

**The Logic of Domination in Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams*, *Prodigal Summer*, and *Flight Behavior*: An Ecofeminist Reading through Val Plumwood's Theory**

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**منطق الهيمنة في روايات باربرا كينغسولفر: أحلام الحيوانات، الصيف الضال،**

**وسلوك الطيران: قراءة بيئية نسوية من خلال نظرية فال بلاموود**

**Abstract**

The present study explores Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams*, *Prodigal Summer*, and *Flight Behaviour* as ecofeminist texts viewed through the lens of Val Plumwood's environmental philosophy. By illustrating the dualistic reasoning behind patriarchal and anthropocentric world views, respectively, the three books provide a lens for more comprehensively understanding systemic connection between gender oppression with environmental exploitation. Drawing on close reading as its main methodology, the study applies Plumwood's ideas of dualism, the logic of domination and anthropocentrism to highlight that both women and nature are positioned within hierarchical systems of power as subjugated subjects alongside relational ethics. The example shows how Kingsolver's fiction works not only against explicit power structures but also both the implicit beliefs and procedural conventions of an institution as well as the epistemic grounds that make domination unavoidable. Unlike *Woman Hollering Creek*, *Animal Dreams* links the ecological decline

**Keywords:** Ecofeminism; Val Plumwood; logic of domination; Barbara Kingsolver; *Animal Dreams*; *Prodigal Summer*; *Flight Behavior*

**المستخلص**

تستكشف هذه الدراسة روايات باربرا كينغسولفر "أحلام الحيوانات" و"صيف الابن الضال" و"سلوك الطيران" من منظور بيئي نسوي مستوحى من فلسفة فال بلاموود البيئية. وتزعم الدراسة أن هذه الروايات الثلاث تُبرز العلاقة البنيوية بين هيمنة النوع الاجتماعي والاستغلال البيئي من خلال تصويرها للمنطق الثنائي الذي يقوم عليه كل من المجتمعات الأبوية والأنظمة الأنثروبولوجية. وبالاستناد إلى مفاهيم بلاموود عن الثنائية، ومنطق الهيمنة، والمركزية البشرية، والأخلاق العلائقية، تستخدم الدراسة القراءة المتأنية كمنهج رئيسي لتحليل موقع المرأة والطبيعة في الهياكل الهرمية للسلطة باعتبارهما طرفين خاضعين. وتُظهر الدراسة كيف أن روايات كينغسولفر لا تنتقد فقط أساليب السلطة الظاهرة، بل تنتقد أيضًا الافتراضات الثقافية والممارسات المؤسسية وأشكال التفكير الأداتي التي تجعل الهيمنة تبدو طبيعية. ويرتبط التدهور البيئي في رواية "أحلام الحيوانات" ليس فقط بالذاكرة والمكان والمسؤولية الجماعية، بل أيضًا باقتصاديات الحدود. يُقلب التنوع البيولوجي والمعرفة البيئية المتجسدة في رواية "صيف الابن الضال" نماذج الأطر القائمة على الإتيقان رأسًا على عقب؛ بينما تُسلط أزمة المناخ الضوء على استمرارية الهشاشة الاجتماعية والجندرية في رواية "سلوك الطيران". كما تُبين الدراسة أن روايات كينغسولفر لا تقتصر على كشف الهيمنة، بل تتصور إمكانيات بديلة للترباط والرعاية والوعي البيئي. تُسهم هذه المقالة في النقد الأدبي النسوي البيئي من خلال وضع فلسفة بلاموود البيئية في حوار مباشر مع أعمال كينغسولفر الروائية، مؤكدة بذلك

على ترابط النضال من أجل العدالة البيئية والجندرية.. الكلمات المفتاحية: النسوية البيئية؛ فال بلاموود؛ منطق الهيمنة؛ باربرا كينغسولفر؛ أحلام الحيوانات؛ صيف الابن الضال؛ سلوك الهروب

## Introduction

Over the past few decades, ecological feminism has become an important lens in literary and environmental studies as it clarifies how violence against women and violence against nature are systemically related. Ecofeminist theory posits that gender injustices and ecological destruction are interlinked crises, stemming from, and reinforced by the same hierarchical power systems that privilege domination, rational control and exclusion over reciprocity, care and interdependence (Gaard 1993; Merchant 1980). From the perspective of these structural manifestations, literary texts serve as crucial cultural sites for the constitution and subversion. This research should start with the books of Barbara Kingsolver. Her books always show how people and the environment are connected. The main characters are women whose lives are affected by natural disasters, unstable economies, and the limits of patriarchy. *Animal Dreams*, *Prodigal Summer*, and *Flight Behaviour* are especially important because they look at how women, the environment, ecological vulnerability, and systems of oppression are all connected. These books do not depict environmental exploitation and gender inequality as distinct issues; rather, they illustrate how both women's lives and the natural environment are influenced by analogous systems of valuation and devaluation (Kingsolver 1991, 2000, 2012). Val Plumwood is one of the environmental thinkers whose ideas are drawn on in this study; she presents a radical critique of Western silo ideology. The differences between human/nature, man/woman, reason/emotion and mind/body are not neutral; they are hierarchical oppositions that perpetuate dominance (Plumwood, 1993). Her critique of dualism, anthropocentrism and the logic of domination is a deep literary analysis, showing how difference becomes understood as inferiority, which then legitimises control, exclusion and exploitation. Plumwood's critique of dualistic thinking remains relevant in environmental discussions, according to Mathews (2017), because it points to the sources of domination but also helpfully suggests how living together might be different and more relational.

Kingsolver's writing exemplifies the theoretical framework because she often disambiguates social and ecological (or post-institutional) existence. Many of her pieces deal with ecological issues, women's rights, biodiversity and climate change and our moral interdependence. While Jones (2006) considers the interdependence theme across species in *Prodigal Summer*, Magee (2008, 2012) recognizes ecofeminism and issues of community in both *Animal Dreams* and *Prodigal Summer*. In a similar vein, Mahato (2015), Rejani (2018) and Ramadan (2018) prove that ecological instability, women experiences, and societal consequences of environmental disasters are integral components in the literature of Kingsolver. Recently, scholars have proposed the ecofeminist significance of Kingsolver's oeuvre through discussing relationality, stewardship, climate consciousness and the woman-nature relationship (Paul & Sarveswaran, 2023; Ali & Sasani, 2024; Kapoor & Saraswat, 2024).

We are gathering more and more research, but there are still some big holes in it. A lot of people read Kingsolver's books with an ecofeminist point of view, but the best criticism of her work doesn't really have anything to do with what Plumwood said in the first place. It doesn't go into more detail about ecocritical frames or ecofeminist ideas. Researchers have found out what dualism, anthropocentrism, and the logic of domination are (Ling 2014; Puleo 2017; Tialila 2022). But there hasn't been a thorough real-life study of these ideas in the context of *Animal Dreams*, *Prodigal Summer*, and *Flight Behaviour*. Kingsolver's conclusion doesn't have a strong enough theoretical basis when it comes to the texts, especially when it comes to how female supremacy and environmental manipulation are connected at a structural level.

In this respect, the current research aims to fill the gap by providing an ecofeminist critique of *Animal Dreams*, *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behaviour* through Val Plumwood's lens. It shows how these patriarchal and anthropocentric frameworks represent women and nature as oppressed—'other' within an internal logic of domination embedded into hierarchical power structures. Kingsolver writes of systems of mastery, exclusion and instrumental reason, but she also imagines other kinds of relationships — founded on caring, ecological interdependence, reciprocity and living together in a moral way. This analysis contributes to ecofeminist literary criticism by revealing the ways in which resistance against gender oppression is integral to resistance against environmental destruction, all within an integrated conceptual and cultural matrix.

## Theoretical Framework: Ecofeminism and Val Plumwood's Theory of Domination

This research utilises ecofeminism as its principal theoretical framework, clarifying the structural relationship between the oppression of women and the exploitation of the natural environment. Ecofeminist theory posits that these instances of injustice are not isolated but rather stem from identical hierarchical power structures that promote rational domination, control, mastery, and exclusion, thereby diminishing the significance of embodied experience, care, and interdependence (Gaard, 1993; Warren, 2000). There is more to ecofeminism than just a symbolic way to connect women and nature. It looks at the cognitive and structural ideas that make both seem less important. This framework fits well with Barbara Kingsolver's work because she always shows how women's issues and environmental issues are linked. The study significantly utilizes Val Plumwood's environmental philosophy, which provides an extensive critique of the dualistic frameworks present in patriarchal and anthropocentric ideologies. Plumwood contends that Western philosophy has historically organized itself hierarchically around dualisms such as human/nature, male/female, and reason/emotion, consistently privileging the first term over the second (Plumwood, 1993). They do not merely record disparities; they convert disparities into inferiority, thereby legitimizing tyranny. This distinction is crucial to the current study as it facilitates an interpretation of Kingsolver's works as critiques of the ideological framework that devalues both women and nature within this shared hierarchical structure. So, the idea of domination becomes the main way we look at things in our analysis. Karen Warren calls it a conceptual framework that explains, makes sense of, and keeps going the dynamics of domination and submission (Warren, 2000). Plumwood elaborates on this concept by illustrating how domination operates through a mechanism that recognizes difference, interprets it as inferiority, and subsequently utilizes it to rationalize control. This idea is especially useful for looking at Kingsolver's books because it shows how gender hierarchy and environmental exploitation are linked by a shared moral view. In all of the chosen works, women and nature are shown over and over again as being in a subordinate position in a system that normalizes power, exclusion, and being treated as a tool.

Plumwood's criticism of anthropocentrism makes this theory stronger by questioning the idea that nature is only there for people to use. Anthropocentric epistemologies see people as unique, logical, and better than a small group of non-human things that are seen as just matter or resources (Plumwood, 1993). Kingsolver's books always argue against this point of view by focusing on how fragile ecosystems are, how non-human beings are affected, and what happens when the environment gets worse. Plumwood's idea of relational ethics is a strong way to fight against oppression. Relational ethics reject the idea of self-sufficiency and include interconnection, mutuality, and ecological embeddedness. This theme is important because Kingsolver's work shows how people can connect through love, kindness, humility, and caring about the environment.

Utilizing this and other concepts introduced by Plumwood, such as dualism, the logic of domination and hierarchy, anthropocentrism, and relational ethics, the main goal of the present research is to analyse *Animal Dreams*, *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behaviour* on ecofeminist terms. This framework allows us to see how these chosen works are not only narratives engaged with entrenched gender and environmental issues, but also existing as critiques of hierarchical ideologies, and innovative propositions for new forms of ethics that encourage living together.

### **The Gendered Logic of Domination**

Barbara Kingsolver knows from *Animal Dreams*, *Prodigal Summer*, and *Flight Behaviour* that gender domination is not merely a personal issue; it's an issue conceived out of family relationships, marriage contracts, inheritances and societal standards. Val Plumwood's ecofeminist critique argues that patriarchal power is based on a structure of hierarchical differences which positions women in subjugated, less powerful realms where they can be dominated over. We're seeing these works through this lens. In Kingsolver's story, she tells us what it is about women that we expect them to be submissive at home and not just as an unremarkable occurrence.

In *Flight Behaviour*, marriage, religion and the oversight of family provide institutional control through male leadership. Outside forces and moral obligations bear more impact on Dellarobia's marriage than agency shared between partners.

"Church attendance was a condition of her marriage. Cub felt if they laid out on Sundays, his mother would either drop dead or disown him, and he didn't care to find out which. Dellarobia would have been willing to give it a test run" (Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior*, p. 59). This part of the book shows that marriage creates a system of following rules instead of giving and taking. The phrase "a condition of her marriage" is very telling because it shows that the rules for home life are made by things outside of the home. Dellarobia's sarcastic response shows how silly these rules are and how she is fighting against them. Plumwood thinks that the passage shows the logic of domination by showing how obedience is created in socially acceptable groups like marriage,

religion, and parental control. Animal Dreams shows a more subtle but just as strong kind of patriarchal control, where authority is shown not through direct orders but through silence and emotional distance. "Did you tell him about me? About dropping out?" "Rita, no. I wouldn't do that." Silence. She didn't believe me. To Rita we were both authority figures—but at least she'd called. "My father and I aren't real close," I said. "I go up to see him every week, but we don't exactly talk." A pregnant teen could surely buy that. (Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams*, p. 150). This quote shows how the book's authority affects people's feelings. Codi's admission that she and her father "don't exactly talk" suggests that their relationship is defined by authority lacking connection or affection. Kingsolver shows that women can be made to feel alone, confused, and less like they belong, which makes them easier to control. This book shows, from an ecofeminist point of view, that control can come from being left out or kept at a distance instead of from pain or physical violence. Patriarchal authority is embedded in socially normative structures, making its influence more subtle yet as powerful. "I'll inherit fifteen hundred acres one day," he said, sounding unconvinced, and she wondered what divides of kinship were concealed in that flat statement, what dreads and expectations, what it was costing him to hold his place in his family. As the daughter of a farmer who'd lost his land, she felt only measured sympathy." (Kingsolver, *Prodigal Summer*, p. 179). This passage shows that inheritance is more than just passing down things; it's also a way for patriarchy to stay in power. The claim that the statement is expressed as "sounding unconvinced" muddles any direct link to privilege and gives inheritance ideas of pressure, obligation, and family discipline. We can understand why men own things better when we look at them through the woman's "calibrated sympathy." The paragraph talks about a system of control where land, continuity, and legitimacy are all less important than the people who are already in the system. These books show that religious rules, emotional hierarchies, family pressure, and systems of inherited property all help to keep men in charge. The common thread in these stories is more than just how women are treated badly in a patriarchal society. Patriarchy is a way of thinking and interacting with others that is based on inequality, exclusion, and making women feel like they are less than men. Kingsolver's writing is very similar to Plumwood's criticism of hierarchical dualism because it shows how common institutions and emotional reactions keep people down and make it possible for big systems of control to exist, like the exploitation of nature.

## 2. Embodiment, Domestic Burden, and Emotional Labor

Kingsolver's criticism of control gets deeper when she sees the female body not just as a passive thing to describe, but as a place of emotion, work, vulnerability, and desire; a real source of knowledge. In *Animal Dreams*, *Prodigal Summer*, and *Flight Behaviour*, how society sees women and the work they have to do is closely tied to how they act. Plumwood's ecofeminist view says that these images are even more important because they make women feel less in control of their bodies by showing them as feminine, dependent on others, and inferior. Kingsolver fights this kind of thinking by showing that the female body is a place of consciousness and defiance. In *Prodigal Summer*, the female body is shown as a radical being with emotional depth and ecological continuity. This is different from the masculine idea of dominion and abstraction. "Lusa bit her lip against the strange ache in her belly. This night was out of control completely, she thought, but what could you do? We're only what we are: a woman cycling with the moon, and a tribe of men trying to have sex with the sky." (Kingsolver, *Prodigal Summer*, p. 243). This book shows two contrasting methods of living. Lusa's physical experience is direct, rhythmic, and closely connected to the soil. The image of "a tribe of men trying to fuck the sky" makes me think of wanting too much, wanting too much, and wanting to do the impossible. Kingsolver compares ecological embodiment to a man's hunger for power. Plumwood's research uncovers a dualistic paradigm in which transcendence and control prevail over materiality and connection. And it rethinks its concepts at the same time by showing that Lusa's physical slant is more real than male ambition.

In *Flight Behavior*, a unique form of physical regulation transpires when individuals mock and correct the female body during commonplace domestic conversations: "Dellarobia fished her glasses out of her purse and put them on, possibly to spite her mother-in-law. 'Boys don't make passes at girls wearing glasses,' Hester liked to sing, a joke so tired she could scream." (Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior*, p. 65).

The phrase above shows how a woman's worth is judged by how much men want her. Hester's comment may seem unimportant, yet it shows a deep-seated societal reason why women are seen as possessions. Dellarobia's decision to wear the spectacles is a small act of disobedience, and the statement "a joke so tired she could scream" shows how much emotional work it takes to put up with being made to feel unimportant. Kingsolver shows that patriarchy is kept alive not only by official institutions but also by everyday household routines that control how women look and feel about themselves.

The representation of embodiment in *Animal Dreams* emanates from female awareness, particularly via desire and emotional vulnerability. "He lifted the hand and ran his palm up the length of my arm, from my wrist to my shoulder, lightly, just stroking the hairs and not the skin. My nipples stood up and my scalp tingled and my whole body wanted that hand on it, everywhere at once. But he took it back and put it on the steering wheel, and I pitied myself for envying a steering wheel." (Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams*, p. 126).

This part is important because it reaffirms that women want things and that it's a valid feeling. Codi's answer comes fully from her own knowledge, making the body a place of emotion and truth instead of something she sees from the outside. The last line changes desire into discontent and emotional inadequacy at the same time. This shows that to embody is to reveal oneself as well as to see something. Kingsolver doesn't agree with the idea that the female body is inert; instead, she shows it as a place where people are conscious of themselves and their complicated experiences. In *Animal Dreams*, Kingsolver connects embodiment with caregiving and household duties. This shows how women's physical experiences are shaped by obligation, resilience, and unrecognized work:

"I was hunched over and stumbling and I started to run along the dry riverbed, absurdly burdened with this long-legged child as big as myself. I didn't talk or look at her, I just carried her along." (Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams*, p. 311). In this case, caregiving is not romanticized and is shown to be hard work. The expressions "hunched over," "stumbling," and "absurdly burdened" show how hard it is for a woman to carry. The last remark is just as important since it shows how emotional labor is implicit: The speaker does not explain, object, or seek recognition; she simply continues. From a Plumwoodian standpoint, the extract demonstrates how domination links women to servitude, bodily utility, and self-sacrifice, while also trivializing and obscuring such labor. These texts show how Kingsolver's work rejects the idea that women's bodies are passive objects in patriarchal stories. The body becomes a place of control (where power tries to get to its core), but it is also a place of desire, knowledge, endurance, and resistance. Kingsolver shows that patriarchal authority depends on women's lived experiences through Lusa's ecological embodiment, Dellarobia's refusal to be mocked, Codi's bodily desire, and the burdensome physicality of caregiving. Plumwood's ecofeminist point of view shows that the lack of value placed on embodiment is connected to a larger reason that also sees nature, compassion, dependency, and relational existence as unimportant.

### 3. Women's Knowledge, Perception, and Resistance Beyond Hierarchical Epistemology

Kingsolver's important contribution is that she shows how women's knowledge may be a way to fight against oppression that is based on males and humans. Understanding *Animal Dreams*, *Prodigal Summer*, and *Flight Behavior* goes beyond what you learn in school, what you hear from authority figures, and what you think is logical. She prefers types of knowledge that come from experience, interpretation, mindfulness, embodiment, and relationships. Plumwood's ecofeminist perspective posits that these moments are especially significant as they contest the epistemic hierarchy that privileges detached mastery, thereby subordinating symbolic, experiential, and ecological kinds of knowing. In *Flight Behavior*, Dellarobia has cultivated an awareness of the natural world on her own terms, beyond interpretations that only perceive the environment literally or instrumentally.

"'It flies away from the body.' Suddenly Dellarobia understood. 'The soul. 'The soul,' Josefina repeated. 'They believe a monarch is the soul of a baby that's died?'" (Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior*, p. 359). This quote shows a big change from seeing to understanding. Dellarobia can't just picture the butterflies as they are in the wild. She begins to think about them in a more abstract way, both emotionally and symbolically. She doesn't say that "the soul" is a simple way to explain it technically, because that would be both silly and pointless. From an ecofeminist perspective, this moment embodies rigid epistemologies that prioritise distance and abstraction. Kingsolver demonstrates that female vision constitutes an alternative epistemology grounded in openness and interconnectedness rather than authority. She stresses how important it is to respect things that aren't people. Dellarobia starts to think critically about how power works in society and the environment, which makes her intellect a form of resistance.

"Dellarobia knew they probably had not seen the last of his arguments about the logging. She watched the three of them: accusatory father, contrite son, mother standing ten feet away ignoring the grandkids, absorbed in untwisting the strap of her yellow purse." (Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior*, p. 416).

The phrase "Dellarobia knew" means that she was sure of what she was seeing, not just passively watching. While watching the family interact, she sees a pattern of blame, submission, and emotional breakdown. The disagreement over logging connects home hierarchy to environmental damage, which lets her point of view

work on both social and ecological levels. Kingsolver adeptly frames attention as a kind of resistance by demonstrating how women's interpretive agency can reveal the circumstances that permit injustice to persist unchallenged or unnoticed.

In *Animal Dreams*, women's wisdom shows itself as a journey from confusion to self-actualization:

"Finally I realized he could sell me a ticket for anywhere at all on the eastbound line, it didn't matter. I knew where I was getting off." (Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams*, p. 321). This quote marks an important moment of self-discovery. The phrase "Finally I realized" shows that Codi went from being confused to understanding. The phrase "it didn't matter" shows that outside choices had less of an effect on Codi's path. What matters is her own confidence. From a Plumwoodian point of view, it is a subtle but powerful rejection of systems that make women feel unsure and dependent. Kingsolver doesn't show resistance through dramatic conflict; instead, she does it by taking back control over how she sees her own life. In *Prodigal Summer*, Kingsolver says that women's knowledge is an ecological way of knowing that comes from experience, patience, and self-control:

"Deanna knew better from experience, but she let the mother bird answer. She swooped back onto her nest just seconds after Deanna stepped away from it." (Kingsolver, *Prodigal Summer*, p. 327). This line shows that Deanna is aware of the environment because she has lived it, not because she has read about it. The phrase "knew better from experience" makes it clear that she learned what she knows by spending a lot of time in nature, not by being told what to do by someone else. Primarily, "she let the mother bird answer" redefines wisdom as something that comes from paying attention instead of doing anything. Deanna doesn't try to manipulate nature; she lets it react on its own. In the context of ecofeminism, this challenges the paradigm of domination by advocating for a kind of knowledge that is interpretive, ethical, and non-hegemonic.

In Kingsolver's work, women's knowledge is a constant challenge to hierarchical epistemology because of the way these passages build on each other. Dellarobia's symbolic and critical understanding, Codi's introspective self-awareness, and Deanna's experiential ecological consciousness all go against systems that value control, abstraction, and exclusion. In Plumwood's view, these examples could be seen as acts of defiance because they go against mastery-based ways of knowing and open up new ways of understanding that are more relational. Kingsolver's writing suggests that resistance comes from more than just action; it also comes from perception—the ability to see the world in a different way and think of other ways to control it.

#### 4. From Female Subordination to Nature Exploitation

As a fiction writer, one of Kingsolver's most impressive achievements is that she shows how the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature are two sides of the same coin. The novels demonstrate that both originate from a shared framework of ideas focused on hierarchy, exclusion, and control. This is where Val Plumwood's idea of the logic of domination comes in handy. In *Animal Dreams*, *Prodigal Summer*, and *Flight Behaviour*, the oppression of women is part of a bigger system that judges people based on how superior, useful, or entitled they are. This order lets women be subordinate, which lets people abuse and destroy land, forests, animals, and ecosystems as if they were just resources.

*Flight Behavior* makes this relationship clear by showing how the way women live their life is the same as how nature is treated:

"“Oh, Cub. They'll make it look like a war zone, like the Buchman place. Have you looked at that mountain since they finished logging it out? It's a trash pile. Nothing but mud and splinters.”" (Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior*, p. 40). This paragraph uses violent language to talk about the damage done to the environment. The comparison to "a war zone" takes away any economic meaning from logging and instead shows it as destruction. The comparison to "a trash pile" makes the effects of extraction seem like just ruin and trash. It's not only the image of injury that matters here; it's the reason behind it. The mountain is exploited because it was seen as a resource for people to use. This situation shows that the ideas behind hierarchical social connections also make it okay to be violent against nature, according to ecofeminism. Holder says that Kingsolver connects the deterioration of the environment to the larger system of oppression that also keeps women down. *Animal Dreams* strengthens this continuity by showing environmental deterioration not as an abstract problem but as a direct threat to community, memory, and livelihood. "“The EPA finally sent a report saying that kind of pollution is very dangerous, and they can't put it near people and orchards, so Black Mountain is building a dam to run the river out Tortoise Canyon.”" (Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams*, p. 176). This quote says that pollution is not an externality, but a type of violence against both people and the environment. The phrase "next to people and orchards" is very important because it shows how people and the environment are connected. The orchards are not just pretty to look at; they also stand for continuity, sustenance, and living together. Black Mountain's

answer is just as essential since it tries to change the basic nature of the problem instead of dealing with the main cause of the harm. In Plumwood's perspective of the universe, this logic of domination shows itself in the way people see nature as a passive resource that can be used for profit and ease. Kingsolver shows that ecological exploitation is both technological and ideological in this way. In another part of *Animal Dreams*, the effects of this control become further clearer:

“If Grace gets poisoned, if all these trees die and this land goes to hell, you'll just go somewhere else, right? Like the great pioneers, Lewis and Clark. Well, guess what, kiddos, the wilderness is used up.” (Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams*, p. 255).

This remark shows how extractivism affects people's morals. People know that ecological damage is not just about losing land; it also threatens habitat, continuity, and the future of the community. The harsh irony against people who think they can just "move" shows how callous an ideology is that thinks locations are disposable. This is the point that "Lewis and Clark" makes by refusing to tie environmental deterioration to historical stories of expansionism and entitlement. Bad management isn't the sole reason for environmental degradation; it's also because people think of the non-human world as less important and something we can toss away. The argument in *Prodigal Summer* is about how the environment is getting worse, but even more so, it's about how certain people feel superior and use that to justify and continue the damage: “I don't want to feel that way,” she said finally. “There's people I love. But there's so many other kinds of life I love, too. And people act so hateful to every kind but their own.” He didn't reply. Was he taking her judgment personally? She'd been thinking of people who refused to be inconvenienced for the sake of an endangered fish or plant or owl, not of coyote killers perse.” (Kingsolver, *Prodigal Summer*, p. 175). This phrase goes against the concept that only human life is important right away. The speaker is questioning a hierarchical framework that makes one species better than all others by include non-human beings in moral discussions. The argument regarding endangered fish, plants, and owls is very helpful since it shows how easy it is for people to make things worse for the environment. Plumwood's work makes a strong case against anthropocentrism. Kingsolver does not demonize the smallest bacteria or the larger, more appealing creatures. Instead, she shows them compassion and uses her own interdependence and accountability as a moral framework, if not a direct substitute for control. This critique functions on a broader scale in *Flight Behavior*, as the ecological catastrophe is shown as a systemic failure rather than merely individual issues: “A continental ecosystem breaking down. Most likely, this is due to climate change. Really I can tell you I'm sure of that. Climate change has disrupted this system.” (Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior*, p. 228). This comment changes the view of environmental disaster from localized damage to continental collapse. The statement "a continental ecosystem breaking down" makes it hard to discount the problem as just a lack of responsibility, anomaly, or annoyance. Climate change is a destabilizing force that affects large living systems. It is an example of a basic worldview that is based on entitlement, control, and civilization's lack of respect for interdependence. From a Plumwoodian point of view, the scenario shows that mastery is an illusion. Institutions that put people at the center of everything make nature weak and cause it to crumble. The exploitation of nature is most clearly seen in the form of physical power. These texts together demonstrate that Kingsolver's writing shows a clear path from the subjugation of women to the exploitation of nature. This line is not just a figure of speech; it is also a philosophical, intellectual, and material one. Patriarchal dominance simplifies the hierarchy of existence by bestowing greater authority upon specific entities, thereby subjugating others to silence, utility, and/or expendability. In this idea, women and nature are connected not because they are comparable, but because they are both at the bottom of the hierarchical duality. Kingsolver's writings show that the oppression of women and the degradation of the environment are two sides of the same coin of power.

##### **5. Nature, Interdependence, and the Possibility of Ethical Renewal**

Kingsolver's writing not only shows how people are oppressed, but it also thinks about how relationships work in ways that go against dualistic thinking and make the world a better place. Nature is not just a passive background or decoration in *Animal Dreams*, *Prodigal Summer*, and *Flight Behavior*. Instead, it comes out as a living thing, an active force, and a part of how humans have evolved. This is important for the current study since Val Plumwood's ecofeminist philosophy criticizes dualism and anthropocentrism while also offering a different way of thinking about things that is based on interdependence, mutuality, and ecological embeddedness: relational ethics. Kingsolver's writings fit with that alternative since they say that people can only be rejuvenated when they give up the idea that they are in control and see their place in the bigger picture of existence. Memory, embodiment, desire, and spiritual experience are all linked to nature in *Prodigal Summer*.

"Longing for comfort and rest, she forced her thoughts through the rooms of Nannie's house, out into the familiar trees and even up into the long grass of Nannie's wilding field, where she'd first learned about the connection between sex and God's Creation." (Kingsolver, *Prodigal Summer*, p. 430). This quote is important because it breaks down the rigid line between living space and ecological space. The way the residence leads to the trees and the wild field suggests that things are still going on rather than being cut off. Nature is an important part of our lives since it is how we remember things, want things, and find meaning. The phrase "the connection between sex and God's Creation" is very powerful because it brings together embodiment, spirituality, and caring for the environment into one relational framework. From the Plumwoodian perspective, the tableau indisputably subverts the human/nature divide that elevates culture or interiority above ecological existence. Kingsolver imagines a world where human experience is deeply linked to the more-than-human. *Flight Behavior* offers a similar viewpoint, portraying nature as having an atmosphere, a force, and its own interpretive character. "The fir forest when she reached it had its own air as always, dark and still. Within its snow-flocked boughs she began to pick out snow-laced colonnades of butterflies, first a few, then more, as her eyes adjusted to their wintry aspect." (Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior*, p. 269). This passage makes nature clearer, but it also gives it an agency that people can't use. The phrase "the forest had its own air" suggests that the forest has its own identity and continuity that is apart from how people see it. Yes, the butterflies gently coming into focus as Dellarobia's vision does assist to support the idea that nature shows itself on its own terms against a peaceful background. Kingsolver shows that the natural environment is important and real in its own right, not just as a resource or a background for people. Nature's weirdness doesn't give us a reason to dominate it; instead, it gives us a reason to be amazed, humble, and connected. Kingsolver connects being aware of the environment with being okay with our own constraints, which adds to this relational view. In *Flight Behavior*, knowing is not associated with assurance or expertise, but rather with caution and humility: "Climate change, she knew to be wary of that. He said no one completely understood how they made these migrations. Hundreds of factors came into play." (Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior*, p. 147). This comment shows a huge change from being in charge to being humble. Climate change is no longer an abstract, far-off issue that people watch on TV; it's a genuine concern that needs to be thought about carefully and morally. This idea of "no one fully understood" does away with the idea that humans know everything or that we have control over everything. I like the phrase "hundreds of factors" because it shows how complicated ecosystems are and why it's hard to understand simple explanations. From an ecofeminist point of view, this event is important because it breaks the pattern of mastery that Plumwood criticizes. When individuals cease perceiving themselves as entirely autonomous entities and recognize that nature transcends the mechanisms we establish to control it, they attain environmental awareness. This is how Kingsolver combines being responsible with caring about the environment in *Animal Dreams*: "'You kids think this pollution shit is not your problem, right? Somebody will clean up the mess. It's not your fault. Well, your attitude stinks. You're as guilty as anybody. Do you, or do you not, think the world was put here for you to use?'" (Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams*, p. 254). In general, these novels say that people can only get better when they change how they see themselves in connection to nature. Kingsolver does not anticipate a simplistic return to purity; rather, she promotes an ethical transformation from entitlement, superiority, and exploitation to compassion, reciprocity, and coexistence. Look at Plumwood's model; these examples are literary examples of relational ethics. They show how cruel it is to be in charge and also provide better and more sustainable ways to live based on interdependence and ecological modesty. This part makes it obvious that harming the environment is a moral matter. This attitude of "someone else will fix it" is shown to make the problem worse while also making the person less responsible for the environment. The statement "You're as guilty as anyone" broadens the concept of culpability to include not just direct exploitation but also indifference, convenience, and denial. The last question makes it clear that control is based on the idea that the world exists for human use. Kingsolver questions this assumption from an ethical standpoint—whether humanity will continue to see itself as conquerors of the world or may someday recognize itself as fundamental components of a collective life system.

## Conclusion

This research looks at Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams*, *Prodigal Summer*, and *Flight Behavior* from an eco-feminist point of view, with Val Plumwood's ideas about the environment as a guide. Everyone had a hard time showing how gender inequality and environmental degradation were connected. They show how hierarchical power structures force people and nature to think in two ways. These works show that domination is more than just a social problem or an environmental problem. The ideas behind dominance, exclusion, and

utilitarianism all start with the idea that everything is separate. The study shows that Kingsolver's criticism works on several levels that are all connected. The novels you chose show how marriage and family, as well as emotional hierarchies and hereditary systems of authority, dominate women's lives in patriarchal societies. Second, they show that the female body is built for hard work at home and outside, but it is also a place where society watches and stores physical awareness, desire, and rebellion. Third, the women in Kingsolver's books show ways of seeing and comprehending that go against the basic ideas behind mastery-oriented thinking. Through characters like Dellarobia, Codi, and Deanna, the novels raise interpretive, experiential, and relational ways of understanding, pushing back against both patriarchal authority and anthropocentric simplification. The inquiry finally showed that the oppression of women and natural processes is not only a single structural element, but a hierarchical embodiment of domination logic. A vision of the world that makes hierarchy and entitlement seem natural in gender interactions leads to pollution, deforestation, climate instability, and the collapse of ecosystems.

Kingsolver's book does not prevent people from being critical. The books speak on not falling a prey to manipulation; be it be modest, genuine, helpful and socially concerned. In these works, nature is more than a background or resource; it's also an agency, and embedded in human life. There is no false sense of hierarchically controlled bodies according to Plumwood's relational ethical perspective. This approach aligns with the stories in Kingsolver's latest work. From this perspective people and things that are not people rely on one another. Regeneration, in this case, is not just about returning to your innocence -- its also about transforming your morality upon responsibility, coexistence and renunciation of power.

This study delineates ecofeminist literary criticism through the lens of Plumwood's ideas regarding dualism, the logic of domination, anthropocentrism and relational ethics in light of *Animal Dreams*, *Prodigal Summer*, and *Flight Behaviour*. This means that Kingsolver's writing can not only be an articulation of a compelling case against violence against women and against the environment, but it is also dedicated towards transforming our notions of relationships in hierarchical systems that are subjective, communal and ecological. The titles that we read often feed into larger conversations around gender, the environment, justice and cultural structures where oppression is enabled.

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