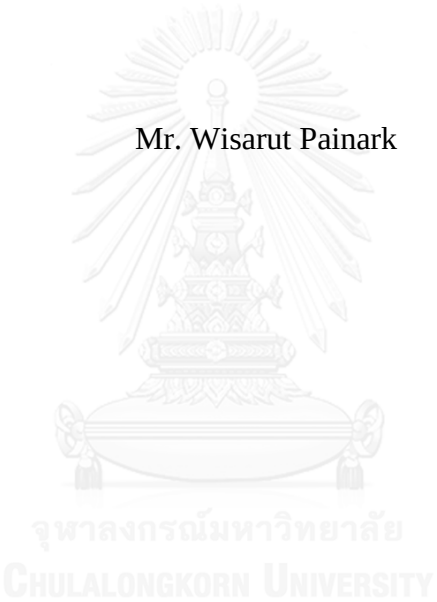
การรับรู้ใหม่เชิงนิเวศน์ของสถานที่และตัวตนในนวนิยายของ บาร์บารา คิงโซลเวอร์

นายวิศรุต ไผ่นาค

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาอักษรศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต
สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ ภาควิชาภาษาอังกฤษ
คณะอักษรศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
ปีการศึกษา 2559

RENEWED ECOLOGICAL PERCEPTION OF PLACE AND SELF IN THE NOVELS OF BARBARA KINGSOLVER

Mr. Wisarut Painark



A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts Program in English
Department of English
Faculty of Arts
Chulalongkorn University
Academic Year 2016

Thesis Title	RENEWED ECOLOGICAL PERCEPTION OF PLACE AND SELF IN THE NOVELS OF BARBARA KINGSOLVER
By	Mr. Wisarut Painark
Field of Study	English
Thesis Advisor	Assistant Professor Darin Pradittatsanee, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree

.....Dean of the Faculty of Arts
(Associate Professor Kingkarn Thepkanjana, Ph.D.)

THESIS COMMITTEE

.....Chairman
(Assistant Professor Nida Tiranasawasdi, Ph.D.)
.....Thesis Advisor
(Assistant Professor Darin Pradittatsanee, Ph.D.)
.....External Examiner
(Associate Professor Pachee Yuvajita, Ph.D.)

วิศรุต ไผ่นาค : การรับรู้ใหม่เชิงนิเวศน์ของสถานที่และตัวตนในนวนิยายของ บาร์บารา คิงโซลเวอร์ (RENEWED ECOLOGICAL PERCEPTION OF PLACE AND SELF IN THE NOVELS OF BARBARA KINGSOLVER) อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก: ผศ. ดร. ดารินทร์ ประดิษฐทัศนีย์, หน้า.

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้ศึกษาการรับรู้สิ่งแวดล้อมและการปฏิบัติต่อผืนแผ่นดินผ่านมุมมองการวิจารณ์เชิงนิเวศน์โดยชี้ให้เห็นว่า การรับรู้สิ่งแวดล้อมนั้นมีความสัมพันธ์กับการรับรู้ตัวตน โดยเลือกวิเคราะห์นวนิยายสามเล่มของ บาร์บารา คิงโซลเวอร์ ได้แก่ *Animal Dreams* (ค.ศ. 1992) *The Poisonwood Bible* (ค.ศ. 1998) และ *Prodigal Summer* (ค.ศ. 2000) งานวิจัยนำเสนอว่าความคิดแนวนิเวศน์ของ บาร์บารา คิงโซลเวอร์ เน้นเรื่องการรับรู้ที่ทางของมนุษย์ในโลกธรรมชาติ กล่าวคือคิงโซลเวอร์เชื่อว่า การรับรู้สิ่งแวดล้อมแบบอหังการของมนุษย์คือรากเหง้าของปัญหาสิ่งแวดล้อมเพราะผู้คนมักจะมองสิ่งแวดล้อมเป็นเพียง “พื้นที่” ที่ไร้ความหมาย มากกว่า “สถานที่” ที่เต็มไปด้วยความหมายและคุณค่า การรับรู้ที่ผิดพลาดดังกล่าวเป็นการหนทางสู่การพิชิตครอบครองโลกธรรมชาติ และนำไปสู่การเสื่อมสลายของสิ่งแวดล้อมในที่สุด การศึกษาเรื่อง *Animal Dreams* แสดงให้เห็นว่า การกลับบ้านของตัวละครเป็นรากฐานของการเปลี่ ยนแปลงทางการรับรู้ จากความแปลกแยกจากผืนแผ่นดินสู่ความสัมพันธ์ที่แนบแน่นกับผืนแผ่นดินผ่านกิจกรรมพิทักษ์สิ่งแวดล้อมซึ่งเปิดโลกของตัวละครสู่มิติอันหลากหลายของสถานที่ซึ่งช่วยเยียวยาตัวตนที่แตกร้าว บทวิเคราะห์เรื่อง *The Poisonwood Bible* นำเสนอว่าอุดมการณ์อาณานิคมของเหล่าตัวละครหลัก ทำให้พวกเธอครอบครองสิ่งแวดล้อมและพิชิตชาวพื้นเมือง อย่างไรก็ตาม การเผชิญกับความไม่แน่นอนและความโหดร้ายของโลกธรรมชาติในคองโกค่อยๆเผยให้เห็นความโง่เขลาและความไร้สาระของอุดมการณ์อาณานิคม ส่งผลให้ความเชื่อเดิมของตัวละครพังทลายลงการปลดเปลื้องตนเองจากแอกแห่งอุดมการณ์นี้ทำให้พวกเธอสามารถสร้างความเชื่อใหม่ ที่มีความนอบน้อมกับสิ่งแวดล้อมและสรรพชีวิตอื่นๆ สุดท้าย การวิเคราะห์เรื่อง *Prodigal Summer* ชี้ให้เห็นว่าปฏิสัมพันธ์ของตัวละครกับชุมชน บาดแผลทางจิตใจ ความรู้ด้านนิเวศน์วิทยา และสัมผัสที่อ่อนโยนต่อโลกธรรมชาติ มีบทบาทสำคัญในการสร้าง “อัตลักษณ์ทางนิเวศน์” ตัวตนเชิงนิเวศน์ที่ถูกสร้างขึ้นมาใหม่ ทำให้ตัวละครสามารถเยียวยาบาดแผลในใจและปฏิบัติต่อผืนแผ่นดินด้วยความนอบน้อมได้ในที่สุด

ภาควิชา ภาษาอังกฤษ ลายมือชื่อนิสิต .....

สาขาวิชา ภาษาอังกฤษ ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก .....

ปีการศึกษา 2559

5680154022 : MAJOR ENGLISH
KEYWORDS: BARBARA KINGSOLVER / ECOCRITICISM / LITERATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

WISARUT PAINARK: RENEWED ECOLOGICAL PERCEPTION OF PLACE AND SELF IN THE NOVELS OF BARBARA KINGSOLVER. ADVISOR: ASST. PROF. DARIN PRADITTATSANEE, Ph.D., pp.

This thesis aims at examining how one's perception of the place affects not only one's treatment of the environment but also one's sense of self from an ecocritical approach in Barbara Kingsolver's three selected novels: *Animal Dreams* (1992), *The Poisonwood Bible* (1998), and *Prodigal Summer* (2000). My research postulates that Kingsolver's ecological insight is fostered by the human perception of their place in the environment. Her ecological view suggests that the human arrogant perception of the environment is the cornerstone of our ecological crisis as humans tend to perceive the environment as a meaningless "space" rather than a "place" endowed with meaning. This mis-perception of the land further leads to our maltreatment and eventually the deterioration of the environment. My analysis of *Animal Dreams* suggests that the protagonist's homecoming lays the foundation for her changing perception from an alienating to more intimate one as she engages in the community's environmental activism which exposes her to the place's various dimensions and further heals her shattered self. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, I argue that the protagonists' colonial ideology paves the way for the double dominations of both the land and the natives. Their encounter of the unpredictability and cruelty of the Congo's environment gradually reveals the senselessness of their ideology and eventually debunks their beliefs. The protagonists' disillusionment with their ideological beliefs allows them to develop their unique and more humble view of the environment. Lastly, my reading of *Prodigal Summer* proposes that the protagonists' interactions with other people in the community, their traumatic experience, delicate sensitivity to the natural world, and their knowledge of ecological science play a significant role in constructing "ecological identity". Their reconstructed ecological self galvanizes them to come to terms with their sense of loss and treat the land with more humble attitudes.

Department: English
Field of Study: English
Academic Year: 2016

Student's Signature .....

Advisor's Signature .....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For this arduous but rewarding quest to make this thesis come into existence, there are some people to whom I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation. First, I would like to thank my parents for their emotional and financial support as well as their decision to let me pursue my graduate study in literature. My utmost appreciations and gratitudes go to Assistant Professor Dr. Darin Pradittatsanee, my advisor, who tirelessly reads numerous drafts of my work and, at the same time, hones my writing as well as my analytical skills. I am really grateful for her guidance, support, and relentless endeavour to bring out the best in me and cultivate in me her in-depth and profound knowledge of literary analysis over the course of the research. My appreciations also go to Associate Professor Dr. Pachee Yuvajita and Assistant Professor Dr. Nida Tiranasawasdi whose insightful comments help strengthen my research. Moreover, I want to extend my thanks to Assistant Professor Simon J.P. Wright and Assistant Professor Dr. Carina Chotirawe who help polish the language. Lastly, I'm thankful for all the friends who provide me with continuous and endless support since the very beginning of my graduate study.

CONTENTS

Page

THAI ABSTRACT iv

ENGLISH ABSTRACT v

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vi

CONTENTS vii

CHAPTER I: Introduction 1

CHAPTER II: Healing Place and Self: The Renewed Ecological Perception and the Invisible Landscape in Animal Dreams 19

CHAPTER III: Shattered Ideology: The Impact of the Environment on the Re-Perception of Place and Self in *The Poisonwood Bible* 57

CHAPTER IV: Different Paths to Ecological Identity in *Prodigal Summer* 99

CHAPTER V: Conclusion 146

REFERENCES 158

VITA 164

CHAPTER I: Introduction

Scholars have examined the issue of place from different perspectives. In his book *Place: A Short Introduction* (2014), Tim Cresswell summarizes the genealogy of the study of place as having three main approaches. The first one is "a descriptive approach to place" (51). It views each place as "a unique and particular entity" (51) in that it highlights the physical aspect of the place. Its concern is the "distinctiveness and particularity" (51) of places. This approach is usually taken by geographers. The second one is "a social constructionist approach to place" (51). This approach focuses on the politics of place. Place in this sense is constructed to serve certain structural social conditions such as capitalism or patriarchy. Cresswell points out that "[issues] of race, class, gender, sexuality and a host of other social relations were at the center of this analysis. […] [Place] was […] a tool in the creation, maintenance and transformation of relations of domination, oppression and exploitation" (29). In other words, this approach focuses on the underlying social condition that is hidden in each place for political reasons. The last approach is "a phenomenological approach to place" (51). This approach emphasizes the human perception and experience of a place. Cresswell points out that "it seeks to define the essence of human existence as one that is necessarily and importantly 'in-place'" (51). Humanistic geographers take an interest in this approach in order to study how the "essence of human existence" (51) is inextricably related to place.

One influential scholar whose works have laid foundations for the phenomenological approach to place, which is the focus of this thesis, is Yi-fu Tuan, a humanistic geographer. He makes the distinction between place and space in *Space*

and Place: The Perspective of Experience (1977). For Tuan, the concepts of place and space are inseparable. While he argues that "[t]he ideas 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition," Tuan makes a distinction between the two concepts (6). He contrasts "the security and stability of place" with "the openness, freedom, and threat of space" (6). Moreover, he associates "space with "movement" and "place" with "pause": "[I]f we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place" (6). Humans, then, can transform "space" into "place" by inhabiting it and giving value and meaning to it.

Ecocritics are interested in the issue of place because it is connected with environmentalism. Lawrence Buell, one of the leading ecocritics, has brought the concepts of place and space into the study of literature and the environment. In his book *Writing for an Endangered World* (2009), he states that "[E]nvironmental well-being [cannot] be properly understood without a close look at how the imagination of place-connectedness itself works" (56). This is where the study of place and the environment intertwines. Buell defines place as "a configuration of highly flexible subjective, social and material dimensions" (60). That is, he pays attention to various dimensions of place, such as personal experience and physical or social aspects. In this sense, Buell points out that one's experience of place flexibly interplays within these dimensions.

One of the green thinkers whom ecocritics consider to be an important figure in environmentalism is Aldo Leopold, a forestry professor. Introducing the notion of "a land ethic", Leopold argues that ethics should be extended beyond the realm of human relationships to include the relationship between humans and the non-human

world. As he puts it in *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There* (1989), "a land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals or collectively" (240). This notion will also change the role of humankind from "conqueror of the land-community" to "plain member and citizen of it" (240). This ecocentric perspective of the environment is reflected in Leopold's essay "Thinking Like a Mountain" (1989). In this essay, Leopold discusses his mistreatment of the natural world in the past. He enjoyed hunting wolves "with more excitement" (138). He thought that getting rid of wolves was the right thing to do since "fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunter's paradise" (138). This view of the natural world suggests that he saw it only served as a resource for humans. He later came to the realization that what he had thought was wrong. As he puts it, "neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view" (139). When Leopold examines his actions through an ecocentric perspective, he is able to comprehend that "a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer" (140). The decrease of wolves prompts the deer population to increase. The increasing number of deer disrupts the sustainability of the ecosystem as deers feed on all plants rendering the mountains treeless. Thus, Leopold's own lesson to "think like a mountain" is a caution against a human-centred approach to the environment.

In addition to the idea of "place-connectedness", Buell also points out that place is able to influence one's sense of self. He emphasizes the significance of place as being part of our existence when he states, "all the places a person has lived that she or he still dreams about sometimes are embedded and responsible for shaping present identity beyond what is consciously realized" (69). Gary Snyder, a

contemporary poet and essayist, highlights this idea of place and identity. In his book *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds* (2008), Snyder suggests that it is impossible to comprehend one's self without knowing one's place; as he points out, "we are all composite beings, not physically but intellectually […] knowing who we are and knowing where we are intimately linked. There are no limits to the possibilities of the study of *who* and *where*" (189). More specifically, he notes that the knowledge of the place and our sense of self are connected. He also argues that our sense of self changes all the time as we interact with the place which is always in flux.

This ecological dimension of place and identity is reflected in Snyder's idea of bioregionalism. He suggests that the idea of the bioregion makes people reperceive the place differently. In *Turtle Island* (1974), Snyder suggests a new perception of place when he says "we may see ourselves more accurately on this continent of watersheds and life-communities-plant zones, physiographic provinces, culture areas; following natural boundaries" (i). It can be seen that the concept of the bioregion is different from the usual way people perceive place since a bioregion is measured not by humans' conviction of political boundaries but by nature itself. People, who see the natural world by this criteria, can develop more intimacy toward the land as they observe, and become familiar with, natural elements. People are also able to understand themselves more through the bioregion perspective of place. Furthermore, in the essay "Reinhabitation" from *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds* (2008), Snyder suggests the possibility for humans to "reinhabit" the land as they reconnect their relationships with it. He states, "[reinhabitory] refers to the tiny number of persons who come out of the industrial societies […] and then start

to turn back to the land, back to place" (190). He also stresses a sense of human responsibility as he notes that we must "[take] responsibility for [our] own acts" (188). Moreover, Snyder's concept of bioregionalism also highlights the spirituality of the place as he discusses in *The Practice of the Wild* (2008) . He notes, "To know the spirit of a place is to realize that you are a part of a part and that the whole is made of parts, each of which is whole" (38). In other words, human attachment to a place plays an important role in prompting them to reperceive their sense of self as part of the whole system.

Apart from Snyder's version of bioregionalism, a number of scholars have discussed the issue as well. For instance, Buell defines the idea of bioregionalism as:

> an ethos and set of life practices directed toward achieving an ecologically sustainable coevolutionary symbiosis of human and nonhuman communities within a territory of limited magnitude whose borders […] are conceived in terms of "natural" rather than jurisdictional units […]. Bioregionalism seeks to make human community more self- consciously ecocentric. (297)

Buell's definition of bioregionalism is both similar to and different from Snyder's version. It resembles Snyder's in that it highlights the natural criterion of the land and its sustainability. However, it does not seem to accentuate the spiritual aspect like Snyder's. In addition, Buell's notion of bioregion corresponds with Snyder's in that both highlight a sense of human responsibility toward the land. More specifically, bioregionalism encourages humans to rethink and reimagine the land and thus adopt an ecocentric perspective in treating it.

In addition to the issue of place and identity, some scholars have also suggested new models to look at the nature of identity. In his article, "In the

Procession of Identity and Ecology in Contemporary Literature" (2012), Patrick Murphy attempts to conceptualize new ways of defining one's sense of self through his analysis of contemporary American novels. He also tries to add new dimensions to the existing theories of identity in Western philosophy by incorporating the physical, material, and environmental aspects to the formation of one's identity. For instance, while Paul Ricoeur argues that one part of identity which he calls "*uninterrupted continuity*" (117) is permanent, Murphy contends that Ricoeur's argument "suffers from an outdated and static conception of genetic formation and ignores the variable environmental factors affecting genetic expression, and human fetal and infant development, and viral alterations" (85). In this sense, Murphy further argues, "Identity might be better termed *co-dentity*, adding the material world in which all of the social formations operate with, through, and on a person. Then even *eco-dentity* might serve us better than the ego-oriented one that remains so prevalent" (85). In other words, Murphy's statement suggests that biological factors alone are not sufficient in shaping one's sense of self as it is influenced by external factors, such as the environment as well. In this light, he suggests that "eco-dentity" is better than "co-dentity" as it reduces our egocentrism. Identity, for Murphy, is always in flux; as he notes "we are in process and undergoing dynamic interactive change and adaptation" (127). Moreover, he argues that there is the possibility for humans to create a new sense of self through the re-imagination of ourselves in relation to the environment from an ecological point of view stating, "[to] perform a new identity shaped to the household in which we live we have to rethink ourselves through an ecocentric perspective, to see ourselves through the eyes of another, but see our very selves

differently" (89). Thus, Murphy's reconceptualization of identity accentuates the influence of the environment on one's sense of self.

Apart from scholars in the literary field, scholars in the field of ecology have an interest in the study of identity and environment as well. For example, Mitchell Thomashow, a professor of ecology, introduced the term "ecological identity" in *Ecological Identity: Becoming a Reflexive Environmentalist* (1996). He posits, "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" (3). He argues that one's reflection of experiences of place and interactions with the environment not only bring about changes in one's view of the non-human world but also induces one to reexamine one's relationship with the environment, bringing about the construction of "ecological identity" (3). Thomashow holds practical workshops where he has his students reflect upon their relationship with the environment and he calls this process of reflection "ecological identity work". In other words, "ecological identity work" is the process of gaining "ecological identity" through the reflection of one's relationship with the environment. He argues that the purpose of this "ecological identity work" is to "provide the language and context that connect a person's life choices with his or her ecological worldview, serving as a guide that coordinates meaning, a transition to a new way of seeing oneself in the world" (6). It can be seen that Thomashow emphasizes the significance of personal reflection that stimulates people to reperceive themselves in relation to the environment in which they live.

Furthermore, Thomashow notes that the three important paths that enable individuals to find their ecological identity are their experiences in places of

childhood memory, disturbed places and wild places (18). More specifically, he discovered that the workshops' participants had similar environmental experiences which can be categorized into three types: childhood memory of special places, perception of disturbed places, and the contemplation of the wild places. For the experiences in places of childhood memories, Thomashow argues that "some kind of emotional experience" (9) is an important factor for an individual to establish his or her bond with a particular place. As for the disturbed places, they are related to "a special childhood place". Thomashow argues that the experience of witnessing one's beloved places being contaminated or disturbed by urbanization or other factors will generate paradoxical feelings of "[l]ove and loss" or "[w]onder and doom" (13), thereby making people discern the interrelatedness between themselves and the places. The third environmental experience is the contemplation of wild places. Thomashow notes that people can reconnect with the natural world through the reflection of their relationship with the environment in wild places.

The issue of the relationship between place and the human sense of self can also be found in such schools of environmental ethics as "deep ecology" and "ecofeminism". The term "deep ecology" was first coined by Arne Naess, a Norwegian green philosopher. In "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecological Movement" (1998), Naess contrasts "deep ecology" with "shallow ecology". He argues that shallow ecology "[fights] against pollution and resource depletion" (134) for "the health and affluence of people in the developed countries" (134). This model of thinking perceives the environment only as a resource and shallow ecological goals only serve human well-being. On the other hand, deep ecology's main aim is to "[reject] the man-in-environment image in favour of the *relational, total-field image*"

(134). That is, humans are no longer the central concern as deep ecology tries to reject this human-centered view. It prioritizes the well-being of every life as it views "[organisms] as knots in the biospherical net or field of intrinsic relations" (134). In other words, deep ecology views both humans and non-human others as having rights to live. Moreover, Naess also discusses "the process of identification" in "Ecosophy T: Deep Versus Shallow Ecology" (2001). He first differentiates "the narrow self (ego)" from "the comprehensive Self" (138). He then posits that "the process of identification" induces humans to widen their "self" since "[our] Self is that with which we identify" (139). In this light, he defines "identification" as "a spontaneous, non-rational, but not irrational, process through which *the interest or interests of another being are reacted to as our own interest or interests*" (139). More specifically, Naess points out that it is significant for humans to recognize what he calls "intrinsic relations" among beings so that we can identify our "self" with "Self".

While "deep ecology" extends one's sense of self to embrace the non-human world through "the process of identification", "ecofeminism" highlights how women identify themselves with nature. In her article "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism" (1990), Karen Warren argues, "Ecological feminism is the position that there are important connections […] between the domination of women and the domination of nonhuman nature" (173). She presents the idea of the double oppressions of women and nature. By double oppression, she means that women and nature are in the same position since both are exploited by the patriarchal and anthropocentric logic of domination. In other words, men and humans tend to impose a sense of supremacy over women and nature. Women and nature, thus, are both subjugated to the logic of domination. Moreover, she accentuates the fact that the

resemblance between women and nature prompts women to associate themselves with the natural world more easily. In addition, Warren further argues that ecofeminists are capable of the "loving perception" of nature. Analyzing the first-person narrative of a female rock climber, Warren points out, "[there] is no fusion of [the narrator and the rock] into one, but a complement of two entities *acknowledged* as separate, different, independent, yet *in relationship*; they are in relationship *if only* because the loving eye is perceiving it, responding to it, noticing it, attending to it" (178). In other words, the relationship between the female narrator and the rock does not impose the idea of the one under the other; each being is allowed to exist independently while in relationship.

While the thinkers whose ideas have so far been discussed tend to emphasize what Lawrence Buell calls the notion of "place-connectedness", it is important to note that the field of ecocriticism has expanded beyond this dimension of place-connectedness and regionalism to include various topics which are the main concerns of postcolonialism, such as cosmopolitanism, displacement, and diaspora. In his article "Environmentalism and Postcolonialism" (2005), Rob Nixon points out four points of difference between ecocriticism and postcolonialism. Firstly, he argues that ecocriticism accentuates what he calls "discourses of purity" (235) as ecocriticism focuses on "virgin wilderness" and "the preservation" (235) of the land while postcolonialism foregrounds "hybridity and cross-culturation" (235) within the land. Secondly, the attitudes of ecocritics and postcolonialists toward the place are also different. An ecocritical approach prioritizes "place" as the main concern in literature. In contrast, in a postcolonial approach, the place becomes undesirable because the feeling of displacement emerges within place from the colonial past. Thirdly,

ecocriticism is limited to a national scale whereas postcolonialism tends to be more "cosmopolitan and transnational" (235). Nixon's observation demonstrates that the two fields have contradictory concepts of the place because postcolonialism focuses on the global scale whereas ecocriticism focuses on the local scale. Lastly, the ecocritical study of history "is often repressed or subordinated to the pursuit of timeless, solitary moments of communion with nature" (235) while postcolonialism highlights the examination of the colonized's history. Moreover, Nixon argues that the attempt of "postcolonial ecocriticism" is to bridge the gap between the two fields which also have similarities. He seeks to combine the two different ways of perceiving place through both ecocritical and postcolonial lenses. As Nixon states "[postcolonialism] can help diversify our thinking beyond the dominant paradigms of wilderness […] in ways that render ecocriticism more accommodating of what I call a transnational ethics of place" (239). It can be seen that Nixon extends the notion of the ecocritical "land ethic" in order to "rethink the pastoral in terms of colonial and postcolonial transnationalism" (239). The "transnational land ethics of place" (239) thus includes not only the natural environment but also the colonized people and place.

Barbara Kingsolver's Life and Work

Attempting to examine the study of place in relation to one's sense of self, this thesis focuses on Barbara Kingsolver's novels. Barbara Kingsolver is a contemporary American writer. She was born in 1955, Annapolis, Maryland. She went to the Congo when she was seven in 1963 as she tagged along with her father's mission to treat the people there. Barbara Kingsolver obtained a bachelor degree in

Biology in 1973 from DePauw University. During her undergraduate years, she was also intrigued with liberal-arts education, such as anthropology, history, and French. As Kingsolver was heavily influenced by her family and her graduate study in ecology and evolutionary biology, her novels discuss the idea of social justice, biodiversity, and humans' interactions with the non-human world.

Kingsolver is a prolific contemporary writer who has penned both fiction and non-fiction: *The Bean Trees* (1998), *Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983* (1989), *Homeland and Other Stories* (1989), *Animal Dreams* (1992), *Another America/ Otra America* (1992), *Pigs in Heaven* (1993), *High Tide in Tucson: Essays From Now or Never* (1995), *The Poisonwood Bible* (1998), *Prodigal Summer* (2000), *Last Stand: America's Virgin Lands* (2002), *Small Wonder* (2002), A*nimal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* (2002), and *Flight Behavior* (2012).

Her books have been included in the literature curriculum in high schools and colleges in the US. They have also been translated into many languages. Kingsolver was commended as one of the most important writers of the twentieth century by Writers Digest. In 2000, she was awarded the National Humanities Medal. *The Poisonwood Bible* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the Orange Prize and won the national book award of South Africa. *The Lacuna* received Britain's Orange Prize for Fiction in 2010, and she was awarded the Dayton Literary Peace Prize for the body of her work. In addition, she also served as editor for *Best American Short Stories* in 2001.

Literature Review: Criticism on Barbara Kingsolver's Novels

Barbara Kingsolver's novels have been analyzed from various approaches. The trend of the interpretation of her works can be categorized into two main approaches. Firstly, a number of critics have examined the issue of power politics and ideologies in her work. They suggest how the texts reveal certain ideologies and how these ideologies function or have been undermined. Secondly, some critics have employed ecological science and Kingsolver's engagement with ecology to shed light on the texts. They have drawn upon, for example, Aldo Leopold's notion of "the land ethic" or Darwinian ecology to make sense of the different narrative strands in the novel. Other critics have included the analysis of the literary elements such as plot and metaphor in the novels, the connection between woman and nature, the problems of southern farms, and the formation of identity.

For the first approach, some critics have examined the issue of power politics and ideologies in the works. For instance, in her article, "The Mission Position: Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*" (2003), Elaine Ognibene argues that the novel demonstrates the destructive force of misused religious rhetoric and practices as these religious practices become the underpinning of the white imperialism in the Congo . In "The Neodomestic American Novel: The Politics of Home in Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*" (2005), Kristin J. Jacobson argues that the American home serves as a key site for the reproduction of female oppression ideology and how the novel, at the same time, challenges "domestic fiction's conventional cultural work" (106).

Secondly, critics have pointed out Kingsolver's employment of ecological science to help the reader realize the intertwining of humans and the environment.

Bert Bender's article "Darwin and Ecology in Novels by Jack London and Barbara Kingsolver" (2001) argues that Kingsolver draws upon the notion of Darwinian ecology since she presents the connection between humans and animal characters, pointing out that humans are the most evolved species. With this portrayal of the characters which disrupts anthropocentric attitudes, Bender further argues that Kingsolver's portrayal of human characters also reinforces their "responsibility to 'the land'" (125). Apart from Charles Darwin's concept, critics have also employed Leopold's notion of "the land ethic" to shed light on Kingsolver's novels. For example, in his article "Leopold's Novel: The Land Ethic in Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*" (2003), Peter S. Wenz argues that the novel draws upon Leopold's notion of "the land ethic" because it demonstrates the interdependence among all members within an ecosystem. The novel suggests more specifically that the extinction of one species can lead to the collapse of the ecosystem.

Other approaches have included the analysis of plot, metaphor in the novel, the connection between women and nature, the problems of southern farms, and the formation of identity. For example, focusing on the plot, in "Sidestepping Environmental Justice: 'Natural' Landscapes and the Wilderness Plot" (1997), Kristina Comer examines what she calls "the wilderness plot" formula in Western environmental literary texts. She points out that the elements of "the wilderness plot" are "a love of wide open 'wild' spaces, a penchant for the mystical […] 'natural' American Indian, the suggestion of redemptive possibility, a disavowal of the industrial or technological, and representations of woman as nature" (75). With this formula of the "wilderness plot", the characters are presented as being able to construct their sense of self through the non-human world. In addition, one critic has

analyzed the ghost metaphor in *Prodigal Summer*. In her article "Living with Ghosts, Loving the Land: Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*" (2008), Dilia Narduzzi draws upon Derrida's notion of the ghost from *Specters of Marx* to shed light on the text. She argues that all the three main characters see the "ghost" in a different form, and the act of seeing the ghost prompts them to take responsibility for the land. Moreover, critics have paid attention to the interrelation of women and nature in Kingsolver's novels. For example, Kritin Van Tassel argues in "Ecofeminism and a New Agrarianism: The Female Farmer in Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer* and Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain*" (2008) that the Kingsolver portrays "an ecofeminist vision for the farm" (85) when she presents "intertwining terrains" (85) between female and male, as well as nature and humanity to highlight the sameness of women and nature. With this sameness, Tassel also notes that the female farmers are able to practice Wendell Berry's notion of new agrarianism that focuses on the harmonious relationship between the farm and its farmers. Furthermore, another critic has analyzed *Prodigal Summer* in relation to the problems of the American southern farms. In her article "The Southern Family Farm as Endangered Species: Possibilities for Survival in Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*" (2006), Suzanne W. Jones suggests that Kingsolver portrays four problems in southern farms as they encounter "failing family farms, fragmented communities, ecosystems out of balance, and rural-urban, insider-outsider tensions" (84). The novel also suggests a solution to these problems. Jones argues that it is necessary for farmers to understand "the complex ecosystem in which humans live but about which they know far too little" (93). Thus, farmers must relearn and embrace diversity in the ecosystem in order to survive. Lastly, one critic has drawn attention to the nature and formation of identity in

relation to the environment. Analyzing the significance of identity and ecology in contemporary literature, Patrick Murphy points out in "The Procession of Identity and Ecology in Contemporary Literature" (2012) that contemporary literature suggests new ways of looking at the formation of identity when the environment has to be taken into consideration. In his discussion of *The Poisonwood Bible*, Murphy argues that Leah is able to settle for her life in the Congo because she is able to "continuously [work] at integrating herself with the environment" (82). Thus, Murphy points out, this novel "[calls] for expanding our thinking about intersubjectivity beyond human" (82).

Thesis Objectives

Diverging from the existing criticism, this thesis mainly examines one's perception of the place in relation to one's perception of the sense of self in the novels of Barbara Kingsolver by drawing upon Yi-fu Tuan's notion of "place" and "space". This thesis analyzes Kingsolver's three selected novels from an ecocritical perspective. Focusing on the three novels that depict human interactions with the non-human world: *Animal Dreams* (1991), *The Poisonwood Bible* (1999), and *Prodigal Summer* (2001), this thesis will argue that, in the chosen novels, Kingsolver portrays the environment in a similar manner by including the physical environment, members of the ecosystem, and native wisdom attached to the place. Her representation of the environment suggests not only the physical dimension of the environment but also the cultural and spiritual dimensions which are embedded in the land. Moreover, as the thesis argues, the novels suggest that the environment can heal an individual psyche or change his or her sense of self, values and attitudes only when the person perceives

the environment as "place" rather than "space," giving meaning and value to it, inhabiting it, and becoming engaged with it.

In addition, this thesis will argue that the selected novels differently depict how the environment affects one's sense of self. In *Animal Dreams*, the environment plays an important role in healing the displaced protagonist who suffers from the loss of her mother and child as well as alienation from her father—experiences that lead to her estrangement from her hometown. The environment, the recalling of her lost memory of the place, her engagement in environmental activism and native wisdom where she comes to learn to reperceive the environment of her hometown, heal her shattered self, and allow her to reintegrate herself into the community. While *Animal Dreams* presents the story of returning home, *The Poisonwood Bible* presents the story of people who learn to settle down in a foreign land. The novel presents the Westerners' twin colonization of both the natives and the land of Africa. This thesis will examine how the colonial, religious, and gender ideologies of some of the Westerners in the novel have been gradually changed by the experience of living in the Congo and the environment itself. This transformation induces the Westerners to reperceive themselves, the land, and the natives differently. In *Prodigal Summer*, this thesis will argue that the characters' interactions with other people in the community, traumatic experiences, and their understanding of ecological science play an important role in prompting them to reperceive their relationship with the environment and its ecosystem. This reperception of the place results in a process of reinhabitation. At the same time, it influences the transformation of the characters' sense of self, making possible the construction of an "ecological identity".

Finally, in the last chapter, this thesis will illustrate how the study of the American novels may help shed light on Thailand's environmental problems[1]. It will demonstrate how the ecological crisis actually emerges from the human mis-perception of the land as merely resources. This wrong conception of the land further leads to the maltreatment of the environment, having the impact on both the human and non-human community that inhabits the place.

[1] This research is one of the collections of ecocritical theses written by MA students from the English Department, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. Please see, for example, Wasinrat Nualsiri's *Ecological Awareness in John Steinbeck's Novels* (2006) and Ranjana Wangvipula's *Agricultural Ethics in Wendell Berry's Contemporary Novels: A Place on Earth, Remembering and Hannah Coulter* (2012). As Thai readers, the authors of these theses not only examine American literary texts from ecocritical perspectives but also attempt to employ the analysis to discuss the issue of environmental problems in Thailand in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER II: Healing Place and Self: The Renewed Ecological Perception and the Invisible Landscape in Animal Dreams

> If I were to now visit another country, I would ask my local companion […] to walk me in the country of his or her youth, to tell me the names of things and how, traditionally, they have been fitted together in a community. I would ask for the stories, the voice of memory over the land […] I would ask about the history of storms there, the age of the trees, the winter color of the hills. Only then would I ask to see the museums. I would want first the sense of a real place […] I would want to know the lay of the land first, the real geography, and take some measure of the love of it in my companion before I stood before the paintings or read works of scholarship.
>
> (Lopez 60-61)

In this passage taken from "The American Geographies" (1989), Barry Lopez, a famous American essayist and novelist whose works express his environmental concerns, points out the significance of the subjective knowledge of the place. It is a knowledge created by people's experience in, and bond with, the place in the form of the stories and how these stories are tied to the land. The phrase "the voice of memory over the land" suggests that the place has a history known only by the "local companion" who has inhabited the place. These local people have lived in the place long enough to tell Lopez every tiny detail of the place, such as "the name of things," "the history of storms," and "the age of trees." These aspects of the place reflect the people's bond with the land as this shared memory is told and passed on to the next generation. Lopez obtains the knowledge by learning from the people who

inhabit the place through their "love of it". In this sense, Lopez privileges this kind of knowledge over the physical dimension of the place which can be easily captured and exhibited in museums where artifacts and objects are obtained by the use of objective knowledge.

Lopez's idea of the subjective knowledge of the place to which only those with an intimate relationship with it can get access, can be elaborated on by Kent C. Ryden's notion of "the invisible landscape". In his book, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place* (1993), Ryden posits that space represents only its physical side as he puts it: "Space is primarily two-dimensional, a pattern of locations, a system in which the places of human experience have significance primarily as geometrical coordinates or identical dots on a map" (37). In this statement, Ryden develops his idea from Tuan's notion of place and space already discussed in the first chapter. That is, space only does not suffice because it is devoid of meanings or values within it. Ryden suggests that a place without depth is a place without human experience as he says, "When space takes on three dimensions, when it acquires depth, it becomes place" (38). In this sense, the invisible landscape is the depth created by human experience and constitutes various layers as Ryden posits, "For those who have developed a sense of place, then, it is as though there is an unseen layer of usage, memory, and significance—an invisible landscape, if you will, of imaginative landmarks superimposed upon the geographical surface and the two-dimensional map" (40). Place, thus, can be seen as an amalgam of different layers, which includes both visible and invisible landscape.

Drawing upon Lopez's idea of the subjective knowledge of the place and Ryden's notion of "the invisible landscape", this chapter will analyze human

subjective experience with the place in Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams*. In the novel, Codi, the protagonist, left her hometown, Grace, and has been away for fifteen years to deny her traumatic experience of the loss of her mother and her baby. Codi attends a medical school but, eventually she fails to receive a medical degree. At the same time, her father is suffering from Alzheimer's. With these experiences of loss and disappointment in her life, she has come back to her hometown with a feeling of displacement and alienation in order to take care of her sick father. Although her homecoming might trigger her painful memories, her inhabitation of the place and her newly developed ability to perceive its "invisible landscape" gradually help establish new relationships with the place and heal her shattered self. This chapter argues that the protagonist's ability to discern the different layers, such as the physical, historical, cultural, and spiritual aspects as well as memories embedded in the land, induces the protagonist to realize the significance of the place in her life and extends her sense of self to include both the place and its people.

Codi's Alienation and Her Perception of Place

Codi's alienation from her hometown is reflected in her perception of the landscape. Her sense of superiority over the natural world is manifest in the scene in which she views the landscape from a bus when she first returns to her hometown. She "[passed] through the land like some rajah on an elephant looking down on [her] kingdom" (8). The phrase "rajah on an elephant" signifies the sense of her superiority to the landscape as she is riding "on an elephant," which symbolizes the natural world. The quotation also demonstrates Codi's estrangement and distance from the landscape because she "[looks] down" on her place. Moreover, her view of the

landscape is similar to how she sees her life when she says, "[my view of the landscape] wasn't all that different from my usual view of life" (8). The way she sees the exterior landscape mirrors her view of her interior life as alienated from the land. In this sense, Codi sees the landscape as meaningless space since she is able to see only the physical side but is unable to perceive its invisible aspects. For instance, Codi thinks, "Grace looked like a language [she] didn't speak" (12). To her, although it is her hometown, Grace renders her disoriented.

Although Codi feels estranged from her hometown, Grace also evokes the painful memory of how she lost her mother and her baby. In her article "Trauma and Memory in Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams*" (2001), Sheryl Stevenson argues that Codi uses an "unstable discourse that resembles those of traumatized people, pulled by conflicting impulses, controlled by the need for safety" (328). Codi is unstable because she is a traumatized patient and is aware of her trauma which is tied to the place. For example, in the scene where she reflects her past experience in her hometown, she states, "Even the people who knew me well didn't know my years in Grace were peculiarly bracketed by death: I'd lost a mother and I'd lost a child" (50). The memory Codi has about her hometown embodies death itself. She knows that her memory of the place and her traumatic experience are inextricably bound together. Furthermore, she also experiences the feeling of loss in the landscape when she perceives death in the natural world. Her traumatic experience resurfaces in the mind in the scene in which Codi walks through an orchard. She describes, "[the orchard] presents you with an optical illusion. You move through what looks like a hodgepodge thicket of trees," and she "[remembers] it over and thinking it was a forest of graves" (13). The landscape signifies two levels of meaning. Firstly, in its

physicality, it is comprised of trees which overwhelm her with a sense of chaos and confusion. The phrase “a hodgepodge thicket” indicates how Codi feels discomforted when she is surrounded by these trees. Secondly, her personal memory is embedded in this landscape as these trees remind her of “graves”, symbolizing death. She associates death with her perception of the place, suggesting the memory aspect of Grace she wants to forget. Codi’s repressed memory is mirrored in the scene in which Codi lost her way back to her own house. She says:

> I wanted to find the road that led up the canyon to Doc Homer's. I wasn't ready to go there yet, but I had to make sure I knew the way [...]. I didn't want her to know how badly dislocated I was. I'd always had trouble recalling certain specifics of childhood, but I didn't realize until now that I couldn't even recognize them at point-blank range. (47)

Codi’s forgetfulness suggests the intensity of her trauma which leads to her repression and detachment from her hometown. Simultaneously, the place also causes Codi’s memory to resurface, thereby prompting her to re-encounter the past.

It is not only Codi’s traumatic experience which alienates her from Grace but also the way in which her father, Homer, raises her. He tries to exclude his children from the community as Codi puts it, “Doc Homer drilled us relentlessly on how we differed from our peers: in ambition, native ability, even physical constitution” (46). The quotation suggests that Homer tries to instill in his daughters the idea that they differ from others in physical, cultural, and intellectual terms. He also inculcates in them the idea of how his daughters are superior to other people in the community. Codi has grown up with this awareness of her differences from other people. Because he is a doctor, Homer also forbids his children to participate in traditional activities in

Grace due to his scientific knowledge and for hygienic reasons. For example, he does not allow his children to collect peacock feathers because, as Codi says, “The practice had not been allowed in our house because Doc Homer said the feathers were crawling with bird mites; he dreaded to think what those old women’s houses were harboring in the way of microoragnisms” (27). He uses his knowledge of science and reasons of hygienic to differentiate his family from “those old women’s houses,” representing the whole community. While the passage demonstrates the collision of two belief systems since most people perceive the practice as a communal activity whereas Homer perceives it from his scientific background, it also points to Homer’s sense of superiority over other people.

Apart from Homer’s scientific background, the reason he has to raise his children in such a way is also rooted in the loss of his wife and its profound and long-lasting impact upon his mind. In his view of the children, Homer says, “For their whole lives, since Alice died, they’ve been too far away to touch. It’s as if she pulled them with her through a knothole halfway into the other world, and then at the last minute left behind, two babes, stranded together in this stone cold canyon” (141). The quotation illustrates how Alice’s death creates Homer’s trauma since he sees her in the form of his two daughters because they signify the haunting memory of his wife. Because of this trauma, Homer raises his daughters with excessive love as he sees them as inseparable from his wife. For example, he “decides this will be their last year for the cemetery and the Days of All Souls” (4). The statement reflects Homer’s deep care for his children and his tendency to repress his grief because he does not want his children to experience the atmosphere of death at the graveyard. His decision, however, also separates them from the community because “the Days of All Souls”

are considered to be one of the occasions where people in the community recall the memories of their loved ones. In addition, his concealment of the truth of his wife's death confuses Codi's memory of herself and her mother and reflects his denial of reality. He does not want Codi to know the truth in order to protect her from sorrow. For instance, Codi was sure she saw her mother lifted by the helicopter, but "[she is told] [she] couldn't possibly remember it because [she] wasn't there" (48). Codi is confused between what actually happened in reality and what she remembers as happening, which her father condemns as the product of her imagination. Homer's distortion of reality, thus, affects Codi and she says, "It made sense to me. I had no visual memory of a mother, and could not recall any events that included her, outside of the helicopter trip she declined to take. But I could remember a sense of her that was strong and ferociously loving. Almost a violence of love" (49). The quotation suggests that Codi questions her own memory, and she is afraid that "a sense of [her mother]" could be false. Therefore, Codi grows up without the memory of her mother and the land because of her upbringing and, at the same time, she has no bond with the community and the land which gradually reinforces her estrangement from it.

In addition to Homer's loss of his wife which affects the way in which he raises his children, the disgrace he feels toward the history of his lineage also alienates him from Grace. According to Grace's local legend, there were nine Gracela sisters who produced, "a population of blue-eyed, dark-haired descendants and a thousand wild peacocks" (14). People in Grace are descended from these nine Gracela sisters. Codi later finds out that "the red-haired Gracela sister with the temper, who married Conrado Nolina and produced a legacy of trash—that was my father's family" (260). The phrase "legacy of trash" suggests that her father's family was not

accepted in the past. The hostility has been passed down to Homer's generation. He also upsets the community due to his marriage with his own cousin, Alice, as Codi puts it, "[Homer] married his second cousin for mad love" (292). This fact renders him insecure as he is aware that other people do not accept the marriage. Homer, therefore, tries to recreate himself and rewrites his own story by burying the past and denying that his family is one of the descendants of the Gracela sister. However, he suffers from a lack of self-esteem and his self-perception as a rootless, displaced man. As he puts it, "I became a man with no history. No guardian angels. I turned out to be a brute beast after all. I didn't redeem my family, I buried it and then I built my grand house on top of the grave. I changed my name" (287). Because of this, Codi inherits from her father the feeling of insecurity and the lack of a sense of belonging. She does not have any idea of where her family come from because her father tells her that they came from Illinois as she puts it, "My mother came from some place in Illinois, and Doc Homer won't own up to being from anywhere" (213). Codi's lack of knowledge of her roots prevents her from bonding with the place and the people. It is also possible to see that Homer's traces of alienation are manifested in Codi since both undergo the same loss and estrangement.

Both characters' alienation from their hometown deprives them of the opportunity to inhabit the land. In the light of this chapter's analysis, it is worth noting that the characters' problems highlight the significance of subjective knowledge. As Barry Lopez has pointed out in the first part of this chapter, one can become engaged with a place by gaining subjective knowledge from the people through their inhabitation in the place. One must also learn the history, culture, and memory in the place in order to inhabit it. However, Codi and Homer lack this knowledge. Homer

acts as if he were an outsider and Codi knows nothing about the place and the history of her own root. She cannot even remember the way back to her home. For this reason, they cannot create their bond with the place. Moreover, Codi's deprivation of the memory of her mother and her history prompts her to detach herself from the community. Codi's return, at first, seemed to be devoid of the memory endowed in Grace, but paradoxically, it is full of memory as Codi describes it as a "memory minefield" (46) which brings her repressed sorrow back to the surface. As the next section will discuss, while Homer refuses to mingle with the community, Codi gradually becomes one with the place and retrieves the subjective knowledge in spite of their similar traumatic experience through her perception of the environmental problem in Grace which prompts her to participate in the community's environmental activism, the beginning of her healing process.

The Invisible Landscape That Heals

Codi's healing process starts from her observation of Grace's physicality. Her feeling of sympathy with the place is triggered by the environmental catastrophe of the river's contamination caused by the Black Mining Company. The environmental problem prompts Codi, who is working as a science teacher in a local high school, to conduct a thorough scientific examination of the river. This study is the first step towards her bonding with the townspeople through her students. Moreover, her knowledge of science enables her to make a contribution to the environmental protection activities of the community led by the ladies in the Stitch and Bitch club. Simultaneously, she gains a better understanding of Grace's history through the strategy the club employs to campaign against the mining company. With her

participation in environmental activism, Codi gains more self-esteem and a sense of belonging to the community.

Codi's concern about Grace's physical environment is the first step towards her exposure to the deeper layers of the place and their significance to her life. She sympathizes with Grace when she learns about the approaching environmental disaster. Accidentally she overhears the problem in a conversation among townspeople as they discuss the contamination of the river: "They're getting gold and moly out of them tailing piles. If they wasn't, they wouldn't keep running the acid through them. You boys know that damn company. They're not going to stop no leeching operation on account of our pecan trees" (64). Codi's realization of the problem and its catastrophic effects suggests her sympathy for the townspeople as she reflects upon the situation: "The party seemed like something underwater, a lost continent, and I felt profoundly sad though it wasn't my continent" (64). This quotation reveals that this environmental disaster evokes in her a feeling of profound sorrow. Her concern about the place's environmental problem and its devastating effects upon people in her hometown also prompts her to examine the contamination more thoroughly by the use of her knowledge in science. Codi asks her students to measure the pH of the water in order to find organisms in it. She discusses the purpose of the experiment: "our putative goal was to get some samples of water to examine under the microscope" (108). The result of the pH testing alerts Codi to the destructive effects of the contamination because she sees no sign of life in the water. As she puts it, this discovery "gave [her] a strange panic to see that stillness under powerful magnification" (110). Codi's probing of the cause of the polluted river also suggests her need to do something to protect the place.

Codi's examination of the contaminated river leads her to her participation in the community's environmental activism when she is invited to give lectures to explain the problem to the ladies of the Stitch and Bitch club. The club itself represents female empowerment as Henry Aay points out in "Environmental Themes in Ecofiction: In *The Center of the Nation* and *Animal Dreams*, "While Grace's mayor is a man, the real power lies with the Stitch and Bitch Club" (75). Kingsolver depicts the women's strong sense of community in the novel to highlight their more delicate sensitivity toward the natural world compared with men. When Codi is at the meeting to discuss the solution of the problem, a woman suggests that "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 […] that it would be home" (179). This woman's comment reflects these women's view of Grace as irreplaceable. They need to protect this place, for they cannot find a place like Grace anywhere else. Their eagerness to protect Grace points to their strong ties with the place and their realization of its significance to their lives. Furthermore, Codi's participation with the club gradually bonds her to the community. She contemplates a strong sense of female community: "I was beginning to learn my way around the matriarchy of Grace, a force unknown to me in childhood" (159). Codi's ability to feel this female bonding illustrates her developing bond with the community.

It is important to note that her engagement with the female community and environmental activism opens her eyes to the historical dimension of Grace. The club's strategy of campaigning for the protection of Grace's environment highlights the significant role of Grace's history in binding people together. The members decide to take action by making peacock piñatas with an "epic broadside" (195) that presents

a brief history of Grace, attached to them. Codi is assigned the important responsibility of researching and writing about Grace's history. In so doing, Codi starts learning about Grace's legendary history:

> There was a local legend, supposedly true, about how they got here a hundred years ago: the nine lucky miners in the gold camp, sight unseen. Back then, these hills were run through with gold veins and drew a crowd of them who had too much money and too little love. The sisters were just children, and only agreed to come if they could bring their birds with them in the hold of the ship. Their legacy in Gracela Canyon was a population of blue-eyed, dark-haired descendants and a thousand wild peacocks. (14)

This quotation points to the story of the Gracela sisters as the ancestors of Grace's townspeople. The legend also accounts for the genetic trace of their descendants who possess dark hair and blue eyes. In addition, that the sisters brought with them numerous peacocks not only explains why wild peacocks abound in Grace but also connects with the significance of these animals in the townspeople's lives. What Codi learns about Grace's history gradually makes her understand the deeper meaning of her hometown. Its history is made up of various stories which are meaningful to its inhabitants. Codi's reflection upon what makes Grace rich with its history points to her thorough understanding of its historical significance:

> I tried to include all the things that made Grace what it was: the sisters coming over with their peacocks: their blue-eyed descendants planting an Eden of orchards in the idyllic days before Black Mountain: the confetti-colored houses and stairstep streets—everything that would be lost to a poison river. I was respected as an expert on city people. So my modest History of Grace was

rolled, bound in ribbon like a diploma, and inserted into each peacock's beak. (206)

Moreover, Codi has come to the realization that, from the legend, Grace townspeople are connected with one another and thus belong to the same family. She also understands that the club's use of the peacock piñatas to protest against the mining company suggests the people's understanding of the history of the place as a place and history that are parts of their sense of self. The identity of each person in this community is derived from the history of the Gracela sisters and their relationship with the locale and that of the advent of the peacocks to the land. In other words, Grace is connected with the Gracela sisters through peacocks rendering humans, animals, and the environment inextricably interwoven. Therefore, if the company destroys the land, it will uproot both the physical environment and people's sense of self which is tied to the land through their shared history.

In addition to deepening her perception of Grace, Codi's engagement in environmental activism increases her bond with the community. Codi feels useful and recognized as she makes use of her scientific knowledge and writing skills for the community. More importantly, the experience of the environmental campaign provides Codi with a valuable lesson that changes her self-perception as Codi puts it, "My life is a pitiful mechanical thing without a past, like a little wind-up car, ready to run in any direction somebody points me. Today I thought I was a hero" (200). The way in which she sees herself as "a hero" indicates her increasing self-esteem. She also contrasts herself without history in the past with herself in the present having learnt the impact of history, making her yearn for being part of the community even more.

Another important factor that enables Codi to delve more deeply into the historical layer of Grace is her participation in the rituals on the Days of the Dead. When she attends this traditional ritual, she discovers the true meaning of the Days of the Dead which she calls "[a] festival of women and children and old people and dead ancestors" (160). People gather on this day to visit their ancestors' graves in order to remember them. The fact that people in Grace joyfully celebrate the Days of the Dead suggests that they neither deny nor suppress their grief. In addition, it demonstrates their ability to accept death and discern that life and death are inevitably intertwined. Furthermore, Codi is impressed with the long-lasting love that each family extends to its ancestors and bequeaths to younger generations. She has come to realize, "The unifying principle was the simplest thing was done with the greatest care. It was a comfort to see this attention lavished on the dead. In these families you would never stop being loved" (163). Her experience teaches Codi that the deceased are still loved and not abandoned. She feels comfort even though the issue of death is something she used to avoid and suppress. This new attitude is contrasted with Codi's previous opinion of death as something horrifying.

Codi's better comprehension of the coexistence of life and death is also manifest in the way in which she perceives the landscape. The scene in which she gives details of her hometown indicates the influence of what she has learnt from the rituals. For instance, the depiction of the landscape exhibits Codi's deepened recognition of the place. She says, "From where we stood, we could look down on the whole of Grace plus the many small settlements that lay a little apart from the town, strung out along the length of Gracela Canyon and its tributaries, often inhabited by just a few families, some with their own tiny graveyards" (161). The fact that

graveyards are placed beside the houses illustrates the locals' ability to see death as an ordinary part of life. The passage also conveys the oneness between the physical environment and its inhabitants because the settlements lie beautifully along the canyon. Moreover, her careful observation of the graveyard also illustrates her new attitude toward death as inseparably integrated into life. For example, in the scene where she carefully examines the graveyard, she reflects:

> I wanted to see what else there was in the line of beautified graves. […] Some were devotees of color or form, while others went for bulk. One grave, of a boy who'd died young, was decorated with the better part of a Chevrolet. There were hundreds of holes drilled into the fishtail fenders, to hold flowers. It was beautiful, like a float in a parade. (163)

Codi now sees graves, the symbol of death, as beautified. Her vision of the beautified graves connotes her better understanding of life and death. In addition, her new way of seeing the graveyard changes its atmosphere since it is now paradoxically endowed with joy. With such beautiful scenery, Codi feels the changing atmosphere of the place. She describes what she sees: "Golden children ran wild over a field of dead great-grand mothers and great-grand fathers, and the bones must have wanted to rise up and knock together and rattle with joy. I have never seen a town that gave so much—so much of what counts—to its children" (165). The passage demonstrates a strong sense of community between the living and the deceased.

The knowledge Codi gains from the historical aspect of the place inspires her to trace the root of her family. Her urge to learn about her family's history first begins with her realization about her dreams of the peacocks: "[I] remembered being on the ship with the nine Gracela sisters and their peacocks" (48). Her dream can be seen as

originating from her unconscious self trying to connect with the place through the community's history in order to make sense of her present self. Codi also discovers the fact that her family is actually rooted in Grace from Viola, a woman in Grace. At the graveyard, Viola provides Codi with the knowledge of Codi's family: "The Nolinas had dug up what they could of the family graveyard and carried the bones a few miles to bury them up here" (164). Viola's comment allows Codi to realize that she is related to one of the Grace descendants. This new understanding is contrasted with what her father has told her. Moreover, Codi also learns that the history of her lineage is the cause of her family's alienation. For instance, Viola points out, "[the Nolinas] weren't real accepted. They were kind of different all the way back. There was one of the Gracela sisters had auburn hair and a bad temper, and she married Conrado Nolina" (165). Her family's estrangement results from one of the Gracela sisters' marriage to her ancestor.

The discovery of Codi's roots in Grace induces her to rethink how she sees herself. Codi's reflection after her participation in the ritual demonstrates her desire to be part of the place:

> More than anything else I wished I belonged to one of these living, celebrated families, lush as plants, with bones in the ground for roots. I wanted pollen on my cheeks and one of those calcium ancestors to decorate as my own. Before we left at sunset I borrowed a marigold from Emelina's great-aunt Pocha, who wouldn't miss it. I ran back to lay it on Homer Nolina, just in case. (165)

This scene is a glaring contrast to the beginning of the novel when Codi returned to Grace. Back then, she had no grasp of the importance of Grace's history and her roots. Now, the vivid portrayal of the way in which Codi sees herself points to her intense

yearning to be part of the community. The image of "these living, celebrated families" as "bones in the ground" suggests not only that her sense of belonging to this community supplies her with rootedness but also that the lives of the natural world in Grace are akin to the those of her ancestors and, by extension, to her own life as well. Furthermore, Codi symbolically identifies herself with the community through the act of laying a flower on her ancestor's grave. It is worth noting that Codi's sense of self and her history are now inseparable.

Personal Memory

Once the historical dimension of the place has come to play a significant role in fostering the townspeople's sense of selves and community, the shared memory and legends, in this sense, also represent their collective memory. Nevertheless, Grace is not only a site of collective memory but also a site of personal memory since part of Codi's memory is embedded in the place as well as its people. Her traumatic experience of loss results in her distorted memory of herself and her family. However, through her attentiveness to the place and its people, she is gradually able to restore her personal memory.

It is worth noting that the problems relating to Codi's memory are likely to concern the following issues: they are caused by her lack of self-esteem, they reveal her confusion between what has actually happened and what is the product of her imagination, they result from her misunderstanding of her relationship with her father, and they also demonstrate her amnesia. Firstly, the traumatic loss of her mother distorts Codi's self-conception. It deprives her of a maternal figure, making her lack self-esteem. Therefore, she has to assign the role of a surrogate mother to her sister,

Hallie, in order to cope with the loss. With this replacement, Codi misconceives her sister to be superior to herself. Her excessive attachment to, and dependence on, Hallie shape Codi's view of her relationship with her sister: "Hallie and I were so attached, like keenly mismatched Siamese twins conjoined at the back of my mind" (8). Codi's identification with her sister insinuates itself into her intensified feeling of lack. The word "twins" also implies that Codi cannot survive without her sister/mother.

Secondly, Codi tends to confuse what actually has happened and what is in her imagination. In her article, "Family Matters: Fictions's Contribution to the Memory Wars" (2003), Carol Osborne posits that "Kingsolver at first appears to suggest that memory can be a product of her imagination, influenced by stories an individual has been told and manipulated by his or her desires and expectations" (1331). Codi's memory can be seen as the consequence of her imagination which is in contrast with reality. Codi herself is aware of this confusion. As she puts it, "This is my problem—I clearly remember things I haven't seen, sometimes things that never happened" (48). Confusion in her memory emerges as her two sets of memory collide. For example, in the scene where Codi visits the grocery store, she ponders, "I was an outsider to this nurturing" (46). At the beginning of her return to Grace, her memory points to her alienation from the community. However, as she will later discover, what happened in reality was that actually Codi was raised and surrounded by those who love her. In addition, Codi is confused between her imagination and what her father tells her. For example, in the scene in which Codi discusses with her father her dream of "the ship with the nine Gracela sisters and their peacocks" (48), her father disapproves of her dream, considering it to be mere fantasy. It is possible that her dream is derived from

her imagination and her yearning to be part of this community. Simultaneously, this dream may have been disinterred from her collective memory. It suggests that Codi is a descendant from one of the Gracela sisters, however, her father denies its actual existence. His action reinforces Codi's estrangement from her history and the community.

Thirdly, due to the way in which her father raises her, Codi has misconstrued that he does not love her. Codi's misapprehension of her father results in her distant relationship with him. For example, upon Codi's arrival in Grace, she ruminates about her father, "My relationship with Doc Homer had always improved with distance, which is to say that mail was okay and short, badly connected phone calls were best" (10). That she avoids contacting him as much as possible demonstrates her alienation from her father. Furthermore, she misjudges her father as being devoid of love for her. For instance, in the scene in which she ponders on how her father has raised her, Codi thinks, "children robbed of love will dwell on magic" (50). This reflection illustrates her misunderstanding —which is engraved in her childhood memory—that her father does not love her. Moreover, her father's attempt to differentiate his two daughters from the rest of Grace's townspeople induces Codi to think that she is bereft of the love not only from her father but also from her community. As she puts it, "Doc Homer drilled us relentlessly on how we differed from our peers: in ambition, native ability, even physical constitution" (46). With her father's insistence of Codi's superiority to the townspeople, Codi also misperceives herself as isolated from the community.

Finally, the last problem regarding Codi's memory is her amnesia concerning important events during her childhood, as well as places and people in Grace. This

forgetfulness points to Codi's painful experience and the loss of her secure self during childhood. For instance, Codi forgets that she tried to save the coyote pups from drowning although she herself was almost drowned. In the conversation between Codi and her friend, Emelina, Codi says, "I don't have any idea what you're talking about" (77). The amnesia about this event hints at the loss of Codi's old self which was full of sensitivity toward non-human beings. In addition, she also forgets places in her hometown. For example, when she returns to Grace, she has difficulty recollecting her memory of these places: "I tried to place myself inside these stores; I knew I'd been there. […] But I couldn't see it. Those things didn't seem so much like actual memories as like things I remember from a book I'd read more than once" (12). Codi's inability to recall her memory of the place demonstrates her repression of the painful memory in order to cope with her trauma. She cannot, thus, form a bond with a place of which she has no memory. Apart from public places in Grace, Codi even forgets the way to her home. This intensity of her trauma is evident in the scene where Codi tries to remember the right path to her house. Codi thinks, "I couldn't ask Emelina for directions to my own childhood home" (47). Codi's memory of home is contaminated by distressing experiences, resulting in her lapse of memory. Her inability to recognize her own home also renders her rootless. Furthermore, her amnesia also affects her memory of people in Grace. For instance, after her early stay in Grace, Codi ponders, "why did I not know Mrs.Campbell in the grocery? Or Lydia Galvez, who rode our school bus"? (47). Each person Codi forgets shares part of her personal memory, and each is part of the place. Her amnesia, therefore, wipes out the memory of not only herself but also the place and the people. In other words, the loss

of each piece of Codi's memory undermines, or even destroys, her sense of self and her bond with the place and its people.

The turmoil within Codi's memory caused by her alienation from Grace's environment is gradually resolved by her contact with the place itself. In her case, both the place's physicality and the meanings assigned to it by its inhabitants play an important role in bringing her memory back. In this respect, it is worth noting that Codi's personal memory is also part of the place and people who inhabit it. Her attentiveness to the place gradually enables her to restore her lost memory embedded in it. To be specific, Codi's observation of the place is represented through her sensory experience in each place, allowing her to extract the memory from it. For instance, part of Codi's personal memory is hidden in Emelina's house. Codi describes the place: "A little collection of potted plants stood in a row on the windowsill. Prayer plants. I was struck with a sudden forceful memory of Emelina's grandmother house […] the house had a stale, old-lady smell, but we loved her boxes of 'pretties'" (43). With her keen focus on the prayer plants, Codi is suddenly immersed in a layer of the place. Her olfactory experience of the place also strikes her with its association with Emelina's grandmother. Codi's competence to recognize the smell points to her intensified sensitivity to the place's layer of memory because she remembers both the place's significance and the smell of the person with whom she was intimate.

Codi's memory is rooted both in the domestic sphere of its inhabitants' houses and outside the houses in natural surroundings. For example, Codi's memory of her mother resurfaces while she is walking back to her house. During this walk, the auditory image of the river plays an important role in evoking Codi's memory of her

mother as when she says, “I was on a road that looked promising, anyway. I could hear the river. […] I had my mother’s death on my mind. One of my few plain childhood memories was of that day” (48). Codi’s sensory experience allows her to dig up her recollection of the day when she lost her mother and to vividly delineate the scene when her mother was lifted up by the helicopter. As she puts it, “two men in white pants handling the stretcher like a fragile, important package. The helicopter blade beating, sending out currents of air across the alfalfa field behind the hospital. […] The field became the ocean I’d seen in storybooks” (48). The lucid depiction of this significant event is strikingly emphasized by Codi’s feeling of the air from the helicopter’s blades. With her stronger grasp of her lost memory, Codi can also recall the intensity of her mother’s love as she puts it, “But I could remember *a sense* of her that was strong and ferociously loving. Almost a violence of love” (49). Her mother’s love is part of the place and brought to the surface by Codi’s restoration of the memory of her mother.

In addition, Codi's own home is a site of her memory. Codi’s imagination of, and attentiveness to, the place, reflected in her olfactory sense, induce her to gain access to the memory aspect of the place. For example, in the scene where Codi revisits the attic at her house, she comments:

> The attic was pleasantly chilly and smelled of pine. Decades of summer heat had forced droplets of resin out of the rough floorboards […]. The afternoon is fixed in my memory with the sharp smell of resin and that particular amber rattle, like the sound of ball bearings rolling around in a box. It’s surprising how much of memory is built around things unnoticed at the time. (280)

The attic is usually represented as the storehouse of the unconscious. Codi has metaphorically entered the realm of her repressed memory. The significant factor which brings about her restoration of her memory is the aroma of the pine. The passage also emphasizes the sense of time because this place has existed through the history of this family long enough to absorb its inhabitants' memories. The vivid image, along with Codi's sensory experience of sound and smell, prompts her to access the memory aspect of the place. With regard to Codi's ability to retrieve her memory through the place, she can see that the attic is the place where "material evidences of [Codi's] family past" (281) are kept. One of the important objects, which allows Codi to gain more understanding of her family, is the artwork, which Codi did when she was a child, labelled by her father as "ARTWORK, C" (283). The artwork includes the portraits of Codi's family; "it was full of family portraits. Big sister, little sister, father, mother, a cockeyed roof over our heads and above that an omnipresent yellow sun" (283). The artwork testifies to the fact that Codi's childhood was nurtured by the love of her family members. The artwork also provides Codi with the vivid image of her mother. While she believes that she "had no visual memory of a mother," (49), the artwork rectifies her distorted memory of childhood and her misunderstanding about the lack of the mother figure in her life. Codi's acknowledgement of this revised memory is demonstrated in the statement, "[The artwork] didn't resemble anyone's reality but mine" (283).

Codi recalls her personal memory not only through the place's physicality but also its people who have inhabited the place long enough also share memory with Codi. To her own surprise, Codi even admits that "my childhood was everyone's property but my own" (77). Codi is aware that the townspeople also hold a key to her

lost and distorted memory. For example, Emelina, who has been Codi's friend since childhood, corrects Codi's misconception of her sister, and she also prompts Codi to remember her sensitivity towards non-human beings. While Codi used to think of herself as inferior to her sister, Emelina reminds her that she was actually a very self-confident young girl who served as a role model for her sister. She states, "[S]he copied you like a picture" (31). Emelina's version of the story sheds new light on Codi's conception of herself and her sister. Emelina also gives rise to Codi's awareness of her sensitivity towards animals when she discusses Codi's rescue of the coyote pups. She tells Codi, "Everybody knew about that. It was a famous incident. You hid down in a coyote burrow and wouldn't come out and Eddie Dell found you and dragged you out" (77). Emelina's narrative about Codi's attempt to help save the coyote pups reveals Codi's ability to extend herself to other beings. Although Codi does not fully remember the event, she still gets a glimpse of what happened on that day. Moreover, Codi is able to retrieve all the pieces of her memory about this event through her witnessing of the brutal cockfighting. In the scene in which Codi is in the truck with Loyd, who has taken Codi to see the cockfighting, she considers, "As plainly as anything then, I remembered trying to save the coyotes from the flood. My ears filled with the roar of the flooded river and my nose with the strong stench of mud. I gripped the armrest of Loyd's truck to keep the memory from drowning my senses" (191). This train of turbulent thoughts and sensations signifies the disinterment of her traumatic memory and also the retrieval of her lost self. With Emelina's shared memory and Codi's exposure to the cruelty of the cockfighting, Codi is able to regain her lost memory and sensitivity to the natural world.

While she retrieves her intimacy with the natural world, Codi also reconceives her relationship with her father. The presence of Uda Dell, who raised Codi when she was a child, along with the layer of memory in the attic, makes Codi realize the truth about her father's love for his two children. For instance, in the scene in which Uda accompanies Codi up into the attic, she shares with her a story of her as a joyful child, "You'd come up after school and we'd play Old Maid or you'd play swinging statues out in the yard" (282). Uda's story which shows that she treated Codi as if she were her own daughter assures Codi again that her life during childhood was filled with love and care from the people around her. Since the attic is made of pine wood, the story and the smell of pine enable Codi to restore her precious memory with Uda. In the same scene, Codi reflects, "I remembered [Uda's] arms when they were thinner; a younger Uda. […] I was experiencing a flash flood of memories. I feared I might drown in them" (282). These statements suggest that the memories of her childhood are being disinterred and that they are inundating her mind to the point where she feels overwhelmed. Moreover, Uda's narrative discloses another view of Doc Homer—of which Codi has never been aware. As she puts it, "He just wanted awful bad for you kids to be good girls. […] It's hard for a man by himself, honey. You don't know how hard. He worried himself to death. A lot of people, you know, would just let their kids run ever which way" (281). This remark awakens Codi to the reality that her father struggled a great deal to function as best as he could as both father and mother to her and Hallie.

Cultural and Spiritual Dimensions of Place

In addition to the understanding of the place's layers of history and memory, Codi comes to learn about its cultural and spiritual aspects. Loyd, a native American who possesses the ability to see the invisible landscape, plays a significant role in helping Codi appreciate the deeper meanings of the place. His complex interaction with the animals and the land becomes a foundation for Codi's perception of the place's cultural aspect. After she has a firm grasp of the indigenous cultural belief about the bond between the human and non-human worlds, Codi gradually grasps the place's spiritual dimension and realizes her place among other beings.

Loyd's complex relationship with the animals and the land serves as a basis for Codi's insight into the place's cultural dimension. Firstly, Loyd's intimacy with animals makes Codi rethink her relationship with non-human beings. Codi witnesses Loyd's compassion for his dog, Jack. For example, in the scene where Loyd introduces his dog to Codi, Loyd says, "He's in love, is what he is, if you gave him a piece of that goat" (90). Codi also admires Loyd's ability to understand Jack's needs by simply looking into its eyes. His interaction with the dog triggers Codi's feeling of wonder for the intimate relationship between the dog and its owner. Their mutual love shapes the way Codi sees the dog. In the same scene, Codi gazes into Jack's eyes and says, "Sometimes when you look into an animal's eyes you see nothing, no sign of connection, just the flat stare of a wild creature. But Jack's eyes spoke worlds" (90). Codi's ability to communicate with the dog points to her heightened sensitivity toward the animal.

Secondly, Loyd's interaction with the rooster raises Codi's awareness of the blurred boundary between the human and the non-human other. In the cockfighting

scene where she observes Loyd's participation in this violent activity, Codi ponders upon Loyd's interaction with his rooster:

> In this unapologetically brutal sport there was a vast tenderness between the handler and his bird. Loyd cradled his rooster in arms, stroking and talking to it in a low, steady voice. At each handling call he caressed the bird's wings back into place, stroked its back, and licked the blood from its eyes. At the end, he blew his own breath into its mouth to inflate a punctured lung. He did this when the bird was nigh unto death and clearly unable to win. The physical relationship between Loyd and his rooster transcended winning or losing. (189)

In this passage, Codi highlights Loyd's tenderness toward the rooster. He treats it with love and care although the rooster is going to die. He even tries his best to save it. The gentle ways in which he treats the rooster demonstrates the obscure boundary between human and non-human beings because he treats the rooster as if it were a fellow human being. From what Codi sees, the result of the match is not as important as the fact that Loyd truly loves his rooster. Loyd's bond with the animal deeply touches her and triggers her sympathy for animals.

Even though Loyd plays an important role in triggering Codi's sensitivity to animals, he hurts them through his participation in the cockfighting. Codi is not the only one whose attitude toward the non-human world changes. Loyd's view of the animal also changes because of Codi. In the scene in which Codi expresses her thoughts about such a cruel sport: "What I believe is that humans should have more heart than that. I can't feel good about people making a spectator sport of puncture wounds and internal hemorrhage" (191). Codi expresses her sympathy for the non-

human being because she sees the animal as no different from a human. Following her remark, Loyd decides to quit this sport as his brother has also died from the same cause as the rooster.

Apart from Loyd's attentiveness to the animals, his heedful interaction with the land also enables Codi to realize the interconnectedness between the land and its human inhabitants. When he takes Codi to his mother's place on the Indian reservation, Loyd reveals his in-depth knowledge of the land. For example, in the scene in which Loyd examines his land, he says, "Those little weedy cottonwoods have grown up along the stream. And there's a big boulder on that slope, you see the one with dark stripes? That used to be up there" (214). Loyd has inhabited the place with such attentive stewardship that he is familiar with every single detail of the land and able to detect every change in the natural surroundings. Codi is intrigued by his delicate knowledge of the place and reflects upon Loyd's action, "Most men, I thought, aren't this familiar with the furniture in their homes" (214). This statement suggests that she sees that Loyd treats the land as his home. Her understanding of how a person embraces the land as his home also opens her eyes to another aspect of a sense of belonging that is derived from one's relationship with the land.

Furthermore, Codi realizes that Loyd treats the land as part of his family. For Loyd, the land is inseparable from himself. For instance, in the scene in which he describes the environment, he makes the very careful observation: "[Peach trees]'re older than my aunt. The peach trees go way back. They were planting orchards down her three hundred years ago" (214). Loyd's comparison of the peach trees with his aunt implies that he sees both beings as equal in terms of their significance. With his inclusive attitude toward the non-human world, Codi comes to understand the

environment as an integral part of Loyd's family. For example, in the scene in which Codi observes Loyd's interaction with the place, she reflects, "It seemed like a family business. On this land Loyd seemed like a family man" (215).

As Loyd's complex relationship with the animals and the place gradually heightens Codi's attentiveness to the place and its non-human inhabitants, she gradually sees the cultural dimension of the place. With this new awareness of the place, Codi is able to use her sensory perception together with her imagination to deepen her understanding of the place, especially its cultural dimension which entails a way of life and how one should live. For example, Codi's observation of the prehistoric condo allows her to become aware of a sense of the community represented through the architecture. The scene in which Codi visits the prehistoric condo reveals the significance of Loyd's guidance as well as her sensory and imagination perception of the place:

> It was a maze. Loyd said there were more than two hundred rooms—a village under one roof. The air smelled cold. I tried to imagine the place populated: stepping from room to room over sleeping couples, listening through all the noises of cooking an scolding and washing up for the sound of your own kids, who would know secret shortcuts to their friends' apartment. (128)

Codi's attentiveness to the place is manifested through her olfactory sense which triggers her imagination to comprehend the cultural implication of the place's structure. Codi's vivid imagination of how people used to live here helps her gain access to the structure's meaning. With the image in her mind, Codi can visualize that there are two hundred rooms and each room is interconnected because they are under the same "one roof", reflecting interdependence within the community. The sound of

each room is interpenetrated with every other in this piece architecture, thereby demonstrating the concept of its inhabitants' unity. Her sensory sense, along with her imagination, prompts Codi to feel the intimacy these inhabitants share with each other. In short, Codi can comprehend that the architecture itself is evidence of the place's cultural layer because it reveals its inhabitants' way of life.

Moreover, Codi gains more understanding of the place's cultural aspect through her tactile perception of the wall. At the prehistoric condo, Codi thinks, "The walls are thick" (128). Codi's ability to detect the thickness of the wall reveals that she has examined the place more carefully. Simultaneously, Loyd's knowledge gives further depth to Codi's understanding. Loyd adds his cultural belief to Codi's observation of the place by telling her about the material of the walls. In the same scene, he says, "The walls are graveyards. When a baby died, they'd mortar its bones right into the wall. Or under the floor. […] So it would still be near the family" (128). With Loyd's guidance, Codi is able to discern the indigenous belief that the deceased which are represented by the bones are still present to the living. Loyd's explanation also points to the harmonious blending of the deceased and the living since both exist in the same place. It is important to note that this cultural belief about the interweaving of life and death can be also considered as spiritual because the belief suggests a new way of looking at death. However, in this scene, Codi is able to be aware of only the cultural aspect and because her sensitivity to the place undergoes a gradual process of development, Codi is yet to discern its spiritual dimension.

In addition, Codi learns from Loyd about native American idea of how to create a home. In so doing, she gradually reshapes her misconception of home. For example, in the scene where Codi looks at the houses around the edge of the cliff, she

asks Loyd, Why "doesn't somebody fix [those old houses] up?" (235). The act of "fixing" reflects Codi's understanding of home as something materially permanent. On the other hand, Loyd's answer suggests to Codi a new way of thinking about home. He responds to Codi's question: "Sometimes. Someday you'll get old and fall down. […] The greatest honor you can give to a house is to let it fall back down into the ground. […] That's where everything comes down in the first place" (235). Firmly couched within his bond with the place, Loyd is able to put aside the physical aspect of the home because he believes that it will be natural for both the place and the people to collapse someday. Everything will eventually disintegrate into the ground from whence every being originates. In other words, the existence of both the living and the deceased lie together in the same ground, reaffirming the indigenous notion of the oneness of life and death. It is also worth noting that Loyd's sense of the community is no different from that of the townspeople. In Grace, both indigenous people and the townspeople open Codi's eyes to the reality that the dead coexist with the living without being forgotten. Moreover, Loyd suggests that the physical environment alone does not suffice when creating home. He further discusses this idea as he puts it:

> The important thing isn't the house. It's the ability to make it. You carry that in your brain and your hands, wherever you go. Anglos are like turtles, if they go someplace they have to carry the whole house along in their damn Winnesota. […] We're like Coyote. […] Get to a good place, turn around three times in the grass, and you're home. Once you know how, you can always do that, no matter what. You wouldn't forget. (235)

In this passage, Loyd suggests that the material aspect is not all that matters. He can carry the whole house within his mind during his journey. What is important is the ability to endow a place with value and meaning. To put it differently, people can transform any "space" into "place" by their experience in it. Loyd's insight into the place induces Codi to realize that she too can create home if she opens up her mind to inhabit the place.

Furthermore, Codi intuitively apprehends the profound meaning of the indigenous reservation. For instance, in the scene after Codi's visit to the prehistoric condo, she goes out into the courtyard and carefully observes the place: "[The courtyard] was completely hidden from the outside—a little haven with a carpet of fine grass and an ancient ash tree. A treasure island. I was drawn to the shade" (128). The quotation emphasizes Codi's ability to appreciate the richness of culture. In this place, she feels comfort because of the influence of the place. Her view of the place as a "haven" indicates her feeling of security. Her scrutiny of the place gradually prompts her to discover the courtyard's importance. To elucidate, her description of the tree as "ancient" signifies that this place existed long before its inhabitants created a cultural dimension for it. Thus, Codi is able to conceive of the courtyard as "a treasure" of culture by herself. Her ability to grasp the place's deeper meaning on her own—without Loyd's help—also indicates her developing perception.

Following her receptivity to the cultural aspect of the place, Codi's reconception of life and death and the idea of home allows her to become cognizant of the spiritual dimension of the place. In his book *Keywords in Religious Studies* (2006), Ron Geaves posits the meaning of spirituality: "an intense relationship with the sacred involving deep emotive experiences of unity, joy, loss, gratitude and states

of consciousness achieved through prayer, mediation, reflection or remembrance" (qtd. in Pradittatsanee 60). In other words, the spiritual aspect enables a person to connect with "the sacred", something larger than oneself. Codi experiences a spiritual epiphany when she is surrounded by the natural construction of the canyon walls at the Indian reservation. Her delineation of the place demonstrates that she is in awe: "The canyon walls rose straight up on either side of us, ranging from sunset orange to deep rust, mottled with purple. The sandstone had been carved by ice ages and polished by deserts eons of sandpaper winds. The place did not so much inspire religion as it seemed to be religion itself" (210). Codi's view of the place as sacred suggests her awareness of the spirituality of the place. The canyon walls have been constructed and reconstructed for ages by nature, revealing a sense of time. The grandeur of the canyon walls not only makes Codi feel minute but also comforts her as if they were protecting and embracing her. For Codi, the place is thus no different from religion as she feels her egocentric existence being diminished by vastness of nature.

Furthermore, Codi's religious participation in the indigenous ceremony makes her understand the interdependence between the human and non-human worlds. In the scene in which Loyd takes Codi to witness the indigenous ritual, where people dress like animals and dance to ask for the rain, in worship of the god of fertility, Codi's keen observation of the ceremony exhibits her realization of her expanded self. Codi reflects upon the ritual, "Their human features disappeared behind a horizontal band of the black paint across the eyes. They move like deer. […] They *became* deer. They looked exactly as deer would look" (237). The quotation illustrates Codi's spiritual moment when she sees the performers transform into deer. The blurred image

between the human and the non-human other that Codi perceives suggests that the humans' anthropocentrism is lessened to the point where they are able to blend their sense of self with, and become part of, the world of the non-human other. This experience can be seen as founded upon the native Americans' humble attitude toward nature and their realization of the interdependence between humans and nature. With regard to Codi's taking part in the indigenous ritual, the spiritual dimension of the place reshapes her view of religion. For example, in the scene in which Codi contemplates the spiritual meaning of the religious ceremony, she says, '"It's a good idea,' […] 'Especially since we're still here sleeping on God's couch. We're permanent houseguests' […] 'It was a new angle on religion, for me" (240). Codi's perception of "God" in the land hints at her awakening to the sacredness of nature. Her new apprehension of the land becomes Codi's new religion as she identifies herself as "sleeping on God's couch", demonstrating her humble dependence upon God's natural world.

The Renewed Perception of Self

The invisible landscape, which entails layers of memory, history, culture, and spirituality, helps Codi discern the meanings hidden in the place. At the same time, her renewed perception of the place also brings about the changed view of herself. Different aspects of the place provide Codi with a renewed self-perception. Firstly, her discernment of the place's historical aspect prompts her to identify herself as being related to Grace's ancestors. For example, in the scene in which Codi listens to Dona Althea's interview about the ancestors of Grace, Codi reflects upon Dona's speech, "She pronounced the names musically and slowly, […]. It was the Genesis of

Grace. And of Hallie and me. Our father's own grandmother—mother of Homero Nolina up in the graveyard—was one of those princesses: the red-haired, feisty one" (267). Codi's appreciation of her genealogy points to her utmost satisfaction in belonging to her ancestors. She has exhibited her precise knowledge of her family history as descendants from one of the Gracela's sisters. In other words, Codi has become reconnected with her ancestors' history.

Also, Codi's grasp of the cultural and spiritual aspects of the place provides her with a new attitude towards life and death, thereby inducing her to make peace with her loss. In the scene in which Codi discusses her sister's death with her father, Codi says, "That's true. We got punctured pretty bad. But we still gave the world a lot, Pop. We gave it Hallie" (333). In this conversation, Codi's answer reflects her understanding of the Native American cultural attitude toward life and death. Codi's view of her sister's death is based on the idea that everything originates from, and goes back into, the ground after death. Codi now believes that her sister is part of the earth from which the whole community of lives emerges. With this firm belief, Codi can come to terms with her loss.

Due to her comprehensive experience of the land, Codi is able to expand her self to include both the human and non-human worlds. For instance, her discernment of the anthropomorphized landscape demonstrates her extended self which includes the physical environment. She describes the place:

> As we slipped down over the city every building and back lot was beautifully distinct. […] The land stretched out under me the way a lover would, hiding nothing, offering up every endearing southwestern cliché, and I wanted to get

> down there and kiss the dirt. I made a bargain with my mother. If I got to the ground in one piece, I wasn't leaving again. (321)

Codi recognizes the place as "beautifully distinct". The beautified landscape mirrors her changing perception of the place. The land is not depicted only as a backdrop but is "stretched out" like "a lover". This anthropomorphized environment metaphorically embraces Codi and receives her as part of its existence. The personification of the land as a lover also symbolizes the unified self of Codi and the land. She also expresses her act of bonding with the place through the act of "kissing the dirt".

Moreover, Codi's more inclusive self renders her traumatic experience of loss bearable. In the scene where the townspeople gather at Hallie's funeral, Codi reflects upon the place and the people, "I believe it was the physical manifestation of unbearable grief. But you learn these situations that all griefs are bearable. Loyd was standing on one side of me, and Emelina on the other, and whenever I thought I might fall or just cease to exist, the pressure of their shoulders held me there" (327). The way in which Codi sees Loyd, Emelina, and the townspeople illustrates her extension of self. She will not "cease to exist" because Codi has come to the realization that her existence is also tied to other people and the place. In other words, Codi has completely identified herself with both the community and the place. It can be seen that her shattered self is eventually healed and that she is able to reintegrate herself into the community.

Codi's exposure to the place's invisible landscape provides her with her new self-perception. That is, Codi's identity now hinges upon the place with which she has bonded. For example, in the scene in which she visits the cave, the place's darkness awakens Codi to her realization of the significance of the place in her life:

> The darkness was absolute […] I breathed slowly and tried to visualize the size of room, the distance between myself and the roof that I knew was there. Instead I saw random images that didn't help: Emelina collecting the little fast-food cars for her boys; the man in the caf who'd suggested I marry him. And then while we all still waited I understood that the terror of my recurring dream was not about losing just vision, but the whole of myself, whatever that was. What you lose in blindness is t space around you, the place where you are, and without that you might not exist. You could be no where at all. (204)

The darkness in the cave makes Codi lose the vision of it. Without her connectedness with the place in which she stands, she loses touch with whom she really is. She has come fully to realize that her identity is derived from the place and that without the place, her sense of self could disintegrate.

Furthermore, with Codi's discernment of the invisible landscape, she has become a better teacher because she intends to pass on her subjective knowledge of the place to the next generation. She tries to inculcate environmental awareness in her students. In the scene where Codi teaches her students, she says, "People can forget, and forget, and forget, but the land has a memory. The lakes and the rivers are still hanging on DDT and every other insult" (255). The quotation demonstrates Codi's more delicate concern for the non-human world. She tries to advance the idea that DDT destroys not only the rivers but also the cultural identity of people tied to the land. Moreover, her criticism of the American consumerist society points to her deeper understanding of the interrelationship between the well-being of the land and the people. This point is evident in the scene where Codi further discusses the idea with her students. As she puts it, "They wash [these jeans] in a big machine with this

special kind of gravel they get out of volcanic mountains. […] all us lucky Americans can wear jeans that look like somebody throw them in the garbage before we got them" (254). The depletion of natural resources will bring about long-term environmental degradation as the consumerist aspect of American society, represented by denim jeans, continues. Here the scope of her concern moves from the regional to the national. Codi's criticism of a larger scale of environmental problems highlights her holistic view of the earth and its human inhabitants.

Ultimately, Codi also instills into her students the idea of cultural memory. She emphasizes that the land is also packed with values and meanings derived from people's experience in the place. In this sense, she wants her students to be the ones who protect the land and its invisible landscape. As she puts it, "I want them to be custodians of the earth" (331). Now, Codi does not simply teach biology or science but also the subjective knowledge of the place so that her students will live their lives in harmony with the natural world.

CHAPTER III: Shattered Ideology: The Impact of the Environment on the Re-Perception of Place and Self in *The Poisonwood Bible*

> Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire. What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth! (Conrad 3)

In this passage from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), its narrator, Marlow, who sails to the Congo, expresses his pre-conception, contaminated by colonial ideology, of the natural environment in this part of Africa. For the Europeans, the Congo is abundant in natural resources, waiting to be depleted and exploited. Furthermore, this excerpt points to the oppression of the land and the people. The passage illustrates the image of white men's violent act of trespassing into the environment to dominate the land and its natives as the word, "sword", suggests. The "torch" the whites carry with them symbolizes the light of western civilization they use to justify their colonization because the narrator thinks he brings with him "greatness" to probe into this "unknown earth". The rigid demarcation between the superior whites and the inferior blacks is thus formed. In *The Poisonwood Bible*, Barbara Kingsolver deliberately deploys the setting of Conrad's novel to bring to attention the question of the justification of western colonialism and show how this domination can lead to exploitation of the land.

The on-going relationship between the powerful and the powerless can be examined in the light of postcolonial theory. Among postcolonial thinkers, three prominent postcolonial critics have paved the way to the study of the correlation

between the colonizer and the colonized. First, Edward Said's notion of orientalism discusses the dichotomic relationships between the West and the East. In his book *Orientalism* (1985), Said postulates that the knowledge about the Orient produced by the West is full of cultural bias as this knowledge becomes "a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')" (45). In this light, the East becomes inferior since the West creates the East in order to maintain its status as superior. Consequently, the Occident is able to use their constructed knowledge of the Orient to justify their colonization.

However, Homi Bhabha debunks what Said constitutes as a polarized interaction between the West and the Orient through his notion of hybridity. He posits in his book, *The Location of Culture* (2012), that the colonized also use what he terms "hybridity", emerging from cultural differences, as a strategy to reappropriate the colonial control and resist it. The colonial power thus cannot fully function to exert its authority on the colonized. For Bhabha, the colonizer's authority can always be challenged and shaken by the colonized's ability to hybridize what the colonizer instills into them. In this sense, the current of power between the two sides is always in flux rather than fixed and stabilized as Said proposed.

Lastly, unlike Bhabha, Mary Louise Pratt emphasizes the process of transculturation, the cultural exchange between the colonizer and the colonized, through her notion of the "contact zone". In her book, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (2008), she argues that the process of the "contact zone" emerges in "the space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and

establish their ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (8). In short, the contact zone is the collision between the colonizer's and the colonized's different cultures, and this colonial space unavoidably establishes the "asymmetrical relationship" (8) in terms of power between the two sides.

While this chapter aims at examining in *The Poisonwood Bible* the issue of the postcolonial relationship between the Americans and the natives in the Congo, it also attempts to argue that Barbara Kingsolver interestingly opens up a new issue of how the environment, or, to be specific, the physical reality in the Congo, can expose the vulnerability and senselessness of colonial ideology. The novel tells the story of the Prices, who go to the Congo on the mission of Father Nathan, the head of the family, as a passionate evangelist. Here the family members find out that their preconception cannot help them comprehend this exotic place and its inhabitants. The mother, Orleanna, and her four daughters, Rachel, Leah, Ruth May, and Adah, gradually change their attitude toward their oppressive and patriarchal father, question the validity of their religious and colonial ideologies, and adjust themselves to the environment in the Congo.

Existing criticism on *The Poisonwood Bible* does not examine the impact of the environment on the characters' ideologies. Critical essays on the novel can be categorized into two major trends. The first trend deals with power politics in the West's attempt to dominate the natives. For example, in "The Missionary Position: *The Poisonwood Bible*" (2003), Elaine Ognibene postulates that "religion and politics are not separate entities, but a powerful combined force used historically not only to 'convert the savages' but to convert the masses to believe that what is done in the

name of democratic, Christian principles is done for the greater good" (20). Ognibene emphasizes the inextricable connection between religion and colonial ideology and how the whites use religion as a justification for their domination. The other major trend is the issue of the position of women and how they are suppressed. In her essay "The Neodomestic American Novel: The Politics of Home in Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*" (2014), Kristin Jacobson discusses how the domination of women can lead to western colonialism and also traces how the subjugation of women are gradually undermined in the course of the novel. She posits that the Prices' domestic sphere is "a key site for white privilege's reproduction and as a place not necessarily doomed to reproduce forever its imperial history" (106). In addition to these two major trends of criticism, another approach is from the perspective of disability studies. In her essay "The One-Eyed Preacher, His Crooked Daughter, and Villagers Waving Their Stumps: Barbara Kingsolver's Use of Disability in *The Poisonwood Bible*" (2009), Jeanna White analyzes Kingsolver's representation of disability and argues that the author "casts disability as a site of resistance, she challenges its social constructedness, and avoids essentializing the experience of impairment. In so doing, she offers a complex and provocative view of disability both in literature and in culture" (141).

Diverging from existing criticism, this chapter highlights the role of the physical environment, as well as its human and non-human inhabitants, in changing the characters' attitudes and values. Focusing on Leah's and Adah's perception of themselves and the Other in the Congo, this chapter argues that Nathan's Christianity underlies the Prices' proclivity to dominate the people and the land. It will further argue that the environment in the Congo will gradually expose the characters to the

senselessness and vulnerability of the religious ideology and the fragility of colonial power. The characters' renewed attitude toward themselves and the environment allows them to form newly developed beliefs based on their experience in the Congo as opposed to the institutionalized religion imposed on them by their father. Therefore, the characters adopt a humble attitude toward nature and become conscious of their insignificance in the natural world.

Christianity and Colonial Oppression

In *The Poisonwood Bible* (1998), Christianity is the underpinning of the white characters' colonial ideology, which results in the domination of the natives and also the exploitation of the land. Each member of the Price Family internalizes the idea of white supremacy through Nathan's inculcation of Christianity. The Prices thus see themselves as superior to the natives in terms of race and religious beliefs. With regard to Nathan's position as a missionary, he attempts to exercise his authority by imposing his religious beliefs upon the natives. Furthermore, the method Nathan employs to convert the natives also entails the depletion of natural resources.

Nathan's fundamentalist teachings of Christianity reflect colonial ideology. Firstly, Christianity, as taught by Nathan, endorses the idea of white supremacy and slavery. Some parts of the Bible Nathan chooses to teach his children points to the inferior status of black people. As Ruth May demonstrates her contaminated view of the natives due to her father's teaching, she thinks, "God says the Africans are the Tribes of Ham. Ham was the worst one of Noah's three boys […]. So Noah cursed all Ham's children to be slaves for ever and ever. That's how come them to turn out dark" (23). In this passage, this Biblical teaching is literally interpreted as indicating

that the blacks are condemned to be slaves. It is also used to justify racial hierarchy between whites and blacks and the practice of slavery. Moreover, Nathan's version of Christianity supports the domination of others who hold different beliefs. For example, in the scene where Nathan preaches about the Israelites' attempt to convert the Egyptians, he says, "*Into* Egypt […] and *every* corner of the earth where *His* light,' […] has yet to fall" (31). The excerpt reveals Nathan's belief in the supremacy of Christianity and thus the necessity to proclaim God's teachings in every single corner of the earth. Nathan thinks that beliefs other than Christianity are all primitive and that those he considers as heathens need to be civilized by the light of God. In the novel, the image of Christianity is repeatedly associated with light while other beliefs are represented by darkness. This idea corresponds with, and justifies, the whites' colonization of non-whites.

With this cultural bias influenced by their religion, the Prices view the inhabitants of the Congo as sinful and primitive. The impact of the Prices' religion upon their worldview is manifest in Ruth May's conception of the natives. For instance, she ponders, "They're hungry as can be, and don't get their vitamins. And still God makes them look fat. I reckon that's what they get for being the Tribes of Ham" (58). Ruth May sees that these natives are born with hardship and starving because of their innate sin. Her religious beliefs induce her to ignore the fact that their hardship actually results from the environment rather than their race. The Price family also sees the natives as primitive. For example, in the scene in which Rachel sees the natives for the first time, she says, "I almost screamed when I realized the hand I held was not my mother's but a thick brown claw" (27). Rachel's choice of the word

"claw" suggests her apprehension of the natives as animalistic and her racial discrimination against them.

Due to his view of the natives as inferior, Nathan's religious fanaticism eventually leads him to dominate the natives through his attempt to impose his religious doctrines upon them. Firstly, Nathan uses Christianity as a tool to heighten his status in order to exercise his authority and dominate the people. With his concept of himself as a messenger of God, Nathan thinks that he is justified to do anything he wants. His arrogance can be seen in his preaching: "I do not fear any man in Kilanga. I am a messenger of God's great good news for all mankind, and He has bestowed upon me a greater strength than the brute ox or the most stalwart among the heathen" (148). Nathan's teaching demonstrates his colonial mindset which prompts him to oppress the natives through his attempt to convert them.

It is also worth noting that Nathan's position as a missionary serves as the justification of his attempt to bring civilization to the Congo since he has no harmful intention in doing so. Nathan's conversation with a Belgium doctor reveals his enthusiasm to bring light to the people in the Congo. As Nathan puts it, "My work is to bring salvation into the darkness" (137). He means well to the Congo because he believes that Christianity will enable the natives to attain better living conditions. Despite being interrupted by the doctor who considers Nathan's work as a form of exploitation, Nathan still insists that his mission is justified as he asserts, "American aid will be the Congo's salvation" (138). The sentence highlights Nathan's obsession with the idea of "salvation" and connotes his view of the natives as the helpless who need to be saved by Christianity. However, his teachings turn out to violate the natives' beliefs. For instance, he preaches to the natives, "Arise and come forward

into a brighter land!" (32). The quotation highlights Nathan's violation of the natives' beliefs as he sees the indigenous beliefs as unworthy and tries to replace their conviction with Christianity. He also comes up with a plan to convert the natives through the ritual of baptism. He invites the natives out to have food near the river without informing them of his true intention to baptize them. As his daughter puts it, "Father lured people down as near as he could get them to the river by means of the age-old method of a church supper" (54). His strategy to entice the natives suggests that he only wants to convert them without their consent. Although Nathan desires to create a communion where people gather and build their relationship with Jesus through Christian rituals, baptism, in a sense, serves as a tool to exert his authority.

It is important to note that Nathan's attempt to convert the natives does not involve physical violence. However, it can be considered as an even more brutal form of colonial domination because it aims at replacing the natives' knowledge and beliefs with westerners'. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls this "epistemic violence", which she defines in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1999) as "a complete overhaul of the episteme" (266). In other words, she argues that the colonizers' attempt to replace indigenous knowledge or episteme with their supposedly superior knowledge is considered violence because the colonizers' knowledge will eradicate the non-western beliefs, rendering them meaningless. In this light, Nathan's endeavour to convert the natives to Christianity becomes the act of colonizing the natives as he tries to make the Congolese think that their beliefs are worthless and inferior to the whites'.

Moreover, Nathan's religious ideology induces him to dominate the land. This aspect is implied at the beginning of the novel as Kingsolver inserts an epigraph from "Genesis":

And God said unto them,

Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,

and subdue it: and have dominion

over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air,

and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (Genesis 1:28)

The epigraph demonstrates the anthropocentric view toward the natural world. God creates the world for humans to conquer and nature is considered as natural resources for humans to use. This epigraph is here presented as a critique of Christianity which generates humans' sense of superiority and their tendency to alienate themselves from the non-human world and to exploit nature. The critique of the anthropocentric attitude which Christianity perpetuates is evident in Lynn White Jr.'s article entitled "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" (1967). In this well-known essay, White argues that "Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions, […] not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends" (10). White's comment postulates that Christianity engenders anthropocentrism due to the binary oppositions that underpin God's creation of all beings in "Genesis".

In addition, Nathan's domination of the land is acknowledged by Orleanna when she thinks of her husband after leaving him in the Congo. Her reflection records his religious fanaticism to take control over every being as she puts it, "We aimed for no more than to have dominion over every creature that moved upon the earth" (11). The echo of "Genesis" in her words suggests that she knows her husband has internalized the Biblical idea of the domination of the natural world. He fantasizes he could demonstrate the miracle of God to the natives. However, in his desperate

attempt to imitate one of Jesus's miracles in the New Testament, he ends up depriving natural beings of their lives. For example, in the scene in which Nathan orders his men to bomb the river to get plenty of fish to feed the natives, Adah describes her father's action as "The Reverend's high-horse show of force": "He [Nathan] ordered men to go out in canoes and pitch dynamite in the river, stupefying everything within earshot" (80). This passage is an echo of one of "The Gospels" in the New Testament. It is from the scene called "Feeding the multitude" where Jesus miraculously multiplies five loaves of bread and two fish to feed five thousand followers (Matthew 14:13-21). With this image in his mind, Nathan wishes to create a miracle of a similar nature to win the natives' hearts without considering the lives of the non-human beings. Nathan's view of the land is not different from his attitude towards the natives as he also sees the land as a tool to serve his religion despite the waste of fish's lives. The senseless loss of innumerable fish that are inedible but left rotten due to the impact of the bomb and heat in the Congo points to Nathan's insane obsession with Christianity, which brings about the domination of not only the people but also of the natural world.

How the Congo Undermines Colonial Ideology

This section aims at arguing that what Nathan considers as the Other, i.e., the physical environment in the Congo as well as its human and non-human inhabitants, plays a crucial role in rendering his effort to colonize the natives ineffectual. It will demonstrate how Kingsolver constructs the plot that highlights various ways in which Nathan's attempts to replace the natives' knowledge with the values of the white are parodied. Furthermore, the representation of the evangelist missionary as a clown

from the natives' and his daughters' perspectives reveals the vulnerability and senselessness of Christianity and its colonial ideology. In addition, this section's analysis of the novel's structure will demonstrate how *The Poisonwood Bible* can be read as a parody of the Bible.

Nathan's religious fanaticism makes him ignore the Congo's physical environment. He does not care whether his belief is applicable to the place and its people. His lack of bioregional knowledge about the Congo is manifest in his treatment of the land as he plans to create an American garden on African soil. Leah describes her father's effort to do so in order to exhibit one instance of the white man's civilization: "He planned to make a demonstration garden [...]. It was to be our first African miracle: an infinite chain of benevolence rising from these small, crackling seed packets" (42). Leah's depiction of her father's attempt suggests that he intends to transform wild nature into a cultivated garden in order to make visible to the natives the extent of God's omnipotence and benevolence. The God whom Nathan idolizes thus serves to justify his attempt to modify the land. As Leah puts it, "[M]y father needs permission only from the Saviour, who obviously is all in favor of subduing the untamed wilderness for a garden" (42). From the quotation, the way in which Jesus is depicted as seeing the land as "untamed wilderness" suggests the Christian view of the land as something that needs to be conquered.

Nathan derives the idea of cultivating the American garden from the parable of the mustard seed. As Leah points out, "My father mopped his brow again and launched into the parable of the one mustard seed falling on a barren place, and the other one on good soil" (46). In this tale, Jesus scatters mustard seeds on different kinds of soil. He compares Christians to good soil while likening non-Christians to

barren ground. The tale influences Nathan's attitude towards the natives. That is, the parable constructs the rigid polarization where Christians are regarded as superior to non-Christians. More importantly, Nathan's act of making the American garden resembles Jesus's act of growing the mustard seeds as the acts of spreading the mustard seed and cultivating the garden symbolize the evangelization of other people. Furthermore, it is important to note that Jesus and Nathan both try to grow the plants without knowing whether the soil is suitable for the seeds or not. In other words, they try to impose the notion of Christianity upon the people without realizing whether their teachings are appropriate to them or not.

Nathan's lack of the bioregional knowledge results in his failure to show his power through American gardening. He plants the seeds in a wrong way. That is, the furrows in the American garden cannot make the seeds grow because the rain will eventually inundate all the seeds. Mama Mwanza, a native woman who serves the Prices, advises him to adopt the native wisdom of gardening: "You got to be make hills" (47). She suggests that Nathan plant the seeds in mounds instead of furrows because the mounds will help prevent the seeds from being flooded by the rain. Nevertheless, Nathan ignores her advice because he thinks his way of cultivating the garden is universal like his religion. This event suggests that Nathan has to learn to adopt native wisdom and rely more on the physical environment rather than his western knowledge in order to survive.

The way Nathan cultivates the American garden is not the only factor that prevents the American bean seeds from growing. Nathan later discovers that the seeds are not compatible with the bioregion in the Congo. In the scene in which Nathan discusses the African bees which do not pollinate his plants, he says, "African bugs,

Leah. Creatures fashioned by God for the purpose of serving African plants. Look at this thing. How would it know what to do with a Kentucky Wonder Bean?" (92). Despite his failure to make the plants yield fruit, Nathan still expresses his arrogance because he views African bugs as too primitive and not worthy for his beans from America. With this respect, this event reveals that not everything from America can be implemented in the Congo. This situation also foreshadows the fact that all attempts which have been made to colonize the place and the people will be disrupted by the environment of the Congo.

In addition, the non-human inhabitants of the Congo play an important role in disrupting Nathan's plan to employ the place in his attempt to convert the natives. To elaborate, baptism is a ceremony which every non-believer must undergo before s/he is fully converted to be a Christian. Nathan wants to use baptism as an expedient means to proselytize the natives. The Congo River hence becomes a perfect place for the ritual. Nonetheless, he is not aware of the fact that the river is full of crocodiles and a girl once was killed by one of them. Nathan later learns about this event from Mama Mwanza. As Nathan puts it, last year "[A girl] got killed and eaten by a crocodile. They don't let their children step foot in the river, ever. Not even to be washed in the Blood of the Lamb" (93). The passage emphasizes the fact that no one will participate in baptism because the death caused by the crocodile is the reason why the natives are too frightened to go near the river. The author thus makes fun of Nathan's attempt to baptize the natives in the Congo River without any knowledge about the place.

Furthermore, his lack of the bioregional knowledge about the Congo and his dismissal of its importance put him in trouble. In one example, Nathan neglects Mama

Mwanza's warning of the danger of the poisonwood plant's poison. She warns him: "That one, brother, he bite" (46). Nathan, however, chooses to "[show] no trace of concern" (47). His completely ignoring her suggests his arrogance, and stubbornness. Pride in his position as a missionary makes him a self-righteous person whose ideas no one can question. His sense of superiority also induces him to see the natives' knowledge as inferior and worthless. The result is that he becomes allergic to the poisonwood plant. As his daughter puts it, "My father woke up the next morning with a horrible rash on his hands and arms, presumably wounded by the plant that bites" (47). Nathan's rash signifies that his failure to pay attention to the physical environment can be harmful to him. Furthermore, it may suggest the doubtful status of Nathan as God's messenger since God cannot protect him from such an environment.

All the failures Nathan has encountered indicate the fact that the physical environment in the Congo is the key factor that renders Nathan's attempt to dominate the land and the natives ineffectual. He fails to show the natives God's benevolence through his American garden. His plan to baptize the natives in the Congo River is made impossible by crocodiles. In other words, Nathan's attempt as a colonizer to change the land and to replace the natives' knowledge with Christianity is challenged and undermined. These events reflect the fact that colonial authority does not succeed in exerting its power in the Congo.

Nathan's attempt fails not only because of the physical environment but also because of his lack of linguistic knowledge. Firstly, when Nathan gives a sermon, the natives do not understand it. His lack of the knowledge of the natives' language becomes an obstacle for him to convey God's teachings to them. Nathan tries to

preach in the Congolese language but he unintentionally mispronounces words. Nathan's problem in communication reveals that Christianity and the ideology it perpetuates cannot be easily implemented as Nathan thought. For instance, in the scene in which Nathan tries to preach the natives, Adah critizes her father: "Our Father could not seem to accept what seemed clear enough even to a child: when he showered the idea of baptism—batiza—on the people here, it shrunk them away like water on a witch" (85). The passage captures the natives' fear of baptism as Nathan unintentionally mispronounces the Congolese word, "batiza", which signifies baptism. His pronunciation of "batiza" unfortunately sounds like another Congolese word which means "to terrify". Nathan does not know that the word "batiza" has to be "pronounced with the tongue curled" (243). In addition, he has to rely on Anatole, a native who serves as a translator, to convey Nathan's messages to the natives. As Adah puts it, "The church service lasts twice as long now because the Reverend has to say it once in English, and then the schoolteacher Tata Anatole repeats it all in Kikongo" (81). Nathan will never know if Anatole has correctly translated the messages. When Nathan finishes his first sermon, "[h]e scrutinized his parishioners' blank faces for signs that they were on the edge of their seats" (82). The passage reflects that the natives may actually not understand what the reverend means. Nathan's lack of knowledge in the Congolese language is therefore an obstacle for him to convert the natives through language. This event also illustrates the vulnerability of the colonial ideology when imposed upon the natives under these circumstances.

The complex interaction between the colonial figure, Nathan, and the indigenous can be further elaborated in the light of Bhabha's notions of hybridity and

mimicry. Bhabha has sought to debunk the rigid demarcation between the colonizer and the colonized. In *The Location of Culture* (2004), Bhabha posits that the colonizer cannot fully maintain and exercise its authority over the colonized as the colonized's cultural difference will eventually lead to the reinterpretation, reappropriation, or rethinking of what the colonizer tries to impose upon them. In other words, Bhabha's hybridity emerges from the colonized's cultural difference as the difference may cause them to misinterpret the colonizer's strategy to inculcate their values into the colonized subjects. The reinterpretation, which results from cultural difference, is what Bhabha calls hybridity. According to Bhabha, hybridity "intervenes in the exercise of authority not merely to indicate the impossibility of its identity but to represent the unpredictability of its presence" (163). That is, the fixity of colonial power is merely impossible to achieve as hybridity always works within cultural dissimilarity and disrupts the illusory absolutism of colonial authority.

Furthermore, Bhabha defines mimicry, which is part of hybridity, as the colonized's strategy to deliberately reappropriate what the colonizer brings to them. The word "mimic" means to copy, but, the word simultaneously connotes a sense of mockery. Bhabha posits that mimicry is "*a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (122). In this quotation, Bhabha discusses the colonizer's view of the colonized as the colonizer wants them to bear the similarity to the colonizer but at the same time maintain their difference. The colonized reinterpret or reappropriate what the colonizer teaches them and use it to mock the colonizer. As Bhabha puts it, "mimicry marks those moments of civil disobedience within the discipline of civility" (121). In this sense, the authority of the colonizer is put under threat because their colonization is challenged by those colonized who mimic the colonizer. Nathan's

failure to convey God's teachings to the natives can be interpreted in the light of hybridity. The natives' understanding of Nathan's mispronunciation of baptism turns out to mean "terrify" for the natives. On the other hand, Anatole's deliberate mistranslation of the Bible corresponds to Bhabha's notion of mimicry as he reappropriates and twists the messages of Nathan's sermon to make the natives refuse Christianity.

Apart from the cultural difference in terms of language, the natives' different religion also shapes their conception of Christianity. Nathan is so preoccupied with his religion that he fails to examine the natives' religion and its influence their view toward Christianity. Even Adah is able to notice the natives' reaction to Christianity. Adah makes a keen observation of the distinctive features of the natives who attend the church:

> The Reverend failed to notice that every churchgoing family whose children were struck hard with kakakaka quietly removed themselves back to ancestor worship, while a few of the heathen families that were hard hit quietly came and tried out Christianity […]. And so he continues ministering to the lepers and outcasts. By pure mistake, his implementation is sometimes more pure than his intentions. (242)

The ones who attend the church ironically turn out to be the outcasts of the village, and fewer people are attending the church because, for the natives, Jesus cannot help cure those who are sick of the *Kakakaka* disease. In this respect, Christianity which is related to colonial ideology is subtly debunked since the natives see Nathan's religion only as pagan when compared to their own. In other words, the natives' different view

of Christianity also points to hybridity as the natives make their own interpretation of the whites' religion and regard it as inferior.

Moreover, the natives are also sharp enough to play with the authority of their colonizers and unveil its ineffectiveness. Their subversive strategy deployed from within the structure of the European civilization can be seen in the way in which they use the westerner's democratic mode of election to their advantage. Tata Ndu, the chief of the village, deploys an election as a means through which people choose Christianity or the indigenous beliefs. Tata Ndu proposes that, "'Church is a place for it,' […] 'we are making a vote for Jesus Christ in the office of personal God, Kilanga Village"' (376). The chief sagaciously holds the election because he is certain that his side will win. The election ironically becomes a tool for the natives to rebel against the whites. The natives' strategy to challenge the authority corresponds with Bhabha's notion of mimicry in the way that the natives deliberately use the election, the product of civilization invented by the whites, to diminish the importance of Christianity and to undermine their colonial authority.

The natives also undermine Christianity by reappropriating the function of the church. Their use of the church as a polling station is subversive because the church is supposed to be a sacred place exclusively used for religious rituals. However, the natives see no difference between Nathan's church and an ordinary house. As the chief puts it, "in Kilanga we can use the same house for many things" (379). With cultural difference, the chief desacralizes the church as he deliberately modifies the place's aim. Therefore, this event points to the fact that the effort to convert the natives is impossible because the inhabitants' cultural difference makes them understand or interpret Christianity and the church in a way that diverges from the

whites' intentions. In other words, hybridity and mimicry expose this falseness of colonial ideology and exhibits the fragility of colonial ideology since the natives can easily dismantle the authority by the very tool the whites use to civilize them.

The parody of colonial power is manifest in the representation of Nathan, who is the embodiment of colonial ideology, as a clown and a monomaniac. Nathan's fanaticism and pride prevent him from realizing that he is merely an incapable man in terms of his ability to make a living in the Congo. While Nathan perceives himself as a carrier of God's Words, the natives think of him as a man who cannot even hunt to feed his family. Adah describes the chief's view of Nathan: "In his opinion, [Tata Ndu] said, a white man who has never even killed a bushbuck for his family was not the expert on which god can protect our village" (378). The Prices may not see this issue as significant, yet, for the natives, men must be able to hunt to feed their family. In this sense, Nathan's status as the figure of authority is challenged and questioned because Christianity does not help him make a good living as he cannot even protect himself. Furthermore, the depiction of Nathan's reaction to his defeat in the election makes him look like a clown. For instance, Adah observes her father's ridiculous gesture which demonstrates his stubbornness as she describes, "Father pointed his finger like a gun at Tata Ndu, then swung it around to accuse the whole congregation". Despite his defeat in the election, Nathan continues to express his arrogance and his obsession with white supremacy and Christianity in his disdainful comment of the natives as primitive and inferior. He belligerently argues, "You haven't even learned to run your own pitiful country! Your children are dying of a hundred different diseases! You don't have a pot to piss in! And you're presuming you can take or leave the benevolence of our Lord Jesus Christ!" (379). To the

natives, Nathan's rage means nothing but a joke for them while Nathan is not even aware that his foolish gesture makes him a clown. The juxtaposition between how Nathan considers himself and how the natives see him exposes the folly and senselessness of his religious fanaticism to the point that his religion ironically makes him and his ideology ridiculous.

In addition to the representation of Nathan as a clown, in the last part of the story, he is also portrayed as a monomaniac who eventually turns native. In the scene in which his daughters discuss their father's frightening physical appearance as similar to a madman, one of them says, "He hid from strangers. But they always heard plenty of stories about the white witch doctor named Tata Prize. They got the impression from talking to people that he was really old. I mean *old*, with a long white beard" (551). The appearance of Nathan resembles that of the natives on whom he used to look down. He has become a witch doctor, the thing he used to hate the most. His behavior also suggests that Nathan has become a lunatic. In the same scene, a daughter describes his threatening attempt to convert the natives by dunking them under the river against their will:

> The people in that village had asked him to leave a hundred times, go someplace else, but he'd always sneak back. He said he wasn't going to go away till he'd taken every child in the village down to the river and dunked them under. Which just scared everybody to death. So after the drowning incident they'd had enough, and everybody grabbed sticks and took out after him. They may have just meant to chase him away again. (552)

The passage reflects that ironically Nathan has become an outcast as everyone is scared of him and drives him away. He is sill trapped in the illusion of his fanaticism

since he attempts to baptize every child in the village. Specifically, Nathan's representation as a monomaniac and a marginalized person exhibits the fact that colonial ideology eventually cannot help him survive. The colonial power is completely destroyed in this scene because its embodiment,
Nathan, is satirized and parodied. His stubbornness and religious fanaticism become a threat to both himself and other people around him.

Furthermore, the novel itself parodies Nathan's religious fanaticism through the title of each chapter and the author's use of epigraphs taken from the Bible and the Apocrypha[2] at the beginning of each chapter. In terms of structure, the novel is divided into seven chapters: Genesis, The Revelation, The Judges, Bel and the Serpent, Exodus, Song of the Three Children, and The Eyes in the Trees. The titles of these books correspond with those of the books in the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha, which are not included in the canonical Bible.

As pointed out, the titles of each chapter work together to criticize Nathan's attempt to impose Christianity upon the natives. For example, the novel's first chapter is entitled "Genesis". In the context of Christianity, "Genesis" is the story of God's creation of the world whereas the "Genesis" in the novel suggests that Christianity ironically is the origin of the domination of the natives and the land. Another example is the chapter entitled "The Eyes in the Trees". This chapter presents an omniscient narrator who represents the Congo's spirit of nature. The content the last chapter

[2] In Porter, Frank C. "The Apocrypha." *The Biblical World*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1896, pp. 272-279. (1896), Frank Porter traces the origin of the Apocrypha and how it becomes excluded from the canon. He proposes that "The Apocrypha is made up of the excess of the Latin[Bible] over the Hebrew Old Testament, and was cut off and given a place and name of its own by Protestantism, in the adherence to the Hebrew canon" (272). The Apocrypha is deemed inferior to the canonical Bible because the contents "are not held equal to the Sacred Scriptures" (273). Furthermore, the meaning of the word "Apocrypha" is derived from "*spurious* or *false*" (274), thereby reinforcing its lower status.

suggests that the Congo too has its own god who still looks after human beings as the word “Eyes” suggests. The meaning of the word “Eyes” thus signifies the Congo’s god instead of the Christian God. The fact that the novel ends with the narrative by the voice of this god symbolizes the superiority of the natives’ firm religious beliefs over Nathan’s implementation of Christianity.

Moreover, Kingsolver strategically deploys the epigraphs at the opening of each book to criticize the colonial ideology brought by Christianity by contrasting what happens in the biblical text, from the epigraphs, with what happens in the novel. In other words, irony emerges through her use of the epigraphs. For example, the epigraph in the first chapter “Genesis” is taken from the Bible: “have dominion / over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, / and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:28). The Biblical passage presents how God tells Noah to take control of all beings, thereby endorsing anthropocentrism. On the other hand, the content of this novel seems to insinuate that God’s instruction to Noah becomes the genesis of the twin colonizations of human and non-human beings. Another example is the epigraph from “The Song of the Three Children”: “All that you have brought upon us,/ and all that you have done to us,/ You have done in justice. . ./ Deliver us in your wonderful way” (Song of the Three Children, 7-19 Apocrypha). This passage from the Apocrypha describes the three children’s glorification to God for all His just ways. In contrast, the content of the novel focuses on Adah’s and Leah’s new understanding and their appreciation of the Congo’s nature as god because their experience in the Congo induces them to rethink their position as humans in relation to the natural environment and how they need to depend upon it. These elements of parody in *The Poisonwood Bible* not only critique Nathan’s

fundamentalist Christianity and the whites' colonial ideology but also presents alternative views regarding the relationship between humans and the environment.

Disillusionment and Collapse of Colonial Ideology

Having witnessed how Nathan's senseless attempts have failed, the daughters gradually question the ideology which they have internalized through their father's religious inculcation. They have come to realize that their father's teachings cannot help them adjust themselves to the natives' ways of life and the environment. This sense of skepticism, together with their experience of living in the Congo, stimulates them to be more heedful of the natives' culture and the environment. It is important to note that the daughters' doubts toward the colonial ideology are different from one another, depending on their interactions with the natural world and the natives. As illustrated at the novel's introduction to each of the Price family members, the four daughters perceive themselves and the land differently. It should also be added that their interactions with the natives and the place thus induce them to change their attitude toward the environment which in turn affects ways in which they perceive themselves.

In the first few chapters, it is evident that Leah's and Ruth May's worldview is shaped by Christianity because their view of the people is always based on their father's indoctrination. Their radical faith prompts them to view the natives in the same way as their father does, for they apprehend the natives as sinful and uncivilized. This discriminating view against the Congolese is manifest in the scene in which Leah judges a native due to his polygamy: "[Tata Boanda]'s a sinner. Right in the plain sight of God he has two wives, a young and an old one" (117). Leah uses

Christianity to stigmatize him as a sinner without being aware of other people's cultural and religious differences. Ruth May, the youngest member of the family, also has the same attitude toward the natives as Leah's. For example, in the scene in which Ruth May listens to the conversation between her father and a Belgian doctor about the whites' enslavement of a native, she thinks, "I was glad nobody wanted to cut off *my* hands. Because Jesus made me white, I reckon they wouldn't" (58). Ruth May's idea that her whiteness gives her a privilege of not being used as a slave illustrates her prejudice. Thus, this ideological blindness prevents her from seeing how the whites actually dehumanize the natives through slavery.

Whereas Leah and Ruth May are faithful to their father's teachings, Adah rebels against him. Partly her disobedience may result from her disability. Adah blames God for her disability as Leah, her twin sister, is born normal. Adah has also come to realize that her father has deployed Christianity to exercise his authority over her mother and sisters: "The dreaded Verse is our household punishment. Other lucky children might merely be thrashed for their sins, but we Price girls are castigated with the Holy Bible" (68). The way she sees the Bible as a tool for punishment demonstrates that Adah has no faith in Christianity. On the contrary, she sees that it is a tool to manipulate and take control of her family. Moreover, unlike Leah and Ruth May, Adah always questions her father's actions as her judgement is not clouded by her staunch faith in Christianity. For example, Adah is able to perceive her father's religious fanaticism through her observation of his preaching. As she questions, "[D]oes our Father have his Bibles so entirely in mind that he can select an instructive verse and calculate backward to the one-hundredth previous?" (69). Adah's question reveals that she is able to recognize her father's unusual familiarity with the Bible as

his religious obsession. She thus becomes disillusioned with not only her father but Christianity as well. For this reason, Adah is capable of being awakened to the truth that her religion serves as a tool for the oppression of her family sooner than her sisters.

Without faith in Christianity, Adah turns to the natural world. Adah's attentiveness to the environment can be seen in the very first scene after her arrival in the Congo as she chooses to describe the place's environment before anything else. Her observation does not simply record the physical world in front of her eyes but she notices the temporal manifestation of the natural world thoroughly since she can accurately describe the Congo's natural cycle: "Sun rises, sun sets, six o'clock exactly. Everything that comes of morning undoes itself before nightfall: rooster walks back into forest, fires die down, birds coo-coo-coo, sun sinks away, sky bleeds, passes out, goes dark, nothing exists" (35). Adah's ability to delineate the environment precisely points to her open-minded attitude to adapt herself to the new surroundings. Furthermore, her attentiveness also includes not only the physical environment but also non-human beings. With this respect, her concern for the Congo's environs becomes the first step toward her changing perception of the place.

It is worth noting that Leah is similarly attentive to the physical environment in the Congo. This aspect can be seen in her being attracted to the environs before other things else when she first arrives in the Congo. While standing in the airport buildings and being surrounded by people, she notices the big palm leaf: "Big palm-tree leaves waved in the bright light outside" (19). Her attractiveness to the natural world will later become the foundation for her changing perception of the place.

On the other hand, Rachel, the oldest daughter of the Prices, has different characteristics from her other three sisters. She represents materialistic and consumerist values, reflected through the items she has brought with her. For instance, Leah's description of Rachel's preoccupation with putting on makeup reveals the latter's superficiality and self-absorption: "Sitting next to me on the plane, [Rachel] kept batting her white-rabbit eyelashes and adjusting her bright pink hairband, trying to get me to notice she had secretly painted her fingernails bubble-gum pink to match" (18). With her obsession with physical appearance and her narcissistic behaviour, she proves to be a shallow girl who bases her judgement solely on people's appearance. This aspect is mirrored in her description of the natives in her first encounter with them: "We got fumigated with the odor of perspirating bodies. What I should have stuffed in my purse was those five-day deodorant pads" (26). Here Rachel can narrowly perceive the natives only in terms of their odor, and her mention of "deodorant pads" suggests that she contemptuously views them as disgusting.

So far it can be seen that each of the daughters has her own idiosyncrasy. However, only Leah and Adah, through their interactions with the natives and the natural world, are able to gradually change the way in which they perceive the environment. Although the cruelty of the environment in the Congo, such as the drought, the rampage of man-eating ants, and the plague, claims a lot of human lives, these disasters gradually induce Leah and Adah to form a sense of skepticism toward Christianity and to rethink their conception of the environment. Moreover, the characters discern that their faith in Christianity cannot help prevent the environmental disasters from happening. When the cruelty of the physical

environment has rendered Christianity powerless, the characters feel that they are abandoned by God. Additionally, their experience in the Congo also significantly alters ways in which they perceive, and interact with, other human beings and non-human beings.

The famine plays a significant role in undermining the colonial ideology. As the result of the drought, the famine opens Leah's eyes to the reality that even her faith in God cannot help her family. The drought makes it harder to provide food as there is not enough water for the plants to grow. As Leah puts it, "In the long, strange drought we were having in place of last year's rainy season, soft dust had spread across our yard in broad white patches" (252). The quotation accentuates Leah's exposure to the adversity of starvation for the first time. The hunger gradually prompts her to question the whites' mission to help make the natives attain the better living condition. This aspect can be seen in the scene in which Leah describes her hunger and the contrast between the whites' living condition and the natives': "My belly is empty. […] I thought of the Underdowns' home in Leopoldville with its persian rugs and silver tea service and chocolate cookies, surrounded by miles of tin shanties and hunger" (262). The juxtaposition between the image of the rich whites' houses and the natives' indicates that Leah is able to see through the hypocrisy of the colonial ideology. Actually the whites come to the Congo to exploit the natives instead of bringing civilization as they first claimed.

The famine her family undergoes not only makes Leah come to realize the whites' exploitation of the natives but also changes ways in which she perceives the environment. With her full awareness that the physical environment is indispensable to her family's survival, Leah views the natural world as something she has to depend

upon rather than dominate. This view of the environment is evident when Leah makes an observation of the forest around her:

> I stared at the edge of the clearing behind us, where the jungle closed us out with its great green wall of trees, bird calls, animals breathing, all as permanent as a heartbeat we heard in our sleep. Surrounding us was a thick wet, living stand of trees and tall grasses stretching all the way across Congo. And we were nothing but little mice squirming through it in our dark little pathways. In Congo, it seems the land owns the people. (321)

Leah's depiction of herself as being owned by the environment reflects her humble attitude toward the natural world. The portrayal of herself as being embraced by the trees suggests that her sense of self diminishes to the point that she considers her life as part of the grandeur of the Congo. It is also worth noting that the way in which she perceives the environment also decreases her anthropocentrism and simultaneously points to her increasing attentiveness to the natural world as well.

At the same time, the hunger also prompts Leah to empathize with the natives' sufferings as they have to undergo the same plight as her. Moreover, her interaction with Anatole, a native who can speak English, gradually influences her to be more open to, and compassionate towards, the natives. During her early stay in the Congo, she never thought about the natives' well-being as she saw them only as sinners. Anatole gradually changes Leah's attitude toward the natives as he kindly gives a rabbit to her family during the famine.

Her interactions with the natives allow her to feel the compassion of the people whom she used to discriminate against. Leah thus comes to realization that despite racial difference they are similarly human beings. Her new notion of the

natives is different from what she has been taught by her father and in her American society: “I wish the people back home reading magazine stories about dancing cannibals could see something as ordinary as Anatole’s clean white shirt and kind eyes, or Mama Mwanza with her children” (265). The fact that Leah gives out her opinion for the oppressed reflects how the colonial ideology has been undermined. She also criticizes the whites’ stereotype of the natives as cannibalistic. Her conception of Anatole’s clothes and physical appearance as “ordinary” demonstrates her developing perception as she dismantles the dichotomy between herself and the natives.

Apart from the fact that hunger induces her to see through her own racial prejudice, the circumstances also render Leah aware that both her father and his teachings may not help her survive this famine. Even Orleanna, Leah’s mother, shows a sign of disobedience toward Nathan. The drought makes Orleanna form a sense of skepticism toward Nathan’s decision to continue his mission in the Congo. When she witnesses her mother’s resistance to her father and realizes that her mother is secretly plotting to run away with the children, Leah herself starts questioning her father’s judgement:

> I was shocked and frightened to see her flout Father’s authority, but truthfully, I could feel something similar moving around in my own heart. For the first time in my life I doubted his judgment. He’d made us stay here, when everybody from Nelson to the King of Belgium was saying white missionaries ought to go home. (273)

Leah’s experience of the drought and famine also opens her eyes to the reality that her father is manipulating her family by using Christianity to imprison them in the Congo.

In a similar way, Adah doubts God's existence because the environmental threats, especially the drought and the plague, have caused the losses of many lives. Her skepticism is revealed in the scene in which she ponders over the Congo's physical environment:

> God works, as is very well known, in mysterious ways. […] Oh, He will send down so much rain that all his little people are drinking from one another's sewers and dying of *kakakaka*. Then he will organize a drought to scorch out the yam and manioc fields, so whoever did not die of fever will doubt over from hunger. (246)

Adah questions why God heartlessly lets the drought and the plague happen and allows people to die from the disease and starvation. She also believes that God is the cause of the sickness of her mother and Ruth May. The physical environment thus compels her to rethink and reject God's existence.

It is equally crucial to note that Adah's view of the natives also changes in a similar manner as Leah's. Her experience in the cruel environment of the Congo helps her understand the oppressed status of the colonized subjects as she realizes that Christianity turns out to be a tool to dominate the people. An instance of this aspect is manifest when Adah witnesses Nathan's effort to purify the souls of the children who died from the plague without their mothers' consent:

> [T]he Reverend has spoken with every mother who lost children. Some are pregnant again. […] Our Father tries to make them understand the *batiza* is no fetish but a contract with Jesus Christ. If baptized, the children would be in heaven now. […] Our Father takes their ironical and self-interested tone to indicate a lack of genuine grief. His scientific conclusion: the Congolese do

> not become attached to their children as we Americans do. Oh, a man of the world is Our Father. (337)

Adah can clearly see that her father's act is oppressive since he implies that the deceased's souls will never reach heaven because the mothers have beliefs other than Christianity. She criticizes not only her father's narrow-mindedness but also his cunningness in condemning the mothers for lack of love in order to galvanize them to allow their children to be baptized. In addition, Adah takes side with the mothers and shows her sympathy for them.

Another significant event which paves ways for Leah to realize the powerlessness of colonialism and debunk her racial prejudice is "the big hunt" in which she participates during the drought. The natives in the whole village usually go hunting together in time of famine. Women are not allowed to join the practice, yet Leah has no choice but to engage in the hunt for her family's survival. Leah thus has to kill an impala, an animal similar to deer: "I held my breath to stop my arms from trembling. I had the hunger and thirst of a famine all to myself, smoke in my burning eyes, and no strength left. I prayed to Jesus to help me, then to any other gods who would listen" (396). In this quotation, the description of Leah's overwhelmed feelings which result from the hunt points to the cruelty of the environment as it drives her to kill an animal. More importantly, her prayer not only to Jesus but to other gods discloses her helplessness and her uncertainty in the power of Christianity to save her. Furthermore, her hunger galvanizes her to see what both the whites and blacks have in common: hunger. That is, both Leah and the natives have to fight over their food: "On the day of the hunt a war was already roaring toward us, whites against blacks. We

were all swept up in a greediness we couldn't stop" (401). The similarity becomes a basis for her to later discover the illusion of racial boundary.

At the same time, Adah who also witnesses the big hunt has come to realization about the connection between humans and non-humans. She realizes that humans are not actually so different from other beings as each being struggles for survival. In her participation in the big hunt, she witnesses two baboons trying to help their baby: "With their bellies underslung with precious clinging babies, they loped behind the heavy-maned males [...] but on reaching the curtain of flame where the others passed through, they drew up short. Crouched low. Understanding no choice but to burn with their children" (394). The cruel scene which depicts the death of the baboons and their baby opens Adah's eyes to the truth that one needs to take life in order to survive. Furthermore, this hunt makes Adah become cognizant of the fact that each living being is all interconnected through their hunger and need to survive. This newly developed view of non-human beings diminishes her sense of self as she regards herself as one of the animals and she sees all lives as equal. This transformation in her self-perception is encapsulated in the following passage:

> I became something else. On the day of the hunt I came to know in the slick center of my bones this one thing: all animals kill to survive, and we are animals. […] The death of something living is the price of our own survival, and we pay it again and again. We have no choice. It is the one solemn promise every life on earth is born and bound to keep. (395)

The other prominent incident which diminishes Leah's and Adah's anthropocentrism and reveals the powerlessness of colonial ideology is the rampage of man-eating ants. The ongoing barrenness of the land, along with hunger, drives

these ants to wildly hunt both humans and animals. The event depicts human fear and desperation as both the Prices and the natives are hunted by these ants: "*Ants*. We were walking on, surrounded, enclosed, enveloped, being eaten by ants. Every surface was covered and boiling, and the path like black flowing lava in the moonlight" (340). This rampage awakens Leah to her inability as a human as she cannot do anything to cope with this cruelty of the natural world. To put it differently, her view of humans as superior beings is abated. Furthermore, the rampage shatters her faith in Christianity as God cannot help her handle these ants at all. Anatole's statement that "Don't expect God's protection in places beyond God's dominion" (354) also suggests the invalidity of the Christian and colonial ideologies in the Congo.

It is worth noting that Leah's encounter with this horrible incident deepens her understanding of the natural world. That is, she does not express her anger toward the ants that harm the people, but she understands that these creatures, like humans, have to hunt in order to survive: "The world can always give you reasons. No rain, not enough for the ants to eat. Something like that. *Nsongonyar* are always moving anyway, it is their nature" (352). Leah also sees that humans are not different from man-eating ants as they are similarly driven by hunger. She considers this event as part of nature because no one can prevent these ants from hunting.

In addition to the radical change in Leah's perception of the natural world, the rampage of man-eating ants makes the Prices fall apart. When the ants are attacking the village, Nathan who is supposed to help protect family is hysterically preaching to natives that they are being punished by God without any concern for his own family. With her fear and survival instinct, Rachel looks after only herself and leaves Ruth May alone. At the same time, Orleanna brings Ruth May who is sick with her but

chooses to leave behind the crippled Adah, who is later rescued by Anatole. When the family is able to reunite on a boat, Adah has realized that the bonds among her family members are shattered beyond reparation: “It was Anatole. We crossed the river together, mother and daughter, facing each other, low in the boat’s quiet center. She tried to hold my hands but could not. For the breadth of a river we stared without speaking” (349). The silence signifies that her mother and Leah’s guilt for leaving Adah behind. As for Adah, she thinks that she is the only one who is left behind and thus becomes the unwanted member of the family.

The other turning point for Leah and Adah is the death of Ruth May, who dies of a snake bite. Her death is the last straw for the female members of the Prices family. Now that that they have become disillusioned with his religious fanaticism, they decide to leave him. Moreover, his comment on Ruth May’s death that “She wasn’t baptized, yet” (429) opens Leah’s eyes along with other members’ to the truth that her father is a religious fanatic. Their separation from Nathan also symbolizes the dismantling of the colonial ideology because this is the first time the female members disobey Nathan as reflected in Leah’s comment: “I looked up when he said this, startled by such a pathetically inadequate observation. Was that really what mattered to him right now—the condition of Ruth May’s soul?” (419). Seeing that even his own daughter’s death does not suffice to wake Nathan up, Leah has realized that her father’s religious fanaticism is, in fact, the root of all the disasters in the family.

Re-perceiving the Congo and the Self

Following Ruth May’s death, the women characters in the Price family become disillusioned with Nathan’s religious fanaticism and run away from him. The

departure of Orleanna and her children from Nathan's life in the chapter entitled "Exodus" makes the new beginning of these women's lives which will lead to their further self-transformation. Each of them chooses to walk on different paths. Orleanna and Adah return to America where Adah becomes a doctor. On the other hand, Rachel and Leah decide to stay in the Congo. While Rachel gets married with a rich white man who owns a big resort in Africa and lives a luxurious life, Leah spends her life with Anatole and has children with him. This break away from Nathan and Christianity brings about the characters' rethinking of ways in which they see themselves, others, and their environs. In particular, both Leah and Adah's attentiveness to the natural world, together with their experience of living in the Congo, help reconstruct their worldview. Consequently, both characters create their own religion and gradually erase their racial prejudice, anthropocentrism, and old sense of self.

Leah and Adah are the characters whose changes in their perception of the environment are the most evident. As discussed in the previous section, their transformations are rooted from their attentiveness to, and interactions with, the environment and the natives. In contrast, Orleanna and Rachel have not developed any relationship with the natives and the environment as they spend most of the time in the domestic sphere. In this sense, Orleanna and Rachel's conceptions of the natural world are static.

Leah's adversities during her husband's imprisonment due to his political activism plays an important role in inducing her to bond with the natives and reconceiving herself as one of the villagers. She has to raise her children alone. She grows plants to eat by herself and teaches English to the natives. With her husband's

absence and her job as a teacher, Leah has created good relationship with the natives and gradually changes her self-perception: “For many years now I’ve had the luxury of nearly forgetting I was white in a land of brown and black. I was Madame Ngemba, someone to commiserate with the market over the price of fruit” (535). Having lived in the village for many years, Leah almost succeeds in erasing the racial boundary that has dominated her mind. Her experience with the people causes her to nearly forget herself as a white woman.

Leah’s job as a farmer and her agricultural activity are also the significant stepping stones that motivate her to bond with the environment, which eventually becomes her spiritual refuge. As a farmer, Leah needs to depend on the land in order to survive in the Congo. As she puts it, “Here in Kimvula District we’re working with farmers on a soybean project, trying to establish a cooperative” (566). The soybean project helps sustain Leah’s life as the place becomes the source of her food. Moreover, Leah also finds the purpose of her life through her agricultural activity in the place: “I’m just happy to be living among fruit trees and cooking with wood again. I don’t mind the satisfying exhaustions of carrying wood and water” (567). Leah’s reliance on the Congo’s environment results in her strong attachment to the land. She has come to realize that the true happiness she yearns for is when she lives simply in nature. Furthermore, her experience with the place also inspires her to see it as her spiritual nurturance. This aspect is manifest in the scene she prays to the stones to wish for her husband’s safety: “I prayed to old black African stones unearthed from the old dark ground that has been here all along. One solid thing to believe in” (479). The passage reflects that the place for Leah takes on new meaning as her religion of nature because it helps her cope with her husband’s absence. To elaborate, stones

which represent nature are the only thing she depends on because they are tangible and solid enough for her to believe, unlike abstract God in Christianity.

It is also important to see that Leah's experience in the Congo also heightens her receptivity to the environment since she is able to discern the interconnectedness of beings through the natural world. For instance, after she gets fully accepted by the natives and jocundly settles her life, she explains her holistic view of the environment: "Central Africa is a rowdy society of flora and fauna that have managed to balance together on a trembling geologic plate for ten million years: when you clear off part of the plate, the whole slides into ruin" (593). In this passage, Leah sees Africa as one huge plate where each part of the land is inextricably interwoven. That is, the disruption of one part of the land will affect all community of lives on it. Furthermore, Leah's wonderment at nature's works is shown as she highlights the sense of time in the long history of evolution in the natural world.

More importantly, the way Leah sees the land as the centre of all lives metamorphoses her conception of god. For Leah, God is no longer abstract and intangible. Instead, her god becomes the physical world which is more visible and tangible as her god now manifests itself in the seasonal cycle. This aspect can be illustrated in the scene Leah rethinks her notion of god after she settles down in the Congo:

> This God does not work in especially mysterious ways. The sun here rises and sets six exactly. A caterpillar becomes a butterfly, a bird raises its brood in the forest, and a greenheart tree will only grow from a greenheart seed. He brings drought sometimes, followed by torrential rains, and if these things aren't always what I had in mind, they aren't my punishment either. (594)

Unlike in Christianity where natural disasters are usually interpreted as God's punishment, the cruelty of the environment is here regarded as part of nature. More specifically, she considers them as reminders of the changing condition of the place to which she has to adjust herself. Leah develops her dependence and faith on nature, which she worships as God. Her prayer to the land to forgive her sin suggests her conversion from Christianity to the religion of nature: "*Forgive me, Africa, according to the multitudes of thy mercies*" (594). Here she replaces the word "God" with "Africa".

Leah's spiritual ties to the land heightens her sense of humility as she can grasp the sustainable relationship between humans and non-human beings and question the whites' notion of nature as commodity. For example, when she discusses how the villagers live simple lives in the Congo, she remarks, "Kongo did not buy or sell or transport their crops, but merely lived in place and ate what they had, like the beasts of the forest" (590), reflecting the natives' use of nature without exploiting it. Furthermore, her comparison of the natives to animals suggests that she sees humans as not different from other beings as they all share, and rely on, the forest. In other words, their treatment of the land emphasizes the notion of sufficiency and sustainability. In addition, Leah's view of nature as the sustenance of human life paves ways for her to criticize the whites' contempt for the natives' treatment of the land: "Europeans were dismayed to find no commodity agriculture here. […] no cities, no giant plantations, and no roads necessary for transporting produce from the one to the other" (588). The passage highlights the sense of anthropocentrism and capitalism of the white colonizers since the words "giant plantations" and "commodity" imply the commodification of nature resources. The whites deplete

natural resources only for money. They do not adjust themselves to the environment like the natives.

In a similar vein, Adah's experience in the Congo helps her rethink Africa as an autonomous being that has its own life. After Adah becomes a scientist, she still tries to make sense of the environment in the Congo: "Africa has a thousand ways of cleaning itself. Driver ants, Ebola virus, acquired immune deficiency syndrome: all these are brooms devised by nature to sweep a small clearing very well" (598). Adah's depiction here reveals her understanding of the place as having its own way to sustain its balance through the environmental disasters. With this view of the place, Adah believes that the place endows humans with an equal status to non-human beings in terms of survivability. As Adah puts it, "[T]he race between predator and prey remains exquisitely neck and neck" (598). It is unusual for human beings to be regarded as predators and yet in Africa they have become preys.

Adah's changing attitude toward the place and the African wisdom of seeing the place also awaken her to the inseparableness of all beings. During Adah's stay in the Congo, Nelson, a native boy who plays with her, provides her with a new perspective about *Muntu*, or the shared essence of all beings. For example, when Adah discusses this concept of life with Nelson, she thinks, "*Muntu* does not mean exactly the same as person, though, because it describes a living person, a dead one, or someone not yet born. *Muntu* persists through all those conditions unchanged" (390). "*Muntu*" connects the living, the deceased, and the unborn. This traditional belief undermines the racial boundary in humans because all humans are linked by *Muntu* in the same way. Moreover, Nelson introduces the idea of "*ntu*" and "*nommmo*". "*Ntu*" means "[all] that is being here" (238). This word has the same root

as "*muntu*" because "*Ntu*" embraces means all beings in the world. As for *Nommo*, it means "the force that makes things live as what they are: man or tree or animal" (238).

In addition, Adah later incorporates the indigenous understanding of "*nommo*" she learns from Nelson to form her notion of all beings. Adah's discovery of the underlying life force shared by beings connotes her apprehension of the African wisdom:

> Now I understand, God is not just rooting for the dollies. We and our vermin all blossomed together out of the same humid soil in the Great Rift Valley, and so far no one is really winning. Five million years is a long partnership. If you could for a moment rise up out of your own beloved skin and appraise ant, human, and virus as equally resourceful beings, you might admire the accord they have all struck in
>
> Africa. (599)

The passage accentuates the sameness or "*nommo*" in humans and vermin as both have undergone stages of evolution for million years. Adah, thus, sees no difference among ants, humans, and viruses since they are all linked together by the same force or "*nommo*". She also points out how "*nommo*" helps sustain the balance within an ecosystem like Africa. Moreover, the natives' conception of life intrigues her to become a doctor and make contributions as a scientist. It could be interpreted that Adah decides to pursue her studies in medical school because her experience in the Congo makes her realize the fragility and vulnerability of lives. Her experience makes her question the meaning of life perceiving that one can die easily because of the environment. Adah's attentiveness to the virus also helps inspire her to make a great

discovery of the new kind of viruses, “AIDS and Ebola viruses” (599). Adah expresses her pleasure when she spends her time with the viruses: “I visit them daily in their spacious glass dishes, and like any good mother I cajole” (599). Adah’s motherly bonding with the viruses suggests that she incorporates the idea of “*nommo*” to view how the viruses are like humans.

In addition to changes in her attitude towards non-human beings, Adah’s experience in the Congo allows her to reconstruct her sense of self and resolve her life-time conflict. Adah realizes that her sense of self is constituted not only by herself alone but also by all non-human beings. This aspect can be seen when Adah discusses how she views viruses as her relatives. She remarks, “I don’t think of the viruses as my work, actually. I think of them as my relations (599). Adah’s view of viruses as her relations signifies her extended sense of self which includes non-human beings. Thanks to her new understanding of the non-human beings, Adah’s life-time conflict with her twin sister, Leah, is eventually resolved. This transformation of the feeling towards her sister is revealed when Adah reminisces about her past “Such childhood energy I spent on feeling betrayed. By the world in general, Leah in particular. Betrayal bent me in one direction while guilt bent her the other way. We constructed our lives around a misunderstanding” (602). Adah expresses her regret because back then she was obsessed with the idea that Leah made her crippled. Adah’s old self lacks the comprehension that all beings have their own right to grow. Adah now sees that her sister also has the right to grow up being normal in the same way the viruses do. Adah thus comes to realize that actually all hatred she had towards her sister is merely the illusion she creates.

Lastly, it is worth noting that Kingsolver depicts the outcome of the Prices' colonization of the natives and the land in a similar way to what happens in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Both Kurtz, the white colonizer in *Heart of Darkness*, and Nathan try to dominate the natives and the land. While Kurtz employs physical violence by using tools and weapons to subjugate the natives, Nathan's action can be seen as "epistemic violence" through his implementation of Christianity. However, both Kurtz and Nathan end up succumbing to the Congo's nature: Kurtz starts hallucinating and sees himself as the "God" of the natives whereas Nathan becomes a witch doctor who absent-mindedly runs around trying to proselytize the natives. Later, both characters die. The two characters' tragic ending results from their pride and vanity, which are rooted from their white supremacy. It can be seen that Kingsolver and Conrad similarly portray Nathan's and Kurtz's death as a critique of the white characters' attempt to dominate the people and the land as both Nathan and Kurtz—the epitomes of white imperialism—ironically end up being dominated by the Congo's nature. The ending of the white fanatics in the two novels also accentuates the backfire of the whites' attempt to dominate the natives whether the process of colonization entails physical or epistemic violent. In contrast, Leah and Adah, unlike Kurtz and Nathan, adjust themselves to the Congo's environment and later learn to adopt the natives' view of nature as something they need to depend upon.

CHAPTER IV: Different Paths to Ecological Identity in *Prodigal Summer*

> Thus, knowing who and where are intimately linked. There are no limits to the possibilities of the study of *who and where, if you want to go "beyond limits"—and so, even in a world of biological limits, there is plenty of open mind-space to go out into.* (Snyder 28)

In this excerpt from "Reinhabitation" (2008), Gary Snyder argues that one's knowledge of the place cannot be separated from one's sense of self. If one does not know one's place, one cannot truly realize who one is. Furthermore, Snyder also proposes the notion of "reinhabitation". He postulates that people are able to reinhabit the place in which they live if they learn more about the place. The three selected novels in this thesis present different ways in which humans reinhabit their places. In Chapter Two, my discussion of *Animal Dreams* highlights the protagonist's re-discovery of her sense of self through her relationship with the environment in her hometown while my analysis of *The Poisonwood Bible* in Chapter Three examines the re-conception of the sense of self and place in a foreign land. In this chapter, I will investigate how *Prodigal Summer* opens up possibilities to rethink one's relationship with the place where one lives and to reinhabit it.

In *Prodigal Summer*, Kingsolver employs three different narrative strands to present the lives of three protagonists who live in the same community of Zebulon County. Through the three alternating chapters—"Moth Love," "The Old Chestnut," and "Predator"—the novel depicts the lives of the three protagonists—Lusa, Garnett, and Deanna—who undergo different traumatic experience of loss. Their trauma affects their psychological well-being and the way they treat the land. Lusa who has a

different background in terms of race, religion, and education from her husband, loses him in a car accident. After his death, Lusa decides to claim the ownership of the land. Her quest to keep the land gradually bonds her with the place and the community, making her rethink her relationship with it. In a similar way, Garnett, an old man who lives a purposeless life, tries to cope with his loss after the failure of his family's business in selling chestnuts logs and his wife's demise. Garnett's interaction with Nannie, an old woman and his neighbor, exposes him to ecological science, a significant factor that makes him reconsider his mistreatment of the land. Unlike the other two characters, Deanna is a forest ranger who lives a solitary happy life in nature. She has gained ecological knowledge and also established an intimate relationship with the place as she knows every detail of all creatures living in this mountain. However, her sense of self, as well as her intimacy with the environment, is undermined as Eddie Bondo, a coyote hunter, appears with an agenda to hunt coyotes. Because of her loneliness stemming from living alone for some time, Deanna has an affair with him. Her love for the environment changes as she develops her relationship with him.

The existing criticism of *Prodigal Summer* can be categorized into two main trends. Most of the criticism on the novel emphasizes the notion of ecofeminism and ecology. For example, in "Ecofeminism and a New Agrarianism: The Female Farmer in Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer* and Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain*" (2008), Krinstin Van Tassel postulates that "female farmers assume a central role in the portrayal of a new, ecologically based agrarianism" (85). That is, she argues that Kingsolver presents "an ecofeminist version for the farm" where she deploys an ecofeminist approach to agrarianism to offer a new way to look at nature and farming.

The other major trend accentuates Kingsolver's use of her ecological knowledge. One example is Bert Bender's "Darwin and Ecology in Novels by Jack London and Barbara Kingsolver" (2012), Bender argues that *Prodigal Summer* "celebrates and explores Darwin's great theme of the reproductive force in evolutionary biology" and at the same time offers the principle of ecological knowledge that every living being is intertwined by the intricate web of lives (125).

In addition to the two major trends, there are various approaches to the novel, such as an analysis of the author's didactic agenda and her use of ghostly elements. An illuminating instance is Suzanne Jones's "The Southern Family Farm as Endangered Species: Possibilities for Survival in Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*" (2006). Focusing on the context of a southern Appalachian farming community, she contends that the novel serves as "a blue print for saving the small family farm and for restoring ecological balance in a southern Appalachian bioregion that is struggling to survive" (84). She proposes that the novel makes visible the four problems in southern community: "failing family farms, fragmented communities, ecosystems out of balance, and rural-urban, insider-outsider tensions" (84).

To add to the afore-mentioned existing criticism on the novel, this chapter will draw upon Mitchell Thomashow's notion of "ecological identity" to analyze the protagonists' construction and restoration of their ecological self. Since the novel deals with how the protagonists cope with their traumatic experience through their interaction with environment, Mitchell Thomashow's notion of "ecological identity" will be used to shed light on the characters' healing process. In his *Ecological Identity* (1996), Thomashow presents different ways of how one can reconstruct one's sense of self through one's relationship with the environment. As he proposes, "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. […] [E]cological identity reflects his or her cognitive, intuitive, and affective perceptions of ecological relationships" (3). Thomashow's notion of ecological identity suggests how this newly developed self changes its perception and treatment of the land. Moreover, Thomashow further argues that the construction of ecological identity not only helps change the way one treats the land but also reflects one's healing process: "The ability to take responsibility for our actions is a prerequisite for ecologically responsible citizenship. It is also a therapeutic action, contributing to a process of personal and political healing" (159).

In the light of Thomashow's notion of ecological identity, this chapter argues that the characters' traumatic experience affects ways in which they perceive and treat the land. Moreover, it will argue that the characters' traumatic experience galvanizes them to try to cope with their sense of loss. Each character has his or her own unique path to a healing process and , at the same time, the construction of ecological identity. As the characters try to come to terms with their trauma, they step into different paths of what Thomashow calls "ecological identity work" which gradually prompts them to be more responsible for the land. In addition, the characters' interactions with the community, their sense of guilt, their agricultural activity, their knowledge of ecological science, and their delicate sensitivity to the natural world help change the way they see and treat the land and gradually heal their traumatized self. Their renewed perception of the place not only contributes to their "ecological identity work" but also paves the way for their reinhabitation.

My analysis of the novel will demonstrate each protagonist's different path toward "ecological identity work". First, the three protagonists differently undergo traumatic experience which results in estrangement from the land. Then, to cope with the trauma, they gradually discover their unique way to heal their shattered self through interactions with human and non-human inhabitants in the place where they live. This attempt paves the way to the healing process as they rethink their relationship with the environment. This process also signifies the beginning of the construction of ecological identity or what Thomashow calls "ecological identity work". Lastly, their newly developed "ecological identity" brings about the renewed perception of both the place and their sense of self.

Lusa and the Healing Scent

For Lusa, her trauma is her estrangement from Cole, his family, and the land. The problem comes from her different background in terms of her way of life, education, and race. Before her marriage, Lusa lived in a city where she had a happy life with her dream job. This point can be seen from the scene in which Lusa expresses her doubt if she belongs to this farm as she wonders: "[h]ad she really wanted so badly all her life to live on a farm? […] how she could have left her city and beloved career for the narrow place a rural county holds open for a farmer's wife" (49). Lusa's doubt of her place and her position of a housewife on the farm illustrate her sense of alienation from the place. The passage also suggests that she is not acquainted with the atmosphere of a small farm in the same way as the bigger city. What is more tragic for Lusa is how she needs to leave her job behind in order to settle down with her husband. It is important to note that Lusa's moving from her

hometown is the root cause of her traumatic experience which will be more intense as the story progresses.

Apart from the new environment to which Lusa has difficult times adjusting herself, her higher education and racial difference subtly affect her relationship with her husband and his family. For example, as a "postdoctoral assistant" (39) who specializes in entomology, Lusa tries to teach Cole what she believes to be the right way to treat the honeysuckle without using chemical substances but they end up having a fight "nearly every day" (35). Lusa is aware that her education is a sensitive issue for her husband as she tries not to intimidate him with her knowledge: "It was just one more thing she couldn't talk about—her education, which far outstripped her husband's" (39). Furthermore, her race is also one of the obstacles for her to bond with her husband and his family. In a scene in which they quarrel about her disapproval for his planting tobacco, Lusa even uses swear words. He responds to her with disdain: "If my Ay-rab mama had taught me to swear, I wouldn't be proud of it" (48). The word "Ay-rab" reflects his racial prejudice. In other words, his answer demonstrates how his position as a native speaker of English is superior not only to her Arab mother but also to her cultural background. Moreover, her racial difference affects her relationship with the Wideners. For instance, Lusa ponders as she regrets being on this farm with this family: "I always had the same name, before, during, and after Cole. Lusa Maluf Landowski. My mom's Palestinian and my dad's a Polish Jew, and *never*, before I came here, did I think that was anything to be ashamed of" (129). The passage suggests that Lusa thinks of her lineage as one of the reasons why her husband's family rejects her. She also feels estranged even from herself because now she may be "ashamed" of her race. This point can be seen in the way Lusa views

herself as “a dire outsider from the other side of the mountains” (36). Her self-perception reveals the fact that Lusa is alienated from both the place and herself.

In addition, Cole’s demise further intensifies Lusa’s trauma. It is important to note that even after his death, Cole does not leave her. Since Cole’s scent is still present everywhere, Lusa undergoes the unending traumatic experience of loss through her olfactory perception of her deceased husband. The scent is first manifest in Lusa’s dream of Cole: “His scent burst onto her brain like a rain of lights, causing her to know him perfectly. […] His odor was of water over stones and the musk of decaying leaves, a wild, sweet aura that drove her to a madness of pure want” (81). Lusa’s dream suggests that Cole is still present in this place. Moreover, his scent becomes part of the environment on the farm. Cole’s scent is everywhere on the farm she lives. For example, when Lusa talks to Jewel, her sister-in-law, about Cole, “Lusa crossed her arms overs her stomach, holding her breath, transported by the scent-memory of honeysuckle across a field” (128). This passage illuminates how the place she lives intensifies Lusa’s trauma as Cole’s presence still haunts her.

Furthermore, after Cole’s death, Lusa begins to sense the existence of ghosts in her house. The ghosts are those from both her family and Cole’s. Lusa explains to her nephew about the ghosts: “[The ghosts]’re in my house. It’s full of them. Some are mine, people from my own family—my dead grandfather, specifically. And some are your family. Some I can’t identify” (241). What is intriguing in this passage is that the ghosts are not only Cole’s but also Lusa’s ancestors. The apparition of her ancestors’ ghosts on Cole’s land may signify that Lusa’s family history might share some similarities with Cole’s ancestors as the story later reveals that Lusa’s ancestors are farmers as well. When Lusa finds out that even Cole’s fiddle in the guest’s

bedroom carries with it his haunting presence, she feels more alienated from the place:

> [T]here was Cole's big bass fiddle standing up in the corner, spooking her with its presence as badly as if it were a man standing there in the shadows. […] She stared at its dark, glossy curves, realizing that the instrument was old, probably older even than this hundred-year-old house. Other dead men had surely played it before. […] How strange that you could share the objects of your life with whole communities of the dead and never give them a single thought until one of your own crossed over. Lusa had come only lately to this truth: she was living among ghosts. (78)

The passage discusses how Cole's presence and also the ghosts become part of the place. Firstly, the fiddle directly affects Lusa's psyche as this musical instrument resembles Cole's figure. Moreover, the object also carries with it the haunting presence of other ghosts as this instrument was also used by Cole's ancestors. The house, in this sense, becomes a site of her trauma because the place reminds her of the dead people. Lusa, thus, wants to leave this place. As she puts it, "she could leave this place, be anybody she wanted, anywhere at all" (73).

It is worth noting that while Lusa's heightened perception of Cole's scent and the ghosts aggravates her trauma, it also becomes the stepping stone for her ecological identity work, which is part of the healing process, as the smell and the apparition allow her to be more intimate with the land and its people. Her delicate olfactory sense, along with her background as an entomologist, gradually helps her tap into the meaning of the scent. At the same time, her ability to grasp the meaning of the scent as her love for the place and her husband resolves the conflict with her husband.

While she realizes that her language, which entails her different background, is an obstacle for her communication with Cole, her intensified olfactory sense, however, helps shape her understanding that her bond with her husband is, in reality, deeper than that of ordinary humans because their relationship is like that of moths—relying on olfactory perception. In addition, agricultural activities also expose Lusa to familial love, the Wideners' history, the bond with the community, and the healing effects of farm work.

One of the significant factors which deepens Lusa's attentiveness to the olfactory sense is her background as an entomologist. She is particularly interested in moths and how they depend on their sense of smell. The scene in which Lusa reads the book about moths after she loses her husband demonstrates her deep interest in this kind of insect: "*Using binocular vision, we judge the location of an object by comparing the images from two eyes and tracking directly toward the stimulus*. […] *Using olfactory navigation the moth detects currents of scent in the air and, by small increments, discovers how to move upstream*" (70). This quotation taken from the book Lusa reads illustrates the comparison between humans' and moths' perception to highlight how the latter's reliance on its sense of smell is deeper than the former's. Humans tend to put emphasis on the visual sense, thereby focusing on the visible rather than the invisible. It is crucial to note that Lusa tends to compare herself with moths as she deploys her olfactory sense to tap into the meaning of the place where she lives as moths do.

Lusa reveals her delicate sensitivity to the olfactory scent from the very first scene of her interactions with the place. When she describes her sensitivity to the place after she moves to live with Cole, she thinks, "[T]he inhalations of Zebulon

Mountain touched her face all morning, and finally she understood. She learned to tell time with her skin, as morning turned to afternoon and the mountain's breath began to bear gently on the back of her neck" (34). The passage highlights Lusa's attentiveness to her olfactory sense as her "inhalations" of the place helps refresh her mind. Her ability to feel comfort by the scent of the environment also suggests that she gradually forms a bond with the place since she is able to sense the distinct scent from the land. It is also worth noting that the passage discloses Lusa's distinct view of the land as anthropomorphized since it can "[touch] her face" and "breath". As she puts it, "She had come to think of Zebulon as another man in her life, larger and steadier than any other companion she had known" (34). Her unique view of the mountain will later become one of the significant factors which help her reconceive her relationship with her husband as she later views her husband as part of the land.

Despite the fact that her heightened olfactory sense is part of her trauma because the smell carries with it her husband's presence, Cole's scent serves as one of the most important factors for Lusa's ecological identity work as well since the scent gradually makes her intuitively reconceive of the land as signifying her bond with her husband and simultaneously galvanizes her to stay on the land when she comes to realize that her husband still exists in this place through the scent. For example, in her dream, Lusa sees her husband's scent as part of the place as he manifests himself in the shape of the mountain: "[Cole] 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. […] His odor was of water over stones and the musk of decaying leaves, a wild, sweet aura that drove her to a madness of pure want" (81). This description suggests that her husband's "odor" that she senses in her dream is actually part of the natural world on

her farm. It is also worth noting that the anthropomorphized image of the husband resembles the way she perceives the mountain as a man as discussed in the previous paragraph. Due to this inextricable link between the scent of her husband and the place, Lusa expresses her desire to live with her husband on the land: “What she’d loved was here, and still might be, if she could find her way to it” (82). The scent thus paves the way for Lusa to rethink her relationship with the land rather than leaving it as she first decided.

Lusa’s attentiveness to the olfactory sense not only helps her realize the significance of the place in relation to her husband’s existence but also resolves the conflict with her husband. That is, Lusa discovers her love for the husband and the place through the scent of her husband manifest in her dream. Moreover, the text tends to present that human language which involves the couple’s different background is actually the main factor that leads their married life to failure. However, with Lusa’s special sensitivity to the scent and her ability to imagine her relationship as moths’ by relying on the olfactory sense, she comes to realize her love for her husband because their relationship goes beyond what human language can capture.

The hindrance for Lusa’s and Cole’s married life is human language, which entails their different culture in terms of education and class. The couple “argued nearly everyday” (35). The difference between Cole’s and Lusa’s education leads to the contrasting ways in which they treat the land. For example, when Lusa argues with Cole about the villagers’, including Cole’s, decision to use herbicides to exterminate honey suckles, she expresses her disagreement: “People [in Lusa’s hometown] just have more to read and write about than killing the honey suckle in

their hedgerows" (37). With her ecological knowledge as an entomologist, Lusa's comment hints at her prejudice against the uneducated villagers who lack ecological knowledge and thus mistreat the land. On the other hand, Cole's comment in the same scene points out how class difference is a problem for them. As Cole puts it, "I'm not from someplace fancy where people keep their dogs in the house and their gardens in the window boxes" (37). Cole's response to Lusa's treatment of the land illustrates his bias as he thinks that city people like Lusa can never understand the way he treats the land. It can be seen that Cole's and Lusa's communication through words ends up in failure. In this sense, human language—contaminated by the couple's different culture—becomes their obstacle in bonding them together.

Nevertheless, Lusa's moth-like relationship with Cole helps resolve the conflict with him. Her unique olfactory sense transcends the barrier of human language and induces her to realize her bond with Cole. That is, the intensity of her husband's scent in Lusa's dream connotes their intimate relationship and her interpretation of Cole's scent: "His scent burst onto her brain like a rain of lights, causing her to know [Cole] perfectly. *This is how moths speak to each other. The wrong words are impossible when there are no words*" (81). The miraculous manifestation of Cole's scent upon Lusa's perception indicates that she is able to bond with her deceased husband through the scent. Lusa compares her relationship with her husband with that of moths suggests that their intimacy with each other goes beyond words.

Cole's scent is perceptible not only in Lusa's dream but also in the physical reality of the farm. To elucidate, Lusa and Cole usually had a fight over their treatment of the honeysuckles. While Lusa sees this weed through her preservationist

perspective, Cole as a farmer discerns the impracticality of Lusa's idea. After Cole's death, the honeysuckles bear his trace. Lusa becomes attentive to the smell of the honeysuckles as it reminds her of Cole. In the scene where Lusa has a conversation with two of Cole's relatives, she "looked away from them, inhaling the rich scents of mud and honeysuckle" and then she remarks, "It's my farm now" (107). The impact of the scent upon Lusa signifies Lusa's wish to keep her husband's legacy as she decides for the first time to take care of the land. It should be noted here that Lusa's reinterpretation of Cole's scent is the first stepping stone towards her ecological identity work. This process helps form a sense of belonging to the place and will further pave the way for her to bond with the family and the community.

Thanks to Lusa's realization of her bond with Cole, Lusa decides to engage in his family's agricultural activities as a means to survive and to simultaneously build her relationship with the land. The idea of how one is able to build an intimate relationship with the place through agricultural activities is elaborated in Wendell Berry's "People, Land, and Community" (2003). In this essay, he argues, "[P]eople are joined to the land by work. Land, work, people, and community are all comprehended in the idea of culture" (189). The passage suggests that the farm work can serve as a bridge which joins people and the land together. In addition, Berry focuses on the practice of farming as a way to get access into farming culture. As he puts it, "[T]he essential wisdom accumulates in the community much as fertility builds in the soil" (189). It could be interpreted that Berry's "essential wisdom" is the practice and knowledge of agriculture that the community has passed on from one generation to another. Lusa's engagement in the agricultural activity, in this sense, helps her keep her farm and tap into the Wideners' history, their agricultural

knowledge, and the community. At the same time, Lusa also learns to bond with the Wideners while she is learning to take care of the land her husband has bequeathed to her.

While Lusa is determined to look after the land and find a way to make a living, she unexpectedly gains support from the Wideners as they help provide her with their agricultural knowledge. For instance, when Lusa plans to cultivate other kinds of crops than tobacco to make a living, she seeks advice from Herb, Cole's brother, and he makes indispensable suggestions:

> Cole's got a five-acre tobacco bottom, so put it in sweet corn, that'd get you about five hundred bushels, maybe six in a good year, […] About fifteen hundred dollars. Minus your diesel for your tractor, your seed, and a whole bunch of fertilizer, because corn's a heavy feeder. […] You might end up making near about . . . eight hundred dollars. (108)

Herb's advice for Lusa to cultivate corn demonstrates his keen observation and experience in farming as he expresses his in-depth knowledge of farm work from his calculation of the benefits Lusa will gain from the harvest. The information he shares with Lusa signifies that Herb really means to help her. He also compliments her for her courage to try new things. In the same scene, Rickie, Cole's brother-in-law, remarks, "I believed she's got the right attitude for farming" (110). The man's approval makes Lusa feel more open to, and accepted by, the family. She will gradually feel that she can belong to this family as well.

At the same time, Lusa has a chance to bond with Jewel, her sister-in-law, through their activity of making cherry preserves. While Lusa and Jewel are working together in the kitchen, Jewel reveals her sisters' wishes to have a dinner at Lusa's

home again as they used to live here: “Mary Edna was a stinker to you over that. There wasn’t any reason for her to get so high and mighty. Emaline thinks so, too; she told me. We both wish we still could have thanksgiving up here at the house” (115). Jewel’s statement suggests that actually the family members want to visit her place and socialize with her. This new understanding is contrasted with her perception that no one wants to come over to her place. She reflects, “She’d never suspected she had allies at all, much less the support of a faction. How had she gotten here, stranded in this family without rhyme or reason?” (115). She now realizes that the family does not hate her as she first thought. It is also worth noting that the activity of making preserves is part of American culture where women get together to make preserves together and share their stories. By participating in this activity, Lusa becomes part of this family.

Now that Lusa has a firm grasp of the new meaning of Cole’s scent and is part of the Wideners, she is also able to tap into the family’s history. Lusa is exposed to the history of the family when she visits the barn with her nephew and experiences through her visual and olfactory sense: “Lusa inhaled [the barn’s] perfume, a faint petroleum pungency but mostly the mellow sweetness of old tobacco. A fine brown dust of crumbled leaves inhabited every crevice of this place where Wideners had stripped, hung, and baled tobacco for over a hundred years” (293). This passage discusses how the scent of tobacco is ubiquitous in this place and is inextricable with the Wideners’ history. The family has cultivated tobacco for a hundred years. Over the course of their cultivation, the tobacco leaves have disintegrated and become integral part of the farm. The scent carries with it the trace of the Wideners’ history. Lusa is able to tap into the historical account of the Wideners. More importantly, her

ability to delve into this historical aspect indicates her developing bond with the family, which is also another pivotal factor for her ecological identity work.

The bond with the Wideners paves the way for Lusa to establish the relationship with people in this community. As Lusa needs to find a new way to make a living without cultivating tobacco, she comes across the idea of breeding goats. In this community, goats are oversupplied. The villagers do not want to keep the goats with themselves but they do not know how to get rid of them. Lusa thus comes up with an idea to acquire these unwanted goats in order to start the business of meat goat breeding. In order to do so, Rickie, her nephew, advises her to put an advertisement in the local newspaper to get the goats. As Rickie puts it, "'Wanted, free goats. You deliver' I swear, Aunt Lusa, you'd look out your window next morning and see a hundred goats out there eating your field" (158). This incident suggests that Lusa will not be able to survive without the help from the Wideners as she lacks the knowledge about farm work in this community. As Lusa later receives a number of goats from the community, she comes to realize that people in this county are generous and kind. Furthermore, Rickie also opens up a possibility for Lusa to create bonds with the community as he advises her to further seek guidance from Garnett. Garnett provides Lusa with the suggestion of the right kinds of goats she needs and also the methods to get all the goats pregnant in time to be sold. In this sense, the help from both the community and Garnett, thus, helps Lusa create her bond with the place.

In addition to the familial and communal bonding she gradually creates, the agricultural activity also has healing effects for Lusa. It helps her cope with her trauma. For example, in the scene where Lusa milks the cow for the first time, Lusa

realizes that the agricultural work can help comfort her mind as for a moment she focuses only on what she is doing rather than plunging into her traumatic past: “There was comfort in this work. Sometimes she felt flooded with the mental state of her Jersey cow—a humble, unsurprised wonder at the fact of still being here in this barn at the end of each day. Lusa actually enjoyed the company” (151). This quotation suggests that Lusa’s bonding with the animals can help soothe her pain. This activity is part of her healing process. Another agricultural activity that alleviates Lusa’s psychological wound is lawn mowing. That is, the voice coming from the machine helps clear her mind from human language, the origin of her problems with Cole. An example of this healing activity is from the scene where Lusa uses a lawn mower:

> In the summer after her husband’s death Lusa discovered lawn-mower therapy. The engine’s vibrations roaring through her body and its thunderous noise in her ears seemed to bully all human language from her head, chasing away the complexities of regret and recrimination. It was a blessing to ride over the grass for an hour or two as a speechless thing, floating through a universe of vibratory sensation. By accident, she had found her way to mind-set of an insect. (288)

The passage discusses the role of the machine’s vibration and voice in relation to Lusa’s psyche. The voice, together with the vibration, gradually permeates through her body and replaces her other senses. Due to the intensity of this sensation, Lusa is so inundated that she forgets all the human language, which entails her sorrow, on her mind. Thanks to her peaceful state, she feels that her mind is able to transform into an insect. It could be assumed that the insect is a moth. Just as moths rely on their olfactory sense to communicate, so Lusa is connected with her husband after his death

through his scent. It can then be interpreted further that Lusa can communicate with her husband through lawn mowing.

In short, Lusa's ecological identity work relies on two main factors: Lusa's receptivity to Cole's scent and her engagement in agricultural activities. Lusa's ability to connect with Cole through his scent in her dream and the smell of the honey suckles on the farm makes Lusa wish to stay on the same land with her husband. Lusa's love for the husband also transforms into her love for the land her husband left behind. In order to make a living in this land, Lusa finds a means of survival through agricultural work. Simultaneously, the farm work gradually exposes Lusa to the Wideners' agricultural history, and the love from the family and the community. More importantly, the farm work also helps Lusa heal her psychological wound and traumatized self.

Through the ecological identity work, Lusa succeeds in renewing her sense of self and changing her perception of place. Her newly developed ecological identity not only enables her to come to terms with her loss but also changes the way in which she see herself in relation to the place she inhabit, thereby resulting in her reinhabitation of the land. Lusa also comes to realize the inseparableness of her sense of self, her husband's family, and the land.

Thanks to her reinterpretation of Cole's scent as her love for both her husband and the land, Lusa is able to make peace with her loss and at the same time reconstruct her sense of self. This aspect is illuminating in the scene Lusa describes her unique ability to conjure up Cole's image to her mind when she is conscious after she wakes up:

> One of the skills of grief that Lusa had learned was to hold on tight to the last moments between sleep and waking. Sometimes, then, in the early morning, taking care not to open her eyes or rouse her mind through its warm drowse to the surface where pain broke clear and cold, she found she could choose her dreams. She could call a memory and patiently follow it backward into flesh, sound, and sense. It would become her life once again, and she was held and safe, everything undecided, everything still new. (347)

The passage captures Lusa's ability to recall the image of her husband as a way to heal her inner self. To elaborate, she lets Cole's image flood in her mind while she is closing her eyes and recalling the memory she has with him. This image has healing effects as it replaces the wounded place within her mind. For Lusa, her memory of Cole is tangible and the memory gradually becomes her "flesh, sound, and sense". Specifically, the memory is now solid and inseparable with her sense of self. The passage, thus, exhibits Lusa's reconstruction of her identity as her newly developed self also includes her husband, making her feel safe and secured with her life.

As Lusa has reconstructed a stronger sense of self, she reinterprets the ghosts as part of her love for the land. This aspect can be seen when she discusses about ghosts with her nephew: "Maybe I shouldn't even call them ghosts. It's just stuff you can't see. *That* I believe in, probably more than most people. Certain kinds of love you can't see**.** That's what I'm calling ghosts" (360). The ghosts here are similar to the scent as both are invisible to human eyes. Lusa, who is keen at sensing the olfactory sense, now becomes more attentive to the invisible rather than the visible. That is, she uses her understanding of her husband's scent to make sense of the ghosts as both the ghosts and the smell represent her attachment to the place. It is also worth

noting that her ability to rethink the meaning of the ghosts suddenly comes after her re-perception of the scent. Her ghosts could be seen as her initial fear of her unfamiliarity with Cole's family as Lusa has a very different background. Once she becomes intimate with the land, she sees the ghosts differently.

Consequently, Lusa totally changes the way in which she views herself in relation to the land. In the scene where Lusa tells Jewel that she will adopt her children and use "Widener", not her own family name, as their last name, she says, "As long as I live on this place, I'm going to be Miz Widener, so why fight it? […] I'm married to a piece of land named Widener" (386). Lusa's answer discloses her perception of the land as a lover. The passage also connotes that her sense of self now extends to include the Wideners and the land.

Moreover, the community becomes part of Lusa's extended sense of self. Her intimacy with the place provides her with the clearer understanding of the community's culture in the place. After Cole's death, Lusa starts gradually bonding with the family by engaging in agricultural activities, which provide her with an opportunity to understand the familial love and simultaneously the love from the community. Lusa's firm grasp of the family's history and her bond with the community helps her re-conceive herself as part of the Wideners' long history and its agricultural community. This point can be elucidated in the scene in which Lusa explains her new understanding of the community's culture regarding the deceased in relation to the land:

> Country people seemed to have many unwritten codes about death, more of them than city people, and one was that after a given amount of time you could speak freely of the dead man again. You could tell tales on him, even

> laugh at his mild expense, as if he had rejoined your ranks. It seemed to Lusa that all these scattered accounts were really parts of one long story, the history of a family that had stayed on its land. And that story was hers now as well. (440)

The passage suggests that Lusa is intimate with the community enough to be able to comprehend its culture. The community's unique way to "speak freely of the dead" makes Lusa closer to her husband as the conversation will always revive her memory of Cole.

Garnett and Healing Effects of Ecological Science

As for Garnett Walker, the loss of the glorious past of his family business and his wife disorients him and eventually becomes his trauma. When Garnett was a boy, he loved to play on "the whole southern slope" (83) which his grandfather owned and which some people still call "Walker's mountain" (83). Garnett's reminiscence of his past reveals his bond with the place. As he puts it, "the thought made him smile" (33). The place's name, "Walker's mountain," also suggests that this place is full of his ancestors' history as the mountain is named after his last name. Furthermore, this place is tied to Garnett's family business as well, for the Walkers used to run a business by selling chestnut logs. However, one day the business became a failure because there was an outbreak of the chestnut blight, which renders almost every one of the chestnuts extinct. In this sense, the chestnuts blight uproots not only the trees but also Garnett's attachment to the land and his ancestors' history. The effect of such a loss still haunts him even in the present: "He was haunted by the ghosts of these old chestnuts, by the great emptiness their extinction had left in the world, and so this was

something Garnett did from time to time, like going to the cemetery to be with dead relatives: he admired chestnut wood" (130). The passage shows Garnett's love of the trees as he compares them with his family members and reflects how this loss impacts his life. As a result, Garnett becomes infatuated with the crossbreeding of the trees because he needs to make them immune to the blight in order to restore his family's legacy. The other significant turning point which causes Garnett's trauma is the death of Ellen, his wife, with whom he spent most of his time. Her death consequently causes a great impact upon his life: "Eight years a widower, Garnett still sometimes awoke disoriented and lost to the day" (52). The passage points to the lasting effect of his trauma as he has suffered from disorientation for eight years since his wife's death. This quotation also insinuates how his wife has been the only person he feels attached to.

Due to Garnett's sense of loss and solitude, he needs to find something to hold on to in his life. He thus sublimates his sense of disorientation into his interest in Christianity: "Lacking a wife, [Garnett] had turned to his God for solace" (52). He wholeheartedly believes in the Bible because it is the only thing he can turn to in his state of loss. Garnett believes in every single word in the Bible. His fundamentalist belief in the Bible gradually provides him with the wrong conception of non-human beings. The misunderstanding eventually prompts him to mistreat the land and reinforces his anthropocentrism. For instance, Garnett advocates the notion of human dominion over nature when he argues with Nannie about how to tend the garden. He writes in a letter to her: "If the Holy Bible is to be believed, we must view God's creatures as gifts to his favored children and used them for our own purposes" (188). Garnett's letter discloses his view of nature as resources. He also thinks that his

anthropocentrism is justified. This view of the natural world also affects his gardening: “Garnett did admire a well-set orchard, he’d give her that much. […] first in straight rows and then in diagonals depending on how you looked. A forest that obeyed the laws of man and geometry, that was the satisfaction” (273). This vivid depiction of Garnett’s preoccupation with the human-made garden reflects his sense of superiority to nature. The garden for Garnett is only a type of commodity which only fulfils humans desire for control. Even the word “forest” which connotes a sense of wildness must “obey” him. Moreover, because of his dominating attitude toward the non-human world, Garnett mistreats the land by using DDT to get rid of the insects that are harmful to his garden. As he puts it, “It took only one good dose of Two-Four-D herbicide every month to shrivel these leafy weeds to a nice, withered stand of rusty-brown stalks” (87). The passage focuses on how Garnett considers it normal to use the insecticides to kill insects. This incident also reflects Garnett’s ignorance because he does not realize the insidious effects of the chemical substances.

It is important to note that Garnett’s path to his “ecological identity work” is different from Lusa’s. While Lusa’s ecological identity work leads to her quest to find the meaning of the scent and her engagement in agricultural activities which bond her with the place, Garnett’s hinges upon his acquired knowledge of ecological science affect the way in which he treats the land. Nannie, his neighbour, is the person who informs him of the deleterious effects of chemical substances and gradually provides him with the knowledge of ecological science and its practical use. The beginning of Garnett’s ecological identity work also involves Nannie’s insightful comments on Garnett’s understanding of Christianity. Moreover, Garnett realizes his guilt when Nannie tells him how his use of insecticides might have partly caused his wife’s

death. With his guilt and attempt to atone for his past mistake, Garnett changes the way he thinks of the human and non-human inhabitants as he is more aware of the principle of ecological science.

Nannie plays a significant role in Garnett's "ecological identity work" as her comment on Garnett's understanding of the Bible awakens him to the problems in his anthropocentric view of the environment. As discussed in the previous section, Garnett's sublimation of his sorrow into Christianity is the root of his maltreatment of the land. He internalizes the anthropocentric attitude toward the environment through his fundamentalist approach to the Bible. For example, in the letter he writes to Nannie, he thinks: "[W]e must view God's creatures as gifts to his favored children and use them for our own purpose" (188). From his point of view, Garnett thinks that God gives humans a superior position to exploit natural resources as much as they need. However, Nannie's letter which counters Garnett's argument draws his attention to a new interpretation of the Bible from a more ecological perspective. For instance, Nannie writes back in her letter: "If God gave Man all the creatures of this earth to use for his won ends, he also counseled that gluttony is sin—and he did say, flat out, 'Thou shalt not kill.' He didn't tell us to go ahead and murder every beetle or caterpillar that wants to eat what we eat" (218). Here she proposes that God does not mean to let humans use natural resources as much as they think they can. In addition, she strategically refers to the notion of gluttony, one of the seven deadly sins, in order to vex Garnett's mind and make him think that his anthropocentrism reflects his gluttony since he wants to dominate the natural world. In this sense, if Garnett continues to think that he is justified in his exploitation of non-human beings, he too will be a sinner because of his avarice. This influence of Nannie over his attitude

toward Christianity and the environment is thus of paramount importance. As Garnett puts it, "Nannie Rawley was a test of his faith" (272).

Nannie not only presents to Garnett a new interpretation of the Bible but she also brings to light his misunderstanding of insecticides' benefits. This aspect is manifest when Nannie tries to point out how DDT is actually ineffective in reducing the number of insects:

> When you spray a field with a broad-spectrum insecticide like Sevin, you kill the pest bugs *and* the predator bugs, bang. If the predators and prey are balanced out to start with, and they both get knocked back the same amount, then the pests that survive will *increase* after the spraying, fast, because most of their enemies have just disappeared. And the predators will *decrease* because they've lost most of their food supply. So in the lag between sprayings, you end up boosting the numbers of the bugs. (278)

In this passage, Nannie tries to explain how insecticides render the ecosystem imbalanced as the chemicals tamper with the balanced amount of prey and predator insects. To elucidate, the insecticides will initially decrease the number of both preys and predators. However, the use of the insecticides will, in the long run, increase the number of pest insects. Once the predator insects have been killed by the chemicals, the pest insects will reproduce very fast without their natural enemies. James Dutcher discusses the use of insecticides in relation to the resurgence of pest bugs in "A Review of Resurgence and Replacement Causing Pest Outbreaks in IPM" (2007). "Insect and mite pest resurgence occurs when an insecticide or acaricide treatment destroys the pest population and kills, repels, irritates or otherwise deters the natural enemies of the pest" (27). This entomological research substantiates Nannie's

argument since Garnett's use of insecticides "deters the natural enemies of the pest". His attempt to get rid of insects ironically ends up helping them proliferate.

Nannie's insightful knowledge makes Garnett more open to the principle of ecology. After he listens to her explanation about the insecticides' ineffectiveness, Garnett admits that, "[he] didn't find the fault in [her] thinking" (278). His comment suggests that he now realizes his mistreatment of non-human beings. It should be noted that Nannie attempts to teach him before about the principle of ecology to make Garnett see the whole picture of the ecosystem. This aspect is manifest in her letter written to counter-argue Garnett's anthropocentric view of the environment: "Everything alive is connected to every other by fine, invisible threads. Things you don't see can help you plenty, and things you try to control will often rear back and bite you" (218). Due to Nannie's teaching and Garnett's mistake, he learns more about ecology and how he should treat the land.

Furthermore, Nannie's knowledge of ecology gradually debunks Garnett's conception of what Nannie calls "modern farming" (279) which eventually causes debt burden for farmers. For Garnett and other farmers in the county, modern farming involves the use of insecticides and the cultivation of GMO grain. As Garnett puts it, "Modern farmers try new things. […] Even in Zebulon County" (249). Nannie tries to point out that Garnett and other farmers become victimized by agricultural corporations when they turn to modern farming. For example, when Nannie is having a conversation with Garnett about his cultivation of GMO grain, she says, "all the companies are pushing that grain with its genes turned out of whack […] Half the world won't eat that grain; there's a boycott on it" (279). Nannie's comment suggests that the consumers do not trust the GMO grain. The quotation also demonstrates the

companies' irresponsible attempt to sell the genetically modified grain without any concern for the well-being of its consumers. Moreover, Nannie demonstrates how these companies also coax farmers into buying insecticides: "Chemical companies change, and turn your head along with them" (279). Due to the high cost of the GMO grain and insecticides, farmers who buy these products end up having debts. As Nannie further explains, "In your father's day all the farmers around here were doing fine. Now they have to work night shifts at the Kmart to keep up their mortgages" (279). Nannie compares the time before the existence of the corporation to the present to make Garnett realize the insidious effects of what they understand as modern farming.

In addition to her knowledge of ecology, Nannie's garden is a testimony of her ecological stance showing that humans are able to cultivate crops without chemical substances. When Garnett sees Nannie's crops with his own eyes, "[h]e crossed over just below her big vegetable garden, which looked well tended, he had to admit. By some witchcraft she was getting broccoli and eggplant without spraying" (274). Garnett's sense of wonder suggests that he thinks Nannie's organic farming is possible. Her garden suggests that Nannie is not just an old woman with the knowledge of ecology but she actually puts her knowledge into practice. Furthermore, Garnett makes a comparison between Nannie's garden and his. As he puts it, "Garnett didn't even plant broccoli anymore—and his eggplants got so full of flea beetles they looked like they'd taken a round of buckshot" (274). Here both Garnett's and Nannie's vegetable gardens reflect the way each of them treats the environment. While Nannie cultivates her vegetables without using insecticides, Garnett uses chemicals which result in the increasing number of insects.

Apart from Nannie's eco-friendly way to cultivate the garden, she also ignites Garnett's hope to make the chestnut trees immune to the blight when she discusses the process of natural selection with him. Since the chestnut trees represent his family's legacy, Garnett seriously attempts to crossbreed the trees to prevent them from becoming extinct. He feels committed to using his knowledge of science to crossbreed the trees and render them immune to the blight which may resurface again in the future. Since he has been crossbreeding for a long time, he doubts himself if he is doing it in the right way. When Garnett shares with Nannie his unsuccessful attempt at crossbreeding, a sense of hopelessness emerges in his mind: "Garnett thought with the deep despair of a man running out of time. Just enough years to make a good chestnut, that was all he wanted, but in his heart he knew he couldn't expect them" (283). It is again Nannie who supplies him with the notion of natural selection. She explains that actually nature can evolve and adjust itself without human interference. In the same scene, she explains to Garnett:

> What you're doing is artificial selection […] Nature does the same thing, just slower. This 'evolution' business is just a name scientists put on the most obvious truth in the world, that every kind of living thing adjusts to changes in the place where it lives. Not during its own life, but you know, down through the generations. Whether you believe in it or not, it's going on right under your nose over there in your chestnuts. (283)

In this passage, Nannie believes that nature, specifically chestnut trees, can evolve and develop itself to be immune to the blight without the aid of science. She also tries to point out that the chestnut trees too are adapting themselves to survive in a new environment but it takes some time. In other words, Nannie is offering Garnett

another set of knowledge from ecology. At the same time, she is trying to tell him that his chestnuts will eventually survive as they all undergo this process of natural selection. Nannie's comment, thus, gives Garnett hope that the chestnut trees will prosper again. Furthermore, Nannie allows Garnett to visit the chestnut trees on her backyard that survive the blight and opens his eyes to the substantial evidence of natural selection: "Garnett could picture the two old chestnuts up there, anomalous survivors of their century, gnarled with age and disease but still standing, solitary and persistent for all these years" (346). Because of Nannie's ecological knowledge and the existence of the surviving trees, Garnett now realizes that actually nature has a way to help the chestnut trees develop themselves to be immune to the blight.

Nannie also plays an important role in making Garnett realize his mistake because she awakens him to the peril of DDT. It is worth noting that Garnett's concern about toxicity is manifest from the first part of Garnett's plot, specifically in his third chapter. For example, when he thinks about the cause of the deformity of Nannie's daughter, he associates it with the chemicals: "He suspected a connection between that long-ago birth of a deformed child and [Nannie's] terror of chemicals. The troubles had been evident at birth, the Mongol features and so forth" (138). Garnett's curiosity of the relationship between toxicity and the deformity of Nannie's child reflects that he is, to a certain extent, aware of the chemicals' deleterious effects but at that time he still denies the possibility of the connection between his own use of DDT and his wife's demise due to lung cancer eight years ago.

Furthermore, since Nannie awakens him to the denied truth that his use of insecticide is the root of his wife's cancer, she triggers Garnett's sense of guilt, which plays a significant role in galvanizing him to rethink his treatment of the land and quit

using DDT for good. This aspect can be seen when Nannie argues with Garnett whether it is safe to use DDT:

> This god-awful Sevin you've been spraying on your trees every blooming day of the week! You think you've got troubles, a *tree* came over on you? Well your poison has been coming down on *me*, and I don't just mean my property, my apples, I mean me. I have to breathe it. If I get lung cancer, it will be on your conscience. (275)

Nannie's comment demonstrates the uncontrollable threat which comes from the chemicals. That is, she emphasizes that the toxicity will harm not only her trees but also herself. Moreover, the fact that Nannie has a chance to be contaminated by DDT insinuates that both Garnett and his wife—when she was alive—are affected by the insecticides as well. Owing to Nannie's thought-provoking comment, Garnett realizes that his use of insecticides partly causes his wife's death because she suffers from lung cancer: "Ellen had died of lung cancer, metastasized to the brain. People always remarked on the fact that she never had smoked" (275). This realization that his use of DDT might be the cause of his wife cancer brings about Garnett's sense of guilt:

> [He] realized with a shock. Thought it and put it about so other people were thinking it, too. It dawned on him with a deeper dread that it might possibly be true. He'd never read the fine print on the Sevin dust package, but he knew it got into your lungs like something evil. Oh, Ellen. He raised his eyes to the sky and suddenly felt so dizzy he was afraid he might have to sit down on the grass. (275)

Here Garnett feels so guilty that he almost faints. However, this incident becomes the turning point for him to stop using all chemicals and reconsider ways in which he

treats the land since he now learns that his use of insecticides also affects those who live around him.

It can be seen that Garnett's "ecological identity work" mainly involves his learning of ecological science through his interaction with Nannie. She points out Garnett's misconception of the Bible and makes him rethink his anthropocentric view of the environment. She also provides Garnett with the correct information of how the insecticides he uses everyday ironically increases the number of pest bugs, thereby making him see how lives are actually interconnected. Nannie, who has profound knowledge of ecology, teaches Garnett the process of natural selection to give him hope to render the chestnut trees immune to the blight. In addition, Nannie explains how farmers these days are the victims of agricultural corporations when the farmers use GMO grain and insecticides. More importantly, she is also the person who galvanizes Garnett to learn the detrimental effects of DDT in relation to his wife's cancer

After Garnett's ecological identity is constructed, one can see the effects of the principle of ecology on Garnett's view of the environment. His changing view of nature is manifest in the scene in which he contemplates the natural world while he is on the way to Nannie's house:

> His eye wandered up toward the row of trees that towered along the fencerow, giant leafy masses like tall green storm clouds, and felt unexpectedly awestruck. A man could live under these things ever day and forget to notice their magnitude. Garnett had gradually lost the ability to see individual leaves, but he could still recognize any one of these by its shape: the billowy columns

> of tulip poplars; the lateral spread of an oak; the stately, upright posture of a walnut; the translucent of effeminate tremble of a
>
> wild cherry tree. (369)

In this passage, Garnett no longer expresses his anthropocentric attitude towards the environment since he appreciates the beauty of nature. He is in awe when he discerns for the first time the "magnitude" of the trees that he has seen all his life. His sense of wonder emerges from his ability to perceive nature in a more delicate way as he vividly describes the features of each kind of plants and flowers. He also sees the agency of nature as an autonomous and animate being when he sees the cherry tree "tremble". It should be noted that he now respects the wildness in nature instead of evincing his will to tame it as he usually does. This changing attitude, thus, hints at the effects of ecology on his perception of the environment.

Moreover, Garnett's view of the natural world also reflects his ecocentric perspective when he expresses his opinion on weeds and bees. For example, when Garnett discusses with Nannie the villagers' decision to use insecticides to get rid of bee hives in the church, he thinks, "[T]his was sad. As a child he had enjoyed putting on the bee bonnet and helping his father with the honey chores, spring and fall" (339). The passage accentuates Garnett's sympathy towards the bees as he used to be intimate with them when he was young since his livelihood was based on collecting honey from bees. His concern for the bees connotes Garnett's changing attitude towards non-human beings. In addition, Garnett might feel sad and guilty since he also uses insecticides and his action is an insult to the memory of his father. Another incident which exemplifies his changing perception of the environment is Garnett's encounter with "blue-flowered weeds" (395). While he is walking back to his home,

he sees "[the] blue-flowered weeds parted and then closed like curtains in a movie house, and Garnett had the strangest feeling that what he'd witnessed was just that kind of magic" (395). His ability to admire the weeds demonstrates his ecocentric way of seeing the environment. While in the first part of Garnett's narrative, he showed his misconception of the natural world and used DDT to eradicate those weeds, he now views the weeds as "magic" thanks to his appreciation of biodiversity.

In addition to Garnett's renewed perception of the environment and his sympathy for the non-human beings, his view of Nannie develops from treating her as a neighbour to embracing her as a member of his family. Before he closely interacts with Nannie, he lives alone in solitude and secretly grieves over his loss. An example that elucidates Garnett's care for Nannie is the scene in which Nannie gives him a hug when she knows that he is worried about her. She "[puts] those arms around his waist, and hugged him tightly with her head resting against his chest. […] It was astonishing. Holding her this way felt like a hard day's rest. It felt like the main thing he'd been needing to do" (430). This incident highlights Garnett's realization of how he has so far lacked human touch that replenishes emptiness in his lonely heart.

Moreover, Garnett's concern over the extinction of the chestnut trees is resolved when his grandchildren want to learn from him the knowledge of gardening. To elaborate, Garnett's son got married with Jewel, one of the Wideners, and together they have two children. However, their marriage ends with a divorce as Garnett's son abandoned her. Since then, Garnett has lost touch with the Wideners, and Jewel becomes a widow and a single mother. After Cole's death, Lusa has formed her bond with Jewel since both understand each other very well because both lost their husbands. Jewel leaves her children—Garnett's grandchildren—under Lusa's care as

Jewel's body gradually deteriorates from cancer. When Lusa loves to take the children with her, they have a change to engage in the agricultural activity, making them intrigued with plants and crossbreeding. Lusa then asks Garnett to let her children see the chestnut trees as both know each other when Lusa sought Garnett's advise of goat breeding. Therefore, the two families re-unite and Garnett's worry is solved. An example which elucidates this aspect is when Garnett plans to provide his grandchildren with agricultural knowledge: "I was thinking I might be able to teach them how to bag flowers and make crosses, […] On my chestnut trees. To help me keep it all going" (429). Now he has the grandchildren to whom he will bequeath his knowledge of crossbreeding to help sustain and take care of the chestnut trees. This incident also signifies that Garnett's family legacy will continue to exist as well.

Deanna and Deep Immersion in Nature

Unlike Lusa and Garnett who are not intimate with the place in which they live, Deanna has bonded with the place and its ecosystem since the beginning of her narrative. In the opening scene, when she explores the mountain around her cabin, "She squatted, steadied herself by placing her fingertips in the moss at the foot of the stump, and pressed her face to the musky old wood. Inhaled" (5). The passage highlights her perception of nature through her tactile sense. Deanna's act of inhaling the wood illustrates her heightened receptivity to the natural world. Moreover, Deanna expresses how she incorporates ecology in her practice as she is very concerned about the well-being of non-human beings: "Every quiet step is thunder to beetle life underfoot" (3). Deanna's ability to put herself in the insect's position reflects her delicate sensitivity to the environment.

However, Deanna's attachment to the place and the non-human beings is gradually undermined by Eddie Bondo, a handsome and young coyote hunter. Growing up as a member of a sheep rancher family, Eddie carries with him a bias against animal predators, especially coyotes. In the scene where Eddie discusses his view of coyotes with Deanna, he remarks, "[H]ating coyotes is my religion. Blood of the lamb, so to speak" (326). Eddie's comment confirms his strong animosity toward the animal and the impossibility of changing his attitude as reflected in his comparison of his belief to "religion". In short, he does not care whether the killing of predators will disrupt the whole ecosystem. Eddie accidentally meets Deanna in the forest. Due to Eddie's attractive appearance and personality, Deanna lets him stay with her. Since then, their sexual relationship gradually becomes Deanna's trauma as she is fully aware that Eddie aims at hunting coyotes and that he may seduce her only to obtain the information about the animals. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Deanna is complicit in her sexual relationship with him. An example is a scene where Deanna helplessly succumbs to her own desire:

> He breathed on the skin beneath her earlobe and her back arched like a reflex, like a moth drawn helpless to a flame. She had no words, but her body answered his perfectly as he slid himself down and took the nape of her neck in his teeth like a lion on a lioness in heat: a gentle, sure bite, by mutual agreement impossible to escape. (99)

This vivid depiction of Deanna's sexual relationship with Eddie emphasizes her consent and her loneliness caused by having lived alone for a long time. Their relationship is portrayed by the author's use of natural images of the two lions mating.

The representation of the two's relationship suggests that Deanna's desire is something natural.

Deanna's traumatic sexual relationship with Eddie gradually ruins her bond with the environment, causes anxiety, and changes ways in which she treats the non-human beings. For instance, Deanna ruminates on her regret of letting Eddie come into this place, she "wiped tears from the side of her face […] Now the spell was gone, the magic of this place that had been hers alone, unknown to any man" (102). Deanna's sorrow reflects her shaken bond with the place and her paradoxical feelings toward her relationship with Eddie as she lets him stay despite knowing that he may be a threat to the place she loves. In addition, there is anxiety which emerges from her interactions with Eddie. Her sense of paranoia is manifest when she hears a gun shot: "Panic rose into her throat. The gunfire, that would have been *him*. Eddie Bondo had shot something while she slept" (314). The quotation describes Deanna's fear as she thought Eddie must have hunted a coyote but in reality he hunted a wild chicken for food. Furthermore, Eddie's presence changes the way Deanna treats the non-human beings. Her decreasing intimacy with animals is apparent when she, who loves every form of life, even an insect, takes pleasure in eating the wild chicken Eddie hunts. As she puts it, "But something in her body had been longing for a celebration, or so it seemed right now. He'd guessed right. She *wanted* this feast" (317). Deanna's enjoyment in this activity signifies not only her changing attitude toward the non-human beings but also her action toward it. The word "feast" also reflects how Deanna sees the chicken only as food that she can enjoy. It is also crucial to note that, before Eddie's arrival, Deanna eats only canned food she receives from another forest

ranger once a month. In other words, she has never hunted wild animals for food, but Eddie influences her to the point that she changes her eating habit.

It is significant to point out that the sabotaged bond between Deanna and nature by Eddie's intrusion can be analyzed in the light of ecofeminism to illustrate how her sexual relationship affects Deanna's ecological self. Ecofeminism is the school of thoughts that highlights the female bond with nature. This notion accentuates biological similarities between the female's body and nature. For example, women have a menstrual cycle in the same way nature has a seasonal cycle. More importantly, both women and nature are endowed with the capability of giving birth. Women give life to a child in the same way that nature gives life to its flora and fauna. Such phrases as "Mother earth" and "Mother nature" emerge from these shared attributes because both are capable of procreating. This biological aspect helps explain Deanna's delicate sensitivity to the place and its ecosystem. Another shared attribute between women and nature is their oppressed status by men. As Karen J. Warren posits in "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism" (1998), "the conceptual connections between the dual dominations of women and nature are located in an oppressive patriarchal conceptual framework" (173). Since both women and nature share the same oppressed position within the patriarchal structure, women in this sense are more intimate with the environment.

In the light of ecofeminism, we can see the double oppressions of both women and nature through Deanna and Eddie's relationship. As discussed before, Deanna shows her concern for the well-being of the non-human beings as she is, for example, very careful not to step on an insect. Moreover, she demonstrates her bioregional knowledge as she is able to detect the trace of each animal and remember

tiny details of the place such as the location of the trees. Thus, her attentiveness to the natural world and her knowledge of the place suggest that Deanna has already bonded with the place. However, Deanna's ecological identity is gradually undermined by the intrusion of Eddie Bondo who befriends her in order to obtain the information of coyotes' den from her by exploiting her loneliness. In this sense, it can be seen that both Deanna and nature are oppressed as Eddie only exploits her bioregional knowledge to hunt coyotes. Furthermore, her sexual relationship with Eddie undermines Deanna's ecological self as both her view and treatment of the non-human beings change. For example, she lets Eddie hunt a rooster in her beloved forest. Her decision demonstrates her shaken ecological self as she does not care for the non-human beings like she did in her opening scene. She also takes pleasure from eating a rooster. These two examples point to Deanna's undermined ecological self. Her sexual relationship with Eddie, thus, not only puts both Deanna and nature under his dominion but also sabotages her bond with the environment.

It is, however, interesting to point out that even though Deann's relationship with the male hunter becomes an impediment to her bonding with nature, her association with Eddie also makes her reconsider her ecological stance, making the beginning of her "ecological identity work". It should also be noted that Deanna's ecological identity work is sharply different from both Lusa's and Garnett's. While Lusa and Garnett focus on the process of their ecological identity construction, Deanna's plot emphasizes the retrieval of her ecological identity. This difference signifies that Deanna has already formed her bond with the environment but lost it because of her sexual relationship with Eddie. Hence, the process of her ecological

identity work, unlike that of the other two characters, is more sudden rather than gradual.

Deanna's ecological identity work entails her quest to retrieve her ecological self. Her recovery of the ecological self begins when she attempts to change Eddie's bias against coyotes by teaching him the principle of ecology. Her endeavour ends up with failure which lessens her interest in Eddie and at the same time prompts her to rethink and end her relationship with him. Due to Deanna's determination to stop the relationship, she comes to be more attentive to the environment again when she demonstrates her intuitive perception of the natural world. Her intense perception of the physical surroundings also helps her overcome sorrow in breaking with Eddie. This heightened sensitivity to the place further leads her to immersion in nature where she is able to be aware of her connection with the environment.

The beginning of Deanna's retrieval of her ecological identity is manifest when she tries to provide Eddie with ecological knowledge to re-think and treat the environment. That is, her endeavour to change Eddie's view of coyotes suggests that she gradually regains her awareness to protect her beloved environment. In her attempt to change his attitude, she also has a chance to revise her own ecological knowledge and simultaneously rethink the way she treats the land. For example, she explains to him the basic principle of ecology:

> The life of a top carnivore is the most expensive item in the pyramid, that's the thing. In the case of a coyote, or a big cat, the mother spends a whole year raising her young. Not just a few weeks. She has to teach them to stalk and hunt and everything there is to doing that job. She's lucky if even one of her

> kids makes it through. If something gets him, there goes the mama's whole year of work down the drain. (323)

Deanna demonstrates her ecological insight through her discussion of the predators' significance in relation to the ecosystem by mentioning the ecological "pyramid" where the predators' lives are valued the most as they help balance the number of preys. Focusing on coyotes' lives, Deanna explains that a cub needs its mother before it can hunt. As preys tend to reproduce faster than predators, a loss of predators can render the ecosystem imbalanced. The preys will overpopulate during the predators' absence. The ecological pyramid Deanna tries to present to Eddie is the foundation of ecology.

Nevertheless, Eddie rejects her argument because he has long been taught the wrong conception of coyotes by his sheep rancher family. For instance, in the same scene after Deanna tries to change his attitude, Eddie responds to Deanna, "I'm a ranching boy from the West, and hating coyotes is my religion. Blood of the lamb, so to speak. Don't try to convert me, and I won't try to convert you" (326). Eddie's comment connotes his narrow attitude towards coyotes as he does not even try to consider what Deanna is proposing. Another scene which illustrates Eddie's bias towards coyotes is when he does not care to read Deanna's thesis about coyotes and their significance to the ecosystem. As he puts it, "I don't think I'm going to care for the ending" (329). Eddie's remark becomes the last straw for Deanna to put up with his prejudice. Deanna, thus, realizes that he has just befriended her only to acquire the information about coyotes' habitat. Her realization of Eddie's hidden agenda makes her less interested in him and decide to move on.

Thanks to Deanna's awakening to Eddie's exploitation of her, she starts re-perceiving the environment in a new light as she starts exhibiting her enhanced receptivity to the environment, especially the moon and the non-human beings, through her intuitive perception and her intensified tactile and olfactory senses. The instance which exemplifies Deanna's special perception is the scene where she is able to feel the moon without her dependence on the visual sense. For example, when she is awakened by the moon's presence, she describes, "The moon was up somewhere, and big, just a little past full. It hadn't yet climbed above the mountains that shadowed this hollow, but the sky was collecting a brightness Deanna could sense through her closed eyelids" (330). So far, she has shown her delicate sensitivity to the place only through her visual and olfactory perception. Now her perception is deepened as she shows her intuitive experience of the moon which goes beyond humans' ordinary senses. It is worth noting that Deanna's unique perception of the place is manifest right after she decides to stop her relationship with Eddie. This chronological aspect insinuates that Deanna's sexual relationship with Eddie is an impediment for her to bond with nature.

Furthermore, after Deanna makes up her mind to end her relationship with Eddie, she relies on her heightened sensitivity to the environment to help ease her confusing mind. Now, Deanna is able to perceive the environment with love and intimacy again as she first did in the opening of her story where she attaches her face to the ground and smells the scent of the soil. For instance, when Deanna lays beside Eddie with a sense of frustration, she expresses her attentiveness to the physical surroundings:

> She tried to forget her body, her immensely full stomach, and Eddie beside her—all these troublesome symptoms of being human. She tried, slowly, to inhale and absorb this night instead. It was an extraordinary time to be awake, if you gave in to it: these hours of settled darkness when the insects quieted and the air cooled and scents rose delicately out of the ground. She could smell leaf mold, mushrooms, and the faint trace of a skunk that must have come poking around the turkey bones in the woods right after she and Eddie fell into bed and she fell asleep, hard, briefly, before popping indelibly awake again. (330)

The scene illustrates Deanna's determination to overcome Eddie's disturbing presence and her unique way to cope with her sense of disorientation. That is, she uses her olfactory sense to distract her mind from Eddie by smelling the scents of the physical environment. More importantly, the scents are so intensifying that she can vividly describe the sources and at the same time intuitively visualize the image of the skunk "poking around the turkey bones". The clear depiction of the physical environment also reflects how Deanna's attention changes from Eddie to nature. Her experience of the natural world here also signifies her intuitive perception of the place since she can describe the details of what happens outside although she is in the cabin. This heightened receptivity to the place lays a foundation for the next step of the restoration of her ecological identity work when she lives in the woods.

In addition, Deanna's ecological identity work corresponds with what Mitchell Thomashow calls "the contemplation of wild places" (7) in *Ecological Identity* (1996), one of the paths to construct ecological identity. Thomashow, as an environmental activist and a teacher, holds a workshop where the participants take a

walk in the woods and reflect upon their relationship with nature through their journal. He calls this activity "a *sense-of-place* meditation", "a series of observations that allow [students] to focus on their sense in relation to the landscape" (15). In other words, Thomashow highlights the participants' intensified perception of the place mainly through their direct contact with it. Regarding this aspect, he further argues that "the direct experience of the wild places has a transformational quality" as the participants are able to "distinguish an event, a time in their lives, or a critical series of incidents in which different strands of their lives seemed to converge, helping them carve a personal vision" (15). Here Thomashow suggests that "being immersed" (15) in nature can help one reflect and reconsider not only one's relationship with the environment but also one's personal conflict.

In light of Thomashow's notion of the contemplation of wild places, the description of Deanna's interaction with, and her response to, the natural world—both the moon and the place—also correspond with what he proposes as "being immersed" (19) in nature. Deanna's contemplation in the environment she is intimate with helps her not only reflect upon her personal problem, particularly her pregnancy with Eddie during the time she had sexual relationship with him, but also realize her connection with nature. To deal with her sense of anxiety and guilt, Deanna, hence, has to find a means to cope with her anxiety, she goes to the woods where she expresses her appreciation of the natural surroundings to calm her mind:

> [She] headed out into the woods, tense with fury and sadness. She didn't understand how far her emotion were running away with her until she felt the coolness of tears running down her face. […] Halfway up the hillside she stopped to wipe her eyes and nose on the hem of her nightshirt. […] The trees

> on the opposite side of the hollow were washed in brilliant white light. They glowed like a fairy forest or a hillside of white birches far from home. She breathed in slowly. This was what she had. The beauty of this awful night. (333)

The passage shows that Deanna is inundated with anxiety and guilt that she goes out to take refuge in the woods. As she is immersed by nature, Deanna is able to calm her mind and reflect upon her problems. She demonstrates her peaceful mind after she apprehends the beauty of the environment as "a fairy forest".

Apart from the healing effects of Deanna's immersion in nature, this path to ecological identity construction also prompts her to realize her interconnectedness with nature. After being immersed in nature, Deanna feels as if her human self were diminished to something similar to the moon. An example which illustrates this point is the scene when Deanna is walking in the woods at night: "Her body felt full and heavy and slow and human and *absent*, somehow, just a weight to be carried forward without its enthusiastic cycles of fertility and rest" (333). Deanna's "full" body resembles the moon which is similarly depicted as "full". The scene also reflects how she feels that her human self is "*absent*" as she re-perceives her body as only "a weight to be carried forward" rather than a human body. Deanna's connection with the moon along with her re-imagination of her sense of self, therefore, indicates the restoration of her ecological identity.

The restoration of Deanna's ecological self further brings about the renewed intimacy with nature and the resolution of her inner conflicts regarding her sexual desire and her pregnancy. Finally, Deanna demonstrates her recovered sensibility to the non-human beings through her attempt to save a phoebe. As earlier discussed, her

love for the non-human beings is undermined when she becomes a carnivore who feeds on a rooster, hunted by Eddie. Now the change in her behaviour is manifest as she decides to help save a phoebe: “Now her brain settled on phoebe worries: they might have scared the mother off her nest before dark, or a baby might have fallen out” (330). Deanna’s panic and attempt to check on the phoebe at night hint at her enhanced stewardship for the natural world. Her worry for the phoebe also illustrates how her sense of self now includes the non-human beings as well.

Nevertheless, the phoebe Deanna tries to help ends up with death ironically caused by the snake she tries to protect. The death of the phoebe provides her with a new perspective that makes her look at relationships among living beings in the ecosystem: “She breathed hard against the urge to scream at this [snake]. […] This was her familiar, the same black snake that had lived in the roof all summer, the snake she had defended as a predator doing its job. Living takes life” (332). For the first time, Deanna has to question and reconsider her conservationist approach to the environment as she thinks she could protect every being. However, the phoebe’s death teaches her about the reality of the food chain as she realizes she could not help save all living beings. The ones on the top of the food chain always prey on the weaker.

Her newly developed self changes not only the way she perceives the non-human beings but also her sexual desire. In particular, she reinterprets her sexual relationship with Eddie as part of the natural process as every being, including humans, possesses a desire to mate. For instance, when Deanna reconsiders her relationship with Eddie after he leaves her, she shows her changing view of the relationship: “It didn’t matter what she chose. The world was what it was, a place with its own rules of hunger and satisfaction. Creatures lived and mated and died, they

came and went, as surely as summer did. They would go their own ways, of their own accord" (368). Deanna thus deems her sexual desire as something natural that she and other animals have in common. This re-conception shows that her ecological self also helps her come to terms with her sense of guilt, rooted from her succumbing to her sexual desire for Eddie.

Finally, Deanna's retrieval of her ecological identity induces her to make peace with her pregnancy. When Deanna ponders over her pregnancy while she is walking in the forest, she "[thinks] of coyote children emerging from the forest's womb with their eyes wide open, while the finite possibilities of her own children closed their eyes, finally, on this world" (333). The passage suggests that Deanna visualizes herself as part of the forest, giving birth to her child. Her imagination reflects how she sees her baby as a life given by nature rather than by a human. Another example which elaborates on Deanna's re-imagination of herself as nature is the scene when she decides that she is going to tell people who the father of the baby is: "She would tell people in Egg Fork, because they sure would ask, that the father of her child was a coyote" (435). Since Deanna realizes herself as one with nature, she is able to re-imagine her baby's father as a coyote in order to cope with her pregnancy. For her, the child is a blessing from nature.

In conclusion, the three characters—Lusa, Garnett, and Deanna—have taken various paths to their ecological identity work and consequently reconstructed their sense of self. Lusa's sense of self extends to include both the Wideners and the community. In a similar vein, Garnett's identity is re-created out of not only his solitary self but also his neighbour, his land, and also his grandchildren. Deanna's expansion of her ecological self, however, is different from that of the other two

characters as her identity embraces only nature and the non-human beings. In other words, while Lusa's and Garnett's sense of self is part of the human community as well as the place, Deanna's sense of self includes the natural world and its ecosystem, corresponding with her ecofeminist stance and her intimate relationship with nature.

CHAPTER V: Conclusion

This thesis has examined how Barbara Kingsolver differently presents the characters' renewed ecological perception of the place and self in the three selected novels: *Animal Dreams* (1990), *The Poisonwood Bible* (1998), and *Prodigal Summer* (2000). In *Animal Dreams*, the protagonist feels estranged from her hometown due to her traumatic experience caused by the loss of her mother and baby. Due to her loss and disorientation, her sense of estrangement from the place is manifest in her perception of the landscape. Her participation in environmental activism with the community of women gradually exposes her to the place's various dimensions: history, memory, culture, and spirituality. Thanks to her deepened perception of the place, the protagonist also changes ways in which she conceives of herself in relation to the place as her sense of self expands to include both the place and its people. Her shattered self, thus, is healed.

While *Animal Dreams* presents a transformation of the character who comes back to her hometown and heals her traumatized self, *The Poisonwood Bible*, in contrast, brings to the fore the character's renewed perception in a foreign land. In the novel, the female white protagonists embark upon a journey to the Congo and they carry with them the white colonial ideology, rooted from their father's inculcation of Christianity. The colonial ideology prompts them to believe that they are superior to the natural world and its people. Therefore, this contaminated perception paves the way for the whites' domination of the natives and also the land. However, the protagonists' encounter with cruelty in the Congo's environment gradually induces them to question and eventually abandon their colonial ideology. The collapse of the

protagonists' ideology, along with their anthropocentrism, further makes them develop their unique beliefs based on their personal experience in the Congo. This newly reconstructed worldview allows them to form a humble attitude toward the natural world and, at the same time, realize their existence as an insignificant being among the interconnected web of lives.

Unlike the other two novels, *Prodigal Summer* opens up numerous possibilities for the protagonists to reinhabit the place in which they live through their construction and restoration of "ecological identity". The novel accentuates the roles of the characters' traumatic experience, their interactions with the community, and their knowledge of ecological science in galvanizing them to rethink ways in which they perceive and treat the land.

Kingsolver illuminates the inextricability between one's perception of the environment and one's treatment of it. In *Animal Dreams*, the traumatized protagonist sees herself as "a rajah on an elephant" when she looks upon it. This alienating perception of the land further leads to her decision to leave the land as the land is packed with her memories of her mother and baby. On the other hand, *The Poisonwood Bible* presents the protagonists' maltreatment of the land as stemming from their colonial ideology, propagated through their father's inculcation of Christianity. One example is that the father, who is the minister, thinks he is justified in dominating the environment because God creates the earth for humans' benefits. Due to this wrong conception of the land, he orders a group of the natives to set a bomb in the river to get the fish. His anthropocentric perception of the environment which comes from his fundamentalist approach to the Bible makes him dominate the non-human beings. As for *Prodigal Summer*, the protagonists' trauma and their lack

of ecological knowledge prompt them to misperceive the environment. For example, Garnett expresses his view of nature as something needed to be "tamed". Consequently, he loves a human-made garden since he can control nature. His anthropocentric perception of the place, along with his lack of ecological knowledge, further makes him mistreat the land as he regularly uses insecticides to get rid of pests without realizing the long-lasting effects upon both the ecosystem and those around him.

It is worth noting that the author brings to light various aspects of the human perception of the place. In the selected novels, the protagonists are eventually able to see the land as an autonomous and animate being. This changing perception corresponds with their self-transformation. For example, after Codi's perception is renewed through her engagement with environmental activism, she starts seeing the land as embracing her, reflecting her bond with the land.

Moreover, Kingsolver's depiction of the protagonists' perception of the place also entails its cultural and spiritual dimensions. As we have discussed in the second chapter, the characters' exposure to "the invisible landscape" bonds Codi with her hometown and also the community as she gradually taps into the place's various dimensions such as its culture and spirituality. She makes use of the indigenous culture and discloses its impact upon human experience with physical reality. For instance, in *Animal Dreams*, Kinishba, the prehistoric condo, is embedded with bones of the deceased. This natural architect reflects how lives of the living and the deceased coexist as the dead are not forgotten. This cultural aspect of the place enables Codi to later come to terms with her loss as she understands another perspective to view death.

In addition, Kingsolver's portrayal of human perception of the place also involves ecological science as her protagonist describes how lives in the forest are interconnected. An instance which elaborates on the ecological perception of the place is manifest in *Prodigal Summer*. Deanna, a forest ranger, expresses her ecological view of the place in the opening scene when she is aware that her footstep may cause disturbance to insects' lives and disturb the whole community of the non-human beings. Deanna's mindful attitude reflects she sees the place as full of different life forms and how her footstep can disrupt these non-human beings. Kingsolver, in this sense, opens up the various aspects of the human perception of the place and how it affects their treatment of the land.

The issue of one's perception of the environment in relation to one's treatment of it, which this thesis have examined in the three American novels is relevant to Thailand and able to help shed light on the country's environmental problems. The problems relate to divergent attitudes of the villagers and government towards the land. For example, in 2006, Tongkum Limited, one of the largest gold-mining companies in Thailand, was granted a permission to excavate the land and run a gold mine in Loei Province. The result is that the environment and the locals from six villages are contaminated with the toxic chemicals. In *Geographical*[3], an article entitled "Gold diggers" (2015) reports, "The water in which the women stand plunging seedlings into mud is contaminated with arsenic, manganese and chromium. Below the overburden dumps, the rice fields hold arsenic, cyanide, mercury and cadmium". The passage shows the severe effects of the contamination upon the well-

[3] *Geographical* is an official magazine in the United Kingdom, published since 1935, that mainly deals with culture, geographical knowledge, and wildlife.

being of the land and villagers. The mining company's treatment of the land reflects its view of the environment only as a natural resource. As the news states, "The 1,290 rai of land bought in 1995 for about THB 2000 (37) per rai (1,600 m2) was thought to contain 1.7 million tonnes of ore from which 251,917 ounces of gold could be extracted." It can be seen that the company only wants to use the land's resources without thinking about the impact upon both the land and its people. Illnesses and deaths dramatically increase after the mining company runs its course as the villagers have been affected by chronic arsenic poisoning.

To help save both the environment and its people, the environmental activists have held campaigns against the company. They point out that the locals regard the land as something inseparable from their lives since their means of survival depends upon the environment. Different groups of people, such as villagers, students, and people in the academia, gather to protest against injustice. The group calls itself "Khon Ruk Ban Kerd" (KRBK) Conservation Group. The KRBK collaborates with Dao Din Group, a group of student activists of human rights, and together they make a declaration about their stance. In an article entitled "Thailand: Khon Ruk Ban Kerd Conservation Group Denounces Threats and Intimidations Since Allowing Dao Din Activists to Come Work in the Village" (2015) in *Protect International*[4] , the environmental activists publicly declare in the "Declaration of the Khon Ruk Ban Kerd Conservation Group" (2015): "What we have been doing is to conserve and protect natural resources, forests, mountains, and water supplies which have nourished our livelihood since we were born. We want to preserve them for our

[4] *Protect International* is an international and non-profit organization whose main aim is to protect the human rights all over the globe.

children". The passage highlights the temporal aspect of the necessity of environmental activism. That is, the people along with their ancestors have been living here since they were born, and their experiences have become part of the land from the past to the present. The land will also become the future for the posterity as they will later inherit the land. In this sense, the people need to conserve the land not only for themselves but also the next generations.

Moreover, the land has been endowed with meaning by generations of people who have lived there. To elucidate, their ancestors' inhabitation and cultivation on the land have created the spiritual layer of the place. An example which elaborates on the place's spirituality is from an interview of Mae Rot, one of the villagers and leaders in the protest:

> This is our land and we have been here for a hundred years. We have a right to live peacefully. We can't eat the food we grow, we can't drink the water. All we can do is keep fighting for justice. We pray to our ancestors in the mountains for help. Recently the miners drilled but found nothing. Maybe our ancestors are listening. ("Thailand: Khon Ruk Ban Kerd Conservation Group Denounces Threats and Intimidations Since Allowing Dao Din Activists to Come Work in the Village", 2015)

Mae Rot's statements illuminate how the land has accumulated its spiritual meaning. Her ancestors used the land for a hundred years. Mae Rot believes that her ancestors' spirits still dwell in the mountains and they are her guardians. This ability to discern her ancestors' spirits in the place reflects the significant role of the land in bonding her with her ancestors. Thus, the land is not only the site of the locals' agricultural

activities and the sense of their survival but it is also imbued with a sense of sacredness that gives them spiritual nurturance.

It is worth noting that the locals' deepened perception of the place is similar to Lusa's in *Prodigal Summer*. Lusa, like Mae Rot, sees the ghosts of her ancestors in the place in which she lives. Her ability to see the apparition in the place her husband left behind points to her bond with the land. In this sense, Lusa's and Mae Rot's perception of the place as the dwelling place of spiritual entities suggests that they have formed a profound intimate relationship with the land.

Another environmental problem which stems from the authority's negligence of the locals' livelihood is the initiation of the coal-fired power plant project in Krabi Province due to the insufficient electricity supply and the abrupt blackouts in the southern parts of Thailand. Similarly to what happens in the gold-mining excavation in Loei, the government sees the land only as a natural resource. They want to replace the old way of generating electricity with an alternative energy source due to its lower cost. The place, for the authorities, becomes a resource that produces electricity. In an interview published in *The Nation*'s "Threat of mass rallies after Krabi coal plant approved" (2017), Thai Prime Minister Gen. Prayut Chan-ocha explains, "[T]he power plant is the best option because it can generate electricity at a reasonable price and also be safe" (Prach and Phromkaew, 2017). The PM's comment reflects his utilitarian approach to the environment as he focuses only on the use of science and technology as a part of the project to bring advancement to the community rather than on its detrimental effects on the locals.

However, the locals' view of the environment suggests that they do not want more advanced electrical system in exchange of the well-being of the land because,

for the locals, the land is part of their livelihood and survival. In *Prachatai English*'s "Environ activists on hunger strike to halt coal-fired power plant" (2015), the statement from Save Andaman from Coal network—a group of activists who protest against the coal-fired power plant—reflects the real impact of the power plant on both the environment and its people:

> [T]he Thai authorities ignored people['s] voices as they called for protection of the Andaman as the region is an important world tourist destination. Hundred thousands of livelihoods, businesses, agriculture, and fishing industry should not be sacrificed for the profits from a coal power plant, which would be derived from destroying the Andaman. ("Environ activists on hunger strike to halt coal-fired power plant", 2015)

The statement suggests that for the locals the land is their means of survival. It can be seen that the locals' livelihood, specifically agriculture and fishing industry, totally depends on the environment. The coal-fired power plant will contaminate the Andaman, disrupt the whole community's sustainable use of the ecosystem, and eventually destroy their economy. It can be seen that the locals do not need technological advancement as much as the security in their livelihood.

Furthermore, the locals' urgent need to campaign against the government resembles the environmental activism in *Animal Dreams*. In the novel, the Black Mining Company keeps polluting the river and the contamination affects the community's trees and agriculture. In other words, the environment in Grace is put under threat as well. In a similar vein, the initiation of the power plant in Krabi triggers the protest as the project will disrupt the people's sustainable livelihood.

It is worth noting that the authorities' decision to ignore the locals' voices is able to cause the destruction of not only the environment but also the people's cultural roots, which further leads to political insurgency. An example can be seen from the construction of the Thepa coal-fired power plant in Songkhla Province. The project will uproot both the natural world and its cultural heritage embedded in the place since the construction will be operated on the locals' land, specifically the community's households, cemeteries, and religious schools. In an article entitled "Coal plant in Thepa 'would inflame the insurgency'" (2016) from *The Nation*, Mustarsheedeen Waba, a representative from a protest group, says, "[T]he project would aggravate the insurgency in the Deep South because in order to build the new plant, about 240 families, plus two mosques, two Muslim cemeteries, a religious school, and a Buddhist temple would have to be relocated." It should be noted that most of the people who live in the South are Muslims. For the locals, the land is packed with their long-cultivated history along with Islamic culture as the Muslim cemeteries and mosques endow the place with spiritual and cultural values. The place, in this sense, is not only the locals' livelihood but also their spiritual refuge. The government's enforcement of the construction on the locals' land, thus, illustrates their disrespect toward the locals' culture, thereby sparking the political insurgency in the South. As Direk Hemnakhon, a professor at the Prince of Songkla University, states in *The Nation*'s "Locals in South 'lack details on coal plants'" (2016), "We are concerned that large scale industrialisation of the southern border provinces will escalate the southern insurgency because these projects do not respect local culture, which is the root of any southern insurgency." The professor emphasizes the

government's urgent need to pay their attention to the locals' culture that is connected with the land to prevent the protest.

In essence, my analysis of Kingsolver's novels reveals the root of the ecological crisis. As the thesis aims at examining one's perception of the land in relation to one's treatment of it, we can see that human arrogant perception is the cornerstone of the ecological crisis. In other words, according to Tuan's notion of "space" and "place", people tend to perceive the land as meaningless "space" rather than a "place" endowed with meaning. This mis-perception of the place eventually leads to their exploitation of the land. Moreover, Kingsolver points out the significance of environmental activism in reshaping the locals' perception of the place. The environmental campaign against the authority not only unites people of different backgrounds together but also paves the way to their "ecological identity work". That is, their participation in this activity galvanizes the locals to realize their inseparableness with the land and helps expand their sense of self to include the land and its culture. The campaign also creates a stronger sense of community and bond with the environment.

We have seen that Kingsolver not only traces the root of the ecological crisis but also makes visible the insidious effects of our mis-conception of the land upon both the environment and its people. At the same time, she touches upon numerous possibilities to transform ones' perception of "space" and "place" even though ones have to undergo traumatic experiences and adversities. Therefore, in Kingsolver's insightful view of the environmental problems, there is always a possibility for all of us to bring about changes in our perception of the land. Lastly, as the world's environment keeps deteriorating each day, Kingsolver's vision of the human place in

the world as “a permanent houseguest” may pave the way for our love and thus better treatment of the land.

REFERENCES

"Environ Activists on Hunger Strike to Halt Coal-Fired Power Plant." *Prachathai English*. Prachathai English Accessed March 17 2017.

"Gold Diggers." *Geographical*. Development Accessed March 16 2017.

"Thailand: Khon Ruk Ban Kerd Conservation Group Denounces Threats and Intimidations since Allowing Dao Din Activists to Come Work in the Village." Protect International Accessed March 17 2017.

Aay, Henry. "Environmental Themes in Ecofiction: In the Center of the Nation and Animal Dreams." *Journal of Cultural Geography*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1994, pp. 65-85.

Bender, Bert. "Darwin and Ecology in Novels by Jack London and Barbara Kingsolver." *Studies in American Naturalism*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2011, pp. 107-133.

Berry, Wendell. *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry.* Counterpoint, 2003.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture.* routledge, 2012.

Buell, Lawrence. *Writing for an Endangered World.* Harvard University Press, 2009.

Carroll, R. and S. Prickett. *The Bible: Authorized King James Version.* OUP Oxford, 2008.

Comer, Kristina. "Sidestepping Environmental Justice:" Natural" Landscapes and the Wilderness Plot." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 1997, pp. 73-101.

Conrad, Joseph. "Heart of Darkness." *Joseph Conrad: Three Novels*, Springer, 1995, pp. 1-91.

Cresswell, Tim. *Place: An Introduction.* John Wiley & Sons, 2014.

Dutcher, James D. "A Review of Resurgence and Replacement Causing Pest Outbreaks in Ipm." *General Concepts in Integrated Pest and Disease Management*, Springer, 2007, pp. 27-43.

Geaves, Ron. *Key Words in Religious Studies.* Continuum, 2006.

Jacobson, Kristin J. "The Neodomestic American Novel: The Politics of Home in Barbara Kingsolver's" the Poisonwood Bible"." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2005, pp. 105-127.

Jones, Suzanne Whitmore. "The Southern Family Farm as Endangered Species: Possibilities for Survival in Barbara Kingsolver's Prodigal Summer." *The Southern Literary Journal*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2006, pp. 83-97.

Kingsolver, B. *Animal Dreams.* Abacus, 1992.

---. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: Our Year of Seasonal Eating.* Faber & Faber, 2010.

---. *The Bean Trees.* Abacus, 2001.

---. *Flight Behaviour.* Faber & Faber, 2012.

---. *High Tide in Tucson.* Faber & Faber, 2011.

---. *Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983.* Cornell University Press, 2012.

---. *Homeland and Other Stories.* HarperCollins, 2009.

---. *The Lacuna.* Faber & Faber, 2009.

---. *Pigs in Heaven.* Faber & Faber, 2011.

---. *The Poisonwood Bible.* Faber & Faber, 2008.

---. *Prodigal Summer.* Faber & Faber, 2008.

---. *Small Wonder.* Faber & Faber, 2011.

Kingsolver, B. and A.G. Belt. *Last Stand: America's Virgin Lands.* National Geographic Society, 2002.

Kingsolver, B. and R. Cartes. *Another America/Otra America.* Da Capo Press, 1998.

Kingsolver, B. and K. Kenison. *The Best American Short Stories 2001*. Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There.* Oxford University Press, USA, 1989.

Lopez, Barry. "The American Geographies." *Orion Nature Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1989, pp. 60-61.

Murphy, Patrick D. "The Procession of Identity and Ecology in Contemporary Literature." *SubStance*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2012, pp. 77-99.

Naess, Arne. "Ecosophy T: Deep Versus Shallow Ecology." *Environmental ethics: Readings in theory and application*, 2001, pp. 150-157.

---. *The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecological Movement.* 1998. *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*, Louis P. Pojman.

Narduzzi, Dilia. "Living with Ghosts, Loving the Land: Barbara Kingsolver's Prodigal Summer." *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2008, pp. 59-81.

Nixon, Rob. "Environmentalism and Postcolonialism." *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, 2005, pp. 233-251.

Ognibene, Elaine R. "The Missionary Position: Barbara Kingsolver's the Poisonwood Bible." *College Literature*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2003, pp. 19-36.

Osborne, Carol. " Family Matters: Fiction's Contribution to Memory Wars." *Signs*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2003, pp. 1121-1149.

Porter, Frank C. "The Apocrypha." *The Biblical World*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1896, pp. 272-279.

Pradittatsanee, Darin. "จิตวิญญาณ และนิเวศวิถี: ความหลากหลายในตัวบทวรรณกรรม ของ เฮนรี เดวิด ธอ โร แกรี สไนเดอร์ และ บาร์บารา คิงโซลเวอร์." วารสาร อักษรศาสตร์ *(Journal of Letters)*, vol. 39, no. 2, 2010, pp. 58-108.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation.* routledge, 2007.

Rujivanarom, Pratch. "Coal Plant in Thepa 'Would Inflame the Insurgency." The Nation Accessed April 7 2017.

---. "Locals in South Lack Details on Coal Plants." *The Nation* Accessed March 22 2017.

Rujivanarom, Pratch and Nattapat Phromkaew. "Threat of Mass Rallies after Krabi Coal Plant Approved." *The Nation* Accessed March 20 2017.

Ryden, Kent C. *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place.* University of Iowa Press, 1993.

Said, Edward. "Orientalism: Western Representations of the Orient [1978]." *Harmondsworth: Pengiun*, 1985.

Snyder, Gary. *Turtle Island.* New Directions, 1974.

---. *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds.* Counterpoint Press, 2008.

---. *The Practice of the Wild.* Counterpoint Press, 2010.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Can the subaltern speak? Reflections on the history of an idea*, 1988, pp. 21-78.

Stevenson, Sheryl. "Trauma and Memory in Kingsolver's Animal Dreams." *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2000, pp. 327-350.

Thomashow, Mitchell. *Ecological Identity: Becoming a Reflective Environmentalist.* Mit Press, 1996.

Tuan, Yi-fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience.* University of Minnesota, 1977.

Van Tassel, Kristin. "Ecofeminism and a New Agrarianism: The Female Farmer in Barbara Kingsolver's" Prodigal Summer" and Charles Frazier's" Cold Mountain"." *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 2008, pp. 83-102.

Warren, Karen J. "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism." *Environmental Ethics*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1990, pp. 125-146.

Wenz, Peter S. "Leopold's Novel: The Land Ethic in Barbara Kingsolver's Prodigal Summer." *Ethics & the Environment*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2003, pp. 106-125.

White, Jeanna Fuston. "The One-Eyed Preacher, His Crooked Daughter, and Villagers Waving Their Stumps: Barbara Kingsolver's Use of Disability in the Poisonwood Bible." *South Central Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2009, pp. 131-144.

White Lynn, Jr. *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*

University of Georgia Press, 1996. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm.

APPENDIX

VITA

Wisarut Painark obtained a bachelor's degree in English from Silpakorn University in 2012. During the course of his undergraduate study, his deep interest in British and American literature gradually developed. Thus, he decided to pursue his graduate study in English at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, right after his graduation from Silpakorn University. His area of interest includes environmental literature and ecocriticism.