

## I. Introduction

This research entitled "Feminist Resiliency : Reading of Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees*" probes into the problem of the crisis of female identity and subversion of patriarchal norms and values. The research primarily strives to focus on the fact that her novel portrays feminist views through the character's resiliency. The characters in the novel are admirable and engaging, and almost all are women. The women in *The Bean Trees* are strong, cooperative and resilient living in a traditional society in late twentieth-century America. Their endurance, strong relationships, and commitment to their non-traditional families are paramount to their survival within the confines of society.

The females in the novel are ordinary, decent women. Their concerns, similar to those of most single women, include how to survive on very little income how to keep their children clothed and fed, and how to keep a job and care for their children at the same time. Female in *The Bean Trees* are heroes. They persevere in spite of the trials and tribulations they face, and discover resources in totally unexpected places.

In the novel females survive with each other's help. The interdependent relationships that develop among them provide support and encouragement, enabling them to accomplish tasks that they could not accomplish alone. The relationships between the women, similar to the relationship between the rhizobia and the wisteria vines, are symbiotic because there is a steady give and take. As a result, like the wisteria vines, the women flourish.

It is hypothesized that Kingsolver's women are strong, as the bean plants are capable of revitalizing self through metaphoric bugs; likewise, women in America are resilient enough to thrive in male-dominated American society through strong relationships and commitment to non-traditional families.

Barbara Kingsolver is a contemporary American author of best selling novels, non-fiction, and poetry. She is also a freelance journalist and political activist. She writes about current social issues such as the environment, human rights and injustice. The protagonists in her writing are portrayed as resilient, sensitive females successfully surviving typical day-to-day struggles. Although Kingsolver writes about serious subjects and her characters face traumatic dilemmas, she is also able to interject humour, which lightens the tone and communicates the love, hope, and strength evident in the lives of people from all cultures and walks of life. Her personal experiences and passions, as well as the environment of the south western United States, influence her writing.

Kingsolver was born on April 8, 1955, in Annapolis, Maryland, to Wendell Kingsolver, a physician, and Virginia Henry. Her family soon moved to be close to relatives living in eastern Kentucky. Kingsolver's father worked as the only doctor in rural Nicholas County, a county situated between the poverty of coal fields and the affluence of horse farms. Nicholas County was an economically depressed area, and most people living there were not well off; they earned only enough money to ensure their survival through tobacco farming. From an early age, she enjoyed telling stories. And because her parents were intolerant of television, Kingsolver spent her time reading and writing stories and essays.

In 1962, Kingsolver's father chose to practice medicine where he felt him could make a significant difference in the lives of others. He took his family first to St. Lucia, an island nation in the Caribbean, where they lived in a convent hospital, and then to central Africa. While living in Africa, Kingsolver experienced what it was like to be minority and an outsider. Her experiences opened her eyes to the world and provoked her curiosity about people from other cultures. By the time she was eight

years old, she resolutely kept a daily journal and entered every essay contest for which she was eligible.

Having returned to Nicholas County to attend public school, Kingsolver graduated from Nicholas County High School in 1973. She then attended DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, on a scholarship to study instrumental music, a lifelong interest of hers. While in college, she was exposed to the writings of feminist authors Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem and studied philosophers and socialists Karl Marx and Gloria Steinem and studied German philosophers and socialists Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. She took one creative writing class and participated in anti-Vietnam War protests. She graduated in 1997 with Bachelor of Arts degree and then moved to Tucson, Arizona, where she began graduate studies in biology and ecology.

After receiving a Master of Science degree in 1981 from the University of Arizona, Kingsolver accepted a job at the university and began writing science articles. She did not want to pursue a career in academia but, rather wanted to write. She began working as a freelance scientific writer and journalist. She began a nonfiction book in 1983 about the copper mine strike against the Phelps Dodge Corporation in Arizona. She spent hours interviewing union wives about their experiences during and after the strike.

In 1985, Kingsolver married University professor Joseph Hoffmann. She soon found herself pregnant and unable to sleep at night. Her doctor suggested that she scrub bathroom tiles with a toothbrush to battle her insomnia, but instead she sat in a closet and began writing her first novel, *The Bean Trees*. If her daughter, Camille had not been born three weeks late, Kingsolver might never have finished *The Bean Trees* published in 1988.

Supporting herself with the advance money from *The Bean Trees*, Kingsolver completed writing her non-fiction account of the Arizona mining strike. Published in 1989 by Cornell University Press, the work is titled  *Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983*. In 1989, she also published a collection of short stories, *Homeland and Other Stories*. She then went on to write the novels *Animal Dreams* (1990) and *Pigs in Heaven* (1993), a sequel to *The Bean Trees*; a best-selling collection of poetry, *Another America: Otra America* (1992); a collection of essays, *High Tide in Tucson : Essays From Now and Never* (1995); and another novel, *The Poisonwood Bible* (1998) and *Prodigal summer* (2000).

Kingsolver's writing has received much acclaim. Her awards and honors include American Library Association awards for *The Bean Trees* in 1998 and *Homeland* in 1990; a citation of accomplishment from United Nations Council of Women in 1989; a PEN fiction prize and Edward Abbey Ecofiction award, both in 1991, for *Animal Dreams*; a Los Angeles Times Book Award for Fiction in 1993 for *Pigs in Heaven*; and a feature-writing award from the Arizona Press Club (1996). *The Bean Trees* has been published in more than 65 countries throughout the world and was released in 1998 in a mass-market edition. In 1995, Kingsolver was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters degree from DePauw University.

Kingsolver was divorced from her husband in 1993. In 1995, she married Steven Hoppe, an ornithologist, animal behaviorist, and guitarist, with whom she has a second daughter, Lily, born in 1996. Kingsolver her husband, and the two girls continue to live in Tucson. When she isn't writing, she spends her time parenting, cooking, gardening, hiking, listening music and playing keyboard. Kingsolver continues to be an environmental activist and human rights advocate. She cherishes

her role as a professional writer, which enables her to promote personal, political and social agendas.

Two of the greatest influences in *The Bean Trees* are Cherokee Trail of Tears, the geographical trek that the Cherokee Nation was forced to travel when it was moved to Oklahoma territory from the southeastern United States, and the Sanctuary movement, designed to help Central Americans flee oppressive governmental regimes and relocate usually secretly and illegally in the United States. These two influences serve as the background to Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees*. The Cherokee Trail of Tears informs Taylor and Turtle's journey from Oklahoma to Arizona in the novel, and many of the novel's characters apparently are members of the Sanctuary movement.

Major themes in *The Bean Trees* include the importance of family and the need for community as emotional support systems for individuals facing hardships. Kingsolver uses her feminist beliefs, her interest in political issues, and her background in biology as vehicles to relate her thematic messages.

Throughout the novel, Kingsolver focuses on family as a major theme. Taylor ends up with Turtle, and together they form a family. When they move in with Lou Ann and her son, their family grows. Neither Taylor nor Lou Ann can afford living sufficiently. They help each other survive difficult times by sharing expenses. Lou Ann considers Taylor and Turtle family because they know each other's good and bad sides, stuff nobody else knows and because they'd been through hell and high water together. Taylor and Lou Ann develop an enduring friendship and love for one another. Out of this sense of belonging and acceptance comes the notion of family.

Other non-traditional families include Edna and Virgee Mae, as well as Mattie and her house full of political refugees. Because Edna is blind, she is

dependent on Virgee Mae. They support and care for one another. They are fellow human beings, and Mattie risks her life for them time and time again. What Mattie does to care for and support these refugees is no different from what most biological family members do for each other.

Kingsolver's belief in community as a necessary support for individuals, as well as for American society, is another major theme. After Taylor and turtle rent a room at the Hotel Republic and all of Taylor's money is spent, Taylor knows that she has to get a job; however she finds herself in a situation too familiar to many single mothers: wondering how she will be able to afford childcare for Turtle. She feels guilty leaving Turtle at Kid Central Station in the mall and knows that she needs other resources. After Taylor moves in with Lou Ann, she finds a place where she belongs - a community, and resources within that community. She finds that she can depend on Lou Ann and her neighbours Edna and Virgie Mae to help care for Turtle. Even Mattie doesn't mind having Turtle in the Jesus Is Lord Used Tires shop while Taylor is working.

Estevan and Esperanza also become Taylor's friends and members of her community. They are people she depends on who also depend on her. Taylor takes a risk by driving them to Oklahoma to a safe house; in return, they risk their lives to save Turtle from becoming a ward of the state.

The willingness of people in a community to allow other to depend on them creates trust and a sense of belonging for both the providers and receivers of that dependence. Community members look out for each other and support each other. In doing so, they allow all members to grow emotionally and to lead more productive lives without the worry of everyday personal security, including the need for food. Kingsolver portrays this interdependency between the community members

symbolically in the symbiotic relationship between the wisteria vines and the rhizobia. Exposing her readers to the value of community and family, Kingsolver's hope is to spur them to make resilient for action, thereby making the world a kinder and more secure place in which to live.

### **Critics on *The Bean Trees***

Among the Kingsolver's novels, one of the first successful novels *The Bean Trees* has invited scores of criticism through different perspectives. Its multi-dimensional meanings are also liable to encounter so many criticisms. Despite the various interpretations, the researcher has aimed to analyze it exploring feminist resilience. Through this novel, Kingsolver has delineated her deep concern towards female individuality. She creates a female character who is empowered and is able to transform herself.

Critic Linda Wagner-Martin finds the vibrant issue of home and family in the novel. She asserts, "*The Bean Trees* is, finally, a novel mostly about the varieties of home and the many varieties of families" (63). She further explains, "The traditional definitions of each - the house with the picket fence on its own half-acre of land, and, living inside it, a father, a mother, and 2.4 children - are images that leave at more people than they encompass" (63-64). She explains upon the consequences of forming non-traditional family. She argues:

One of the themes of *The Bean Trees* is that there are dangers in ostracizing people who form nontraditional families from those around them the single parent like Taylor, the divorced parent like Lou An, the childless couples like Estevan and Esperanza or Mrs. Parsons and Edna Poppy, or especially Mattie, who has "something like" grandchildren, the children of the refugees she helps through Sanctuary. Each adult

Kingsolver writes about in this novel belongs to a non - traditional family." (64)

Descriptions of the women and their family backgrounds and culture are carefully crafted, and the experiences of the women, along with their gradual emergence through anger to activism and even leadership, are related. This emphasis on these women and their growth and change are typical in the novel. Most obvious is the fact that her work concentrates on women, with a decidedly feminist slant. The protagonist Taylor Greer and other women are strong to begin with move toward increased autonomy as the story progress. This movement toward greater self-awareness and power of the women depicted in the novel shows female characters' seeking to quench thirst for freedom.

Kingsolver's training in biology is clearly evident in the novel, with its recurring images of plants and other natural phenomena. Critics Linda Wagner-Martin further explains the novel pointing the authors' affinity with nature. She states:

*The Bean Tress* also shows its author's love of nature. Not only does the gardening- the sheer love of plants and flowers that both Mattie and Taylor evince - bring Turtle to her very personal speech, but the natural world gives Taylor and turtle their moment of fond resolution in Oklahoma, before they start the long trip home. In the book's last chapter, titled "Rhizobia", Kingsolver places Taylor with turtle in the Oklahoma City Main Library. As Taylor whispers the wisteria's story to Turtle, she comes to the word rhizobia - microbes that live on plant's roots and re-oxygenate it even in the poorest of soils. The plant lives largely because of its separate support system. Or, in Taylor's words, "The wisteria vines on their own would just barely get by [...] but put



them together with rhizobia and they make miracles. They reader is led to imagine yet another kind of family. (64-65)

As a trained scientist herself, Kingsolver cannot help but include her own scientific knowledge in her writing. This knowledge is put to use through plant and animal imagery. The wisteria or bean plant is an important thematic tool in the novel. Turtle's language mainly consists of the names of plant; she is also interested in planting activities, which is later explained by Taylor's realization that she must have seen her mother to be buried. In comparing Turtle's development to food such as corn, Kingsolver places human life within the greater context of nature.

In her analysis of women's road narratives, Deborah Clarke observes the connections between the auto-mobile, one of the most influential technological advances in the twentieth century, and women. Clarke notes that Taylor "drives a car that contains few of the advances of twentieth century automobile technology such as windows and starters. In push-starting her car, she evokes the days of the crank engines, aligning herself with [...] intrepid women [...] who refused to let the necessary physical exertion keep them from the automobile" (Clarke, par. 28). She poses the kind of relationship between a women and her car that is depicted in *The Bean Trees*.

Catherine Himmelwright, an American critic starts her essay quoting Kingsolver's passage of the novel, "Outside was a bright, wild wonderland of flowers and vegetable and auto parts. Heads of cabbage and lettuce sprouted out of the old tires" (Kingsolver 24). Then she further comments and raises questions: "Junkyards and gardens: how could two such diametrically opposed worlds flourish together?" Seemingly, one would preclude the possibility of the other. Abandoned wrecks would jeopardize how tomatoes, while spilled oil would poison the fertile ground debilitating

the delicate burgeoning of a squash blossom. How can anyone tend a garden in the midst of rusted auto parts? How can growth occur in the midst of abandonment? (199)

She relates the novel with mythology : "In the mythology that surrounds the American West, one of the primary expressions of the western experience has been the male's desire to move" (199). She further supports the statement, she writes;

The relation between the wisteria and rhizobia represents Maggie's garden as described at the beginning of the novel. Wisteria "thrives in poor soil" just as Maggie's vegetables grow within auto parts. Both plants are surrounded by elements which would seem to impede their growth. However, something "invisible" exists which nourishes and enables their productively. In much the same way, Kingsolver addresses the American mythology of the West. By turning from the male archetype, Kingsolver claims a new mythology which proves in her novel to be a productive means of experience. On their own, the American myths of the West are weekend by their inability to produce a viable future, yet by adapting Native American myth, the rhizobia, to the American experience, balance is possible. (136)

The passage above makes it pretty clear that however barren the land is, creature's resiliency caters them to survive. Kingsolver has succeeded in creating an archetype and initiated the process of finding a new mythical model from which to view the American experience. Taylor's move enlarges her scope and understanding of herself in relation to the world as a whole. Her story is certainly an escape from the South, but Kingsolver uses this regional move to express the need to escape any type of limited vision.

Karen M. Kelly and Philip H. Kelly praise the author of the novel :

"Kingsolver is multi-dimensional" (61). Their remark on the adopted child Turtle is worth quoting here:

A central element in the novel is the sexual and physical abuse that Turtle has experienced. We see none of the abuse itself, but do see the consequences, both physical and psychological. Taylor discovers bruises on Turtle the first time she changes her. Later in the novel, a doctor checks Turtle and discovers her "failure to thrive." In addition, we witness her clinging behavior, in fact, that's how Turtle got her name: her tenacious grip reminded Taylor of the myth that once of turtle locks its jaws onto something it supposedly holds on until the next thunder. It seemed as if Turtle's grip was that tenacious. We also witness Turtle's reticence about talking and later her compulsive talk about seed, plants and vegetables. (62)

Turtle was catatonic when she was left with Taylor: she blankly stared off into space, living in her own world and not speaking. Experiencing love from Taylor and others in the community, Turtle feels secure and safe enough to begin speaking. Eventually, Turtle is adopted by Taylor. The novel's focus lies too on motherhood.

Mary Jean DeMar explains the novel taking friendship as its prime focus. She argues:

Friendships and community suffuse this novel. Taylor Greer, the novel's central character, has a gift for friendship and she not only creates friends wherever she goes, but she becomes a member of existing communities of friends. Through portraying Taylor and many people who become her friends, Kingsolver examines how friends may be built and how much they mean. She demonstrates how the concern

for others that leads to the development of deep friendships may also lead to political concern and involvement in political causes. (43)

Taylor's relationships are strengthened due to their communal participation in nature, but it is also important to realize that the community which exists around her arises through Taylor's own relationship with Turtle. In the novel, Taylor is in the challenging position while confronting directly and later accepting abandoned child. She fights with the difficulties in the world around her. Although these difficulties surround Taylor, she is strengthened by the group that encompasses her due to Turtle's presences.

According to Mary Ellen Snodgrass, Kingsolver "makes use of the lowly bean as a double symbol of humility and of nature's building blocks" (50). Snodgrass notes that beans and plants in general, become an important teaching and communication tool for Taylor and Turtle.

In her novel, Kingsolver is able to express a female voice that the women must gain access to the adventure that has been excluded to them yet enjoyed by men. *The Bean Trees*, Barbara Kingsolver's first novel, was greeted with different critical acclaim. Many critics have praised her novel as "poetic". Most critics have acknowledged that her novel displays a different non-traditional family, community and relationship. Some have argued that her novel is more influenced by science and nature. Her novel tries hard to replicate women's effort to come up against their stereotypical images. The present study is from the feminist perspective, above mentioned criticisms help the researcher to broaden the horizon for his research and help him to prove that the women in the novel are ultimately able to thrive in a new place. This research aspires to explore how Kingsolver, in her novel, attribute feminist resiliency to subvert social injustice and discrimination on women.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter introduces the thesis and establishes hypothesis and provides a skeleton of the whole study. It also introduces and relates the novel with her other writings. The second chapter discusses the conceptual tools with which the play is analyzed. The thesis presents the concept of feminism as a crucial factor to dismantle the traditional gender and sexual rules to explore the identity of female. The change in social, political, economic and sexual characteristics and behaviour is taken in this section. The third chapter is an analysis of the text on the basis of theoretical modality. During the analysis, some lines from the novel are taken so as to prove the hypothesis that Kingsolver presents a character Taylor, who resists and debunks patriarchy as her quest to establish own female identity. Finally, the fourth chapter concludes the thesis by mentioning its findings.

## **II. Radical Feminism**

Feminism is the theory that deconstructs male female binaries. If we go to the origin of feminism it seems being practiced from 1900's. But after Second World War, it had been used as literary discourse. In 1960s it came as a movement. As movement it raised the voices and visions of women for their access in social economic and political aspects of society. In western literary tradition 1960s has brought the drastic change in theory. Especially with the advent of Derridian deconstruction there is no existence of binary polar. Being influenced from deconstruction, feminists dismantled inhuman poles of male and female. Then feminists launched feminist movement or feminism in 1960s to come up from their subsidiary position in the patriarchy.

Feminism is a modern tradition of literary theory to the defense of women's writing against the predominantly male literary establishment. Feminism is an awareness of women about male dominated socio-cultural tendency to rule over women in 1960s to 1970s. After the feminist movement of 1960s to 1970s, the issues of women rights spread world wide in showing good reasoning power. But from 1980s the feminist theory has developed in a number of ways and now it is characterized by a global perspective. It includes number of social, cultural and political movements, theories and moral philosophies concerned with gender inequalities and discriminations against women. On the one side, feminist theories unfolded the marginal socio-economic status of women and they focused large numbers of consciousness of women to launch collective activities for the equality and freedom of women in the society.

That is why, feminism focuses on the issues of female, it has feature of multiple dimensions. By exposing women marginalization, subordination and deprivation in the diverse domains like political, educational and literary genre, it discloses the existing hierarchy between men and women in the patriarchal society. In fact our society, civilization, culture and all the practices are patriarchal that means male centered and which is organized as well as controlled by men. So male patterned assumptions, values and norms of the society always restricted women mentally, physically and psychologically.

Feminism is a discipline of thought which tries to dismantle the patriarchal social values and norms opposed to the law of equality to liberate women. It is the voice against the patriarchal monopoly. So feminism tries to destroy the ideology of male. Its main goal is to understand the nature of inequality and focuses on gender, politics, power and sexuality. To this Context J.A Cuddon in “The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Theory” writes;

It questions the long standing, dominant, male, phallogocentric ideologies [...] patriarchal attitudes and male interpretation in literature [...]. It attacks male notions of values in literature [...]. By offering critiques of male authors & representations of men in literature and also by privileging women writers [...] it challenges traditional and accepted male ideas about the nature of women and about how women, feel, act and think [...] (315).

Here, Cuddon means that the rise of feminism was to dismantle the long rooted patriarchal vision of the society. Besides, dismantling the patriarchal values, feminism privileges women from their subsidiary position.

Moreover, women’s association with the passive body and men’s affiliation with the active mind is believed to be the outcome of the conventional gender roles.

Thus, male and female have to play the assigned roles appropriately. As far as question concerns to the feminine roles, patriarchal ideology views that there are only two identities a women can have. If she follows the conventional gender roles like to be more emotional loving, sentimental she is a “good girl,” if she doesn’t, she is considered as a “bad girl” (Tyson 88). Ultimately, if woman does not accept feminine roles the “only role left for her is that of monster.” The patriarchal stereotypes of women, whether sexual or non sexual, working class or middle class, black or white, have a common denominator. It is considered that the women as human beings are substandard: less intelligent, less moral, less competent less able physically, psychologically and spiritually (Ruth 96). All of these stereotypes have been severely criticized and questioned by many feminists critic. Among them, Simone de Beauvoir, in her seminal work. *The Second Sex* argues that there are no such things as “feminine nature.” Moreover, there is "no physical or psychological reason why women should be inferior to men”, even female have always been considered as second class citizen.

Women in the literary texts are presented as meek characters. Feminism itself was guided by male-intervention. From this aspect Elaine Showalter in her essay “Toward a Feminist poetics” says:

One of the problems of the feminist critique is that it is male – oriented. If we study stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics, and the limited roles of women play in literary history, we are not learning what women have felt and experienced, but only what men have thought women should be. (1227)

From the very beginning, the gender stereotypes are mere construction of society, they can be challenged and changed in any time and space. Now a days,



some of the feminist women are challenging the old images of women and building new ones. Women are not only fighting for equality rather they have been seeking independence, self-affirmation, self respect and pride in womanhood. For this, it requires women's dedication and devotion. Similarly, sexuality has gained prominence as an important principle of social and cultural institution since 1980s. A number of influential theorists see the “exclusion and marginalization” that we see with regard to sexuality as equally pertinent to the way western culture is constituted as other structural exclusion (Bertens 218). Michael Foucault, in his famous book *History of Sexuality* (1976) relates sexuality with discourse, knowledge and power. He describes sexuality as relations that are continuously and locally produced and productive at the level of modern culture.

Thus, there is the existence of 'third gender' categories or other confusing/problematic genders. This gender is theorized in comparison to their sexuality and cultural practices, binary opposition. According to Butler, “the lesbians” emerges as a third gender that promises to transcend the binary restriction on sex, imposed by the system of compulsory heterosexuality (26) and always on the way to sexual liberation. In this sense, the gender categories-gay/lesbian, homosexual, butchfemme transvestite, transsexual, bisexual all practice categorical sexuality. Therefore the concept of “compulsory heterosexuality” initiated by patriarchal normativity. Butler, in her *gender trouble: Feminism at the subversion of identity* (1990), believes that 'a construction is not a kind of manipulability artifice' because the subject of gender neither produces nor follows the process of this gendering but emerges only within as the matrix of gender relations themselves (Halberstam 119). By these all means, the stereotypical version of gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity defined by traditional gender and sexuality is under elimination. The first represented as a

challenge to patriarchal values, a bold assault on oppressive cultural boundaries, the second as making the sexual ambivalence, androgyny and muted eroticism linking actors, dramatists and playgoers in a sexual charged subculture of transgression. Cressy has identify not simply isolated and ambiguous cases of women, “making in men’s weeds” but a full blown, “female transvestite movement” in early modern England.

The gender of the transvestite women demand careful attentions because the various theme of gender theatricality, gender dysphoria, androgyny and butch masquerade all produce very different narratives. Sometime it produces an image of essential androgyny, and constructs the transvestite women as a meeting of the sexes. In other, the male drag has become more than a costume, and the butch inside it has an erotic relation to her cloths and uses masculine clothing to complete her gender presentation. But the feminist theorist claims that gender is the unity of the subject, and is cultural interpretation of gender and multiple interpretation of sex. The discussion of drug in gender trouble offers to explain the constructed and performative of gender is not precisely an example of subversion of patriarchal normativity.

Butler opines that gender is the social construction, i.e. performativity but not the natural entity:

[G]ender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender’s performative characters and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configuration out side the

restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality". (180)

However, the contribution to revision the male-centered system was initially made by Mary Wollstonecraft in her essay, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792). Wollstonecraft strongly raises the voice against patriarchal society and its domination over females. She opposes the system of education of her time. She answers the attacks charged by many writers arguing that "Mind does not know Sex". Mary Wollstonecraft argues for sexual equality and "put special emphasis on education protesting against a system that kept women in a state of ignorance" (qtd in Mautner 456-57). *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is the first book on feminism which makes a strong argument for the equality of man and women. The book seems to suggest that equality is possible only when education is catered to women. And when they are made able to utilize divine gift of reason.

Mary Wollstonecraft opposes the Rousseau's ideas on education as he expressed in *Emilius and Shopia*, where Rousseau's proposed education for women as a tool for making her a good servant of male. In this regard Romemaire Tong says:

[. . .] Wollstonecraft did present a vision of a woman strong in mind and body who is not slave to her passion, her husbands or children. For Wollstonecraft, the ideal woman is not interested in fulfilling herself it by self fulfillment is meant any sort of pondering to duty distracting desires than in exercising self control. (16)

Wollstonecraft going against Rousseau appeals all the women to use their reason and to fight against traditional consciousness. She never believed that women

possess emotional, fragile and submissive nature. It is by conforming to the traditional ideas women keep themselves in perpetual childhood. They generate the ideas of beauty and sex in their might. Traditional consciousness gives emotions and unnatural weakness to the women. But she argues women are equal in moral and intellectual ground, they should use the divine reason bestowed to them by the God.

Women save their consciousness traditionally and yet developed their ignorance by reading sentimental novels, the novels which have the access of emotion exaggeration of characters too comic and tragic, with the purpose of pleasing middle class. These novels raise woman's emotions by giving sexual character to their mind. They compel women to act as a docile and serving lady for the sake of man. So, she suggests that women detach themselves from reading such novel and rather ridicule them and use their faculty of reason to perfect themselves.

Simone de Beauvoir, in her book *The Second Sex* (1949) writes against the prevailing notion of femininity. Women have been defined by males' society in terms of negative references to men and there is nothing womanish in their definitions. These definitions are based on the creation of essence of women. Women are the second, supernatural, the angel privileged others and the 'flesh' and the body opposed to the first natural existential man, the one and the soul. These attributes are all monopolistic because they don't address the existence of women.

Throughout the history, women have occupied the position of mystical otherness as opposed to the transcendental state of man. Women are supposed to be in the immense as the slaves to assert the males to achieve their transcendental goals.

Similarly, Beauvoir in her most selected work *The Second Sex* heavily challenges the socially constructed myths. She says that patriarchal society functions

according to various myths some of which define the male/female relationship. These myths regard women in negative relation to man. She is not defined as an autonomous being but as the incidental and privileged others to support the subject who is the “one” and she is the other. Such myths never addressed the reality of women but once create the essence for women to know about themselves.

Myths represent women as the privileged other by males, who create those myths for their self identity. These myths are based on binary opposition out of which all positive attributes given to men and negative ones to women. The myths have contradiction in themselves because women are sometimes defined as having qualities like that of Goddess and Muse and sometimes as death, monster and evil. That is why Beauvoir suggests that all these myths be abolished because they do not maintain the relationship between man and woman based on reality. Since myth creates essence about women, they should be discarded so that women can shape their behavior, sentiment and identity by grounding upon the truth not upon the myths.

Elaine Showalter in her book *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), evokes Virginia Woolf's concern that women faced a lot of problems in their literary ambition. The male dominated literary traditional universalized and displaced women and their writings denying them and place in it. Unlike Woolf Showalter's concern here is that there were considerable number of women writers but they were not included in the male hegemonic literary tradition. Showalter therefore, purposes that a separate literary history and feminist poetics be formulated to counter the male hegemony. She talks a short period from 1840 to 1960 and reads women writing as a Gynocritics.

Feminist issues range so widely across cultural, social, political and psychological categories. Feminist literary criticism is wide ranging too, whatever kind of analysis is undertaken however the ultimate goal of feminist criticism is to increase our understanding of women's experience, both in the past and present and promote our appreciation of women's value in the world.

Feminism differs according to the socio political context. Feminism of one country may not be akin (similar) to the feminism of another country. Feminism of colonial countries are different from feminism of non colonial countries. For instance, British feminist criticism has always been Marxist in its emphasis on class and politics. Similarly, American feminist criticism typically has strong political implications because it has focused on the distinctive experience of women echoing that the personal is political. In the same way, French feminist criticism has more inclination toward psychoanalysis. On the other hand, the categorization of feminism according to national boundaries one can locate diverse dimensions like liberal, radical, Marxist, socialist, psychoanalytic, black, post colonial, lesbian feminism and others.

Liberal feminism talks about equality as well as compromise without radically changing social and political systems. So, the function of a liberal feminist is to stress women's choice and challenge the social division of labor. Liberal feminism believed that all people both male and female are created equal by God and deserve equal rights. Liberal feminists concerned that oppression in society exists because of the socialization of men and women in patriarchy. But patriarchy hesitates to give equal position of power because men are in powerful position. Women are claimed that they are as equally capable as the men are if opportunity has given them. This political view goes back to the early feminism of John Stuart

*Mill's Subjection of Women* (1869). Focuses on the identity of liberal feminism. In fact, liberal feminists focus on the reformation of society through negotiation.

Radical feminist wants to establish distinct women identity. Radical feminism tends to be universalizing rather than to focus upon the socially, culturally and historically specific characteristics of patriarchy. So, a radical feminist considers sex and motherhood as forced slavery. Basically, radical feminists demand the revolution by overthrowing the male centered norms, values and the system. They also trying to subvert and disturb such so-called patriarchy. Their individual feelings, experiences and relationships are to be highlighted by excluding males. The root voice of radical feminism is to organize politically to destroy this sex class system.

Patriarchal theory is not always as single-sided as the belief that all men always benefit from the oppression of all women. Patriarchal theory maintains that the primary element of patriarchy is the relationship of dominance, where one party is dominant and exploits the other party for the benefit of the former. Radical feminists have claimed that men use social systems and other methods of control to keep non-dominant men and women suppressed.

Radical feminists believe that eliminating patriarchy, and other systems which perpetuate the domination of one group over another, will liberate everyone from an unjust society. Redstockings manifesto of 1984 reads that radical feminism "got sexual politics recognized as a public issue", "created the vocabulary [. . .] with which the second wave of feminism entered popular culture", "sparked the drive to legalize abortion", "were the first to demand total equality in the so-called private sphere" (housework and child care [. . .] emotional and sexual needs), and "created the atmosphere or urgency" that almost led to the passage of the English Rights

Amendment (2). The influence of Radical feminism can be seen in the adoption of these "personal" issues by even such liberal-feminist groups as the National Organization for Women (NOW).

As a form of practice, radical feminists introduced the use of consciousness raising groups. These groups brought together intellectuals, workers and middle class women in developed Western countries to discuss their experiences. During these discussions, women noted a shared and repressive system regardless of their political affiliation or social class. Based on these discussions, the women drew the conclusion that ending patriarchy was the most necessary step towards a truly free society. These consciousness-raising sessions allowed early radical feminists to develop a political ideology based on common experiences women face with male supremacy. Consciousness rising was extensively used in the National Organization for Women (NOW) during the 1970s.

The feminism that emerged from these discussions stood first and foremost for the liberations of women, as women, from the oppression of men in their own lives, as well as men in power. This feminism was radical in both political sense (implying extremism), and in the sense of seeking the root cause of the oppression of women. Radical feminism claimed that a totalizing ideology and social formation-patriarchy (government or rule by fathers) dominated women in the interests of men. At the beginning of this period, heterosexuality was more or less an unchallenged assumption. Among radical feminists, the view became widely held that thus far the sexual freedoms gained in the sexual revolution of the 1960s in particular, the decreasing emphasis on monogamy-had been largely something gained by men at women's expense. This assumption of heterosexuality would soon be challenged by the rise of political lesbianism, closely associated with Atkinson and "The Feminists".



Radical feminism was not only a movement of ideology and theory. Radical feminists also took direct action. They demand in literature an expression of female sexuality which will burst through the bonds of male logic with a poetic power that defines the tyranny of logocentric meaning. Besides sexual oppression, radical feminists often view other forms of power, for example, unequal power relations within capitalism-as derived from patriarchy. Radical feminism describes sexual as the or at least a fundamental form of oppression and the primary for women. They state the most strongly of all feminist traditions that men as a group are the main enemy.

This approach wants to bring about radical changes in the social configuration in which the position of women is not only redefined but also re-established as a respectable and important, commonly suggesting that the position of man be in a position of power relative to all women, and possibly some men. They have a strong interest in recovering or discovering positive elements in femininity asserting in essence that it is good to be a woman and to form bonds with other women. This school of feminism usually presents a historically continuous clear-cut difference between men and women.

This theory generally advocates a revolutionary model of social change. The agenda of radical feminist writings is to counter women's supposedly natural, biological inferiority and subordination within patriarchal society by asserting their at least equal status in relation to men. A crucial aspect of that agenda is for women to gain control over their own bodies, biology and to value and celebrate women's bodies.

Modern feminist based in United States took their impetus from civil rights, peace and other protest. Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1977) signifies a significant

stage in 'political' feminist writing on literature. Millet's use of the term 'patriarchy' described the cause of women's oppression. Men enjoy power through constraint women. The feminist analysis of politics, therefore, rose from the fact that women have been excluded from the exercise of political power. Women are still underrepresented in formal political institutions and decision making bodies worldwide.

Political feminists believe that politics has been historically dominated by the masculine to express their identity implicitly or explicitly. Women have been driven to private sphere. Despite their active participation in French revolution, post-revolutionary regime excluded them from full political citizenship.

Though the idea of feminism itself seeks to study the existence of women in the patriarchal society, existentialist feminism founded and elaborated by Simone de Beauvoir primary focuses of Sartrean notion of existentialism: existence precedes the essence. Beauvoir raises this issue regarding woman who has been essentialized in the society with certain stereotypes like woman as a flesh, related to nature, vale of blood, open rose, siren, the curve of a hill, the fertile soil, the sap, the material beauty and the soul of the world. Several essentialist thinkers believe that the woman is doomed to eminence but has a passivity to bestow peace and harmony. Beauvoir's central attack is on the attitude of the scholars and writers towards woman's position. According to them, woman is a 'privileged other'.

Her work *The Second Sex* is the narrative of women's existential otherness. A mark of otherness is one's inability to shape one's psychological, social and cultural identity. Men believe that women cannot transcend because transcendence is a spiritual sublimity which can only be attend by men. They project woman as

inherently demure creature and man powerful and virile so that the later can achieve transcendence. Some male critics attribute mystical to woman.

Myths are overwhelmed with an idea of femininity, eroticism and seductiveness. Beauvoir discloses the ambivalence of man's nature towards woman as he calls a Muse, a Goddess or Beatrice on the one hand while he associates her with demon, death, cruel stepmother on the other. Paternalism claim women are projected as 'other' subordinate being. This othering, according to Beauvoir, mystifies woman's qualities and pushes her into isolation.

The categories with which men think of the world are established from their point of view as absolute. Myth has been utilized for man's purpose i.e. to look at women as luxury. It is a snare of false objectivity. It is a 'mirage' and one of those snares of false objectivity into which man makes his readymade valuations. Woman oscillates between one and other. Finally Beauvoir realizes the bondages obstructing a woman's free path so it is difficult for them to accept their status as autonomous individuals and their womanly destiny. Yet this is a source of 'blundering' and 'restlessness' when men realize the situation that is coming into existence, women will be a full human being, a free.

Valerie Bryson has very vividly outlined the nature of feminism, by blending both its traditional definition and the present radical view about it. She holds:

[...] it is essentially a theory of, by and for women; as such, it is based firmly in women's own experiences and perceptions [...] it sees the oppression of women as the most fundamental and universal form of domination, and its aim is to understand and end this [...] women as a group have interest opposed to those of men; these interests unite them in a common sisterhood that transcends the division of class or race,

and means that women should struggle together to achieve their own liberation [...] power is not confined to the public worlds of politics ... but that it extends into private life; this means that traditional concepts of power and politics are challenged and extended to such 'personal' areas of life as the family and sexuality, both of which are seen as instruments of patriarchal domination. (181)

In short, what she brings out is that the theory entirely pertains to women and, therefore, it should not be seen in the viewpoint of politics. It, thereby, threatens the traditional notion of power in patriarchy.

Finally, radical feminist analysis insists that male power is not confined to the public worlds of politics and paid employment, but that it extends into private life as the family and sexuality, both of which are seen as instruments of patriarchal domination, such ideas are not new, but it was not until the late 1960s that they began to be developed systematically as a self-conscious theory. The impetus towards this development came from women's experiences in the Civil Rights, anti-war, New left and student movements in North America, Europe and Australia.

Young women role was essentially that of secretary, housewife or sex object, servicing the political, domestic and sexual needs of male activities; any attempt at raising the subject of women's exclusion from decision-making was met with silence, ridicule or contempt. As Redstockings manifesto of 1969 reads:

Women are an oppressed class; our oppression is total, affecting every facet of our lives. We are exploited as sex objects, breeders, domestic servants, and cheap labor. We are considered inferior beings whose only purpose is to enhance men's lives [ . . . ] we have been kept from seeing our personal suffering as a political condition [ . . . ] the conflicts

between individual men and women are political conflicts that can only be solved collectively [. . .] we identify the agents of our oppression as men. Male supremacy is the oldest, most basic form of domination. All men receive economic, sexual, and psychological benefits from male supremacy. All men have oppressed women. (598)

By the early 1970s these new ideas were reflected in a substantial body of literature that included Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*, Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* and Eva Figes' *Patriarchal Attitudes* (all first published in 1970; anthologies of some of the new manifestos, speeches and articles were also published in Betty and Theodore Roszak's *Masculine/Feminine* (1969), Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood is Powerful* (1970) and Michelle Wandor's *The Body Politics* (1972).

While all of these were important manifestations of the new movement, it is the second chapter of Millett's *Sexual Politics* that is of the most theoretical importance, as it introduced into modern feminist thought the key concept of patriarchy. Although Millett describes her work as simply "notes towards a theory of patriarchy" (*Sexual Politics*, 24) it provides a starting-point from which many later theories have developed and encapsulates many of the central concerns of radical feminist thought; her discussion of the concept is also considerably more rigorous and thoughtful than that of many later writers who have seized upon the term without fully examining its implications, so that many of the criticisms that have been made of the concept do not in fact apply to her original analysis.

The term patriarchy is not of course new to political theory, but the use to which Millett put it certainly was. Derived from the Greek patriarches, meaning 'head of the tribe', it was central to seventeenth-century debates over the extent of

monarchical power; here supporters of absolute rule claimed that the power of a king over his people was the same as that of a father over his family, and that both were sanctioned by God and nature. Millett seems to take such familial power as her starting-point, so that "the principles of patriarchy appear to be twofold; male shall dominate female, elder male shall dominate young" (*Politics*, 25). It is, however, only the first of these principles that she explores, and she does not distinguish between male power within the family and in society as whole; despite the efforts of some writers to restrict the term to strictly family-based power, its use as a shorthand for a social system based on male domination and female subordination has become standard amongst feminists.

According to Millett, "Patriarchy's chief institution is the family" (*Politics*, 33). Later, radical feminists have agreed that, contrary to the assumptions of conventional political theory, the family is indeed a central part of society's power structure; as such it both sustains patriarchal power in the 'public' world and is itself a source of women's oppression. Far from being a 'natural' arrangement based on mutual love and respect in which the emotional, sexual and domestic needs of adult partners are met and their children cared for, it is a social institution in which women's labour is exploited, male sexual power may be violently expressed and oppressive gender identities and modes of behaviour are learned.

Millett's central claims are simple, and they essentially represent a formalization of the ideas that were already current in the new women's movement. She argues that in all known societies the relationship between the sexes has been based on power, and that they are therefore political. This power takes the form of male domination over women in all areas of life; sexual domination is so universal, so ubiquitous and so complete that it appears 'natural' and hence becomes invisible, so

that it is "perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power" (*Politics*, 25).

M.H. Abrams in his *Glossary of Literary Terms* mentions:

Western society is pervasively patriarchal, male centered and controlled and conducted so as to subordinate women to men all cultural domains: familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal and artistic. Patriarchal ideology pervades those writings, which have been considered great literature. Most of them are thus male characters; Oedipus, Ulysses, Hamlet, Tom Jones, Huck Finn etc. Female characters are given marginal and subordinate roles, represented as complementary in opposition to masculine desires. (84)

The patriarchal power of men over women is therefore basic to the functioning of all societies and it extends far beyond formal institutions of power. It overrides class and race divisions, for economic dependency means that women's class identity is a "tangential, vicarious and temporary matter", while "sexism may be more endemic in our society than racism" (*Politics*, 38-39).

Some claim that it was the discovery of the male role in reproduction that was critical and first led men to seek to control women. Thus Rich writes that, "A crucial moment in human consciousness arrives when man discovers that it is he himself, not the moon or the spring rains or the spirits of the dead, who impregnates the woman; that the child she carries and gives birth to is his child, who can make him immortal" (60).

Patriarchy is primarily maintained by a process of conditioning which starts with childhood socialization within the family and is reinforced by education, literature and religion to such an extent that its values are internalized by men and

women alike; for some women this leads to self-hatred, self-rejection and an acceptance of inferiority. Despite the success of this 'interior colonization', patriarchy also rests upon economic exploitation and the use or threat of force.

This means that its history is a record of man's inhumanity to woman and that the thousands of women who die in the United States each year as a result of illegal abortion are victims of the same system as the Indian woman forced to die on her husband's funeral pyre, the Chinese woman crippled by foot-binding and the African girl whose clitoris is cut out. In all societies too, patriarchy relies upon sexual violence and rape. In this context, sexual relations between men and women are but an expression of male power, and Millett devotes a large section of her book to 'deconstructing' the portrayal of sex in the work of four major twentieth-century writers (D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer and Jean Genet) so as to reveal the crude sexual domination involved. Love, too, can be but a confidence trick, part of a patriarchal ideology designed to hide the realities of power; not until patriarchy has been overthrown and sexuality radically transformed can men and women relate in any ways as equal human beings.

Patriarchy always imposes curtailment of a boundary towards women's freedom. Thus for example Adrienne Rich's account of patriarchy explicitly abstracts the position of women from any social context:

Under patriarchy, I may live in purdah or drive a truck; I may raise my children in a kibbutz, or be the sole breadwinner for a fatherless family [...] I may serve my husband his early-morning coffee within the clay walls of barber village or march in an academic procession; whatever my status or situation, my derived economic class or my sexual preference, I live under the power of the fathers, and have access only



to so much of privilege or influence as the patriarchy is willing to accede to me, and only for so long as I will pay the price for male approval. (58)

Unlike most conventional political theory, radical feminism does not see state power as the central political issue. From this new perspective, the state is but one manifestation of patriarchal power, reflecting other deeper structures of oppression, and women's well-documented exclusion from its formal institutions is a symptom rather than the cause of gender inequality. Therefore although the radical feminist analysis of the state has tended to be implicit rather than fully developed in its own right, this neglect itself embodies a theory of state power which is seen as neither autonomous or as reducible to the needs of the economy, but a inextricably connected to areas of life such as the family and sexuality that have usually been seen as private and non-political, but which are now seen as basic to all power relationships in society.

For Radical feminists, the exclusion of women from power is no unfortunate and easily remedied accident, for the structures and institutions of the state have been made by men and embody their interests rather than those of women. This means that feminist demands will never be readily conceded by the state but will encounter opposition that the liberal perspective has no means of understanding. It also means that legislation on its own can do little to improve the real situation of women, although it may disguise or legitimize their oppression by combining it with a formal equality. Indeed state intervention that is ostensibly aimed at improving the situation of women may in fact dangerously increase the power of this male state; for example, state provision of welfare services may involve new forms of subordination rather than independence for women.

For some radical feminists, the whole idea of the competitive pursuit of power is rejected as an embodiment of male values, and conventional politics is abandoned: organizational hierarchies are avoided, political struggle is relocated from the ballot-box to the bedroom, and separatism is favoured over participation in existing organizations or institutions, which are seen as a mere playground for male egoists. For others, however, the identification of patriarchal power within the state is an insight that can further the feminist cause by providing a more realistic assessment of political possibilities than that provided by the liberal approach.

From this perspective, the state is seen as an arena of conflict which is systematically biased against women but within which important victories can nevertheless be won; it is essential to understand the power relations that are involved and the tremendous obstacles that women face, but this need not lead to the pessimistic abandonment of conventional politics. Such an approach can also in principle recognize the existence of cross-cutting race and class conflicts that will help determine political outcomes and which interact with gender struggles in highly complex ways.

Some feminists see women as closer to nature than men, and therefore more able to express and identify with its needs, while Collard states that:

Nothing links the human, animal and nature so profoundly as woman's reproductive system which enables her to share the experience of bringing forth and nourishing life with the rest of the living world. Whether or not she personally experiences biological mothering, it is in this that woman is most truly a child a nature and in this natural integrity lies the wellspring of her strength. (106)

Radical feminist suggest that sex with men is oppressive because it is unfulfilling, it is not freely chosen and it is used as a means of dividing and controlling women. For other deminst writers, it is more explicitly linked to male *violence* and the idea that patriarchy, like all other systems of power, rests ultimately on force. As Kate Millett says, "We are not accustomed to associate patriarchy with force. So perfect is its system of socialization, so complete the general assent to its values, so long and so universally has it prevailed in human society that it scarcely seems to require violent implementation" (*Politics*, 43).

For some writers, existing sexuality is a symptom of patriarchal society the product of a world in which men have authority, women are economically dependent and male needs and desires set the agenda in all spheres. Heterosexuality, therefore itself was declared to be a political institution, as such it was imposed upon women for the benefit of men. The rejection of heterosexuality is therefore not just a matter of personal sexual orientation, but a political act that strikes at the very heart of patriarchy. This analysis has led some radical feminists to the idea of 'politically correct' sexual activity which precludes all relationships with men, for all heterosexual intercourse is seen as a form of rape that is irretrievably bound up with the system of domination and oppression to which it is central. This view is well illustrated in a pamphlet issued by the Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group:

Only in the system of oppression that is male supremacy does the oppressor actually invade and colonise the interior of the body of the oppressed. Penetration is an act of great symbolic significance by which the oppressor enters the body of the oppressed. Its function and effect is the punishment and control of women. Every act of

penetration for a woman is an invasion which undermines her confidence and saps her strength. (44)

Sexual pleasure for women is therefore masochistic, while for men power is eroticized, men's prime motive for oppressing women may be the sexual satisfaction derived from domination. Mackinnon says, "Women bound, women battered, women tortured, women humiliated, women degraded and defied, women killed-or, to be fair to the soft core-women sexual accessible, have-able, there for them, wanting to be taken and used, with perhaps just a little of light bondage" (326-7).

The radical feminist approach to the state can, therefore, give us a simplistic picture of a monolithic institution that can be written off by feminists as an instrument of patriarchal oppression; it can also provide the basis for a more sophisticated approach that recognizes the complex nature of the power struggles involved and the interconnectedness of the different patriarchal structures. This allows us to recognize both the importance and the limitations of conventional politics and legislation.

For example, a law that gives a woman the right to leave an abusing husband is not in itself enough to protect her from marital violence, for it will be enforced by a sexist police force within a culture in which sexuality and domination are inextricably linked, and she is unlikely to have the economic resources to maintain herself. If, however, the law is passed in the context of feminist struggles to make such violence visible and unacceptable, to increase the accountability of the police, to provide safe houses for battered wives and to improve educational and employment prospects for women, then it can represent a significant victory.

For radical feminists, therefore, state power is not to be understood in its own terms, but as part of a ubiquitous system of patriarchal power. This means that it is not a neutral tool equally available for women and men, and that it will not automatically

respond to the dictates of reason or justice; it also suggests that its nature cannot be changed by simply changing the incumbents of the positions of power, for political outcomes are structured by society-wide power relations, not by individual decisions. For some, the patriarchal domination of women by men is the central and defining feature of state power; for others however the concept of patriarchy allows scope both for conventional political struggle and for an analysis of related structures of class and race oppression.

All in all, the rebellion against the male supremacy and patriarchy is the essence of Radical Feminism. Radical feminism subverts long-rooted patriarchal values and norms which dominated women in every aspect of the society. So, women's voices and visions have been excluded from history. At present various feminist writers have raised their voice for the right of women. It also tried to dismantle the conventional pattern to establish nonsexist ones. Similarly, in the novel *The Bean Trees*, Barbara Kingsolver dismantles socio-political, economic and sexual so-called patriarchal dominant view of male characteristic towards subjectivity, identity and sexuality. The present researcher will find out those subversion through the resiliency of the women in the succeeding chapter.

### **III. Feminist Resiliency: Textual Interpretation of *The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver**

The present research is an attempt to explore the issue of feminist resiliency in *The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver by mobilizing the theoretical insights of radical feminism. In the novel, Barbara Kingsolver is able to express female voice that has heretofore been lost or subsumed by the white male experience.

To show the feminist resiliency, Kingsolver investigates gender issue by exploring resilient choices that the female characters are opting at their difficulties. The novel shows how each character has made important and wise choices to survive even in an uneven terrain. The choices a character makes can also serve to define that character, showing him or her to be, for example, generous or selfish, strong or weak. The do-or-die moments portrayed in the novel include Taylor's choice to keep Turtle when Turtle's aunt insists her to take the baby; Estevan and Esperanza's choice not to turn in their friends to the police and also not to pursue their daughter Ismene after she was kidnapped; Lou Ann's choice not to return to her husband Angel after he has left her; Taylor's choice to drive Estevan and Esperanza to a new safe house in Oklahoma; and Taylor's choice to adopt Turtle. Each of their choices is difficult but a choice has to be made, and each of these choices has changed the character's life and defined the character as a resilient female.

In the beginning of the novel, we meet Taylor Greer whose real name is Marietta. She was brought up as was Kingsolver, in rural Kentucky among struggling tobacco farmers. In the first paragraph of the novel, Taylor tells about her fear of putting air in tires. She describes a schoolmate's father who blew up a tractor tire by putting too much air in it. He got thrown over a Standard Oil sign and, according to Taylor, looked like "old overalls slung over a fence". Taylor comes from a non

traditional family. She was raised by her mother, who worked long hours as a house keeper to support Taylor and herself. Her father, Foster Greer, left her mother when he found out that her mother was pregnant. Her mother doesn't mind that Foster left; in fact she often tells Taylor that "trading Foster for [you] was the best deal this side of the Jackson Purchase"(10). As Taylor matures and is exposed to horrible things that fathers can say and do to children, she feels quite lucky to have grown up without a father. The resiliency of Taylor's mother and her commitment to Taylor, as well as her indifferent attitude toward men, represent Kingsolver's feminist views.

In her novel Kingsolver creates a strong - minded, independent woman in search of a better life. Turning away from Kentucky, Missy Greer, at twenty - three, heads west with the hope of finding a life that will provide new opportunities.

Kingsolver creates a protagonist who yearns for escape. Men leave their homes in order to flee women; women represent opposition to the fulfillment of their identities. Building on this tradition, Kingsolver inverts the usual pattern in order to explore the female's search for identity.

Unlike the societal pressures depicted in traditional western novels, *The Bean Trees* reverses the paradigm in which the demands of society are represented by women. In contrast to the depiction of men seeking freedom away from the demand of women, Kingsolver suggests a world in which women and children feel limited by the demands of the father. Although Kingsolver creates no father figure for Missy (her father leaves long before she is born), she does paint a vivid picture of another family in Pittman County: Newt Hardbine's. Missy sees many likenesses between herself and Newt. "If you were to look at the two of us [...] you could have pegged us for brother and sister" (9). Due to these similarities, Kingsolver suggests that the events that occur in Newt's family are at least partially responsible for Missy's flight. Missy

relates the story of watching Newt Hardbine's father propelled "over the top of the Standard Oil sign" due to his inability to fill a tire correctly. Despite the comedy provided for the reader, this experience leaves a lasting impression on Missy. "I had this feeling about what Newt's whole life was going to amount to, and I felt sorry for him. Before that exact moment I don't believe I had given much thought to the future" (9).

And it is later, after Newt Hardbine shoots his wife and kills himself, that Missy saves her money in an attempt to leave Pittman County. Jolene, Newt's wife, tells Missy that Newt's father was responsible for everything. She claims that: "he [Newt's father] beat him up, beat her up, and even [...] hit the baby with a coal scuttle" (11). As similarities have already been drawn between Newt and Missy, it is difficult not to see the feelings of being trapped and lost to all opportunity for Newt as well. Escaping "daddy" is seen as a difficult feat, as in Newt's eventual demise, as well as Jolene's challenges of escaping her own father's abuse. Learning Jolene's past, Missy feels she may have been lucky: "I told her I didn't know, because I didn't have a daddy. That I was lucky that way. She said yeah" (11).

In addition to this pressure, Missy is also desperate to escape the pressures to conform to the woman's role in Pittman County, Kentucky. Most of the women at Missy's high school have become pregnant before their senior year, "Believe me in those days the girls were dropping by their wayside like seeds off a poppyseed bun and you learned to look at every day as a prize" (9). Graduating from high school, Missy describes herself as incredibly lucky to have been given a job at the local hospital. In fact, she says that her science teacher who helped her get the job "changed my life, there is no doubt" (9). In an environment where most young girls become pregnant and marry, Missy describes a place where opportunities for a different kind



of life are limited or non-existent. Her mother cleans homes for people in town, and before the hospital, Missy's only options for gaining money are helping her mother with other people's laundry, babysitting, picking bugs of farmers' beans. Missy prizes the job at the hospital, as it contrasts dramatically with the dead end jobs she has had before. She states: "But this was a real job at the Pittman County Hospital, which was one of the most important and cleanest places for about a hundred miles" (9). Missy pursues a life that deviates from the ones around her: "Mama always said barefoot and pregnant was not my style. She knew" (9). Escaping pregnancy, Missy feels she has the opportunity to flee Pittman County and the dim future it represents for her.

Perhaps more telling than the lack of opportunity is the lack of community in Pittman county, Kentucky. Nowhere does Kingsolver describe this southern community in a positive way. Unlike other southern novels rife with the close, sometimes smothering bonds of family and community, Kingsolver describes no close friends or caring extended family in Missy's life. The only positive forces are her mother, who always acted as if her daughter "hung up in the sky and plugged in all the stars", and her teacher who is "from out of state, from some city college up north" (9). They are the only ones described who are able to envision a life larger than Pittman County. Telling, too, is the fact that Missy's teacher is not even from the South. He seems easily able to imagine a larger, more expansive world, due to his outsider's perspective. That a southern community might be found stifling is not necessarily surprising or strange; southern literature abounds with such descriptions. What is considerably more notable is that this small southern county is completely devoid of any representation of community. Perhaps Missy is denied admittance; yet she never mentions a positive view of community for anyone, including her mother or her school friends. Certainly if she were able to accept life in Pittman Count on its

own terms, she might find herself with a larger body of friends. Certainly if she were able to accept life in Pittman County on its own terms, she might find herself with a larger body of friends; however, even those who seem to agree without arguing seem devoid of any support. Regardless of this larger absence found within Pittman County, the focus remains on Missy's lack of community. She has no one if taking out Missy's mother and her northern teacher. Within this environment, Missy Greer is well-fostered to become a self-sufficient and independent individual. She has no real choice. Missy's society prescribes a role that she does not desire and denies her a sense of community. For these reasons, the dream of freedom that has always loomed large for the westering man is now sought by the women in her equally powerful desire to escape. Southern society threatens her vision of personal identity. Flight is essential.

Missy will be like the fish she finds in the "old mud-bottomed ponds" of Kentucky — "The ones nobody was ever going to hook, slipping away under the water like dark-brown dreams" (9). She will not be the "hooked bass" that remains. After working at the hospital for more than five years, she makes enough money to buy a modern-day horse, a "55 Volkswagen bug with no windows to speak of, and no back seat and no starter" (12). She leaves Kentucky unaided and relying on her own abilities: "I would drive west until my car stopped running, and there I would stay" (12). Soon after she leaves, Missy decides she will change her name. She says:

The first was that I would get myself a new name. I wasn't crazy about anything I had been called up to this point in life, and this seemed like the time to make a clean break. I didn't have any special name in mind, but just wanted a change. The more I thought about it, the more it seemed to me that a name is not something a person really has the right

to pick out, but it is something you're provided with more or less by chance. I decided to let the gas tank decide. Wherever it run out, I'd look for a sign. (12)

The name change certainly marks Missy's desire to "re-create" herself, or at least her attempts towards that re-creation, but it also marks Missy's recognition of her own success at leaving Pittman Country, and, similar to other western figures, her ability to claim her own autonomy due to her escape. She chooses the name Taylor. She has fashioned her own name, which denotes not only western movement but also someone empowered and able to adapt or create. This change further marks Taylor as a creative participant in her new identity.

Taylor begins to feel she has left Pittman County behind, she is surprised by a Cherokee woman who emerges out of the night to leave a small child with her as she is leaving a diner. Taylor is confused and muddled about what she should do. A child is not part of her plan, and she quickly feels the promise of her new life threatened, "If I wanted a baby I would have stayed in Kentucky [...] could have had babies coming out of my ears by now" (14). Yet Taylor does not leave the child, and she continues on her journey with baby riding in car. Once she realizes that the child has been abused, Taylor becomes more convinced that she really has no choice, "I thought I knew about every ugly thing that one person does to another, but I had never even thought about such things being done to a baby girl" (16). Finding "bruises and worse" on the child's body, Taylor confronts the dark shadows of abuse which have tormented the child's young life.

Important to note, as well, is the fact that Kingsolver has chosen that the Native American child should be Cherokee. Through this choice, Kingsolver evokes the forced removal of Native Americans from the southeastern part of the United

States, including Cherokee, along the Trail of Tears (1813-1855). Allusions to this historical event intensify Kingsolver's questioning of an American's embedded concept of conquest and control. Arriving in Oklahoma, Taylor states:

It was not a place you'd ever go to live without some kind of lethal weapon aimed at your hind end. It was clear to me that the whole intention of bringing the Cherokees here was to get them to lie down and die without a fight. (13)

Sympathizing with the Native American plight, Taylor is perhaps further moved due to her own belief that she is one-eighth Cherokee. Raised by her mother, Taylor has been brought up to believe that if times grew tough she could always claim her "head rights."

On arriving in Oklahoma, Taylor realizes that these "rights" promise very little. When she writes home she informs her mother, "No offense, but the Cherokee Nation is crap. Headed west" (13). Kingsolver emphasizes the despair Taylor finds at the Oklahoma reservation, "I sat in the parking lot looking out over that godless stretch of nothing and came the closest I have ever come to cashing in and plowing under" (13). What her mother has imagined as possible freedom, Taylor discovers to be stagnation and ultimate despair. Claiming the child, however, ties Taylor to this heritage, regardless of her rejection of reservation life.

Her Journey is radically changed through her meeting with Turtle. The acquisition of the child is pivotal in Kingsolver's novel, for at this point Kingsolver breaks from the archetypal male construction. Soon after receiving the Cherokee child, Taylor names her Turtle due to her powerful grip:

The most amazing thing was the way that child held on. From the first moment I picked it up out of its nest of wet blanket, it attached itself to

me by its little hands like roots sucking on dry dirt. I think it would have been easier to separate me from my hair [...]. You're like a mud turtle. If a mud turtle bites you, it won't let go till it thunders. (16)

Although Kingsolver focuses on the relationships that occur in the human world, she describes these relationships in terms that reflect the natural world. By doing so, Kingsolver compares the connections between people with the relationships essential in the plants and animal world, as seen in Taylor's description of Tuttle's holding on. Despite the fact that the dirt is dry, there is still the powerfully natural connection between soil and plant and the creative act that occurs between the two. Whether between people and plants or between soil and animals, productivity only occurs through relationship. Unlike male archetypal adventures, creation is the goal, rather than acquisition or destruction.

Kingsolver continually mixes and merges images of nature with people. Often the very act of nature described is the spark for bringing the characters together. One such powerful instance occurs when the drought in Tucson finally ends. "Around 4 o'clock we heard thunder. Mattie turned over the 'closed' sign in the window and said "Come on. I want you to smell this" (69). Hustling everyone to come along, Mattie brings Taylor, Lou Anne, Esperanza and Estevan to witness the Indian New Year. Mattie explains to Taylor that "They celebrated it on whatever day the summer's first rain fell" (69). Taylor's small community is again drawn together by nature's instigation. Knocking on her door late at night, Virgie Mae, her older neighbor, comes to announce the appearance of her night-blooming cereus. Gathering up the children, Taylor and Lou Ann walk over to Virgie Mae and Edna's to witness the amazingly rare natural occurrence. "The petals stood out in starry rays, and in the center of each flower there was a complicated construction of silvery threads shaped like a pair of

cupped hands catching moonlight. A fairy boat, ready to be launched into the darkness" (79). Lou Ann states that "it's a sign [...] something good" (79). Occurring in the midst of personal challenges, the cereum unites community and proves the existence of beauty, even in the darkness.

Kingsolver challenges Taylor by confronting her directly with the problems of motherhood as well as her growing comprehension of the difficulties in the world around her. Although these difficulties surround Taylor, she is strengthened by the group that encompasses her due to Turtle's presence. When Taylor has questions about mothering or needs a babysitter, she soon finds support through the women around her.

On first meeting Mattie at Jesus Is Lord Used Tires, Taylor and Mattie develop a bond when discussing the care of Turtle. Mattie quickly informs Taylor, as she gives more juice to the baby, that "It's so dry out here kids will dehydrate real fast [...]. You have to watch out for that" (24). Taylor slowly begins to realize the enormous responsibility she has assumed, "I wondered how many other things were lurking around waiting to take a child's life when you weren't paying attention. I was useless" (24). Fortunately for Taylor, she is surrounded by a group of strong women. Although Taylor's mother is also depicted as a strong woman, community is not described as a source of support in Kentucky. In Tucson, Taylor finds a world where women aid and help those around them. Quickly meeting Lou Ann when she moves to Tucson, Taylor shares rent with her in order for the two women to afford raising small children as single parents. Child care and meals are often shared, and the burden seems lighter due to the bond that grows between these two strangers. Lou Ann and Taylor soon meet others who are invited to share meals and discuss their lives and personal struggles.

One evening Estevan tells South American, wild *Indian* story about heaven and hell which epitomizes Kingsolver's growing point concerning the bonds and need of community:

If you go to visit hell, you will see a room like this kitchen. There is a pot of delicious stew on the table, with the most delicate aroma you can imagine. All around, people sit, like us. Only they are dying of starvation [...]. They are starving because they only have spoons with very long handles [...]. With these ridiculous, terrible spoons, the people in hell can reach into the pot but they cannot put the food in their mouths. Oh, how hungry they are [...] you can visit heaven [...]. You see a room just like the first one, the same table, the same pot of stew, the same spoons as long as a sponge mop. But these people are all happy and fat [...]. Why do you think? He pinched up a chunk of pineapple in his chopsticks, neat as you please, and reached all the way across the table to offer it to Turtle. She took it like a newborn bird  
(48)

Struggles still surround, yet the community members are able to make their way with each other's help. Amid these powerful women is Mattie, the matriarchal leader who runs the used tire shop. Although Mattie runs her own business, she also uses her store as a sanctuary for illegal aliens. Providing food and care for those who need it, Mattie's home and business thrive as a means of support for those who find themselves hiding from the law. Mattie's ability to repair and sell tires emerges as a fitting metaphor symbolizing the importance of action. This is seen most clearly through Mattie's ability to "control" tires. This power scares Taylor initially, as she is haunted by Newt Harbine's father's inability to control them. However, Mattie is able

to rid Taylor of her fears, and ultimately teach her the importance and need for the power tires possess, if one only knows how to control them.

Throughout the novel, we find Taylor as a resilient protagonist. By fleeing her home, Taylor intends to escape the seemingly narrow life that her peers in Pittman County lead. But ironically, in her new life in Arizona. She ends up with a child and employed at a used tire repair shop. She tells Estevan :

There was no way on earth I could explain what I felt, that my whole life had been running along on dumb luck and I hadn't even noticed. For me even bad luck brings good things [...]. I threw out a rocker arm on my car and I got Turtle. I drove over broken glass on an off ramp and found Mattie [...]. Do you know, I spent the first half of my life avoiding motherhood and tires, and now I'm counting them as blessings. (59)

Taylor is a survivor and makes the best of her circumstances. She values loyalty and community, and in spite of her long held desire to avoid motherhood, is fully committed to raising Turtle. She learns about nurturing and mothering from Mattie and Lou Ann, and she discovers through Estevan and Esperanza that her life has not been nearly as difficult as she has, often thought. She now realizes that the things she'd tried her hardest to avoid exploding tires and motherhood have become blessings because she has met Mattie and has Turtle.

Much of the male western concept has been founded on the desire to explore adventure on the edges of a shifting frontier. As men gain and cultivate, the frontier moves outward, while civilization slowly follows. Male characters must travel farther and farther away from civilization in order to confront those explores this occurrence; however, she finds a movement which shifts inward as opposed to one that continues



outward. The dangers come from areas close to home, those areas which have already been settled and defined as safe. For Taylor, adventures emerge in the challenge to survive within the domestic frontier. Although in Taylor's "adventure" the landscape no longer presents an overt threat, the landscape does hide would-be molesters who jeopardize the physical as well as the spiritual growth of children. Escaping one danger that occurs within her biological family, Turtle is further abused by an unknown assailant's attack. While Taylor is at work, Edna, an older blind neighbor, takes Turtle to the park. During their day there, Edna hears that Turtle is being attacked, yet even with her blindness she is able to strike the attacker with her cane and drive him away. Those places which appear to be the safest may hide dark elements of violence and even a blind Edna have the potentiality to fight against.

Taylor's adventures multiply as she gains a greater understanding of the challenges of those individuals who live around her. Her naiveté quickly explodes when she learns of the plight of illegal aliens like Estevan, who tells Taylor one evening what happened to him and his wife in Guatemala. After the police killed Estevan's brother and two of his friends, they looked to Esperanza and Estevan for the names of the remaining members of a teacher's union to which they belonged. Refusing to release the seventeen names, Estevan and Esperanza's child was taken from them as a leveraging tool. Without proof of the malevolent treatment which awaits their return to Central America, Estevan and Esperanza become fugitives who must hide from an American government which refuses them aid. Threatened with removal, the illegal aliens depend upon Taylor's ability to guide them to a sanctuary hidden from the law. Opening her eyes to the world around her, Taylor vents her frustration with those who question the safety of such an expedition:

Just stop it okay? Estevan and Esperanza are my fiends. And, even if they weren't, I can't see why I shouldn't do this. If I saw somebody was going to get hit by a truck I'd push them out of the way. Wouldn't anybody? It's a sad day for us all if I'm being a hero here. (79)

Taylor is confronted with the fact that she must finally grow up and face the real world, which is often dangerous and cruel. There seems no need to look very far for adventure. Dangers and threats circle and impinge on life for the individual and the community, even in the perceived safety of society.

It is through the experience that Taylor is empowered. Facing a role she initially tried so doggedly to avoid, Taylor has been initiated in the role of mother. Through this acceptance of responsibility she has dramatically transformed a small, abused, silent little girl into a growing child who is able to play, sing, and dance. Yet Turtle's life is not the only life to be transformed; Taylor has also created a new identity for herself by becoming a mother. She has turned her back on an individualistic approach for one of nurturing help and assistance through community. As the traditional male approach depicts the need of males to explore their own individual desires and powers, it also depicts a turning away from social responsibility. Desiring freedom from the demands that such a responsibility entails, men have exemplified an individualistic search. Although Kingsolver describes a similar desire to explore individual pursuits, she does not depict a woman who is able to turn her back on responsibility. Through this acceptance, Taylor gains the powers of motherhood, as well as the essential powers of community.

This delicate natural system is described by Taylor to Turtle when she attempts to define their family. Similar to the Cherokee creation myth, ideas of

community and the natural world are again combined. Taylor explains all these connections to Turtle when she questions her about their family:

But this is the most interesting part: wisteria vines, like other legumes, often thrive in poor soil, the book said. Their secret is something called rhizobia. These are microscopic bugs that live underground in little knots on the roots. They suck nitrogen gas right out of the soil and turn it into fertilizer for the plant. [...] "It's like this [...] There's a whole invisible system for helping out the plant that you'd never guess is there" I loved this idea. "It's just the same as with people. The way Edna has Virgie, and Virgie has Edna, and Sandi has Kid Central Station, and everybody has Mattie. And on and on." This wisteria vines on their own would just barely get by, is how I explained it to Turtle, but put them together with rhizobia and they make miracles. (96)

The symbol with the best potential for development is rhizobia, the microbe that lives on the roots of the wisteria and provides a direct infusion of nitrogen in the most hostile of environments. The rhizobia is a fitting symbol for systems of mutual support that constitute the thematic life blood of the novel. The symbiotic relationship between the rhizobia and the wisteria vines represents the theme of the interdependency between people in a community. The bean trees or wisteria, that are able to thrive in non-fertile soil similar to a bird that builds its nest in a cactus symbolize the resiliency and ability to thrive that the characters in the novel possess.

*The Bean Trees* shows several successful female characters. Among two important male characters, Dwayne Ray is an infant who is too young for significant progress and Estevan is essentially a static character who is revealed but not allowed to develop and change. Turtle's change from an almost catatonic, harshly abused

infant into a normal child who is able to respond naturally and happily to the world around her, secure in the care of people who love her. Most significant are the experiences of political activism, love and loss, and motherhood of Taylor. From the beginning she is an independent and courageous young woman, but she learns much about the pain that goes with freedom, and she finds in herself the ability to behave with dignity when her desires are counter to her knowledge of what is right. Deeply loving Estevan, for example, she never makes any attempt to win him away from Esperanza.

Most of the women characters in the novel are liberated from subjugation. They are resilient enough to encounter with adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or stress. Kingsolver poses Taylor as a perfect model to break male archetypes. Finding Mattie, her surrogate mother, and Lou Ann, her surrogate sister, as well as Turtle, her foster and then adopted daughter, enables her to establish a family that is broader than the birth family which consisted of only herself and her mother. It is notable that Taylor is not rewarded by the love of a man. Lou Ann, no longer grieving for the loss of Angel or fearful of being alone, and Taylor, having said goodbye to Estevan who she loved rightly depicts feminist resiliency. The women in the novel are able to dismantle socio-cultural male ideologies. They even form a female community excluding male's active involvement.

#### IV. Conclusion

After the detailed discussion and analysis of Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees*, the researcher reaches to the conclusion that Taylor's role as an adventurer and an active member of a community gives a new identity to a female character. To get rid of pregnancy, she explores to a new place leaving her home and family behind. On the contrary, she adopts down-trodden baby at the end of the novel. Taylor has performed against the patriarchal norms and values on the level of family and household activities, gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity and economy. Through Taylor, Kingsolver is able to express a female voice that has heretofore been lost or subsumed by the white male experience.

In the novel, Taylor evokes her journey push-starting her car. The kind of relationship between a woman and her car that is depicted in *The Bean Trees* challenges assumptions about male power, which is often connected with almost secretive knowledge and brute strength. The car is particularly powerful symbol, in that it represents a person's ability to leave and go long distances easily and independently. For Taylor, the car becomes a domestic space; baby Turtle is left in the car and it acts as place for Taylor to sleep.

It is because of their resilient choices that female characters survive in the novel. Each of their choices is difficult but a choice has to be made, and each of these choices has changed the character's life and defined the character as a resilient female. In her novel, Kingsolver creates strong-minded, independent women in search of a better life. She inverts the usual pattern in order to explore the female's search for identity. Taylor left Pittman county to avoid pregnancy. She has fashioned her a new name, which denotes not only her journey to explore but also someone empowered

and able to adapt or create. The changes further marks Taylor as a creative participant in her new identity.

Her journey is radically changed through her meeting with Turtle. The acquisition of the child is pivotal in Kingsolver's novel, for at this point she breaks from the archetypal male construction. Soon after receiving the Cherokee child, Taylor names her Turtle due to her powerful grip. Kingsolver challenges Taylor by confronting her directly with the problem of motherhood as well as her growing comprehension of the difficulties in the world around her. Although those difficulties surround Taylor, she is strengthened by the group that encompasses her due to Turtle's presence. Unlike male archetypal adventures, creation is her goal rather than acquisition or destruction.

By presenting female characters such as Taylor, Taylor's mother, and Mattie, the car repair shop owner, Kingsolver slightly changes women's traditional roles. This is because all three women take on the mother role while also displaying skills in handling car maintenance and repair, a traditionally male domain. Taylor's mother supports herself and her daughter and challenges her to learn how to maintain the used car Taylor has purchased. Mattie, the tire shop owner, exhibits care-giving tendencies in her sheltering of Latin American refugees. Taylor, who eventually takes a job with Mattie, becomes a mother in the novel ironically as she is trying to escape the future of many of her peers in Kentucky of becoming pregnant at a young age. In addition, the novel represents a departure from the historical and popular convention of the happy marriage as ending, Taylor loves Estevan but she does not want to win him from his wife. Thus in the novel; despite its depiction of single motherhood and divorce women are portrayed as resilient figure.

The point is that Taylor finds believable strength from her connections with others. Without her relationship with Mattie, Lou Ann, Estevan and Esperanza, Taylor would never have been able to legally adopt Turtle. And without Turtle, she could never have been the main ingredient of the novel. Without these connections Taylor would not have been able to find what she was seeking, a place where she belonged, a place where she could be herself, rather than a young woman whose identity was based largely upon resistance and resiliency.

To put it in a nutshell, Kingsolver has shown her concerns on feminism through the characterization of Taylor Greer with a strong-willed and unpredictable young female character, who leaves her home to begin a new life for herself. To show the subversion of patriarchal norms, Kingsolver portrays other female characters empowered through economic freedom. Kingsolver arms Taylor with masculinist traits to subvert male-centred world. Taylor is self-reliant, sexually liberated and free-thinking autonomous female. Issue of feminism is vibrant in the novel which reveals through the resilient choices that the female characters made during their hard times and able to cope with the challenges of social conventions and patriarchal domination.

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