The lives of all three women and Garnett Walker get transformed over the course of this summer, and the land is a vital agent for this transformation.

Conclusion

The last chapter follows the female coyote through her sense of smell, sight, and sound. The words spoken for Deanna in the first chapter apply to the coyote here, and she is also making a new life like Deanna, Lusa, and Nannie, settling in a newly created niche. Using Arne Naess's words, we can say that Kingsolver's female protagonists revel in "being inspired by ecology and a revived intimate relation to nature, to recognize and accept wholeheartedly [their] ecological self" ("Self-Realization" 89). These characters' everyday struggles and decisions and their influences on other people around them inspire the readers to understand their relationship with the natural world.

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