

**Tribhuvan University**

**Memory, History, and Community: Ground Orientation in Barbara  
Kingslover's *Animal Dreams***

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University,  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in English**

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**Letter of Recommendation**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the notion of “ground orientation” in Barbara Kingslover’s novel *Animal Dreams*. Central to “ground orientation,” is the idea of interrelatedness across the community based on an awareness of the past, of the environment and the ground beneath our feet. The novel’s interwoven theme of “ground orientation” is revealed by Codi and Homer’s different but interdependent narratives. These narratives explore their individual and collective identities, through a combination of memories grounded in the characters’ reality than others. Memories are explored to reveal not only the importance of recollections but also to inform the characters’ personal and political present and to reveal further the limitations of personal memory. Somewhere between Codi and Homer’s narratives lies the history the Nolines and of Grace. It is only by putting their memories together; Kingsolver reveals the importance of broader community and history.

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## I. Ground Orientation: Community, Memory and the Sense of Belonging

“Ground orientation” is understood in relation to the community and environmental, as well as in political and familial contexts. The word “orientation” itself suggests a process of continual negotiation and analysis, rather than a fixed acceptance of how community is defined in *Animal Dreams*. Codi’s search for “ground orientation” is guided by memories and understanding of self and community. While Hallie leaves her comfortable life in Tucson for a Nicaraguan farm and Codi leaves her boy friend Carlo to return to Grace, Codi suggests that both the sisters “both headed home”(8). This awareness of self and community is further explored in the thesis as Ground Orientation, which contains Codi’s description of Loyd’s awareness and of his environment and of his family’s participation in the traditions of their pueblo community. Community relies upon the bonds of family in *Animal Dreams*. Loyd says that he and Leander were “one boy in two skins,” to which Codi replies, “Hallie and I feel that way sometimes” (207). Parallel sibling relationship mirror the macropolitical elements of the plot. More effectively, Codi’s love for Loyd supports her understanding of Pueblo traditions and Hallie’s letters from Nicaragua expand her sister Codi’s awareness of other communities.

The value of individual as part of wider community is elevated in both Kingsolver’s fiction and non-fiction. Every individual endeavour is presented in relation to its effect on the wider group, and groups effects on an individual . Codi’s water project with her biology pupils, for example, reveals that pollution has affected the whole valley and which results in a community campaigns. Similarly, the Grace women’s emphasis on the need to save the water supply allows Codi to learn the truth about her mother’s death and her own family connections to the town. The novel’s interwoven theme of “ground orientation” is revealed

by Codi and Homer's different but interdependent narratives. These narratives explore their individual and collective identities, through a combination of memories grounded in the characters' reality than others. Memories are explored to reveal not only the importance of recollections but also to inform the characters' personal and political present and to reveal further the limitations of personal memory. Somewhere between Codi and Homer's narratives lies the history the Nelines and of Grace. It is only by putting their memories together.

Kingsolver reveals the importance of broader community and history. The author's Note to *Animal Dreams* blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction even as it attempts to differentiate between the two. Kingsolver asserts that "Grace Arizona, and its railroad depot are imaginary as is Santa Rosalia Pueblo, although it resembles the *Keresan* pueblos of northern New Mexico. Other places and crises in the book are actual" (127-133). It can be taken as a real assertion. It is the parallels with the "actual" which underpin the "authenticity" of the political concerns of the characters. Kingsolver further introduces issues in a local context, such as the description of agricultural communities in Nicaragua, Native American reservation environments and local water supplies affected by mining pollution.

This thesis examines the representation of community, memory and belonging in *Animal Dreams* in relation to Kingsolver's desire to answer political questions. Kingsolver strategically raises the political issues to appeal the larger readership in order to raise awareness of her chosen issues. In this regard, this thesis also explores the author's use of political issues in the form of forceful prose and the voices of "ordinary" characters such as schoolteacher Codi and the various positions that mark her work: liberal, feminist and environmentalist.

*Animal Dreams* reflects the themes of memory, safety and mourning, and the struggle to reconnect with others in spite of serious distrust. The novel confirms Judith Herman's view that these motifs describe stages of recovery for trauma survivors (155), but Codi also dramatizes the universal character of these humans needs. *Animal Dreams* acknowledges such in its central character Cosima Noline, whose story emerges through a split narrative, alternating between her first-person account and third person narration that presents her father's perspective. Codi returns to her hometown of Grace, Arizona, in the mid-1980s because her much-loved sister Hallie has left the house they shared in Tucson, going to Nicaragua as an agricultural expert. In addition their father Homer, still practicing medicine in Grace, has developed signs of Alzheimers. As Codi gradually reveals her persistent problems with memory, Kingsolver's narrative unfolds the troubled daughter and her distant, disoriented father. Characterized by inability to remember and a sudden overpowering flood of memory and feelings, Codi's narrative uncovers the intensity of her fear. Codi and her father's perspective show that the present crisis is rooted in the memories of losses in the past- the death of Codi's mother when she was three and that of a child. She miscarries a child secretly when she was fifteen, a daughter who appears frequently in the dreams. Homer Noline's present-tense narrative that focuses on memories but confuses them with present interactions, conveys her sense of life through the story. She tells to impose an order. Her father's thoughts reveal certain aspects of Codi's past that she has repressed. But an ability to bring order to his memories and impressions like Codi.

Faced with Hallie's dangerous journey and possible loss, Codi makes her own journey to the place where she experienced the traumatic losses of her mother and her child. Through this journey, She also returns to her high school (as a biology teacher, for one school year) and eventually to her relationship with Loyd Peregrine, the man who had unknowingly impregnated her when they were high school students. Codi's attraction back to Loyd precisely fits the psychology of reenactment explained by Herman and others-the

need to master a wounding experience of the past (Herman 41). In *Fiction and Repetition*, Hills Miller suggests another way in which the returns effected through memory and reenactment can be deeply satisfying. Such repetitions can accomplish as in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* a "raising of the dead" the return of beloved people who have been lost (Miller 178). Even if painful, returns of the past through memory can sometimes be the only way to remain connected with those we have lost, a view expressed by a Vietnam Veteran: "I do not want to take drugs for my night-mares, because I must remain a memorial to my dead friends" (qtd. in Caruth, Preface vii). Codi's narrative reveals emotionally charged adherence to such remembering and grieving.

Memory and emotion in *Animal Dreams* mirror issues raised by Judith Herman, who suggests that repressed memories may return through "observance of holidays and special occasions," along with "viewing photographs, constructing a family tree, or visiting the site of childhood experiences" (185). One of the novel's evocative sequences generates the powerful effect of returning to a place of great pain. After spending her second day in "Grace shopping with Emelina, meeting people she doesn't remember, Codi describes her overcharged response: "Grace was a memory mine field; just going into the Baptist Grocery with Emelina had charged me with emotions and a hopelessness I couldn't name" (46). That night unable to sleep properly, Codi goes out after midnight to try to find the road "to Doc Homer's" (47). This dream-like scene reveals the complex, obscure nature of her memories along with a startling gap in her memory, as revealing as any slip of the tongue:

"I wasn't ready to go (to Doc Homer's) yet, but I had to make sure I knew the way. I couldn't ask Emelina for directions to my own childhood name; I didn't want her to know how badly dislocated I was. I'd always had trouble recalling certain specifics of childhood, but didn't realize until now that I

couldn't even recognize them at point-blank range. Infact, I felt like the victim of a head injury". (47)

Finally, admitting that "Doc Homer's" is her "own childhood home" Codi shows that she has no idea how to find the house where she lived until she was eighteen. And when she seeks this house-secretly, in the middle of the night-she thinks instead of the field where her mother died recalling the scene in rich, visual detail, including the stretcher "like a fragile, important package," the helicopter "sending out currents of air across the alfalfa field behind the hospital," and the "alfalfa plants show their sivery undersides in patterns that looked like waves," so that the field become the ocean "I'd seen in story books, here in the middle of the desert, like some miracle" (48).

Since Codi was "home with a babysister" when this occurred, she accepts that these vivid memory is actually one of her many "fabrications based on stories I'd heard" (48), suggesting the self-doubts of incest survivors whose memories are denied. Yet remembering her mother's strong will shown in her refusal to fly, leads Codi to see how she herself differs from Hallie in having known their mother as a "Ferociously loving" presence, something Codi "tried to preserve" and be for Hallie though feeling she "couldn't get it right" (49). This memory reestablishes a connection between her mother, her self, and Hallie that seems to enable her to find her father's house. Codi says : "I stopped suddenly in the center of the road, in the moon's bright light, with shadow trickling down hill from my heels like the water Witcher's well spring finally struck open. I'd found the right path" (50). Codi repeatedly associates memories with imagery of water in the desert, suggesting their preciousness and life-sustaining power.

*Animal Dream* revisits the same Arizona mining country with its depiction of the fictional town of Grace, as it faces the economic and environmental threat posed by an

unnamed mining corporation in 1985-6. The novel's perspective alternates between that of returning local Codi and Homer. Taking a job teaching biology at her former high school, Codi moves into a small house in her old friend Emelina's backyard and dedicates herself in the community while facing up to uncomfortable memories of teenage miscarriage and her mother's death. Together with a group of local women, Codi helps Grace fight the pollution of its water supply. Codi's loyalty to her community awakening campaign to preserve environment coincides with her romantic involvement with Loyd Peregrina, a Native American environmentalist and high school sweetheart (295-96). Codi Noline further says : " I was getting a dim comprehension of the difference between Hallie and me. It wasn't a matter of courage or dreams, but something a whole lot simpler. A pilot would call it ground orientation. I'd spent a long time circling above the clouds looking for life while Hallie was living it (77)". Codi's realization that her sister Hallie's active political engagement secures the "ground orientation" which she also carves exemplifies the political values at the heart of *Animal Dreams*. In Codi's description, Hallie is loved by all who meet her; she has a clear memory of her past, and as an asset to the translocal communities of which she is a member. She houses political refugees in Tuckson, works on a farm in Nicaragua, and her letters make her a constant presence in Codi's Arizona life. For a self-confessed "homer-ignorant" (77), Hallie's "ground orientation" is a sense of belonging to a political, environmental and cultural community.

In the novel, Kingsolver uses inter-and intra-textual narratives, and interrelated characters to blur the line between fact and fiction. These techniques direct Codi's political and environmental search for "ground orientation,". Central to "ground orientation," is the idea of interrelatedness across the community based on an awareness of the past, of the environment and the ground beneath our feet.

This thesis while focusing on Codi's ground orientation analyzes the theme of belonging through community and memory while examining the defining structural and intertextual techniques which shape her narrative style. Kingsolver's *Animal Dream* speaks to her negotiation of history and memory through the distinctive preoccupation with "ground orientation".

Ground orientation employs a historicist perspective which, as Fredric Jameson suggests, makes our reading of the past "vitally dependent on our experience of the present" (11). In keeping with Jameson's recognition of the importance of the contemporary in our understanding and representation of the past. This thesis argues that Codi's adult experiences shape her representation of childhood memories. Kingsolver's representation of the political struggles of mining communities of Arizona in the 1980s is not only shaped by the present, but also informs readers about the history that underpins current struggles. This symbolic relationship between past and present is particularly evident in *Animal Dreams* also contributes to the notion of interrelatedness that this thesis posits as fundamental to the ability of Kingsolver's political and popular fiction to raise awareness of the author's chosen issues. Moreover, women's activism in *Animal Dreams* emphasizes the importance of families and communities. *Animal Dreams* privileges protagonist Codi and the female members of the community. In *the novel* female characters are significant in saving the town from the poisoned water. It is a political rather than solely a gender issue which characterizes the struggle of a small town against a politically powerful bureaucratic corporation.

In *Animal dreams*, through familiar female voices such as matriarch Dona Althea, giving more time to the family than the profession, Kingsolver's women challenge political and social hierarchies, fighting injustice in their local communities. Women offer alternative ways of approaching old problems, often through seemingly small actions such as crafting a

traditional piñata or turning out on a (traditionally masculine) picket line each day. Female characters such as Dona Althea faces her past in order to construct hopeful futures on a personal and a broader political level. The experiences of female protagonist as depicted in *Animal Dreams* underpins the structure and theme of the novel. In *Animal Dreams* Codi describes settlements “torn up when (Fictional mining company) Black Mountain chased a vein of copper,” and claims that “not even the graveyards were sacred” (161). The old men in *Animal Dreams* discuss the pollution of Grace’s orchards by the mine’s “leaching operation” (63).

*Animal Dreams* thus presents the subtle connections and complexities of plot and themes. Lisa see, in *Publishers Weekly* argues that Kingsolver had “taken all of her previous themes native Americans, us involvement in Nicaragua, environmental issues, parental relationship woman’s taking charge of their own lives-tossed them into a literary pot and created a perfectly constructed novel” (46). However, this present research focuses on the issue of how the memory and a history hunt the protagonist, and how with the help of network of community she is able to reconstruct her identify.

## **II. Memory, History and Community: “Ground Orientation in *Animal Dreams*”**

The idea of “ground orientation” in *Animal Dreams* depends not only on representations of home, but also on recognition of environmental connectedness. Emelina even points out that Codi is “like that Thoreau guy that lived on Walden Pond” (76), living in her Spartan cabin in the orchard and generating environmental awareness. Land and community are configured as sources of belonging as confirmed by Codi’s realization. Codi

comes to equate the environment with rootedness and secure identity when all other social codes seem to be constantly shifting.

*Animal Dreams* opens with a chapter from Homer. "The Night of All Souls" describes Homer's memory of his daughters' alienation from him, and his fears for their future-tragedies of which he is only now aware. The two pages of Homer's chapter are dominated by words associated with death and sorrow, notably "cemetery", "skull", "bodies", "corpse-like", "pain", "disease", "weep" and "grave" (3-4), as he describes the sisters' closeness as a vulnerability which will give them pain in later life. He notes how "close together" his daughters are, "how much they have to lose", and "how much they have already lost in their lives to come" (4). His fear and cold approach to parenting that results ensures that a loving father-daughter relationship is what Codi and Hallie have already lost in their lives to come. Codi loses her child, and both Hallie and Homer die before the novel's end but *Animal Dreams* concludes optimistically as Codi Settles happily into a relationship with Loyd in Grace.

*Animal Dreams* emphasizes upon an inevitable and necessary part of ecology. While the novel opens with Homer firmly in place as the parent, it ends with Codi's chapter "The Day of All Souls", suggesting a shift towards her as the family's authority figure and future. Homer's increasingly confused memories and persistent denial of family is initially entangled with Codi's isolated teenaged years and the loss of her child. However, Codi re-engages with the people of Grace and connects with her ancestry, as she comes to understand the "ground orientation" which also grounds her life in Grace.

The sense of belonging of Codi to nature is the environmental link which connects her to the society from which she has felt like an outcast. When she becomes pregnant as a teenager it makes her feel "important and similar to other," a feeling that both "lures" and "terrifies" (52). But when Codi loses her child, she also loses touch with her hometown,

running away with a man (Carlo) who promises but never delivers the answers to life's questions. Telling childhood friend Emelina that having children means "you've got something to show for yourself (42), Codi's self-imposed "outsider's" status is confirmed by her association of progeny with belonging.

Codi fears she has nothing to show for her years of study and travel. In fact, she quits medical training only months before she would have become fully qualified, following an incident with a premature baby which mirrors her own traumatic experience. In contrast to motherhood as a marker of social value and acceptance, Codi's descriptions of her unborn baby and of her mother's death following Hallie's birth represent childbirth and motherhood as a source of trauma. The explicit link between family and "ground orientation" is tempered by this associated risk of trauma. Such tension between desire for and fear of intimate familial connection underpins Codi's characterization the novel's father / daughter narrative structure, and by finally Kingsolver's representation of home.

*Animal Dreams* suggests that activism can be effective with Codi achieving both political justice (the mines leaching operation is stopped) and personal sense of belonging (she decides to make her home in Grace). The medium of fiction enables Kingsolver to imagine, and possibly even begin to effect change in a way that isn't possible in her non-fiction. In her introduction to *Holding the Line*, Kingsolver defends her didacticism and subjectivity, asserting that "objectivity may only be possible for their trust" in those who have intentions" (XVII). Unlike her fictional characters, which can be moulded to effect the change encouraged by such "intentions," the women in *Holding the Line* are not Kingslover's inventions. Their fight for justice, community and environment, however, is representative of the political issues at the heart of the author's subsequent fiction.

In an interview with Donna Perry, Kinsolver claims that growing up in "an impoverished, rural place," with its resulting strong sense of community, is what encourages

her to “celebrate dependency” in fiction (145-146). In *Animal Dreams*, Hallie’s ability to see the ways in which she is dependent upon a larger community entails her decision to put her life in danger in Nicaragua, in a political gesture of solidarity. It is this dual awareness that secures her “ground orientation”. Hallie epitomizes the novel’s major idea and Codi approaches it; her negotiation is the reader’s way into the issues, at once more conflicted and more tentative than Hallie’s.

*Animal Dreams* represents multiple, overlapping communities of characters’ variously identified by race, gender, class and local environment. These micro-communities include the young men working on the railroad, the women sneaking food into Homer’s fridge by way of thanks for his years of medical service, and the piñata-making Stich and Bitch club. They intersect with groups of MTV-obsessed teenagers at Codi’s school and Loyd’s pueblo family. Each group is distinct, yet interrelated through the water supply and the threat posed by the mining company. Like the “ordinary” people that Kingsolver claims to write for, they share common community interests including the health of their environment.

Kingsolver’s non-fictional account of the 1983 mining strike does diverge from *Animal Dreams* in its emphasis on the Arizona communities’ isolation. Unlike the women of Ajo and Morenci, the Grace women are imaginatively linked to the wider world. They visit Tucson to spread the story of pollution in Grace and their message reaches the rest of America through TV coverage. Codi’s links to Hallie in Nicaragua represent further translocal connections between seemingly distant communities. In Kingsolver’s fiction, the tension between writing for a reader and writing for a political agenda is unsurprisingly more pronounced. This tension between reader appeal and political didacticism is eased by Kingsolver’s construct of “Ground Orientation” as a perception of home based on a combination of individual and collective identity markers and an engagement with the past.

Memory, either as a theoretical construct or a stylistic tool with which to characterize Codi's preoccupations, structures *Animal Dreams*. As such, it is necessary to elaborate my use of memory in relation to existing theoretical frameworks. There has been a vast amount of work on memory, some of which is touched on in the introduction, but this chapter focuses on Kingsolver's use of memory to represent the "facts" of history, and the influence of the past on the present for both her characters and her readers.

In *Animal Dreams*, memory is the recognition of the political in representations of the past. Fredric Jameson, a Marxist literary critic posits the political interpretation of literary texts not as "some supplementary method" but rather "the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation" (17). This particular aspect of Jameson's critical framework serves to illuminate the political contexts of author and characters. Kingsolver's fiction both adheres to and perpetuates such political methodology, particularly in the way it deals with memory and the past.

Private memory in *Animal Dreams* focuses on two narrative perspectives alternating between past and present. Such personal versions of the past contain within them the seeds of public political awakening. Codi is personally attached to the topography of Grace with the river in particular featuring as a powerful image in her childhood memories. Codi describes:

In one of the dreams I run along the creek bank looking among the boulders. They are large and white, and the creek is flooded, just roaring, and I know I've left a baby out there. I thrash my way through mesquite thickets, stooping often to listen, hearing nothing but the roar of the water. I feel

frantic until finally I see her in the middle of the water bobbing like a  
Cortland apple, little and red and bright. (51)

This describes Codi's rearing nightmares of lolling her baby among the large white boulders. This dream reflects the fusion of fact and fiction within the world of the novel. Codi's memories of burying her child in the bank of creek are combined with the traumatic memory of being trapped by a flood while trying to save coyote puppies with Hallie. Codi's emerging sense of the influence of her past on her present identity is summarized in her observation that memory "is complicated thing a relative to truth but not its twin" (48). She translates this emerging relationship with her memories of Grace into political action designed to reveal the truth of the river's pollution, politicizing her biology class and inspiring the woman of the Stich and Bitch club to protest.

*Animal Dreams* depicts how communities and cultural influences can enable traumatized people to connect with their past and with other people, thus finding value in their lives however much has been destroyed or lost. The novel presents such influences through prominent depictions of rituals. Psychiatrist Marten devries highlights the importance of rituals for individuals and communities affected by traumatic events. He notes that "both long-established ceremonies and informal gatherings at a symbolic place—a church, tree, or schoolyard—can help reconnect individuals as a community, reestablishing their sense of being part of the social order and life cycle" (407-08). *Animal Dreams* retains this effect of rituals by focusing on Codi's relationship to others during three celebrations of All Souls' Day. As Rubenstein observes (14), these events structure the novel, occurring in chapter 1, chapter 14 (a midpoint), and chapter 28 (the final chapter). Beginning with Homer's memory of the last All Souls' festivities he allowed for his daughter, these three chapters suggest that Codi is deeply drawn to the yearly rite because it expresses ties with

community and ancestors which her father has denied and ancestors which her father has denied and effaced, but which she finally recovers.

The novel's last chapter, "Day of All Souls," conveys in its title the inclusiveness of relationship Codi has sought. The chapter depicts November 2, 1989, more than two years after the story's main events, a day that reveals how Codi, pregnant and tending her father's grave among those of the other Nolinás, has become fully reconnected with her community and the cycle of generations. But this "particular day in 1989" is also chosen by Codi for her return to her "mother's death site, with the woman who took her secretly to witness that departure"(339). Thus Codi ends her narrative with a long-denied, long-cherished memory, and her new understanding of it: "Thus is what I remember: viola is holding my hand.[...]. I can see my mother there, a small white bundle with nothing left, and I can see that it isn't a tragedy we're watching, really. Just a finished life" (342). Through the novel's key words, describing how the helicopter, "empty and bright, [...] rises like a soul" (342), Kingsolver suggests that Codi's participation with others in rituals of memory and mourning enables her to release her grief for her mother, as though she can finally take her dream about carrying her fully grown daughter and hear Hallie says, "Let her go. Let go. She'll rise" (301).

Kingsolver's description of the women Codi talks to on the bus as she leaves Grace embodies the possible limitation of such rigid uses of history. The woman knows about the town's piñata campaign against river pollution from watching the local news, and empathizes with Codi about the plight of the community. However, she is entirely ignorant of the American actions in Nicaragua which result in Hallie's death. Codi says "That's the great American disease, we forgot we watch the disasters parade on TV, and every time we say: Forget it. This is somebody else's problem" (316). In this example, Kingsolver signals both the importance and the limitations of personalizing the past. Codi's personal shock at the women's ignorance of foreign policy mirrors the political reaction encouraged in the reader.

Moreover it emphasizes the influence of distant political conflicts upon the local, and the wider global s context of local actions.

Kingsolver in *Animal Dreams* emphasizes on selective and personal forms of memory through an awareness of Sigmund Freud's theory of "Screen Memory". Freud suggests that screen memories are "displaced memories from which the essential element has for the most part been omitted" (310). Important or possibly traumatic memories are displaced into "safe" or manageable ones which, upon recollection, would seem to be unconnected to the original event. In exposing the limitations of the knowledge of the women on the bus, Kingsolver's narrative justifies that the story of the women of Grace and the situation in Nicaragua are part of the same historical moment. It also posits that such seemingly positive public memories as the triumph of Grace over corporate mining act as political screen memory: not to protect an individual from a traumatic childhood memory but to shield the public from fully seeing itself.

The positive and negative features of the past in *Animal Dreams* suggests that reading of the past necessitates both an admission and understanding. Codi engages with previously buried positive and negative memories in order to uncover the "screen memory" surrounding the death of her mother. Codi's positive memories include the community network that cared for her while she was growing up, but are tempered by her painful recollection of the Afghan quilt used to wrap the body of her miscarried child for burial. Adrienne Rich, as feminist asserts, "we can't have a history if we want only to hear the tales of our best moments, our finest hours" (144). Codi rails against the screen memories prevalent in nostalgia and, in the light of Rich's argument, offers a fuller representation of the past by doing so.

Hommer in *Animal Dreams* revisits the past to try to control the present. Hommer fulfils his need for a usable past with photograph which "begin in memory" and allows him

to “photograph the past” (138), but also by deceiving his daughters about their own family origins. Codi interprets it jeopardizing their sense of history in order to reimagine the past more favourably in shaping the present. The old women of Grace worry that Emelina’s boys are “losing touch with their past” and seem to consider it a community duty to remind shared past and by extension, their shared future too (110).

As Arthur Schlesinger Jr. claims in his study of the challenges of US multiculturalism, “history is to the nation rather as memory is to the individual. As an individual deprived of memory becomes distorted and lost, not knowing where he has been or where he is going, so a nation denies a conception of its future”(52). Kingsolver privileges the historical “fact” over nostalgia through characters like Codi, whose awareness of environmental interrelatedness is depicted as essential to the survival of the town of Grace. Codi realizes that community members can’t be “amnesiacs,” proceeding as if there were no other day but today”(240-41). It is a statement which emphasizes the direct association Kingsolver makes between awareness of the past and future environmental survival. In connection the past and future of American community through narrative of environmental interrelatedness, the collective nature of memory emerges as a dominant trope.

Kingsolver incorporates certain notions on collective memory developed by French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. He argues that individual memory is dependent on the “frameworks of social memory”(182). Based on this idea, Kingsolver represents Codi’s identity as bound to the memory of her past, which in turn can only be disclosed by her re-engagement with the society of Grace. Halbwachs’ *On Collective Memory* further argues that “the present affects the way in which societies remember the past” and the idea that collective memory is “culturally specific, responding to the needs of a particular society at a particular time”(11). In the novel, Doña Althea’s recounting of the collective memory of the

genesis of the town of Grace, as told to a CBS news crew, offers a fictional representation of Halbwach's theoretical proposition.

The need for Doña Althea to tell this story is not only to fulfill the CBS News quota of "local color" and promote national awareness of town's plight (164), it also meets the needs of the Grace community. Emphasizing the town's shared origins and identity and the battle for the survival of its valley environment, Codi describes:

There were about fifty of us packed into Dona Althea's living room, just to watch. The Dona looked as she always looked: tiny, imperious, dressed in black, with her long white braid pinned around her head like a crown. As a concession to the cameras she clutched an embroidered shawl around her shoulders. (264)

Through the presence and implied cultural import of a "Frida Kahlo painting" (264), Codi creates the impression of Doña Althea as a storyteller who embodies the history and future values of a whole community. Concluding her description of the scene at Doña Althea's house, she portrays Doña Althea's "Biblical" words as a "bedtime story" which, in reviving her connection with community, also fills her with the "joy of a child" (267-8).

In *Animal Dreams*, the scene is further developed reference to Alison Landberg's theory of "prosthetic Memory", the importance of which was noted in the introduction, developed from collective memory theory. Prosthetic memory is an imagined memory which doesn't simply reinforce a particular group's identity by sharing memories, instead, it "opens up those memories and identities to persons from radically different background" (8). Doña Althea's CBS appearance highlights how choosing to identify with or remember certain cultural memories helps to define people's sense of self, including, as Codi calls it, their sense of ground orientation. Kingsolver's fictional account of the alternative transmission of

memories through the written, spoken and remembered origin story of Grace for example, aligns with the trends which underpin Landsberg's argument. Landsberg states that in the face of social change, links between "individual persons and community" or "Kinship ties" are broken, creating the need for "alternative methods for the transmission and dissemination of memories" (2). The CBS audience and readers of the novel are encouraged to engage with what could be called the "prosthetic memories" offered by Grace's Origin story. The memory of the blue-eyed Gracelo sisters who founded the town is no longer just for local people. According to Kingsolver if the town is to survive, these memories must be embraced by a wider community.

Through flashbacks to Codi's childhood, Codi and Homer highlight memory as a fluid process which is more about imaging identity than recalling concrete facts. Intent on remembering his feelings and fears, Homer refuses to lay claim to memories he didn't live, complicating his denial of shared communal memory. Homer's chapter "The Flood" even includes the bald statement: "There is no memory because he wasn't there" (20). Conversely, Homer manages to convince Codi that she doesn't remember things that she actually did experience, including witnessing her mother's death. Codi describes:

According to generally agreed-upon history, Hallie and I were home with a babysitter. This is my problem-I clearly remember things I haven't seen, sometimes things that never happened. And draw a black on the things I've lived through. I told Doc Homer many times that I'd seen the helicopter, and I also once insitstead, to the point of tears, that I remembered being on the ship with the nine Gracela sisters and their peacocks. (48)

As the extent of Homer's deception is revealed, the reader comes to see the "things" Codi has "lived through" only by comparing father and daughter's memories with those of other characters in the community, until Codi realizes that she is remembering things help that she

has seen. It is with viola's gentle help that Codi remembers that she did see her mother leave in the helicopter and did not imagine the memory after all.

Viola suggests that even what you learn and feel from imagined memories are created in order to belong because "In the long run, that's what you've got" (342). Tellingly, Codi's faith in her memory returns with her return to the community, realizing that the two are necessarily interdependent. All that she believes she has imagined, from her dream of a popping flash bulb and blindness to memories of witnessing her mother's death, turn out to have been real experiences. This revelation indicates that memory isn't only thematically central to the novel's preoccupation with community and interrelatedness, but is also structurally important. *Animal Dreams* ends with a return to Codi's earliest memory, which she has now reclaimed. She remembers her mother fails to take off, that she must have died. In both Codi's childhood memory and her adult reclamation of this memory, she is in the same place at the edge of an alfalfa field and is accompanied by viola (342). This return to memory highlights Kingsolver's interwoven cyclical structure.

Hallie and Codi's position as outsiders in the town is highlighted by Homer's false narrative of difference with the thematic and structural importance of memory. Homer fabricates his own life story and hides Codi's baby photograph, the only existing narrative which would link Codi's identity to Grace. Even the discovery of the photograph doesn't change Codi's mind about her sense of identity and belonging. Rather, it reflects already changing perceptions. Memories buried and partially recovered combine with documentary evidence buried and then partially recovered to support Codi's emerging understanding upon the self. Codi's identity is thus based on evidence from memory in keeping that the photograph is:

Only the most peremptory of a huge modern accumulation of documentary evidence...which simultaneously records a certain apparent continuity and

emphasizes its loss from memory. Out this estrangement comes a conception of personhood, identity (yes, you and that naked baby are identical) which, because it can not be 'remembered', must be narrated.

(204)

The interrelated notions of home, community and self is further emphasized by the influence of Hallie's letters on Codi's journey towards locating ground orientation. Like Anderson's discussion of documentary evidence replacing memory as the basis of identity, it is through Hallie's letters that Codi is reminded of childhood events which reveal forgotten links to Grace and its people. Hallie doesn't only remind Codi about past events but also how brave she remembers her sister being. She reminds Codi about the time they saved coyote puppies from a flood, writing "you said we had to. I was chicken because Doc Homer would spank the snit out of us and I wanted to run for it, but you wouldn't let me"(121). Along with her recovered baby photograph, these documentary links anchor Codi's emerging sense of identity.

Hallie's letters describe a sense of home which transcends the privileging of a single space while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of place-specific details to her identity. She tells her sister about the "collective death" of refugees, equating the forced removal of a "whole land-based of its skin"(88). By representing Hallie's awareness of the influence of the environment and community on her political and personal identity, Kingsolver focuses on the way such understanding of self and home stems from writing and speaking of it. When Doña Althea tells the story of Grace for a CBS news crew, she presents an oral history rich in personal detail and grounded in the local environment. In her description of this "Biblical" story Codi emphasizes the necessary inter-twining of individuals, families and environment describing how Doña Althea, in her "high sustained voice", describes "the Genesis of Grace and of Hallie and me"(267).

The genesis of the Kingsolver's characters is not limited to community engagement but also relies on family relationship, particularly those between fathers and daughters in *Animal Dreams*. The origin of Grace and its legendary peacocks emphasizes these relationships. As Codi describes the "local legend", a hundred years ago, the "nine blue-eyed Gracela sisters came over from Spain to marry nine lucky minors in the gold camp, sight unseen". The sisters "only agreed to come if they could bring the birds with them in the hold of the ship. Their legacy in Gracela Canyon was a population of blue-eyed dark-haired descendants and a thousand wild peacocks. Their father stayed behind and got rich by proxy, for he'd literally sold his girls for a gold mine"(14). The absent father forces his daughters to find their own way through life.

Kingsolver builds her spectrum of political and personal positions with characters represented in opposition to other family members. Contrasting Hallie and Codi's differing approaches to their shared political concerns with imperialist demands upon the environment and people, Hallie offers her body to the political struggle in Nicaragua. While she doesn't affect public opinion, her action has a direct impact on the farming community she helps to organize. Codi, meanwhile, employ her scientific and literary skills to educate her high school classes about their environment. Her choice of issues ranges from contraception to pumice stone mining and reinscribes the interrelatedness of the personal with broader political concerns. She arouses media attention for the town's polluted river by trading on Grace's idealized origin story and handmade crafts, commodifying the town's culture in order to save it from extinction. This emphasizes that Kingsolver's characters' spectrum of behaviors is not only politically defined, but also personally determined by the differing approaches of individuals such as Codi and Hallie.

Codi describes her relationship with younger sister Hallie as that of "Keenly mismatched Siamese twins"(8) and talks about how "somebody ought to do a study on us, if

they want to know kids in the same family can turn out totally different”(931). In a letter to Hallie, Codi even asks “why did you turn out the way you did? You’re my sister. We were baked in the same oven, with the same ingredients. Why does one cake rise and the other fall?”(199). Codi notes that whatever she and Hallie suffer, they “went through together”, but somehow “came out different doors, on different ground levels”(189). Codi’s eventual awakening to her positive differences from her sister suggests that inequality needs to be overcome through recognition rather than denial of difference.

*Animal Dreams* posits a sense of home based identity that is not genetically inherent, but learned and valued through family and community connections. Codi and Hallie are Kingsolver’s recurring representation of twins and close siblings, and of her experience of the same upbringing who react very differently to it. Hallie is described as making her home wherever she is, while Codi runs from security, leaving jobs and lovers behind. Kingsolver emphasizes the importance of nature as well as nurture to the characterization of each set of siblings and their contrasting senses of identity. Kingsolver’s characters not only embody an inclusive sense of personal growth but also make reference to the importance of nature, land and environment, as a nurturing element in the search for a home-based identity.

In *Animal Dreams*, the relationships of characters with environment is largely politicized. Codi’s battle to protect the river from pollution reflects Kingsolver’s politicization of their personal lives. The personal is posited in a typical political way, particularly in the dynamic between sibling characters. Hallie and Codi, with each pair, are torn between nature and nurture. Their experiences of nurturing makes Codi believe that “Every man I’d ever loved had loved Hallie best and settled for me”(10). Codi and Hallie are “so attached”(8) that “No light could show where one body ends and the other beings”(3), while *Animal Dreams* other sibling Loyd and Leander similarly think they are “one person” (207). Loyd

even spells his name with an L, in contrast with the conventional spelling of Loyd, suggesting that he is not whole without his twin brother Leander, who dies as a teenager.

By fusing personal and political stories, Kingsolver elevates what is “ordinary” in the local by tying it to universal political themes and reminding readers of these overlaps with the emphasis of her chapters, and narrative voices. Homer’s focus on family and past regrets is evident even in the chapter titles that preface his sections of the story—“crybabies” and “mistakes”—while Codi’s first-person narrative consistently interweaves the personal with the political.

Kingsolver’s structural choice emphasizes the gender bias suggested by the first-person voice given to the female narrator. She alternates between Homer’s chapters written in the third person and Codi’s in the first where Homer’s sections only ever amount to a single chapter whereas Codi’s sections are comprised of up to six separate chapters. In *Animal Dreams*, Homer has a limited third-person representation. Codi remarks that she has “no idea if it was the confirmed truth or just his opinion, since Doc Homer made no distinction between the two”(67).

Moreover, the discarding of paternal legacies mirrors Kingsolver’s larger symbolic rejection of patriarchal environmental domination in favour of a balanced gendered vision. No character does more to gain political empathy and reader engagement in the novel than Loyd, who suggests an alternative model for a relationship with the environment which doesn’t rely on gender distinction. Both Loyd and Codi cast off their inheritance from their fathers with Loyd giving up cockfighting, despite the fact that his “old man didn’t have one damn thing to give him but cockfighting”(103), and Codi refusing off her father’s insistence that she is “an outsider not only by belief but by flesh and bone”(291).

The representative of male relationship with the environment does not conform to the exploitative aspects of patriarchal “ownership” and mystery. For Loyd, the land offers a sense of belonging. Loyd would die for “the land” but “not property” (122). Loyd contrasts the pueblo commitment to “keeping things in balance” and trying to be “good guests”(239), with the “Anglo” belief that God put the earth here for us to use, Westwardho. Like a special little playground”(240). This idea of the local environment as a “playground” to be used by “Anglo” communities mirrors the political influence of imperialism and colonialism.

The political aspect of interrelatedness is further exemplified by Codi’s anger. She reacts furiously against her students’ belief that “if all the trees die and this land goes to hell”, they can “just go somewhere else”(255). In trying to make the teenagers realize that “the wilderness is used up”(255), Codi’s impassioned lesson is made to correlate with Kingsolver’s own politics of environmental awareness. For Kingsolver, as for Codi, this deliberate environmental engagement necessitates her dispersing with “lordship” in favour of “territoriality” ( 32).

Kingsolver’s sense of what a community should highlight the factors which differentiate such communities from main-stream American societies. Codi’s picturesque descriptions of the Santa Rosalia pueblo as a village “built on a mesa and blended perfectly with landscape”(227), privilege Native American harmony with the land. By blending with the landscape, a pueblo village can be oppressed or ignored in the same way that nature has been, either under the guide of civilizing authority or with the assumption that it can and will tolerate abuse.

In *Animal Dreams*, Kingsolver blurs rigid distinctions between land and humanity, and “civilization” and environment, and highlights the importance of respecting their interrelatedness. Codi describes:

Grace is made of things that erode too slowly to be noticed: red granite Canyon walls, orchards of study old fruit trees past their prime, a shamelessly unpolluted sky. The houses were built in no big hurry back when labor was taken for granted, and now were in no big hurry to decay. Arthritic mesquite trees grow out of impossible crevices in the cliffs, looking as if they could adapt to lie on Mars if need be. (8-9)

Kingsolver undermines the binaries which limit perception of the environment but while doing so, accepts those binaries which are based on perceptions of cultural difference. Codi describes pueblo architecture as organic, “like something alive that just grow here” rather than something planned and built by man”(129). Codi repeatedly parallels *active American* culture and architecture with nature. She describes how there is “something familiar” in the arrangement of the stones of the houses, and realizes that they look “just like cells under the microscope”(129). Codi describes how Grace’s houses are appropriate to their canyon environment, clinging to the steep rocky hillsides and adapting over the years to the changes imposed by human intervention.

In *Animal Dreams*, Kingsolver highlights the need for a balance between the rigid dichotomy according to which land has to be either mastered or conserved. Helping to decorate the town’s graveyard on All Souls’ Day, Codi notes that the Grace community “divides their time equally between the maternal and paternal lines”(162). The Pueblo community is repeatedly referred to as matrilineal “the land down here stays with the women(214), implying that a feminized hierarchy offers more hope of balance. The men of Grace traditionally “labored underground to rob the Canyon of its Wealth”, the women up about had been paying it back in Kind”(277, to strike out the balance which a matrilineal society achieves.

The whole community (male and female) in *Animal Dreams* is concerned by the pollution of the river. The woman's localized, environmental sense of home is complemented by Hallie's more global vision of environments under threat. Grace is a microcosm of a world under threat from outside aggression, whether environmental or military (as in the case of Hallie's Nicaraguan community), with Codi's biology students' acting "like a time capsule" in which everybody tries to "save little bits of Grace"(148). The women's fund-and awareness-raising efforts nonetheless bring forth a positive, empowering model of the feminized role of homemaker. All of their work is for "home", if not physically located without it, and their letters to politicians and journalists save not only their own homes but also the local environment. Further the men call the mining company "the mountain", making it "sound like something natural you can't ever move"(162) which suggests gendered attitudes towards possible courses of action but not towards the environment itself.

Kingsolver's sense of environmental responsibility is evident in the civic responsibility shown by Emelina's neighbour who bugs excess roof tiles for a future he may not see. Codi wants to teach the local children to "have a cultural memory" and to be "custodians of the earth" for future generations(332). To compensate for having no children of her own Codi exhibits investment in the future of the community through her work. She takes her job of teaching the local children to being on her own "in the Garden of Eden, where she is "expected to teach the entire living world to these Kids"(109). Codi's knowledge of science, her anger about birth control, represent her interpretation of home. In Kingsolver's fiction, "home" is related to the land, and environmental pollution signals the dangerous lack of knowledge or ability to think about the future. These concerns emerge as Codi shouts at her biology class; "you kids think this pollution shit is not your problem, right? Somebody will clean up the mess. It's not your fault well, your attitude stinks--- people can

forget, and forget, and forget, but the land has a memory”(254-255). This focus on political and ecological awareness supports Codi’s biological instinct for survival.

In *Animal Dreams*, Kingsolver uses coyotes as symbols of her characters’ instinct for survival and ecologically sound ground orientation. As Loyd suggests, “we’re like coyotes... Get to a good place, turn around three times in the grass, and you’re home. Once you know how, you can always do that no matter what you won’t forget”(235). For Loyd, the ability to make a home challenges the idea that there may be a single place where home exists. In Loyd’s words, The important thing isn’t the house. It’s the ability to make it. You carry that...wherever you go”(235) as he explains why he believes women are so central to pueblo communities.

In the novel Codi’s search for belonging is explained by Loyd’s unconvincing perfection and his lengthy monologues spoken directly to both Codi and the reader. Like coyotes who just turn in the grass to settle, Hallie also belongs “wherever she was”(30). Codi conversely tries to lose her sense of ego in order to fit in, arguing that if she kept “trying to be what everybody wanted”, she would “soon be insipid enough to fit in everywhere”(201). Hallie’s ability to fit is an engagement with her environment, and it is this realization that brings Codi back to Grace at the novel’s end.

Kingsolver offers an alternative idea of home as the ecological web in which we are all entangled through the voice of female and marginalized groups. Codi isn’t alone in representing Native Americans as the embodiment of this recognition of ecological interrelatedness. Loyd’s surname as peregrine draws parallels with the birds of prey so symbolically important to pueblo rituals during which “the eagle carries people’s thoughts to the spirits in the sky. Animal messengers for the small, human hope”(242). By leveling nature with the “other” in a hopeful way, Kingsolver suggests that those outside of patriarchy are better equipped to achieve belonging within the environment.

In *Animal Dreams* Homer's assertions that "printing a photograph duplicates eyesight" and denial of any "real invention in the modern world"(73) represents the idea of human nature. This essentialist statements highlights Kingsolver's overemphasis of nature as the source of everything from invention to a human sense of belonging. Homer's representation of difference and belonging comes into fore as he photographs the babies of Grace in order to capture their local identity through the evidence of their genetic appearance. Clearing his things, Codi finds shoe boxes full of photographs of babies and, discovering one which confirms her genetic relation to the Grace community, she comes to understand both her own history and her father's apparent obsession with taking photographs of objects made to look like other. For Homer, "a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye-if only because an unconsciously permeated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man"(236). In his conscious exploration of the space between the appearance of objects to the camera Homer is able to contain his concealed identity. Homer tells his daughters that he is not from Grace and that they therefore do not belong either, in order to encourage them to aspire to more sophisticated environments than small-town life. However, because he hides his daughters' genetic history and their familial links to Grace by concealing facts as well as the all important baby photo Codi grows up feeling alienated, which makes her search for a grounded sense of self more difficult.

The suggestiveness in *Animal Dreams* creates further layers of characterization and family links. Hallie's real name, Halineda, means "thinking of the sea"(13), and it is unsurprising that she is a character who makes "you look for things beyond what you could see"(13). Hallie is the fictional embodiment of a didactic author encouraging people to look, read and think beyond the literal and push towards the political, the environmental, and the universal. The etymology of names, particularly surnames, in the novel is not only shorthand for individual characteristics, but also for exploring family belonging. Codi believe, that her

surname secures her the teaching job claiming that “Nothing else I put down in my wobbly writing on that application could have impressed anyone too much”(55). The idea of the Noline name as a claim to competence and authority is disregarded by the revelation that Codi’s father Homer changed his surname. Kingsolver’s narrator describes Hommer’s realization that “His name is gone. He understand that this is his own fault. He took a pen to paper and changed it, cancelled his ancestors”(137). Hommer changed his name to Noline to escape his family and it is unsurprising that Codi is ambivalent about the Noline name.

Kingsolver in *Animal Dreams* highlights a social dislocation resulting from loss of language, tradition and land-based identity. The Grace community faces the loss of its water source and of ancient family fruit trees as a result of pollution from the old mine, as well as shifting employment patterns following the mine’s closure and the way of life imposed by rail workers’ timetables. Codi muses on the ways the community has changed and how this complicates her sense of personal dislocation. She describes how the “Spanish-flavored accent of old Grace was dying out, thanks to satellite TV”(56). Codi’s extreme dislocation is revealed to the reader through her realization that she needs directions to her “own childhood home”, and in her attempt to hide from her friend Emelina just “how badly dislocated” she feels (47). She even believes that the high school skeleton is more likely to be her relative than any of the people in Grace, suggesting that “Mrs. Nash was my compatriot from the Midwest; a possible relative”(82). Codi emphasizes the disparity between who she thinks she is (an outsider) in her hometown, surrounded by family), even claiming “I’ don’t look like who I am”(99).

Codi’s preoccupation with the way other people see her reaffirms her sense of isolation from community and belonging Codi’s discovery of her baby photograph proves that she and Hallie share these distinctive eyes, and as such are “as pure as anybody in Grace”(284). It is only with this realization that Codi’s attitude starts to shift. She begins to

overcome her need for men to guide her. Far from guiding her, her father and long-time partner Carlo obscure Codi's sense of self. She describes how in the long term, Carlo "declined to be the guiding star I needed. Just as my father did"(41). Codi learns to define her own sense of home through her relationship with partner Loyd, family, friends, and an environment she understands. Kingsolver's text implies that Codi's dependence on men is unwise, while dependence on community to achieve the same aim is essential.

*Animal Dreams* charts the female protagonists' quest for belonging, implying that women shape even the male characters' sense of home. It is depicted through women saving the town through a female task (crafting the Piñatas) and the way male figures like Homer and Carlo exclude themselves from their communities. Codi describes father Homer as "the only real candidate for center of my universe", but mentions that he is "content to sail his private sea and leave me on my own"(69). Carlo, like Homer, gives Codi "the full measure of love he is qualified to dispense"(142), but his movements between jobs and countries means that he cannot ground her from flight. Instead of male role models, Grace becomes the center of Codi's universe. In the town's environment and community, she finds home, and with it, the kind of love she needs.

Thus the techniques and the related focus on memory and community in the novel offer a framework for reading which prefers the search for ground orientation over the need to challenge identity in order to discover it fully. The importance of memory has been analyzed as a narrative tool allowing the reader to contextualize even Codi's first-person narrative, and as a thematic device through which to address the influence of the past on the future of individuals and communities. Codi's personal awakening in *Animal Dreams* reflects Kingsolver's goal to effect political change through fiction. Codi is aware of her weaknesses as well as her strengths, and comes to terms with her childhood and community

legacy and her story culminates in the apparent location of her long-sought “ground orientation” through her engagement with community.

### III. Ground Orientation as the Strategy for Belongingness

Ground orientation is the exploration of the representation of community and memory through an analysis of the belongingness to the culture, history, society and politics. The protagonist, Codi's "ground orientation" in *Animal Dreams* is her active political engagement. On the other hand, Hallie's "ground orientation" is a sense of belonging to a political environmental and cultural community. This research work explores the representation of community, memory and belonging in the light of Kingsolver's claim to write her way towards answering political questions. Moreover, this research analyzes Kingsolver's political strategy of appealing to a popular readership in order to raise the awareness of her chosen issues and author's translation of abstract political rhetoric into forceful prose and the voices of ordinary characters. By analyzing, the negotiation of history and memory, i.e. ground orientation in *Animal Dreams*, this research work helps to locate Kingsolver's combination of global and local themes on a political literary spectrum. Kingsolver's work incorporates a chronological emphasis on past events shaping actions and perceptions in the present. Her representation of the political struggles of mining communities over twenty years ago isn't only shaped by the present, but also informs new readers about the history that shapes current struggle. This symbolic relationship between past and present evident in *Animal Dreams*, it also contributes to the idea of interrelatedness between and among the communities.

This thesis on community, memory and "ground orientation" in *Animal Dreams*, focuses on Kingsolver's between art and politics because she asks and answers political questions through fiction. Kingsolver sustains the negotiation in part by transcending the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, employing a bibliography, referencing intertexts and exploring political, historical and legal issues in keeping with Mikhail Bakhtin's view that "fiction and nonfiction literature and non literature and so forth are not laid up in

heaven”(33). She informs readers “how to” read her novels through introductions and author’s notes indicating the informed nature of her fiction and suggesting how it may be located more broadly in its cultural context. Encouraging readers to recognize their interrelatedness both to each other and to their local environments, Kingsolver’s fiction itself functions as a way to connect readers to such awareness.

Kingsolver is a political writer and her work seeks to represent the political issues, which are related to the wider communities. In setting such high standards to aspire to in addressing political equality, environmental awareness and personal and social responsibility, Kingsolver’s fiction invites scrutinizes. Kingsolver’s activism is evident in the tropes and techniques used in her fiction where she consistently returns to multicultural communities, alternative families, social and economic inequality, and environmental awareness. Kingsolver’s fiction thus is characterized by the politicized personal narratives of predominantly female protagonists engaged in ground orientation of their own.

Kingsolver is a writer who always takes a political position in her narratives and, in so doing, wears her heart on her literary sleeve. If as readers we are encouraged to be as ethically responsible as the characters Kingsolver creates and the values they espouse, it is inevitable that the spotlight will turn back on the ways in which Kingsolver’s characters are defined according to her authorial persona, particularly when the twinning of her fiction and non-fictional works encourages this association, as this thesis has demonstrated in reading *Animal Dreams*.

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