



DILIA NARDUZZI

---

## Living With Ghosts, Loving the Land: Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*

There exists an intricate web of connections in Barbara Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer*. Human beings interact with various aspects of the natural world in ways that bring that world to the surface of this modern literary and realistic novel. Deanna Wolfe's character is paralleled with the alpha female coyote; they are both strong female predators. Lusa Maluf Landowski moves from her urban life to a new rural place that is mostly unfamiliar to her, yet feels compelled to stay and make sense of the varying motivating factors that have drawn her to it: she is attracted to this new place just as a moth in love locates her lover in the dark only through scent. Garnett Walker III is consumed by his quest to resurrect the past and create a blight-resistant chestnut tree for the future. He also spends his time sparring with his neighbour Nannie Rawley, an organic farmer dedicated to remaking modern farming practices and creating sustainability for the land and health for humans and the larger ecosystems that surround them. This is a novel focused largely on women and their different relationships to the rural landscape of the southern Appalachians, situated on the border of Virginia and Kentucky. The novel is contemporarily set in the twenty-first century and ripe with questions about the relationships that human beings have with the places where they live. It focuses specifically on the relationships that Deanna, Lusa, and Garnett have with other people, animals, and the landscape that specifies their experiences with these places. Human beings' relationships to urban or non-rural surroundings are recognized in the novel, but are positioned as notably different from the relationships humans have with a "natural" landscape.

*Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 15.2 (Summer 2008)  
Copyright © 2008 by the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment





*Prodigal Summer* in large part communicates a deep and abiding love and regard for the land. The interconnectedness of the natural, animal, and human worlds is presented in a piece of fiction that recognizes the immediacy of these relationships and the necessary place of all three groups in larger biological and cultural structures and systems. Barbara Kingsolver's non-fiction environmental writing engages in a dialogue with her fictional work, through her passionate use of story and theory. Nature, in both essay and prose, is an eminently important consideration for Kingsolver. There is a significant and revealing parallel between *Prodigal Summer* and a non-fiction essay written by Kingsolver entitled "Small Wonder" from her book of the same name. Kingsolver writes in the essay,

Bears are scarce in the world now, relative to their numbers in times of old; they're a rare sight even in the wildest mountains of Iran. They have been hunted out and nearly erased from the mountains and forests of Europe, much of North America, and other places that have been inhabited for thousands of years by humans, who by and large find it difficult to leave large predators alive. Bears and wolves are our fairy-tale archenemies, and in these tales we teach our children only, and always, to kill them, rather than to tiptoe past and let them sleep. [...] We need new bear and wolf tales for our times, since so many of our old ones seem to be doing us no good. [...]. [We must] stop in our tracks [...] before every kind of life we know arrives at the brink of extinction. (10)

In *Prodigal Summer*, Deanna, one of three main protagonists, is a woman who cares and advocates for the land. One of the principal concerns in this thread of the narrative is the extinction of animals, including the red wolf, and the nearing and possible extinction of the coyote. It is the "ghosts" that Deanna sees around her of extinct animals, and the fierce protectiveness she has for a family of coyotes, that fuels Deanna's passion and desire to maintain a relationship of integrity to the land that she loves. In both her non-fiction and fiction texts, Kingsolver reminds her readers that the extinction of animals *is* taking place in *the world in which we live*. She calls her reader forward to acknowledge this fact and to work to reconstruct the images humans have of the natural world's present and future. In much the same way that ghosts function in *Prodigal Summer* to alert the central characters to what needs to be acknowledged and accounted for in their lives, Kingsolver seems to be asking for environmental accountability from her readers and placing them in a position filled with responsibility. This position materializes a choice: will I take responsibility for my connection to the land or will I overlook my inevitable duty? Kingsolver's own environmentalism and nuanced thinking on natural landscapes, animals, and plants, and





how human beings relate to these things, emerges in both her fiction and non-fiction work. *Prodigal Summer* materializes an environmental ethic that succinctly corresponds to Kingsolver's articulated environmental ethic. As I conceptualize it, Kingsolver is calling to humans in the material world beyond the edges of her novel and asking her reader to acknowledge and appreciate their intrinsic *places* in an ecological system that encompasses far more than individual lives. Again, Kingsolver's non-fiction writing helps to communicate *Prodigal Summer's* ideology. She says in her non-fiction,

Whether we are leaving it or coming into it, it's *here* that matters, it is place. [...] Our greatest and smallest explanations for ourselves grow from place, as surely as carrots grow in the dirt. [...] People *need* wild places. Whether or not we think we do, we *do*. We need to be able to taste grace and know once again that we desire it. We need to experience a landscape that is timeless, whose agenda moves at the pace of speciation and glaciers. To be surrounded by a singing, mating, howling commotion of other species, all of which love their loves as much as we do ours [...]. Wildness puts us in our place. (Kingsolver, *Small Wonder* 39-40)

Humans are tied to *place* just as animals, plants, and other non-human lives are connected to the places where they live. Kingsolver writes about the stark significance of these interconnections in *Prodigal Summer* while she explores the stakes and the ties that human beings—both in and out of her novel—have to natural worlds that define and surround them.

Amanda Cockrell writes that *Prodigal Summer* is “about sex: people sex, bug sex, coyote sex; about pheromones and full moons, and the drive to pass on your genes [...]. Sex is urgent and dangerous, to the human heart as well as to the lacewing” (573). Cockrell's words are most true—*Prodigal Summer* is about sex; sex between humans, and sex that takes place in the natural world. I suggest though that *Prodigal Summer* is about death and memory as much as it is about birth or procreation, about loss and mourning that loss as much as it is about the magnificence of the human and natural worlds. It is in the delicate balance found in the cycle of life that Kingsolver presents her story for her readers. Furthermore, Cockrell argues that the interconnections between people, animals and the land (beyond sex) are central to *Prodigal Summer*. She says that Kingsolver's text illustrates that “We are all linked, to other humans, to other mammals, to birds and black-snakes and moths” (574). I agree with Cockrell's estimation of *Prodigal Summer*, and add to it, by exposing the connections that humans and the natural world have to each other *and* by exposing the connections that humans and the natural world have to the ghostly. Lisa Abney





argues that Kingsolver's *Prodigal Summer* is largely about the quest for self. She says that neither Deanna nor Lusa "feel[s] comfortable with her identity," though they are "two intelligent and strong women" (183). I suggest, alternatively, that Kingsolver presents Deanna and Lusa with experiences that require their ability to deftly respond to collective and individual debt.<sup>1</sup> Instead of arguing that they are uncomfortable with their identities, I contend that Deanna is quite comfortable with the choices she has made, and continues to make through the end of the text, and that Lusa works to find her place in a context that she had not presumed she would find herself in. I argue that Lusa succeeds. For Abney, the secondary theme in *Prodigal Summer* is "the importance of community and the preservation of traditional ways" of life (183). Community does factor significantly for the characters of *Prodigal Summer*, though I would argue that by the end Kingsolver establishes an untraditional family group (comparable to the coyote family group) in the coming together of and interconnections between all of her characters' storylines.<sup>2</sup> While Abney argues that tradition is central in *Prodigal Summer*, I counter that consideration by noting that the main characters and plotlines in the novel unsettle tradition much more deeply than they abide it. In so doing, the communal family group that results by the end of the text is nuanced, eccentric, and in an unconventional way, complete. Criticism on *Prodigal Summer* is sparse, and both Cockrell and Abney's arguments come from critical companions to literature, articles that encompass the broad range of Kingsolver's work. Abney notes at the end of her piece on Kingsolver that "While Kingsolver's work has not been extensively analyzed, it is certainly rife for such activity" (184). On that account, I wholeheartedly agree.

## Theorizing The Ghostly, Theorizing The Land

The connections between the natural world and the ghostly are strikingly important in *Prodigal Summer*. The overwhelming presence of ghosts in *Prodigal Summer* inundated my attention while reading, and strikingly altered the original trajectory of my investigation. The treatment and representation of nature and the land remained imperative; the argument around it, however, shifted somewhat: while how the land is represented in the text—predominantly as a rural "homeland" versus an urban "otherland"—still remains an interest for me, the detailed way that Kingsolver incorporates ghosts in all facets of her story, to include the ghostly in the natural world, motivated my thinking and refocused it. Thematically, Kingsolver's emphasis on ghosts in all threads of the novel could not be ignored. Ghosts appear in *Prodigal Summer* repeat-





edly and consistently, and their impact on the whole of the work is the primary impetus that propelled a change in my methodology and theorization. Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* was central to my understanding and explaining the ways that ghosts function in and shape *Prodigal Summer*. Ecofeminist theoretical frameworks in combination with Derrida's theorizing on the ghostly found an unlikely, yet highly compatible, union in my work. Ecofeminist theorists are concerned with the idea of place and how humans interface with the natural world that surrounds them. Derrida focuses on how instances of the ghostly interrupt the here and now—our place in time. He further argues that the ghostly disturbs linearity and calls those affected by ghosts to be responsible to their inheritance or legacy. What a ghost *desires* from the person or people to whom they appear configures the stakes of that appearance: ghosts must be accounted for. Theorists who focus on the land concern themselves with human beings' responsibility *to* and dependency *on* the natural world—human beings' individual and collective legacies to the natural world so to speak.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, some ecofeminist theorists argue that the natural world cannot be understood or captured linguistically. Essentially then, nature is experienced differently from a manifest linguistic reality. Catriona Sandilands, in *The Good-Natured Feminist: Ecofeminism and the Quest for Democracy*, offers this compelling conceptualization of nature: "Wilderness, despite its very existence as a creation of the logic of Western culture [...] can condition our sensitivity to the possibility of nonlinguistically determined worlds" (199).<sup>4</sup> She goes on: "The full majesty of nature [is] inaccessible through language and is thus remembered to consciousness as shadow, as fingerprint, as humbling awe" (200). Sandilands intimates that nature, and the experience of it, is unattainable through language. Interestingly, the shadow or fingerprint that she suggests is inherent in the *remembrance* of the embodiment of nature is unexpectedly similar to theorizations of the ghostly as offered by Derrida. Both gesture to material reality—or encounter a trace of its memory—yet neither can encompass nor contain that reality in full. This is the crucial link between Derrida's conceptualizations of the ghostly and Sandilands' ecofeminist construction of the land. The non-linguistic and non-material elements of the ghostly, as maintained by Derrida, and of the natural world, as maintained by Sandilands, both suggest that there is something profound at work that goes beyond material reality, yet both make known that the experience of so-called immaterial reality offers an *alternative* means in which to perceive material reality. Immateriality informs materiality—relationships between the manifest human and natural worlds are constantly being reconstructed, restructured, and newly imagined through the incorporation





in the text of the ghostly and the *felt* experience of nature. Dismantling conventional readings of nature (and the experience of it) and of material reality (through its opposite: the immaterial or ghostly) becomes apparent when one deeply reads *Prodigal Summer*. Barbara Kingsolver constructs her novel to allow for the comprehensive analysis of the remembered or the non-linguistic—ghosts and the land—while figuring strong women in a rural landscape as the conduits for her incisive ecofeminist narrative.

### The Presence of Ghosts in *Prodigal Summer*

Each narrative thread of *Prodigal Summer* contains one character who is fixated by ghosts, or, if not fixated by them, then insistently aware of the ghosts that surround them in their daily lives. Deanna sees the ghosts of extinct animals around her as she tends to the land. Lusa meets ghosts—children who stop her in her tracks—each time she walks up and down the stairs at her newly inherited farm. Garnett is often haunted by the ghost of the American chestnut tree, a tree that sustained the families of his grandfather and father, and brought wealth to the Walker family, prior to its extinction. Each of these characters has a stake in the ghosts they see, a reason that they in particular see them, which is inextricably linked to the *debt* they are charged to pay while in the ghosts' presences. Derrida says, "this spectral [ghostly] someone looks at us, we feel ourselves being looked at by it [...]" (7). It is in this *being looked at* by a ghost that shifts the human being's common privileged position in relation to other forms of life—for example ghosts, Nature, etc—rearranging typical relational constructions. When one of these characters sees a ghost, in essence, it is because this ghost is *seeing them*, and in that seeing, is charging or compelling the characters to acknowledge the debt that comes with the ghostly.

Deanna, Lusa, and Garnett all act in ways that account for the ghostly in their lives. In fact, their actions in many instances are directly linked to the fact that ghosts surround them. In many ways, these three characters "follow [their] ghost[s]" (Derrida 10) actively, choosing to acknowledge and accept ghostly presences, taking certain actions and making certain choices in their lives *because* of ghosts. Deanna tracks the ghosts in the wilderness much as she tracks the living animals. As she moves about the land, Deanna notices and accounts for animals that should be present, but are not—they are now intangible *presences* (or possibly absences). But, as she tracks these ghostly animals, she herself is being tracked, reminded of the past in order to influence and inform the present and the future. She follows the ghosts that







are most important to her, and in so doing, is followed by them. This being followed *by* is what propels Deanna in her personal mission to preserve and steward the land, paying her respects to the dead who have gone before. Deanna's legacy to the land can be linked here to what she has inherited from the land: a responsibility to care for and maintain it. She engages in a passionate conversation with her ambivalently minded lover, Eddie Bondo, about the interconnectedness of animal groups: "There's no such thing as killing one thing, that's what I'm trying to tell you. Every dead animal was somebody's lunch or somebody's population control" (325). Deanna persistently mourns the extinct animals she encounters in an ecological system that deeply misses them and their contribution to the whole. Is Deanna haunted? Does this haunting propel her actions? Or is mourning her guiding impetus?<sup>5</sup> The answers to these questions are secondary in the face of the fact that Deanna encounters ghosts *actively*. She acknowledges the ghosts around her and she works to lessen the *debt* contained in the environmental legacy that she has inherited through her attempt to steward the land. The legacy of the land encompasses a material debt: extinct animals and dismantled natural landscapes. Deanna, for her part, protects live animals from extinction, a move rooted, for her, in the figure of the coyote. Deanna's responsibility and commitment to the land is, I would argue, necessary for all humans to acknowledge in their own lives and practices—our own accountability to the debt. Deanna in *Prodigal Summer* makes manifest human beings' collective responsibility to natural life, a responsibility that if not tended to will undoubtedly create more ghosts.

The function of the debt in *Prodigal Summer* is multifaceted and is connected and theoretically related to both inheritance and legacy. A debt is something owed, whereas an inheritance is something passed from one generation to another and is experienced as a gain. That said, a debt could also be inherited, complicating its meaning—if a debt is inherited, what does the recipient gain? This is indicative of Lusa's condition in inheriting a farm with a familial legacy. A legacy is what one leaves behind, what one is remembered for and by. Characters in *Prodigal Summer* inherit relations to the land and to families that contain different facets of debt: their ghosts call the character's debts to the surface of the story and charge those they haunt to answer for them. Someone's debt or inheritance can also be his or her legacy. A legacy can be productive or destructive depending on how one responds to the debt or inheritance they owe or acquire. In some instances, the debt cannot be recuperated or accounted for. For example, an extinct animal cannot be restored to life; other non-extinct animals can only be saved or protected. Due to this, accounting for the debt to natural life requires





channelling energy into *not* generating further debt, and by extension, coming to terms with the manifestation of the present debt – the ghosts that appear throughout the text. Debt carries connotations of economic responsibility and implies a material repayment. *Prodigal Summer* gestures towards the idea that human beings are indebted to the natural landscape and must acknowledge that debt actively through positive environmental action. Collectively, human beings have inherited an environmental debt from those who have lived on the land before us. The legacy of human beings is yet to be determined on a large scale: will we account for the debt and create a positive legacy out of the inheritance we have been given? Humans now have the capacity to completely destroy the natural world, the question is: will we?<sup>6</sup> Kingsolver asks her reader to consider these questions while reading, and possibly in so doing, account for a piece of the debt.

Deanna's debt seems to be primarily to the land; she has a responsibility to properly account for her actions, and the actions of others, as it relates to non-human nature. She can be said to have inherited the legacy of stewardship from other environmentally conscious human beings. In addition, the debt she carries is tied to the ghosts of the animals she often encounters, "She received a vision of ghosts, imagined for a moment the ivory bills—dead cousins to these pileated woodpeckers—who had been even bigger [...]. Lord God birds, people used to call them, for that was what they'd cry when they saw one. Never again" (202). The debt Deanna has to pay in this example occurs directly in relation to the *live* animals that she chooses to protect, most centrally the coyote. By acknowledging the ghosts of the extinct animals she reaffirms her commitment to the living natural world. It is in this way that she takes responsibility for the debt that she has inherited, as "There is no inheritance without the call to responsibility[...]" (Derida 91). Deanna inherits a debt here—as explained above—she gains something that is owed. The debt becomes embodied in the ghostly in the novel and it is through these highly intangible yet highly present absences that Deanna begins to actively negotiate immaterial terrain in her material world, accounting for the debt she has inherited.

Lusa's debt is situated in the land as well—most notably seen in her relationship with the honeysuckle plant and in her foray into goat production—but for Lusa, the debt is more prominently situated in the legacy of family. When asked by Crys (her soon to be adopted child) who the ghosts are that have congregated at the family farm, Lusa responds, "People who have lost things, I think. Some are your family, and some are from mine. [...] I hear my grandfather playing music when it rains. And your uncle Cole's here, too. I smell him all the time [...]" (357). Lusa comes from a mixed ethnic background; she







is half Palestinian-Jew and half Polish. She marries a farmer whose family has been on the land for many generations and moves from Lexington to his family's home in the southern Appalachians. She is a scientist turned farmer's wife and finds it difficult to demarcate her new domain. Cole's family is large and meddling, he has four sisters each with a definitive role in his life and each with set belief systems. Most of them do not understand Lusa and Cole's connection, and, after he dies, she is seen as a sort of threat to the structure of the Widener family (Cole's lineage). With Jewel, her sister-in-law, on the other hand, Lusa forms a fragile connection: Jewel is sick and Lusa says she will care for her outsider children once she dies. Consequently, Lusa's debt surfaces in the context of family: in the legacy of her own ethnically mixed heritage and in the family of her deceased husband. Lusa's debt also seems irrevocably tied to place: she experiences the Widener family debt (as embodied in Jewel's children) because she finds herself in their *place*. Lusa makes the choice to engage with the ghostly (the manifestation of the debt) instead of exorcising it, and in so doing inherits a farm and all that comes with it, actively. She is not consumed by this familial debt; instead she makes the binding decision to become surrogate mother to two children she hardly knows in a family that casts her as an outsider. Through this choice, Lusa works to repay some part of a familial debt, a debt situated in two *separate* families, her family of origin, and the family she has inherited. Lusa inherits a debt through family and farmland in much the same way that Deanna does in the natural world.

Deanna, Lusa, and Garnett actively engage with the ghosts in this book. The lives of these three characters are created around their ghosts in specific ways. Lusa, for example, decides to make her home in a place that seems both foreign *and* comforting to her, in large part because she feels compelled to stay by the ghosts that have gathered there. She is called back (by the *revenants*) when she feels she wants to leave. In this way, the city where she once lived becomes the foreign place as Lusa becomes integrated gradually into this new rural home. Eventually, she notes that the ghosts are not menacing; instead, "They're all really happy" (239). In addition, the ghosts of Cole and Jewel as children seem to mimic or foil the real-life children that Lusa has agreed to raise on the farm—Jewel's children Crystal and Lowell. Might the ghosts that Lusa has come to live with have arrived to alert her to her new role as surrogate mother of soon to be orphaned children? The ghosts are the indicators that point out for Lusa the ties she has to a place where outwardly it seems she has no connection. She inherits the farm, and as she does, she inherits the legacy of what has occurred there in the past. This past encompasses a family history that values the normative,





nuclear, family system (embodied in the original Widener family and children, to include Cole and Jewel) versus what occurs for Cole and Jewel as adults: Cole dies and leaves behind a widow, while Jewel is left by her husband Shel with two children to raise on her own, children who are atypical in terms of normative gender; Crystal is viewed as a “tomboy”—even seen *as* a boy by Lusa when she first meets Crystal—whereas Lowell is a sort of wimp. Lusa’s nephew sums up the general familial sentiment about Jewel: “Everyone feels sad for Aunt Jewel. Talk about getting the short end of the stick. Uncle Shel hitting the road, and then Cole dying, and *her kids’ being messed up* [...]” (240-41 my italics). As a result of this past, what materializes for Lusa in the present unites her inherited legacy with a new conceptualization of family, and by extension, an alternative conceptualization of her self. In order for this inherited legacy to be accounted for (i.e. as a debt), the normative family structure must give way to the new construction. Lusa is able to acknowledge this past and in so doing finds herself redirecting her own present and future:

She pressed her face against the cotton of his white T-shirt and the warmth of his chest and let herself stay there, sobbing, wishing she could fly away from here. In her mind she could easily picture it: throwing things in a suitcase, books and clothes, practically nothing – she’d leave behind all the heavy family furniture. Just run down the steps and away. But those two children were on the landing with their backs to her, impossible to get around. They stopped her. (241-42)

This moment can be seen as a defining moment for Lusa as the ghosts of the children on the stairs are the representation of both the past and the future (the Widener children who have come before and Jewel’s children who will need a mother to raise them). Interestingly, Lusa encounters a past that she did not participate in but still it forces her to stay and account for it. Derrida suggests: “One never inherits without coming to terms with some specter, and therefore with more than one specter” (21). Derrida claims that in the process of inheritance one must face the manifested *debt*—the ghostly or the spectral—in order to fully realize the consequences and responsibilities implied in that inheritance. The ghosts that literally halt Lusa’s movements and charge her to remain in her new place embody a past that, if Lusa means to stay, needs to be accounted for *by her*—regardless of the fact that she was not materially present when the (familial) debt was incurred. Lusa inherits a farm with a legacy and she makes the choice to account for and work with that which she has been given. Essentially, she could have rebuked the ghosts and left her inheritance, but she does not. But, the question must be asked: does she (or anyone) have a choice when it comes to a





ghost? To accept it or not? Or must we deal with it if it has been given to us? In other words, does Lusa accept the inheritance that, really, any of the Wideners could have accepted, or is she, for some particular reason, the individual person who is made to choose whether or not to engage with the responsibility that emerges when a ghost manifests and is acknowledged? Kingsolver writes: "The Wideners destiny was to occupy this same plot of land [Lusa's newly inherited farm and land] for their lives and eternity, evidently" (33). Lusa—by way of Cole's will and her attentive interaction with the ghostly—interrupts this neatly structured linear future and disrupts its trajectory. Lusa comes to terms with the specificity of her inheritance actively, while she recasts her new *place* as her home.

Ghosts, whether they are benevolent or wicked, haunt; and haunting or being haunted suggest facets of the mourning process.<sup>7</sup> *Prodigal Summer* is as much about mourning the dead in nature as it is about mourning the dead in the human world. Garnett mourns the chestnut tree with reverence and awe, emotions constantly under the surface of his everyday affairs and diversions.<sup>8</sup> The tone associated with his character is that of grief: his life is guided and surrounded by his mission to restore the chestnut tree to the majesty it once held. This, I think, has as much to do with recuperating a larger sense of his familial and *familiar* personal history as it does with the tree itself (this is not to disregard Garnett's mourning for the chestnut, but is necessary to add context). The chestnut tree was deeply connected to Garnett's father and grandfather. The ghosts of the chestnut for Garnett seem to be tied to a history or legacy he has inherited from his family. Multi-generational baggage must be accounted for with ghosts in general and Garnett's interaction with the ghostly in nature is no exception. The ghost of the chestnut tree represents for Garnett a piece of a lost past, a past that cannot be recuperated in the present even though he does try to do this throughout the novel. Of Garnett's mission to produce a blight-resistant chestnut tree, Kingsolver writes,

This life was getting to be too much for one old man. It wasn't so much the work; he loved messing with his chestnut trees. People assumed it was awfully tedious to bag all the flowers in the spring, do the careful cross-pollinating, collect the seeds, and plant the new seedlings, but every inch of that was exciting to Garnett because any of those seeds might grow up to be his blight-resistant chestnut tree. Every white bag slipped over a branch tip, every shake of pollen, each step carried the hope of something wondrous in the making. A piece of the old, lost world returning, right before his eyes. (204)

The paradox in this quotation is situated in the knowledge that timelines become deeply disturbed in Garnett's rationale. His goal is to





create the new in his chestnut tree by nostalgically invoking the past. His work embodies creative process and diligent dedication but its ultimate goal is to re-create the old world for the present and future. Perhaps Garnett is not consciously aware of the way time unravels itself in his work with the chestnut, effectively dismantling notions of linear time. I think Garnett's motivation lies in his remembrance of times past and his desire to restore that time in the present. Garnett's ghosts are just as much ghosts of a boy's childhood as they are of a majestic and towering tree.

Whereas Lusa mourns the death of Cole, a human being, and interfaces with "human" ghosts (in *form* if not tangibility: how human can ghosts be?), Deanna and Garnett mourn aspects of the natural world that need remembrance as well. In all instances, these ghostly "disturbances" situate themselves as central to the characters that they interact with—but these disturbances are not necessarily negative. In fact, ghosts shuffle conventional timelines, attitudes, and places, readjusting what is materially and "realistically" intact. The ghosts in *Prodigal Summer* disturb the equilibrium of a supposed material world and call into question the very beingness of that materiality, while at the same time creating disturbances that must be acknowledged. Deanna, Lusa, and Garnett are deeply affected by and in effect centre their lives on the ghosts that appear for them. Their relationships with ghosts motivate their lives as much as they are changed by and through their ghosts.

One concern I have with the representation of ghosts in the text: In Deanna's, Lusa's and Garnett's frequent glimpsing of ghosts in their everyday worlds, why do the ghosts of Native people not arise? I think that in focusing so much of her text's imagery on the destroyed, killed, or disremembered parts of pasts, the spectre that is itself absent from Kingsolver's rich discussion around ghosts is the ghost of the Native person. This absence acts as a detriment to Kingsolver's self-proclaimed didactic objective, as the human inhabitants that peopled the land before settler-based understandings of it became dominant have been forgotten in a new kind of historicization.<sup>9</sup> Otherwise, Kingsolver is adept at underscoring and illuminating the forgotten or disavowed in both the human and non-human worlds.

## Wilderness and the Land in *Prodigal Summer*

There is something largely unspoken for in *Prodigal Summer*: nature. I will qualify and attempt to explain this seemingly outrageous claim made about a book that places nature as quite central to its storyline.





Barbara Kingsolver writes predominantly *about* nature—its habits, ecosystems, plant life, animals, and its inevitable natural deaths—but there is always something beneath the surface of her words, something that cannot be spoken for because it exists largely outside of language. Sandilands calls this the “Real.” The Real is something that cannot be encompassed in words, as it is an experience, a sense of being that emerges out of the wonder and awe that can occur when one is in visceral communion and communication with nature. The Real is glimpsed in those moments where we feel connected to a larger sense of ourselves and to the world of nature, but it cannot be held or grasped indefinitely. The Real, though, can be later accessed as nature lovers “gesture to its presence. As memories, as symptoms, these states signal the production of the space of the Real within human language, but never the Real itself” (200-01). Linguistically, the Real can only be comprehended in hindsight—as memory or shadow—it can never be fully understood in the present moment, because when it is occurring it is a felt, embodied state, a state that exists outside of language. A similar statement could be made about the experience of the ghostly; ghosts are experienced in the moment and can only be rationally or plausibly grasped in memory or as shadow. The reason that Kingsolver cannot speak entirely for nature, even though she focuses largely on it in *Prodigal Summer* is due to the fact that,

Nature always already defies its construction; it is always Other, uncatchable. [...] It is an unrepresentable kernel around which discourse circulates but which language can never fully apprehend [...] A space is left open for other experiences, for Otherness, for the recognition that discourse, no matter how democratic, cannot be complete. (Sandilands 203-04)

Nature is experienced (the Real), and this experience, no matter how diligently remembered, cannot take place or materialize in language. Language can only gesture towards the presence of the Real; it can never *fully* represent or capture its existence. Embodiment and the experience of place are felt occurrences, bodily sensations that cannot necessarily be explained. Similarly, the characters who are disturbed or haunted by ghosts in *Prodigal Summer* experience encounters with the ghostly that are outside of language and largely outside of linear time. Ghosts recall and resurrect the past and gesture toward the future, all the while seemingly appearing in the present. Moreover, through this precise act of remembrance (of the experiences of nature and of the ghostly), the linear continuity between time and embodiment become misaligned. Derrida calls this kind of time “out of joint: time is disarticulated, dislocated, dislodged, time is run down, deranged, both





out of order and mad. Time is off its hinges, time is off course, beside itself, disadjusted" (18). The characters in *Prodigal Summer* who directly encounter experiences of the Real or of the ghostly—perhaps these can be seen as aspects of the same thing—may remember and speak of their experiences after the fact, but in the moment they can only ever engage in *embodiment* or *experience*. Absences (or ghosts) become present in the character's lives *in the moment*. Similarly, nature exists outside of social constructions and conceptual understandings of it, outside of linguistic or linear structures or boundaries. Despite human beings' desire to capture nature, or correspondingly the ghostly, in words, it can only ever realistically exist as it is—ubiquitous, uncatchable, Other.

Kingsolver gestures towards the Real in *Prodigal Summer* through Lusa: she experiences a communion with nature through her relationship to the honeysuckle flower; its smell often travels to her in the house and interrupts her daily chores and activities. The first time the honeysuckle's presence emerges in the book Lusa's husband Cole is still alive and is cutting the honeysuckle flower to bring to Lusa—at the exact moment she smells it from across the farmland. This is when Lusa internally and silently seems to commit to Cole and to the land that she is now a part. This is the moment of the Real and the moment that sets up Lusa's necessary connection to the land she inherits at Cole's untimely death. "Survival here would be possible if only she could fill the air with scent and dispatch the stern female ghosts in that kitchen with the sweetness of an unabashed and blooming weed" (31). Here, one kind of temporal interruption interrupts another—the scent of honeysuckle is welcomed as something that might drive out the ghosts of women who lived, cooked, and loved their men, in the kitchen where Lusa now stands, the deceased women of the Widener family. Lusa then reflects on her difficult choice to stay at the farm as an outsider—and as a dead man's wife—soon after Cole's passing: "her decision and all the rest of her days would turn not on the moment when she understood Cole was dead, but on an earlier time at that same window when she'd received his wordless message by scent across the field" (48). Lusa here refers to the memory of the honeysuckle's scent that travelled across the land from husband to wife: she experiences through the flower the memory of her unabashed romance with Cole. It is through this temporal interruption or dislocation that a conceptual link between Lusa's newfound place and the scent she associates with it comes together. Lusa then commits herself to a place that is inherently "Other" to her, a farm that she seems to have no stake in, save its scent and her memories of it. The Real here—Lusa's connection to nature and to her newly inherited home—gestures towards constructions of wilderness and ideas of home, as Sandilands' concept of memory







interrupting the present (the gestured to Real) becomes interwoven with ideas concerning what is meant by a home in nature. All of this thinking positions Kingsolver's work as intimately linked with ideas of how wilderness and home are connected, and how wonder, awe, and embodied states of awareness work together when one is deeply connected to *place*. Kingsolver asks her readers to question how these concepts factor into human beings' relationships with others, and human beings' relationships with Nature. Maybe Lusa encounters both the wild *and* the feeling of home in the honeysuckle's scent. Maybe it is at that moment that she is able to say that something significant in her internal self has shifted, committing her to a life on a land that she doesn't outwardly seem to belong to. Maybe the remembrance of the scent, and its connection to her husband, acts as the catalyst for her new life without him. In any case, the moment that she smells that flower from across the field, is, to my eye, a lucid example of the Real in Nature, forcing Lusa to exist outside of language and *in* wonder, connecting the not so contradictory concepts of the wild and of home in a landscape that seems ready to encompass them both: "What [Cole] reached out to tell her that morning, as she sat near the window, was that words were not the whole truth. What she'd loved was here, and still might be, if she could find her way to it" (80).

Alternatively, the significance placed on the honeysuckle's scent could be viewed as somewhat romanticized. At the conclusion of the book Kingsolver dismantles the relationship she has set up between Lusa and the honeysuckle plant, or perhaps she remakes it: "Now, in the gathering darkness, she turned finally to tearing out the honeysuckle that had overgrown the garage. [...] It was only honeysuckle, an invasive exotic, nothing sacred. She saw it now for what it was, an introduced garden vine coiling itself tightly around all the green places where humans and wilder creatures conceded to share their lives" (440). As Lusa begins to feel at home in her new place she resonates less with what was comforting to her previously—an exotic or foreign plant. One could argue that Lusa becomes a "real" farmer at this point in the novel. This scene occurs directly after Lusa's acknowledgement that "she had been called [to the farm]," and after a rainstorm "shattered the windows on the north side of the house and rattled every ghost out of the rafters, from both sides of the family" (437). By the end of the book, Lusa comes to a fuller recognition of the immaterial in her life—the honeysuckle (or her experience of it), the ghosts she resides with—and by extension comes to a fuller recognition of her self, the self that is now at home in what has been called the wild, the self that was planted so to speak in a different life. Derrida maintains that ghosts come back and ghosts follow. I would say that ghosts call on





those they want and charge those people to answer. The same occurs with the Real in nature—one is compelled to respond to the embodied experience. Lusa does this by the end of *Prodigal Summer*; she responds and eloquently works with the circumstances, material and immaterial, that she has been given.

### **The Keystone Predator Concept— Deanna as Alpha Female— Towards the Construction of a New Kind of Family**

Prominent ecofeminist theorist Carolyn Merchant, in her book *Earthcare: Women and the Environment*, explains a partnership ethic, a theoretical framework that helps to guide my understanding of the literal and allegorical connections between the human and non-human worlds that are so prominent in *Prodigal Summer*. She writes,

A partnership ethic sees the human community and the biotic community in a mutual relationship with each other. It states that the greatest good for the human and non-human community is to be found in their mutual, living interdependence. [...] The term partnership avoids gendering nature as mother or a goddess (sex-typing the planet), avoids endowing either males or females with a special relationship to nature or to each other (essentialism), and admits the anthropogenic, or human-generated nature of environmental ethics and metaphor. [...] Partnership ethics recognize both the continuities and differences between humans and non-human nature. (216-17)

Merchant argues that viewing the relationship between human and non-human nature as a partnership is crucial to the partnership's ability to sustain itself. Interdependence is a critical concept here: human beings exist in relation to and with the natural world. The conscious acknowledgment of this fact energizes and upholds the inescapable responsibility human beings have to the earth. Additionally, partnership suggests equality within relationship: both groups in the partnership must maintain reciprocity and accountability to the other. This ecofeminist theorization echoes Derrida's conceptualizations of accounting for the debt. Intriguingly, Merchant's ethic is pronouncedly androgynous. Women and men are encompassed in one large human group, and this group as a whole engages in a partnership with non-human nature. Merchant's theoretical framework deconstructs the notion that women have a stronger relationship to the natural landscape and notes that neither women nor men should instinctually be positioned as having a more important or intimate claim to non-human nature. Although *Prodigal Summer* is notably women-centred, and might rhetorically





suggest an elevated familiarity of relationship between women and nature, I argue that Kingsolver characterizes human and non-human nature in a way that gestures towards Merchant's partnership ethic; channelled through the character of Deanna.

*Prodigal Summer* starts with these words: "Her body moved with the frankness that comes from solitary habits. But solitude is a human presumption [...] If someone in this forest had been watching her—a man with a gun, for instance [...] he would have noticed how quickly she moved up the path [...]" (1). Kingsolver is describing Deanna in this passage. She continues with her characterization: "Her body was free to follow its own rules: a long-legged gait too fast for companionship" (2). The last chapter of the book holds these very similar words, narrated from the perspective of the alpha female coyote: "She loved the air after a hard rain, and a solo expedition on which her body was free to run in a gait too fast for companionship" (441). Additionally, Kingsolver writes: "If someone in this forest had been watching her—a man with a gun for instance [...] he would have noticed how quickly she moved up the path [...] Solitude is a human presumption" (443-44). The intentional corollary between Deanna and the alpha female coyote is starkly captured in these sentences. Kingsolver, firstly, uses language and the narrative structure of her novel to create a relationship between the human and animal worlds. This is the allegorical or figurative manifestation in Kingsolver's text of Merchant's partnership ethic. Deanna is figured as the human representation of the alpha female coyote. She initially needs no man—until Eddie Bondo arrives. But even then, her body seems to desperately need Eddie, but does her mind? Does she need Eddie in any other way than sexually, bodily, passionately? Does she simply need Eddie to plant his proverbial and biological seed? The male coyote plays a secondary and largely reproductive role in coyote procreation; he impregnates the alpha female coyote and then leaves her to her sister's care, the beta female, to raise the pups. A link can be made between Eddie—the man who impregnates Deanna—and the male coyote. After sexual intercourse, both leave. Eddie leaves Deanna a note explaining his choice: "It's hard for a man to admit he has met his match" (432). The similarities between the two family structures are riveting: both groups are women-centred and operated, male animals in both groups simply proffer the seeds needed to reproduce, and the rearing of children is done by more than one female while the male species play a secondary or non-existent role. Deanna, after living in solitude for many months in the forest decides to leave that place and return to the rural community below. She further concretizes her allegorical relation to the coyote when she thinks about what she will say to the townsfolk about her pregnancy: "She would tell people in





Egg Fork, because they sure would ask, that the father of her child was a coyote" (432). Deanna returns to the farm of her surrogate mother, Nannie Rawley, for support and companionship during her pregnancy and after she gives birth. Nannie occupies the position of the beta female, the helper to the alpha female coyote, and Deanna's child can be related to a pup being brought up by two female caregivers. Kingsolver's literary correspondence between woman and extended family and coyote and extended family can be viewed through the ecofeminist lens of a partnership ethic. Kingsolver connects the animal world to the human world in a way that privileges neither, yet recognizes the "continuities" and "differences" associated with each.

Through the characterization of Deanna as the alpha female and in her "return" to Nannie as she carries her unborn child, the first glimpses of a new construction or conceptualization of the family becomes apparent. There is no doubt: this is a women-centered family group, not a nuclear family structure. To further complicate the definition of the family, the other main characters must be taken into consideration. Lusa adopts Jewel's children Crystal and Lowell; they are not blood relations. We also find out that Garnett, Nannie's neighbour and potential romantic partner, is the grandfather to Crystal and Lowell, Shel (Jewel's estranged husband) being his son: "'I've got grandchildren, too.' He told Nannie [...] 'the girl's name is Crystal and the boy's Lowell'" (426). Nannie responds: "'Mr. Walker. Garnett. Will wonders never cease [...] here I'm finally going to have a grandbaby in my house, and you're going to have *two*'" (427). Thus, Garnett and Nannie, by the novel's end, are positioned as the unlikely grandparent figures to three children, Deanna is metaphorically carrying a coyote's child, and Lusa has "inherited" two children along with her farm *and* connects with Garnett through her goat farming. The novel comes together in a plethora of interconnections and deeply welcomed familial associations. This large family group symbolizes difference while redefining the meaning of the concept altogether.

Finally, as Kingsolver allows and accounts for the disarticulated or disavowed in human relations through the portrayal of an alternative family group, she also presents her reader the possibility to read ambivalently one character in the book: Crystal. Crystal is a child who defies gendered characterizations since she is not the "girl" her mother and family want her to be. Jewel, mimicking heterosexist discourse and strictly defined gender binaries, says to Lusa about her daughter: "Her first word was *no*, and her second was *dress*. No dress. No dolls, no pretty hair bows." Lusa offers another reading of this child: "She's not crazy, don't do that to yourself. I wouldn't worry about it." Jewel responds to Lusa's acceptance of Crys: "You would if you were her





mother. You'd worry yourself sick. [Shel] blamed me—oh, Lord did he blame me. He said I was making her a little homo by letting her wear jeans and cut her hair like that" (120-21). These quotations, besides foreshadowing Lusa's role as Crys's adoptive mother, exemplify opposing arguments around gender discourse. Jewel iterates stereotypical conventions whereas Lusa allows for alternative and varied possibilities around Crys's gender and sexuality. Crys is a child and her future by the end of the book remains open and unknown. She could be a "tomboy" who finds her femininity as she ages; she could choose to identify as a bisexual or lesbian woman; or she could decide to identify as an ambivalently gendered heterosexual woman. The possibilities that surround her identity development are extensive and encompass far more than whether or not she is straight or gay. Lusa, in an attempt to reassure Jewel, notes that "Ugly ducklings grow up to be swans" (Kingsolver 121). After uttering these words, though, Lusa reflects on the platitude she has offered: "[T]his wasn't really her wish, to promise that Crys would grow up straight and feminine because maybe she wouldn't. Her wish was to tell Jewel that the alternative was fine, too [...]" (121). Kingsolver, through the character of Crys, breaks through deep-rooted restrictions and accepted assumptions around male and female sexuality and gender as she calls into question that which is taken as "truth" about these issues. Judith Butler argues that gender is a sign, a reiterated and socially reinforced performance. She writes in her book *Bodies That Matter*, "Gender norms operate by requiring the embodiment of certain ideals of femininity and masculinity, ones that are almost always related to the idealization of the heterosexual bond [...]. This is a "girl," however, who is compelled to "cite" the norm in order to qualify and remain a viable subject. Femininity is not the product of choice, but the forcible citation of a norm [...]" (232). Through Lusa's response, Kingsolver destabilizes recognizable notions of femininity and creates a "viable" subjectivity for Crys as an indistinctly gendered person. The relationship between Crys and Lusa can be read in connection with the haunting of the land that I discussed earlier. I will offer this position: Crys, as a girl who chooses not to be a "girl," is a *living* figure in the text but one who also haunts it. Her lack of self or social identification as a "girl" exposes the volatility that haunts gender and the normative, nuclear family, as it works to call into question the viability of "normative" life. In some ways, although quite alive, Crys acts as a ghost. For most of the Widener family, her body "fail[s] to count as [a] "bod[y]" (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 15) and, as such, it remains "not constructed," (16) due to its refusal to enact and re-enact normative gendered and sexed roles. Crys's body becomes, for mainstream understandings of it, part of the "domain of abjected bodies, a field of



deformation [...] failing to qualify as fully human" (Butler 16). Interestingly, throughout *Prodigal Summer* Kingsolver unsettles the hierarchal privileging of the human group over non-human groups, suggesting that the categories that delineate and *place* human beings—for example gender or sexuality—are less than essential. Butler speaks to this end when she argues that identities are less stable than some might avow: there is an "incoherence of identity" apparent in the characterization of Crys. There is unfixedness, unstructuredness to her being. She "undoes" gender, and in so doing "undoes" the hierarchical or reproving relationship between the subject and the object (Butler, *Psychic Life* 149). It is precisely because Crys is a child and her future as a gendered and sexed human being remains unclear that the opportunity for readers to resist forming a definitive conclusion about Crys's identity is afforded by the text. Additionally, the fact that Lusa will become Crys's adoptive mother facilitates the possibilities for ambiguously or ambivalently reading Crys's character. Lusa, for her part, accepts Crys as she is by responding to her very materiality and subjectivity. For Lusa, Crys's life is valuable. Her life is one that is "worth protecting" (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 16). In this way, Lusa perhaps accounts for another kind of ghost or debt—that of the living variety—deconstructing stereotypical perceptions of what a child needs in order to find her place.

## Conclusions

*Prodigal Summer's* rhetorical strategy is situated, above all else, in the connections and interconnections between the human and non-human worlds. The predominant mode in which these relationships are signified—through the characters' relationships to and with ghosts—define the structures and boundaries of these relationships. Ghosts alert Deanna, Lusa, and Garnett to what needs to be attended to in terms of natural landscapes, ecosystems, and people. This *being alerted to* underscores and elucidates the stakes and responsibilities outlined in Merchant's partnership ethic. Kingsolver frames her novel with this message: "Solitude is a human presumption" (1, 444). Derrida, Sandilands, and Merchant would agree. Ghosts interrupt material reality; they come back and follow; haunting never ends. Non-linguistic natural realities exist at each moment—human beings are allowed to experience the awe that comes in nature's wake. In addition, while nature exists around the human world, exposed and subject to human beings' everyday lives, it is not responsible for the choices human beings make in the face of non-human nature. Barbara Kingsolver asks her readers through *Prodigal Summer* to open their eyes and hearts to





the multiple *worlds* that surround them. She asks human beings: Which reality will you trust?

## NOTES

1. I explain what I mean by this concept in depth in the pages that follow.

2. I discuss this alternative familial construction in depth in the last section of my text: "The Keystone Predator Concept—Deanna as Alpha Female—Towards the Construction of a New Kind of Family."

3. The ways that I am using legacy and inheritance for the purposes of my argument will be further clarified in my next section: The Presence of Ghosts in *Prodigal Summer*. For now: Legacy is what is left behind when one dies; Inheritance is what one gains from another—human or otherwise.

4. William Cronon suggests that wilderness is a cultural construction, a place where humans legitimize and experience the romanticization of non-human nature. He writes, "For many Americans wilderness stands as the last remaining place where civilization, that all too human disease, has not fully infected the earth. It is an island in the polluted sea of urban-industrial modernity, the one place we can turn for escape from our too-muchness." He continues: "But is it? The more one knows of its peculiar history, the more one realizes that wilderness is not quite what it seems. Far from being the one place on earth that stands apart from humanity, it is quite profoundly a human creation – indeed, the creation of very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history. [...] Wilderness hides its unnaturalness behind a mask that is all the more beguiling because it seems so natural" (69). Cronon's conceptualization of constructed natural spaces—instances of the wild—provides corroboration and context from which to read Sandilands's ecofeminist work around nature and the land. Sandilands notes the legitimacy of the construction *and* uses it in her own theorization.

5. Derrida maintains that haunting and mourning are facets of the same phenomenon. Haunting is a form of mourning that creates a disjuncture in a so-called normative mourning process. Haunting is on-going suggesting that mourning can never be fully complete. In the context of *Prodigal Summer*, ghosts haunt all three main characters. Because of this, they (perhaps unconsciously) engage in what Derrida would see as a continual process of mourning. Some argue that mourning can be resolved; Derrida maintains that mourning can never end. Haunting is the indicator and impetus of continual mourning; and as such, any imagined resolution to mourning cannot exist.

6. I am indebted to Dr. Sarah Brophy for helping me understand the nuances of the similarities and differences between debt, inheritance, and legacy. Some of the material I use here comes from our conversation March 22, 2004. My thinking on the last question I ask here is partially generated by a quotation from Carolyn Merchant's book *Earthcare*: "[...] humans now have the power, knowledge, and technology to destroy life as we know it today" (217). I speak more about Merchant's theorization in the last section of the text.



7. Pages 7-8 outline the ways I am using haunting and mourning in the context of my argument *vis-à-vis* ghosts in *Prodigal Summer*, akin to Derrida's theorizing. The presence of ghosts suggests haunting, and therefore mourning, regardless of whether or not the ghost is characterized as positive or negative. Haunting and mourning, therefore, can be viewed analogously; being haunted calls those affected by ghosts more deeply into the mourning process—even if they feel the mourning process is complete or no longer necessary.

8. Garnett, although he would not admit it, is in a continual and constant state of being haunted by the chestnut and mourning its loss. He moves through his hallway: "He felt he had seen a ghost, but not of himself: it was the mirror frame that provoked him, his surviving face circumscribed by the remains of that extinct tree" (Kingsolver 212-13). Garnett's self-understanding occurs in direct relation to the extinct chestnut, the tree that structures and frames the whole of his life. He is said to be "surviving" while the tree is understood as "extinct." The intimacy here between man and tree offers valuable insight into the close relationship between the mourner and the mourned. The invocation of a mirror is apt in this circumstance as Garnett's past, present, and future is reflected and caught up in the life and death of the chestnut.

9. To contradict this claim, one could argue that Kingsolver in fact does evoke the ghost or specter of the native person through the representation of the coyote in the text. The coyote is the traditional trickster figure in Native American folklore, and Kingsolver's defence of the coyote in the novel, through Deanna, is unrelenting. To further argue *contra* wise, Kingsolver concludes the novel with a chapter arguably written in the voice of the alpha female coyote; in this chapter Kingsolver mimics the plotline in the first few pages of the novel where Deanna tracks and moves about the land. There is a strong correlation in the text between Deanna and the alpha female coyote, a link I will explore in a following section on Kingsolver's gesture towards a new conceptualization of the family. At this point, the presence or absence of the ghost of the native person remains in question: Does it matter that the representation of the native perspective or worldview in the novel is chiefly conveyed through the animal world? Or, is it appropriate to conclude that the inclusion of the coyote in the text is a fair representation of the native person?

#### REFERENCES

- Abney, Lisa. "Barbara Kingsolver." *Contemporary American Women Fiction Writers An A-to-Z Guide*. Ed. Laurie Champion and Rhonda Austin. Westport: Greenwood, 2002.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993.
- . *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997.
- Cockrell, Amanda. "Luna Moths, Coyotes, Sugar Skulls: The Fiction of Barbara Kingsolver." *Twayne Companion to Contemporary Literature in English*. Ed. R.H.W. Dillard and Amanda Cockrell. New York: Twayne, 2003.



- Cronon, William. "The Trouble with Wilderness: or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York: Norton, 1995.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning, and the New International*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Kingsolver, Barbara. *Prodigal Summer*. New York: Harper-Collins, 2000.
- . *Small Wonder*. New York: Harper-Collins, 2002.
- Merchant, Carolyn. *Earthcare: Women and the Environment*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Sandilands, Catriona. "The Return of the Real." *The Good-Natured Feminist: Ecofeminism and The Quest for Democracy*. Minnesota: U of Minnesota P, 1999. 194-207.

