

Chapter - IV

Community Based Activism for Conservation and Sustenance in Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour*

Flight Behaviour by Barbara Kingsolver features a rural setting that is undergoing displacement without movement, as the components of the ecology are under constant flux and the inhabitants struggle to accommodate the changes, and comprehend the complexities. Tomlinson points out how global modernity and the anthropogenic crisis have enabled this transition or mobility “of staying in one place but experiencing the ‘displacement’ that global modernity brings to them” (qtd in Mehnert 67). In the novel, the human characters are rooted in a terrain of solid values, beliefs and permanence as they are unaffected by the anthropogenic changes that swivel around them, but the arrival of the relocated population of monarch butterflies stirs things in motion by bringing to them climatic awareness. Kingsolver bridges the gap between an environment in constant flux and the inconsistent reflexes of the human inhabitants. This prevalent gap is explored, deciphered in layman terms and analysed primarily, to spread climatic awareness and secondly, to promote activism and resistance.

Kerridge, Ghosh and other literary critics have consistently questioned the contribution of realistic literary responses to present threats of climate change. Kingsolver's work addresses the realistic aspect of climate change and is one of the most popular works of American climate fiction. The factor of ‘realness’ stems through the fictional account not only due to the bearing of close semblances to the present anthropogenic situation but also due to the responses undertaken to counter the same in the novel. It does not yield to eco-utopian, dystopian or apocalyptic imagery but is a sincere attempt in recreating the climatic situation.

It is also a novel of migration that opens up the complexities in migration trajectories of nonhuman climate refugees: monarch butterflies. As the author puts forth a note on the background of the novel, it traces the relocation of the monarch butterflies to Southern Appalachia instead of its usual migration route to the US and Canada. Though the novel features the fictional telling of the relocation of the population of monarch butterflies, the anthropogenic threat of the highly evolved monarch's migration is factual as mentioned in the author's note:

In February 2010, an unprecedented rainfall brought down mudslides and catastrophic flooding on the Mexican mountain town of Anganguero. Thirty people were killed and thousands lost their homes and livelihoods. To outsiders, the town was mainly known as the entry point for visitors to the spectacular colonies of monarch butterflies that overwinter nearby. The town is rebuilding, and the entire migratory population of North American monarchs still returns every autumn to the same mountaintops in central Mexico. The sudden relocation of these overwintering colonies to southern Appalachia is a fictional event that has occurred only in the pages of this novel. (Kingsolver 598)

Barbara Kingsolver traces the plot through the intense imagery of butterflies as nonhuman refugees. The selection of the specific species of nonhuman refugees firstly, decentres anthropocentric pride which rests its focus only on human victimisation, secondly, dilutes the anthropocentric prioritisation of animals which are of use to the human population rather than what is essential to the ecological stability, and lastly, demonstrates the plight of a species with agency but is deprived of its agency due to the anthropogenic crisis. The characters in the novel from various geographic territories and cultural backgrounds associate to the monarchs in a plethora of ways depending on their

belief systems, lifestyle patterns and intimacy shared with their environmental counterparts. By building such associations with the nonhuman agents of flight, the author endows the monarch butterflies with emotional, social and ecological significance.

The novel also connects the grounds of multispecies segregation, place distinction, inequities, and injustices caused and aggravated due to climate change. Kingsolver establishes the plot line through a careful crafting of interconnectedness and junctures of places witnessing anthropogenic displacement. It also draws a parallel with agents of flight that are deprived of their agency and agents of confinement. The protagonist of the novel finds herself in domestic and emotional confinement and craves a collapse “with an appetite larger than sense” (Kingsolver 2). The longing for collapse that she had in the beginning of the novel had overpowering strands of self-destruction but the arrival of the monarch butterflies, which she calls “a lake of fire, something far more fierce and wondrous than either of those elements alone. The impossible.” (22), switches her position from a victim to a catalyst of climatic action.

The novel locates itself in the unfair victimisation of the species that are not responsible for the crisis but bear the brunt first in line. The plot is about “Animals losing their homes, because of people being a bit careless” (Kingsolver 491). The entire chapter seeks to resolve the past push factors that have turned the migrant species of monarch butterflies into climate refugees as the relocation is because “Their ordinary home in Mexico was changing, trees getting cut down and climate zones warming up, much too quickly for their liking” (490). It will also analyse the consequences of the relocation, the factors that triggered action and activism and also evaluate the impact of activism. The reason behind the surmounting issue of “Why a major portion of the monarch population that has overwintered in Mexico since God set it loose there, as you say, would instead aggregate in the southern Appalachians, for the first time in recorded history, on the farm of

the family Turnbow.” (167) is analysed to grant resolution and intervention. The chapter accumulates an understanding of the butterfly crisis from the stand “of Barry Commoner’s first law of ecology, “Everything is connected to everything else,” as we witness the interrelation between the local and the planetary experiences of climate change.” (qtd in Jalan 4)

Climate fictions are renowned for its portrayal of the climate crisis and depending on the perspective taken, it is characterised into utopian, dystopian or realistic genres. Realistic climate fiction are few and scattered along time scales and situations but are considered to have a lasting impact on the readers. Barbara Kingsolver duplicates the plausibility of the climatic event on concrete settings, realistic places and conventional crafting of the novel. Glass resonates similar viewpoint in his acknowledgement of the contribution of novelists like Barbara Kingsolver, Liz Jensen, and Margaret Atwood “who routinely use ‘conventional’ forms of narrative, characterisation, and plot in their fiction” (Maughan 13). The employment of the conventional forms of writing extracts credibility from the readers which enables the passing on of climatic emergency and the assured possibility of climatic collapse.

The climatic situation represented in the novel is place based and is restricted into a place of bounds, which later on expands to accommodate ecological events that has no anthropocentric bounds. The novel does not situate itself in the future ramifications of climate change or a high alert crisis that threatens the survival of every living species but represents the event just like how Naomi Klein says ““a crisis that is, by its nature, slow moving and intensely place based”” (qtd in 4). The novel is a careful consideration of both “the real-world documented impact, and forecast of the likely and significant future impact of climate change in the region” (Lloyd and Rapson 4). The relocation of the population of monarch butterflies would comprise the former whereas the factors that are responsible for

the relocation and its consequences on all the components of the ecology would comprise the latter.

The people of Tennessee had witnessed climatic fluctuations and minor threats of the Anthropocene but due to lack of climatic awareness, education, and interventions from institutions of power and governance, they had resorted to a continuance of same old lifestyle patterns. The residents of the plot were not agents of change as they were wrapped up in an anthropocentric blindfold as Dellarobia wonders, “How had she failed to see them? She felt stupid, or blind, in a way that went beyond needing glasses. Unreceptive to truth. She’d been willing to take in the run of emotions that stood up the hairs on her neck, the wonder, but had shuttered her eyes and looked without seeing” (Kingsolver 71-72). Kingsolver’s depiction of the climatic chaos is twofold: primarily to deconstruct anthropocentric beliefs, attitudes and actions and secondly to expand thought and action to reflect biocentrism. It is in the transition of the twofold process that the climatic ramifications unfold to the characters in the novel, which slowly propels them into activism for climate justice.

The demonstration of the climate crises and the responses toward the same not only proclaim the urgency to decentre the human but also to reframe the notion of ethics. The concept of ethics, humanity and the celebration of anthropocentrism had wrecked the layers of interdependencies that sustain life on the planet. Such a display of mass ideas call for the formation of “*Wild ethics*” as put forth in the *Planet* as it “has more to do with a simple humility toward others—an attentive openness not just toward other persons but also toward the inexhaustible otherness of the manifold beings that compose this earthly world” (Horn et al. 50). This shift in perception of nature and adapting responses to align human actions with ecological betterment was the gift Dellarobia wanted to gift her children. She takes Preston to the butterfly forest, “to give him his present: sight.” (129)

Climate fictions are not only assessed based on the genres and the depiction of the climate crises but also based on its association with places, nonhuman and just interventions to cope with the same. As Buell says in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, the environmental literacy of a text is assessed by “its way of situating itself locally and/or globally, its attention or inattention to the nonhuman sphere, or its ideological valence(s) with regard to receptivity or opacity to social justice issues” (Buell 131). Evaluation of Kingsolver’s text from Buell’s point of reference justifies the function of environmental literacy and its impact in calling for just interventions. The text portrays an accurate depiction of climatic collapse by bringing to light the dispersal effect of the climatic fluctuations. It is dispersed across space and time, dispersed across the disparities in the victimisation of species and vulnerable communities and most significantly, cannot be predicted or contained within borders, spaces and timescales.

As Dellarobia learns about the magnitude of the crisis at hand “She pictured orchards like the Cooks’ dying on the other side of the world, for the opposite reason. Rain being sent to the wrong places, in the wrong amounts” (Kingsolver 385). It was such an unravelling of ignorance through a careful processing of the calamity that has crafted the novel into the genre of realistic fiction. The climatic depiction occurs in a rural locale that has not contributed to the titling of the climatic balance as much as the developed cities have, it includes characters who in comparison to capitalists and unsustainable consumerists have not aggravated the climatic crisis and most importantly, the aftermath is borne by one of the most fragile species in the ecological chart instead of the bearers of crime. Such a depiction reassures the essential nature of the climatic fluctuations that has the potential to topple any known power or institution. The novel “exemplifies that natural and cultural processes shape each other without regard for local or national borders, and

thereby emphasizes that the local must always be viewed in relation with global processes.” (Mehnert 56)

The climate representation in the novel does not begin with the relocation of the monarch butterflies but with the decision made to deforest the property in ownership of Dellarobia’s family. The logging of the trees was not deemed to be an unsustainable action as the family prioritised the profit in terms of money over the loss in terms of ecological value. Though Dellarobia does not support the decision, her family decides to move forward with it until the monarch butterflies take refuge there bringing to them climatic awareness. She goes to the property to die by suicide but she witnesses that “Every tree on the far mountainside was covered with trembling flame” (Kingsolver 72) but fails to recognise it as butterflies and assumes that it is a sign from God, urging her to continue living. She harbours the divine vision that she presumes she had in secrecy as she cannot reveal to her family the reason behind her going to the property at that peculiar time of the day. So, “She had carried this vision inside herself for so many days in ignorance, like an unacknowledged pregnancy” (72). But as days went by, she realised that “The fire was alive, and incomprehensibly immense, an unbounded, uncountable congregation of flamecolored insects.” (72)

The significance of forests has been emphasised in a lot of climate fictions as it is the foundation of wildlife and the more than human continuance. Charlotte McConaghy’s *Migrations* also accommodates the crisis of disappearing forests due to mindless encroachments and unsustainable development trajectories embarked by the nations. As the forests are rapidly disappearing due to anthropogenic activities, the following announcement is made to the public: “*if you or anyone you know wishes to visit the remaining forests of the world, you need to join the waiting lists immediately, for it is becoming more likely that the lists will outgrow the life spans of the forests*” (Kingsolver

210). Forests act as a major ecological interlocutor connecting the human, and the more than human. The Scientist educates Dellarobia “that forests absorb carbon from the sky, but not when they are dying of drought or burning” (388). Though conventional anthropocentric attitudes have led people into viewing nature and the nonhuman in terms of materialistic gain and loss, it is a source of sustenance of multispecies communities and promises the continuance of life on the planet. The fact is brought to the front by Dellarobia who tries to dissuade Cub from deforestation:

when you clear-cut a mountain it can cause a landslide. I’m not crying wolf here, Cub, it’s a fact. You can see it happening where they logged over by the Food King, there’s a river of mud sliding over the road. And that’s exactly what happened in Mexico, where the butterflies were before. They clear-cut the mountain, and a flood brought the whole thing down on top of them. You should see the pictures on the Internet. (234-35)

The relocated monarch butterflies create a spectacle as there are “more of them than we’ve got people.” (Kingsolver 73), attracting crowds of tourists, scientists, volunteers, activists, media and residents and was viewed as “the tenth wonder of the world” (76). By merging the ‘butterfly phenomenon’ with the hordes of human population that it brings closer, Kingsolver emphasises not only on how the anthropogenic or rather the prolonged anthropocentric activities have caused the crises but also of how the interlocution of the “system between human and nonhuman actors” (76) are essential for the sustenance of ecological stability. The family in Kingsolver’s representation has three plans to counter the relocation of the monarch butterflies; firstly to deforest the area but is not approved by the attention that the species has extracted, secondly, to kill the species but the son disapproves by saying, “There’s not enough spray in the world to kill that many bugs, Dad. That might not be the thing to do” (75) and thirdly, the plan based on the

idea that “People would probably pay to see these things” (76) that they had partially put into action through Hester. Through the progression of capitalist and dehumanising series of events, the novel emphasises the role of “bio-physical and socio-cultural interactions in the creation of habitats. As the novel continues, worsening climatic conditions put this system of interdependencies under increasing pressure” (Mehnert 61-62).

The climate crisis portrayed is sensitive, alert, not immune but close to reality. The gravity of the plot is directly reflected in Dr. Byron’s conversation wherein he retorts to the interviewer who asks him to convey the situation in a nutshell, “In a nutshell?... That won’t fit in a nutshell” (Kingsolver 502). It brings to the forefront the root of the crisis: “Living systems are sensitive to very small changes” (387). The essence of anthropocentric pride results from having tamed the insurmountable, potent and untameable nature but is ignorant of the tangled mesh of interdependencies that sustain life and continuance of communities. Man is not at war with the other species but holds the livelihood and future of them and vice versa. As the scientist brings out, humans are not potent enough to outlast the climate crisis as “It will only take a few degrees of change, global average, to knock our kind out of the running” (385). Such an understanding of one’s role and station in life enables the transition from anthropocentrism to biocentrism.

The decentering of anthropocentrism is more complicated for the characters in the novel as they are rooted in religious, cultural, and social practices that have been miscommunicating the connections between the human and the more than human. The novel has been rooted in Christian ideologies and traces how the character navigates and heals with the Holy Bible as well as rebels against certain verses to wrap her mind around the magnanimous wreck that surmounts her life. She brings out a contradiction which can be perceived not as a contradiction within the realms of religion but is the essential contradiction that surmounts all of humankind and the capitalist, consumerist and

anthropocentric tendencies that humankind is a prey to. She wonders how though the Old and New Testaments “had over a thousand passages about respecting God’s earth” (Kingsolver 229) it also promised and blessed humankind with “the hope of many things including prosperity” (229). This excruciating contradiction is the crux of the climatic situation as to take any kind of action: positive or negative, requires collective effort, consistency and relentless pursuit and “In a world of wars and religious fracas, prosperity might be the sole point of general agreement” (229) which has resulted in the collapse that the locale witnesses in the present.

Sonam Jalan in her research paper titled ““Sense of Place and Sense of Planet”: Local-Planetary Experiences of Climate Change in Barbara Kingsolver’s *Flight Behavior*” analyses the construction of the plot and setting of *Flight Behaviour* within the theoretical concept of Ursula Heise’s *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*. She puts forth the need to develop an idea of “ecocosmopolitanism or an “environmentally oriented cosmopolitanism” (Heise) that involves ‘deterritorialization’ or detachment of cultural routines, identities and epistemologies from their ties to place enabling better understanding of how social and ecological systems function within larger global networks” (2). Heise’s understanding of the same is inclusive of the human and the nonhuman and is a rendition of “imagined communities of both human and nonhuman kinds” (Heise 2). Kingsolver like Heise depicts “a cultural moment in which an entire planet becomes graspable as one’s own local backyard.” (4)

The entire climatic crisis and the resulting climatic awareness are demonstrated through an inductive approach of focussing on the local and then proceeding to address the global. The monarch butterflies, the climatic fluctuations and the awaiting collapse befall on the shoulders of the residents through a mere instance in their backyard. The climatic backdrop is situated amidst a mesh of culture, social practices and “between its impact

upon the ‘Family Territory’ and the ‘Circumference of the Earth’” (Jalan 2). Such a portrayal urges the readers as well as the characters in the novel to empower their agency “towards a global consciousness”, and also warrants contextualisation of “the local human experiences within the global context of the Anthropocene.” (2)

The novel intertwines the human and the nonhuman through the tracing of the migration trajectory of the monarch butterflies. Mehnert in *Climate Change Fictions* refers to the connective phenomenon that bridges the human and the other than human as the “butterfly effect” (63). It is “not in reference to chaos theory, but used more literally in order to explore the effect that the focus on butterflies in the story has—the emphasis on the relation between human and nonhuman and the importance of the global dimension—and which ultimately allows for an eco-cosmopolitan reading of the novel” (63). Such a perspective enables the comprehension of the formation of kinship ties and the construction of biotic communities in relation to the plot of the novel.

Throughout the novel, Kingsolver attempts to associate the human and the nonhuman world by setting them “in relation to one another.” (Mehnert 63) Mehnert discusses how the concept of interrelation and interconnectedness is found not only in the events of the novel but also in the setting and the minor components of the plot. She analyses how the element of interrelation is

emphasized by the choice of character names in the novel: Cub, Dellarobia’s husband, who does not think for himself but will always remain his parents’ son; Bear, the bad tempered and rather unyielding father-in-law; and Dellarobia’s best friend Dovey, who is free as a bird and a source of hope. In addition to these rather anthropomorphic names, Dellarobia, “named after a wreath made out of nature junk” (105), represents the amalgamation of nature and culture, and symbolically foreshadows her recognition that everything is

connected to everything else within a global ecological system. (Mehnert 62-63)

Anthropomorphism though is viewed as an attempt to entertain and reduce the magnitude of the crisis, is a powerful assigning of agency from the human to the nonhuman components of the ecology. The element of anthropomorphism in the plot, through the assigning of names of the characters reflects the factor of interconnectedness.

The novel hinges on the plight of nonhuman characters that form the point of convergence. It is an investigation into the “belief formation about climate change and animal rights” which is reflected through the characters’ responses and is situated amidst an intersection of “religious beliefs, knowledge of anthropogenic climate change, personal relationships with the butterflies, and behaviors.” (Defehr 1) The intersection points determine the extent of interconnectedness and predict the future of ecological sustenance.

In climate fiction, such anthropogenic toxification as well as “Anthropocene’s stratification and re-distribution of agency” can be traced through “the literary representation of how characters interact with other human characters, sentient non-human characters, as well as the degraded ecological setting of the novel” (Walsh 12- 13). The interaction between the human and the nonhuman agents in the novel highlights the domineering prevalence of anthropocentric perniciousness that creates a “contested zone” of “utopian privileging of human agency” that sequentially “creates an anti-utopia for the non-human and biosphere” (7). The monarch butterflies are considered to be one of the most resilient species to undertake the longest, generational and challenging migration route, but to place threats in their migration cycle due to anthropogenic intrusion is telling evidence of the utopian privileging of human agency which consecutively undermines the agency and survival.

The anthropogenic toxification is characterised by imbecile violence aimed at human and the more than human components. It is a time of heightened “violence toward the living earth—with terrestrial and oceanic ecosystems rapidly collapsing under the weight of our steady assaults, and with countless species tumbling into oblivion as a result of our arrogant disregard—it is now evident that our own species must undergo a sea change if anything of beauty is to survive” (Horn et al. 52). The Monarch butterflies are victims of the same as Byron says the relocation “is evidence of a disordered system,” and is due to the damage “At the normal roosting sites in Mexico, in the spring range, all over the migratory pathways” (503). The characters in the novel especially the media and the residents fail to grasp the intensity of the crisis and the plight of the ecological refugees due to the inherent feature of humans, who possess the ability to survive and establish a livelihood in any environment. As Neil Evernden points out “what distinguishes *homo sapiens* from other species is that we are “natural aliens,” creatures without fixed habitat who can locate ourselves pretty much anywhere” (qtd in Buell 71). Such a distinction leads to the rejection of culpability to the refugee crisis and the slim possibility of the continuance of species.

The indispensable contradiction that all works on climate change seek to demonstrate is that “Anthropogenic values need not be anthropocentric.” (Thiele 174) Though the anthropogenic crisis is a direct result of human activities, the ways to counter the same need not be a glorification of the needs and welfare of human beings over all the other species. Arne Naess, a biocentrist who had coined the term ‘deep ecology’ paraphrases Protagorus’ statement to support the proposed postulation of eco centric actions: “Man may be the measure of all things in the sense that only a human being has a measuring rod, but what he measures he may find to be greater than himself and his survival” (Thiele 174).

This proposition bears close resemblance to Dipesh Chakrabarty's prediction of the "sixth great extinction" (36) as the aspects that "the warming of the planet threatens is not the geological planet itself but the very conditions, both biological and geological, on which the survival of human species as well as of other forms of life depends." (36) The focus points of both the arguments are in the deduction of anthropocentric glory and to emphasise on kinship.

The deciphering of anthropocentrism followed by deconstruction of the same involves an excruciating process of understanding the factors that comprise in the formation of identity of the human and the nonhuman. The novel follows up the process from deeming the anthropocentric institution as omnipotent, to slowly deconstructing it and proceeds with the process of identity formation of the entire species. The process is laborious as "humans are thoroughly and inextricably entangled in their lifeworld, a world that is in a constant process of creative unfolding, and in which meaning making is a product of humans' entanglement with nature." (Cianchi 5)

It is inconceivable to frame the identity of the entire human species in isolation as all species have been embedded in ecological and biocentric schema. Plumwood elaborates on the same proposition "that allows us to embrace nondualistic ways of relating to nature that recognise the interdependency of nature and culture, acknowledging that at times they are symmetrically dependent and at other times one may enable the other." (qtd in Cianchi 31)

The balance or symmetry that is mentioned above is tilted beyond scales in the Anthropocene which calls for interdependency of species that empowers each other. The conception of empowering is the acceptance that "the human and non-human are co-agential in their history-making" (Walsh 3). Faulkner and Leopold had questioned the anthropocentric stratification that existed in the treatment of the nonhuman. The former

questioned the “familiar hierarchies of gentry/subaltern and human/nonhuman” and the latter probed the concept “of human priority” as he pursued “the idea that *Homo sapiens* is but one among innumerable members of a biotic community that includes the soil, waters, fauna, and flora, as well as people” (Buell 187). But humans have considered themselves the focal point of development and as he says humans “are in love with the idea of our persisting... We fetishize it, really. Our retirement funds, our genealogies. Our so-called ideas for the ages” (390). In the novel, the human characters like Cub, Bear, Hester and a few other residents deny their culpability by declaring the climatic changes as the Lord’s business. Dellarobia retorts by saying, “People used to say the same thing whenever some disease came along and killed all the children. ‘It’s part of God’s plan.’ Now we give them vaccinations. Is that defying God?” (361)

The novel also features the Cooks, Turnbow’s neighbours portraying “soil contamination may have caused their son to fall ill with cancer. As a consequence, they have turned to organic farming, which makes them subject to constant ridicule by their neighbors who believe cancer just like weather irregularities to be of divine intention.” (394). The Turnbows in spite of being aware of the event are least worried about using DDT.

An ecocentric turn in the novel towards sustainability and ensuring multispecies justice stems from defining “human identity not as free-standing but in terms of its relationship with the physical environment and/or nonhuman life forms” (Buell 101). The crisis of the Anthropocene emerges from ages of anthropocentrism. But another factor that must require caution is that equality does not ensure multispecies justice but equity does. Sebo in *Saving Animals, Saving Ourselves: Why animals matter for pandemics, climate change, and other catastrophes* proposes how humans must overcome “a speciesist double standard” by treating “all animals equally, in the sense of equally

considering their interests and needs, while still treating some animals as having stronger or more universal rights than others in many cases in practice” (Sebo).

Such ideologies not only signify the interdependencies but also remind the culpabilities of each species towards the empowerment of the weaker section. This calls for the need for kinship. Kinship as Donna Haraway puts it is “how we are constantly becoming with other species, whether as compost (as a final destination) or as ‘companions’ (and not just dogs and cats).” (Singh)

Kinship is neither genetic nor always inherent but “is cultivated by humans, as one expression of life among many, many, many others, and it revolves around an ethical question: how to rightly relate? We are kinning as we (re)connect our bodies, minds, and spirits within a world that is not merely a collection of objects but “a communion of subjects”” (Horn et al. 3). The novel is set in a rural locale that is moving fast paced towards development, capitalism and other anthropocentric activities, and there is also growing urgency to relearn the ties of kinship, sustenance and interdependencies that have promoted biodiversity in the past. The emotional ties of kinship is said to promote activist tendencies as well as empathise with the nonhuman by refraining from anthropogenic misdeeds.

The life of Dellarobia is paralleled with the life of the monarchs from the beginning of the novel. It is her literal association and perceived metaphorical association that leads to the transfer of feelings of kinship and community based activism. When she had the first vision of the monarch butterflies, burning bright in the forest she was convinced that “The burning trees were put here to save her. It was the strangest conviction she’d ever known, and still she felt sure of it” (Kingsolver 22). She goes to the mountain to end her life but instead views the monarch butterflies that are also on the verge of death and assumes it as a sign for her to continue living, she emerges as “the

butterfly woman”(21) who strives to save the species with motherly affection and resilience. She begins to believe that the relocation of the butterflies is “a vision of glory to stop her in the road. For her alone these orange boughs lifted, these long shadows became a brightness rising. It looked like the inside of joy, if a person could see that. A valley of lights, an ethereal wind. It had to mean something.” (21)

The butterflies symbolise fragility due to their physical built, agential as they are creatures of flight, and are indispensable due to the role they play in the ecology. The monarch butterflies, “Like herself, it just seemed to have come loose from its station in life” (Mehnert 7). The butterflies and Dellarobia are placed in situations that are not conducive to their growth but are choices that they have made to escape the brunt of the past scenario. Dellarobia married Cub early in her youth due to her pregnancy but she ended up having an abortion later on and she could not pursue studies or have the life of her dreams. The monarch butterflies follow a challenging generational migration pathway and due to anthropogenic shock and barriers in their trajectory, arrive in the farm seeking escape. There are multiple overtones of the synecdoche dispersed across the novel which stands for a plethora of relationship ties like mother-child, healer-patient, agent-passive entity and so on. The events placed within the coinciding junctures of interconnectedness not only urge her “to critically look at her own choices in life, but also increasingly becomes attuned to the interconnections of her life with distant processes.” (68)

Dellarobia’s associations with the butterflies are pluralistic as it pushes her along a multi-layered process of metamorphosis: personal, collective, feminine, motherly and human. Kingsolver’s craft is displayed through the weaving of literal and metaphorical signs that reiterate the associations of the butterflies with people dispersed across spaces. Mehnert analyses the instance of Dellarobia spotting a butterfly-shaped potholder made in

China and wonders how “Someone her own size, a mother most likely” (175) had handcrafted it symbolising the transcending of divides and borders.

Mehnert deciphers the instance by putting forth how “the butterfly functions as a synecdoche for a globally connected world” (68). Despite the geographical distance and the cultural dissimilarities that are prevalent between the two women, the association made by Dellarobia through the monarch butterflies signifies how “though they are in distant places, their plights may be similar.” (68)

Another primary association that raises questions on mobility: free and restricted, relocation, rehabilitation, and sustenance is the unification of the refugee crisis of human climate refugees and the nonhuman climate refugees. The mention of the displaced Mexican family who had migrated from the roosting site of “mariposas monarcas” (Kingsolver 135) establishes a common ground of the place of residence and relocation into Tennessee. Dellarobia questions about the butterflies’ relocation and the girl answers saying the butterflies arrive to Mexico every winter and “In summer days the monarch flies around everywhere drinking the flowers, she flies to here to your country. And in winter she all comes home to Anganguero. My town. Every year the same time coming” (138). The girl elaborates on how they had made their living through the swarms of tourists who arrive every year to view the phenomenon but due to the disaster in Mexico, the environment had been drastically altered and could not support the butterflies’ needs. It had led to the loss of biodiversity, lives and livelihoods.

Kingsolver by portraying the stranded lives of the human and the nonhuman climate refugees from Mexico not only establishes a ground of interconnectedness and the need for kinship but also identifies “how a planetary transformation such as climate change impacts our understanding of locality and place” (Mehnert 54). The anthropogenic predicament of a locale cannot be viewed within the geographic constraints as the world of

changing temperatures had unanimously deterritorialized the planet. Anthropocentric territories like “Places, spaces and bodies historically articulated as separate or isolated are revealed to be contingent and connected, as climate weirding unsettles any sense of normalcy” (Brewster 96). *Flight Behaviour* interposes the demarking of geographic terrains, species hierarchies and other institutions of power through the consistent tip-offs of global warming. Antonia Mehnert in the chapter titled “Scaling Climate Change: The Transformation of Place in Climate Change Fiction” of *Climate Change Fictions*, acknowledges “that climate change is a crisis caused by forces that transcend the local and thus can only be adequately understood from a global perspective” (54). The linkages of the places, people and species are set in motion due to the butterfly effect of the novel: climate change. Like chaos theory, the phenomena in the novel sets a lot of situations, phases and events in motion thereby introducing the inductive approach of the local to the global:

The butterfly effect ultimately allows for the emergence of what Tomlinson calls “ethical glocalism” (194)—an understanding of an intricate connectedness in a globalized world while refraining from understanding identity as solely defined by immediate locality. This ethical glocalism, not unlike Heise’s eco-cosmopolitanism, acknowledges our planetary belonging and thus “embraces a sense of what unites us as human beings, of common risks and possibilities, of mutual responsibilities” (qtd in Mehnert 68)

The novel also features interspersed geological and generational time. In climate debates, intergenerational injustice had acquired an upper hand amidst all other issues of extreme concern. Intergenerational disparity is caused due to the lack of rationale behind the impact of the previous generations’ carbon footprint falling on the shoulders of the youngest generation, who have not contributed to the anthropogenic crisis. The

clashing of generational disparities can be found both in the displacement of the monarch butterflies as well as the displacement with movement and sans movement of the human characters in the novel. The species of monarch butterflies are known for the complicated migration trajectory that they embark as it includes four to five generations of the species in order to complete a migration cycle. The relocation of the monarch butterflies is due to the anthropogenic crisis in the pathway which was not caused by them, nor by their ancestors but they reap the brunt of it due to lack of preconditioned behavioural system that caters to the implications of the Anthropocene.

The human characters like the Mexican family of climate refugees, especially the young daughter are faced with loss of livelihood and home not due to their actions but as a result of intergenerational disparity. The other human characters of the novel are not exposed to the implications of climate change to a great extent, still experience displacement sans movement as they live in a place that is altering due to climatic fluctuations. The author's exertion in "enmeshing generational and geological time diminishes human agency to the privilege of the non-human climate: it is human history that has become frozen and natural history that is taking on a frenetic pace" (qtd in Walsh 15). The novel sets in motion the reversal of agency of time from human agential time to geological agential time which comprises the dictum of the Anthropocene.

The widespread events of the Anthropocene have changed the traditional concept of nature being a mere backdrop to human action as it is now active, agential and participatory. The Anthropocene due to its label has been prioritising human endeavour as mighty enough to tame and alter the climatic stability, but in reality, it signifies the planet as more mighty than any human action that has titled its ecological balance. Kim in "The problem of nonhuman agency and bodily intentionality in the Anthropocene" brings out this powerful contradiction in the Anthropocene: "The agentic power of the earth is an

undeniable reality, not a theoretical construction. We hit upon the Real of the earth really hard. The earth, which moderns believed they de-animated and tamed, is animated again with more force than before.” (Kim 13)

The crisis of the Anthropocene demands for the “need to imagine new futures, including a futurity with non-human animals” (McArthur and Wilson xx). Accepting the role of nonhuman animals in the futurity of the planet is inclusive of not only the assignment of agency to the nonhuman world but the realisation of the persistent display of the agency of the more than human world. Such an outlook on the Anthropocene puts forth the requirement of human communities to recalibrate “our standpoints to recognise and to evaluate a wider range of territories and terrains, full of nonhuman agents, interests and meanings that are exposed to transformation by this paradoxically immanent and powerful agent of change that gives its name to the Anthropocene.” (xxv)

Admission of the power to act, decide and function as nonhuman agents is not sufficient to relieve human culpabilities as it also involves the added responsibility of providing protection to the life forms and their habitats. The decision of the Turnbow family to deforest their farm for personal gain is a denunciation of the responsibility as members of the primary species to provide for the other components of the ecology. Sebo brings out the richness of the forests and its life supporting aid that has been offered to an extensive array of flora and fauna. It also has a mention of intentional and unintentional human action towards ecological degradation. The former kind can be traced in the logging of the Turnbow’s family farm, wherein the action is intentional for short term personal gain. Whereas the latter can be traced in the landslide of Mexico, in the region of the roosting sites of the Monarch butterflies. It was prolonged logging and other ecological degrading activities that had intensified the impact of the landslide but at the outset it was a natural calamity caused due to flooding and rainfall:

Forests are densely populated spaces, and we harm and kill many animals when we clear them. We also harm and kill many animals indirectly, by amplifying natural threats ranging from resource scarcity to temperature swings. In many of these cases, this damage is intentional, such as when we destroy animal habitats to clear land for development. In many other cases, this damage might not be intentional but is still foreseeable and avoidable, such as when we disrupt migration routes as a side effect of development. Either way, the scale of this harm is staggering. (SEBO)

Prolonged deforestation would wipe out the entire species of flora and fauna from the planet as portrayed in Charlotte McConaghy's *Migrations*, wherein the forest has "no birdsong as I walk among the trees and it is catastrophically wrong. I regret coming here, to where it should be more alive than anywhere. Instead it is a graveyard" (207). Such disruption in migration routes has occurred in the migration pathways of the monarch butterflies as well. Usually around "ninety-nine percent of them normally wind up in Mexico." (Kingsolver 161) Against Dellarobia's longing to have "just one beautiful thing to her name, with no downside" (161) had collapsed when they realise that it was the landslide in Mexico that has altered their migration trajectory to this extent. The apprehension of the anthropogenic predicament: "that Mr. Monarch is not really our butterfly at all, here in our gardens. Not flying south in winter. Maybe he is really a Mexican butterfly coming north in summer, just for a visit" (164) signifies the turn towards climatic awareness with respect to the nonhuman victimisation.

Curbing the elevated aftermath of the anthropogenic crisis requires decentring of the agency of the human from its former position of "The God species" (McArthur and Wilson xviii). The climatic fluctuations have "deemed the species as both problem and solution" (xviii) to the anthropogenic decay. Manifold climate change consequences of

slow onset and sudden onset events that occur, have fashioned the presumption of the role and identity of the human and anthropocentrism. The figure of the human is decentered through the formulations of new centrism that focus on the more than human.

Kingsolver metaphorically brings out how humans have become impediments of the survival of the nonhuman world: “The people, she and the others here, were human boulders in the butterfly-filled current” (77). Resisting anthropocentrism that stands in the way of the life and livelihood of the more than human world is not about curbing human agency but about channelising it to aid the kin species and “challenging human hubris of treating the rest of the world as inert and disposable.” (Singh)

The zenith of anthropocentrism leads to grief, loneliness and despair, which Richard Powers calls “species loneliness” (Wells) which is not only the emotional response to environmental degradation but also the sense of loneliness and the persistence to gratify one’s selfish desires despite the residue of toxicity it is leaving behind. He suggests humankind “to un-blind ourselves to human exceptionalism. That’s the real challenge. Unless forest-health is our health, we’re never going to get beyond appetite as a motivator in the world. The exciting challenge,” he says, is to make people “plant-conscious” (Wells). Such an act of perceiving the environment and its agents, and to view them as co-agential in determining the futurity of the planet does not occur without a reversal of power, rights and agency from the human to the more-than human. The anthropogenic crisis evokes emotions of climate grief in its inhabitants and the emotions are supposed to be channelized through climatic action. The experience of anthropogenic vicissitudes and losses not only impact the mental state of a person but also “affects self-identity and commitment to activism.” (Cianchi 142)

The emotional journey of perplexity towards climatic awareness is characterised with intense emotions of climate grief. Dellarobia relates to the butterflies with more

emotional attachment than any other character and the following suffering of the species evokes proliferating grief:

The idea of snow on the butterfly trees pulled her toward panic. Snow falling on the butterflies themselves, their brittle wings and tender bodies, was a heartbreak she had failed as yet to imagine. She hit the trail at a hard lope and would have run, if she were a thousand packs of cigarettes younger. Briefly she considered going back to get the ATV, but knew there was no real need. Her presence at this disaster could not alter it, the damage was done. (Kingsolver 370)

The shared emotion of ecological grief formulates a common ground of a shared understanding and a shared plane of hierarchy that relates to the nonhuman as indispensable kin or companions. Such an emotional association rather than adhering only to the isolating strands of intellectual collaboration is the primary step towards communal unity and community activism. Such a stance aids in “Honouring alternate ways of being present in this world, with our human bodies, and horizontalizing relationship with others, brings relationships to the centre, instead of hierarchical orderings of the world (as ‘more-than’ or ‘less-than’ human) using Western man as the normative device” (Singh 84–89). The horizontalizing of the hierarchy crafted through anthropocentric outlook demands for the acknowledgement of the climatic debris made and a sought after policy structure that aims for reduction of the same. Dellarobia is placed in the centre of climatically aware population and climate denialists, and such a position enables her to view the factors that both sides could not themselves. In spite of belonging to the group of climatically ignorant people in the past, she is furious at the deliberate shunning down of accountability of the people, who refuse to admit the grave errors that have been made. She wonders “if men

could even see the messes they made, or if they had differently structured eyes, as Ovid had told her cats and dogs and insects did.” (Kingsolver 373)

Butler had proposed the concept of ‘symbiosis’. In the age of the present crises, humans have turned into the primary geological force responsible for the destruction and mass extinctions which are characteristic of a parasite. But she convinces of the possibility of a transition from being parasites to “become mutualists— symbionts who truly partner the earth, benefiting it as it benefits us,” or at worst, doing no harm to it” (Streeby 71) Becoming symbionts means taking up the legal and responsible position of answering the following question: The irony of such a return of the repressed has not been lost on anthropologist Alf Hornborg, when he asks ““how shall we be able to reintroduce morality into our dealings with our non-human, now that we have invested centuries of training and discourse into convincing ourselves that Nature lays beyond the reach of moral concerns?”” (Conty 6-7)

The answer to the requirement of legal protection of nature can be traced to the ‘Rights of Nature’ movement which is gaining momentum as it is a reorientation of humankind’s relationship with nature. The movement led by climate activists, advocate for ecosystems like lakes, forests, mountains and so on to bear the same legal rights that have been deposited to humans. The movement is a radical decentring of the human as it nullifies the need for human agency to protect the nonhuman world. Most nature rights under the legal system have been formulated under the outset of human rights and how access to quality water, food and other resources call for the conservation of nature. But the radical bio-centric movement has respected the existence of nature as an integral, legal component which can be its own agent, with the help of a guardian who is well versed with the workings of the particular ecosystem. Right from 2008, many countries in

Ecuador, New Zealand, Colombia, India, the United States and so on have merged alliance and displayed support in the implementation of the “Rights of Nature” (Challe).

Under the crisis of changing climates, acknowledging nonhuman agency not only through the assignment of legal rights but also through an observation of their display of agency is crucial to “respond ethically to environmental phenomenon that involves sentient creatures like nonhuman animals.” (Defehr 7) Engagement with the more than human agency involves the stripping of anthropocentric gaze that has colonised nature, looted, corrupted and victimised it. It is “The recognition of more-than-human agency radically alters the sociological gaze from a view of a passive nature filled with objects, to a multi-faceted, dynamic world of manifold, constitutive relationships with non-human subjects.” (Cianchi 34)

The actor’s ability to respond to the changes in the world is an intertwining of the species’ genetics and its attempt to counter the anthropogenic changes in the environment. Agency in the traditional perspective has been assigned to species that possess the ability to act determinatively by employing factors like “interiority, sentience, intentionality, language, autonomy and power.” (Cianchi 34) Nonhumans are not assigned agency as their “decision-making is thought to be determined by genetics rather than complex cognitive processes.” (34)

Such an approach transitions how the agency of the species is perceived in the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene unsettles the traditional sense of agency as the species that have not been assigned agency are now given agency through their response to the Anthropocene. The monarch butterflies, if they are subjects of genetic domination they would have migrated to Mexico and suffered the grave consequences by facing immediate death. Like Dellarobia extends a sigh of relief from realising that the monarchs were not from Mexico but had straightaway relocated to Tennessee, in the following passage:

She was relieved Bonnie hadn't suggested the butterflies had come straight here from Mexico. The thought of them running up here after the landslide and flood, displaced along with Josefina's family, was a worrisome possibility she did not want to entertain. It would give her family's mountain an air of doom. If these butterflies were refugees of a horrible misfortune, there could be no beauty in them. (197-98)

It reiterates how the butterflies were in fact refugees of the horrible misfortune of the Anthropocene, which has altered its responses by relocating to Tennessee. The changed migration trajectory embarked by the monarch butterflies is a testament of their employment of agency. Though the nonhuman world has possessed and displayed their agency from the beginning of time, it did not fit into the demands of the anthropocentric institutions but due to the anthropogenic reversal of power and agency, the more than human world has become more inert, active, potent and co-agential in the making of the futurity of the planet.

Admitting the agency of the species is the acknowledgement of both the inherent agency of the species as well as the acceptance of the transition in the agency of the species in the Anthropocene. The monarch butterflies are creatures of flight, and the ability to fly is one of the major aspects of their agency. In the beginning of the novel, Dellarobia assumes the species to be a forest fire but it was when "they revealed themselves in movement, as creatures in flight. That made the difference" (Kingsolver 72). It was the movement of the creature, a major feature of its agency that made the human characters view the species with respect and as a kin species. The indispensable trait of movement also calls into question its necessity as being stranded in a climatically immune place might aid their survival. The thought is carried forth by the character who asks why "do they have to move? Could the whole being just stay in one place?" (438) is a rational

query as the species can escape extinction and most of the threats that the Anthropocene poses. But the reply by Ovid gives the adequate explanation as it is in the nature of the creatures of flight to engage in the migratory process: “The problem is genetics,” he said, “You are who you are, because of a history of genetic combinations. So are they. The monarchs rely on a particular alternation between inbreeding and outbreeding.” (438)

Nonhuman agents reveal and express their agency through the life cycles of migration, growth, reproduction and adaptation. The marvel about the monarch butterflies’ migration cycle is its multigenerational but the species possess inherent knowledge of navigating the route as per history: “It’s not even the same ones that fly south every winter, it’s the kids of the kids of the ones that went last winter. They hatch out up north somewhere and it’s just in them. Their beady little insect brains tell them how to fly all the way to this one mountain in Mexico where their grandparents hooked up. It’s like they’ve all got the same map of the big picture inside, but the craving to travel skips a few generations” (Kingsolver 263). This is evidence of the genetic domination in their decisions involving their life cycles but the relocation to cope with the anthropogenic changes is a signifier of unrestricted nonhuman agency. This is proof that “They do not passively succumb to human desire for control but resist subjugation... Whether human or nonhuman, animate or inanimate, all bodies endeavor to preserve their being.” (Kim 13)

The nonhuman agents also “have purposive agency and express themselves and, through enunciating, assemble and disassemble subjectivities and collectivities” (Conty 8). The monarch butterflies involve in such curated processes of subjectivities and collectivities through the process of alternation as for “most of a year the genetic exchanges are relatively local. Summer generations breed in smaller groups as they move north. Some might fly only a few miles from where they are born before mating and dying. But then, in winter, the whole population comes together in one place. The gene

pool is thoroughly blended” (Kingsolver 439). The amalgamation of such gene pools, embankment of multigenerational migration cycles has turned the species into “a kind of super-insect. The population can fluctuate fivefold in a year. It’s an insurance policy against environmental surprises” (439-40). The system that is supposed to shield them from environmental surprises could not offer adequate protection against anthropogenic calamities other than relocation.

The relocation to Tennessee has not helped even the strongest of the insect species like the monarch butterflies. It flies thousands of miles like birds and is “The only insect capable of flying great distances and even over ocean. They can go a hundred miles in a single day. It’s unbelievable. They hardly weigh more than a quarter, I bet” (Kingsolver 160). The choice of butterflies as the primary focus of the novel is a permutation of a set of paradoxes: fragility and strength, life and rebirth, humanly and divine, and so on. Butterflies have been romanticised and glorified for its beauty and function, but it is also one of the creatures like bees that are neglected when anthropogenic changes threaten their continuance. Lloyd and Rapson bring out the contradiction of the species and kingsolver’s conception of the same in the novel:

Butterflies are an obviously ‘poetical’ species that have long been aestheticized and used for symbolic purposes, a representation of “‘nature” which so many hold dear’ in the vein deplored by Timothy Morton for obscuring attention to ecology. As traditional symbols of death and rebirth, butterflies are perhaps an obvious choice for Kingsolver. Nonetheless, her depiction of butterflies in their enormity (en masse) and smallness (individually) represent something perhaps beyond our instinctive epistemological frames. They scale up and down and span geographies, all the while offering a visual emblem of climate change’s abstractions, however easily consumable. (Lloyd and Rapson 8-9)

The butterflies in the novel feature not only as victims who require aid but also as healers that heal and assuage the trauma that the characters hoard. They offer a connection that transcends materiality and aesthetics but delivers an overpowering impact that promotes kinship. It is the aesthetics of the butterflies as a highly romanticised and poetic species that attracts plenty of attention and unites people to witness the phenomena. The characters view the species as “A beautiful thing like a heavenly host had come on their mountain, he said, and it was butterflies. “You all just can’t imagine, it’s like a world all to itself. I wish you all would come and partake of it.”” (Kingsolver 96)

In the novel, the possible logging of the trees was neglected in spite of forests being a major ecosystem that sustains various life forms but the relocation of the butterflies drew concentrated and undivided attention due to its aesthetic appeal. Any other insect species or reptile would not have gained the same response but due to the value being weighed upon its aesthetics, the butterflies attracted tourists, media and created the buzz of emergent climate activism. Heymans in *Animality in British Romanticism: The Aesthetics of Species* brings to light how certain species “by virtue of its aesthetic appeal that the animal ranks so high on the agenda of conservationists and that it has become a powerful symbol of our ruthless exploitation of wildlife” (24). But also proceeds to investigate into the exploitative anthropocentric tendency “to destroy an animal for its beauty as for the reverse. When a brutal man sets his foot upon a frog, and crushes it to death, why does he so? Because it is ugly in his eyes. And when the same shoots a kingfisher why does he perform that act?—‘Why,’ he will tell you, ‘because the bird is so pretty’” (Heymans 24). Such an argument on beauty receives an appropriate response from Dr. Byron in the novel who warns the interviewer that “To see only beauty here is very superficial. Certainly in terms of news coverage, I would say it’s off message.” (Kingsolver 503)

In the realm of anthropogenic climate change, the anthropocentric species conservation agenda accommodates certain species in the top of the list thereby marginalising a large number of the rest of the species which are also under threat of extinction. The factors that decide such an unfair selection is primarily, its function and use to humankind, secondly, aesthetics and thirdly, favouritism. Wildlife, animals and a lot of other species are saved but plants, insects and reptiles are not given the same attention as they do not fulfil the anthropocentric demands. Plants occupy the least concern and had become an issue that had to be addressed to save the ecology.

The moral inclusion of plants was confirmed by the Federal Ethics Committee on Non-Human Biotechnology (ECNH), after its publication of a scientific study that ascertained that “humans do not have unrestricted power over plants. We may not use them just as we please, not only because we may influence or even destroy other players of the natural world, and so alter their relationships’, but also because individual plants have an inherent worth” (qtd in Conty 10). The inclusion of plants also plays a functional role in securing the monarch butterflies’ migration. Saving of the forests is as essential as saving the plants that provide life sustaining resources to the butterflies. The milkweed plant is an indispensable part of the species conservation debates as the butterflies lay their egg on the specific plant and let it hatch, which will be the next generation that carries forward the multigenerational cycle. Preservation of flowering plants that provide the butterflies with nectar, which fuels their migration, is also the need of the hour. Omission of a few endangered ecological components and taking up adaptive measures to save only the endangered species in the red list is a grave error that humankind cannot afford to make.

The monarch butterflies displacement, its multi-generational migration cycle and its anthropogenic adaptation undermine anthropocentrism and reaffirm nonhuman agency

as “animals behaved with purpose, it seemed. Unlike people” (Kingsolver 57). The stereotypical assumption that the animal life cycles and their life processes will remain the same unlike the fast developing and changing human processes. This attitude is not only an outcome of anthropocentric ignorance or lack of concern but stems from the yearning of the age old way of ecological functionality. It is showcased when Preston wants a book about animals that was published in 1952 and despite Dellarobia’s warning that “It’s kind of old-timey,” Preston argued saying “But it’s animals,” ...“They stay the same!” (423). Dellarobia had learnt it the hard way that “For better or for worse. Nothing stays the same, life is defined by a state of flux; that was basic biology” (424). Her enlightenment arrives after the butterfly phenomena and Byron’s guidance.

The life cycle of the “handsome and heroic migrator” (Agrawal 1) is as complex as the migration process that it will undertake with its successors:

...an egg hatches into a white, yellow, and black-striped caterpillar; then a metamorphosis takes place inside its leafy-green chrysalis, which is endowed with gold spots; the adult butterfly that emerges flaunts orange and black. In the monarchs’ annual migratory cycle—perhaps the most widely appreciated fact about them—individual butterflies travel up to five thousand kilometers (three thousand miles), from the United States and Canada to overwintering grounds in the highlands of Mexico. After four months of rest, the same butterflies migrate back to the United States in the spring. Come summer, their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren will populate the northern regions of America. (1)

The monarch butterflies undertook a strenuous journey of migration that was not for it’s built of fragile physique. The paradox exemplifies its resilience and its adherence to functional patterns that monitored its population as well as kept the interdependencies

of the milkweed, flowering plants and the food chain in balance. He also mentions “the OE parasites” stunts the “wingspan and lifespan. Monarchs highly infected with this parasite cannot fly very far. The annual trip to Mexico seems to weed out the most burdened, keeping the population healthy” (Kingsolver 481). The migration to Mexico is crafted as a challenge to keep the population under check but the anthropogenic changes have aggravated the existing difficulties pushing the species towards extinction. Ovid explains to Dellarobia how the monarchs had to leave the Mexican roost sites earlier due to climate change consequences and emphasised on the chain of interdependencies as significant factors that had to be taken into account:

Hundreds of factors came into play. Fire ants, for example, had now come into Texas, where the monarchs were vulnerable. Ants ate the caterpillars. And farm chemicals were killing the milkweed plants, another worry he mentioned. She wondered if she should tell Ovid about the landslide in Mexico. But the students were jumping into the conversation, rendering it less than comprehensible. Bio-geography, roosts, host plants, overwintering zones, loss of something-communities, devastation. That one she got, devastation. She held to the vision that moved her, an orange flow of rivulets reaching over a continent, pulsed by its own internal engine. (202-203)

Dellarobia after learning about the species and the complicated system of survival and migration undertaken “was floored to think of these fragile creatures owning the span of a continent, from Canada to Mexico, moving back and forth across the wide face of a land. Each one was so little and sure to die, yet they constituted a force, like an ocean tide” (Kingsolver 197-98). *Chasing Monarchs*, a book that gives exclusive focus to monarch

butterflies and its life cycle attempts to answer three determining questions about the existence of monarch butterflies:

First, how do the monarchs physically do it, this migration over thousands of miles of North America; what are the lives of the migrants like? Second, do they actually navigate or just ride the wind? And third, why do some monarchs end up in Mexico and others in California, and what determines which parts of the breeding population will reach either destination? (Pyle 7)

The monarch butterflies are the only species that follow a complicated transnational and multi-generational migratory system and travel for three thousand miles from the U.S and Canada to either the California Coast or the mountains of the Oyamel fir forest in Mexico. The reason behind why some of them travel to Eastern North American seaboard and the rest travel to the highlands of Mexico is not discovered but is predicted to be either a result of their genetics or due to their magnetic compass. It is found out that the monarch butterflies that travel to the former location have chances of higher mortality and less lipids compared to the latter.

The multi-generational migration system asserts the prediction that “these butterflies cannot possibly rely on the remembered landscape for navigation; the monarchs flapping toward those precise trees are the great-great-grandchildren of those who made the same journey the previous year!” (Horn 54) This reiterates how their knowledge of navigation is not through memory or completely due to genetics as there is a genetic mixture but due to their inherent sense of agency. Scientists predict that the monarchs might navigate with the help of their antenna which uses the earth’s magnetic field and the sun compass as tools of navigation. Their magnetic compasses “discern their direction by the position of the sun, using internal circadian rhythms to vary the angle at which they orient themselves throughout the day.” (59) In spite of recent research findings it still fails

to provide an adequate explanation about their ability to recalibrate their orientation after weather events and how a certain set of species migrate elsewhere whereas the rest move to Mexico. Van Horn echoes how the butterfly phenomenon is still an undiscovered ecological event as the following questions remain unanswered:

When high winds or storms blow the butterflies far off course, how do they recalibrate their orientation? During the spring migration, even along a single route north, a butterfly from the first generation would need to orient by the sun very differently than a butterfly of the second or third spring generation. We have no idea how any creature, much less such a diminutive insect, could pull off such a thing. (Horn et al. 54-55)

In the novel, Dr. Byron has devoted his career to the study of the same by undertaking a plunge into the species' "Taxonomy, evolution of migratory behavior, the effect of parasitic tachinid flies, the energetics of flight", "Population dynamics, genetic drift" (Kingsolver 167) and the effects of the anthropogenic breakdown on its survival and sustenance. But the questions raised by Van Horn remain unanswered in the fictional scenario as well as in the real crises of the butterfly species' relocation.

The Monarchs after travelling to Mexico "cluster with a hundred million other monarchs on the branches and trunks of a small cluster of fir trees, their metabolism slowing down a quiescence settles over the flocks. Those that survive the winter will rouse themselves in late February to mate and begin the long spring migration north" (Horn et al. 54). They respond to temperature and solar cues that determine their place of relocation and their entire migration process ahead.

The magnetic and temperature compass that they possess alter their passage as per the climatic fluctuations. This feature, which is supposed to aid the continuance of the species fail because it was evolved with the purpose of countering environmental changes

and not human-made ecological doom. Ovid Byron associates the monarchs' relocation to the Appalachian Mountains as "a bizarre alteration of a previously stable pattern of migration that points to a continental ecosystem breaking down caused by anthropogenic climate change." (qtd in Yavas 57)

The anthropogenic crisis brings to the forefront a wide range of "New weather patterns" that "affect everything in the migratory pathways." (Kingsolver 481) As the Mexican roost sites had "become much too warm at the Mexican roost sites. With climate change the whole forest moves up those mountain slopes, a slow-motion slipping uphill, a thing she could imagine. The trees have their requirements. With arboreal stoicism they edge toward the peaks, and from there they cannot levitate" (481).

Climate fictions like McConaghy's *Migrations* and the *Hummingbird Salamander* put forth stark realities of the corrupted and thoroughly degraded migratory pathways of the species of the arctic terns and hummingbirds. The novels bring out how the climatic breakdown has radically altered the migration routes of the birds and as migration is indispensable due to their genetic makeup, the climate crisis has made them slowly migrate towards doom. The migration route of the hummingbird "became more arduous and terrifying because of unthinking development, their normal rest stops on the way to their summer habitat taken away one by one. They had to fly farther between food and water. More died along the way." (VanderMeer) Due to the warming temperatures, their habitats got degraded and they also had to face "more competition from other species seeking cooler temperatures." (VanderMeer)

The migratory skill of the monarch butterflies can be conceived as "a felt rapport between its body and the breathing Earth?" (Horn et al. 59). The migratory behaviour, the routes, the roosting sites, the mating period and all nuances of their journey reflect the unfolding changes in the geological forces. VanderMeer brings out this existing tie of

intimate association “that Salamanders have with their environment” that in turn “forces them to be sentinels of environmental change.” (VanderMeer)

The butterfly system was called “a complicated system.” (Kingsolver 200) The survival of the monarch butterflies is of crucial importance as they are endangered and due to ““Diapause,” (200) he called it, a pause in the normal schedule of growing up, mating, and reproducing. Somewhere in midlife, the cold or darkness of winter put them all on hold, shutting down their sex drive until future notice.” (200-201) This marks the urgency of the situation and the need for the continuance of the species because sans mating, the entire species might be wiped out in a matter of few years. The fragile system of migration and sustenance are further transformed into a riskscape due to global warming that made the butterflies migrate “to the wrong place this year, for the first time ever. I guess in the history of the world. So even though it looks really pretty, it might be a problem. It could actually be terrible” (285-286). Due to climate change, life supporting landscapes are transformed into riskscapes “and roots become routes. Hence, mobility and uprootedness are the only response to global climate change, which no longer allows for any risk-free spaces at all.” (Mehnert 56)

The entire village was in utter awe of the butterfly phenomenon due to its beauty but Ovid reveals that “Terrible things can have beauty” (Kingsolver 203). The event that was enmeshed within the beauties of nature had to be reconstructed to receive it as a response from the inert planet and its inhabitants about the crisis. The butterflies were able to sustain a few weather fluctuations in the Turnbow family farm as “the microclimate of these firs” (378) had offered protection. But due to further devastation the butterflies were not able to cope with the changes of habitat in Tennessee and were covered with “clumps of dead monarchs along the way, another ingredient of the flotsam washed down by the flood, but here the ground was completely covered with flattened bodies lying every

which way, like a strange linoleum pattern” (190). This had evoked emergency of saving the species at least till they can lay eggs so that there is hope left for the species to continue. The beautiful phenomenon had withered into a land filled with dead bodies that the activists were asked to “Count the living and the dead, and do the math” (379).

Perceiving the dead butterflies on the ground, Dellarobia looked at the trees and the forest floor, and said “A million dead butterflies... Sorry as hell they ever landed here” (Kingsolver 389). In spite of the monarch butterflies possessing the ability to recalibrate and tolerate a few environmental surprises, it is not inclusive of human caused climate disasters as the butterflies can only handle “Environmental surprise within known limits, he would mean... Grounded butterflies could not hope to lift themselves in a rain like this. She watched this fresh legion of the extinguished, taking their time to die.” (440)

The entire event that has been interspersed throughout the plot has been a marvel of the resilience of the monarch butterflies and the impact of human action for positive change. Kingsolver had depicted nonhumans as agents, who have displayed their agency consistently through movement, navigation, relocation and resilience. The author’s representation of the kinship between the human and the nonhuman occurs from affective transformations of comprehending the nonhuman crisis as an emotionally intimate phenomenon instead of displaying climatic inaction. The following lines bring out how the plot’s pivotal focus lies on the species that expresses a sheer display of resilience, which is a testament of the reversal of power and agency: “A scattering of butterflies in the fallen mass twitched open and closed, while getting pounded, showing their vivid orange a few last times. Rage, rage against the dying of the light” (Kingsolver 441). The reversal as perceived by Mehnert “innovatively questions our understanding of who figures as an agent of mobility in cultural and ecological globalism. The nonhuman perspective is here

highlighted in the framing and narrating of global warming and species extinction.”

(Mehnert 59)

The acceptance of nonhuman agency propels the journey of climate awareness and the twofold reactions of climate denialism and climate action. The action positive reaction stems from the recognition of human made damage, like Bradley signalled in *Ghost Species* that major ecological “collapses coincided with the arrival of *Homo sapiens*” (Bradley). The construction of the age of intense geological transformations as Anthropocene, takes into account the contribution of humans toward the devastation as well as the responsibility of humankind to undertake meaningful action. When individuals feel “complicit (directly or indirectly) in the loss being mourned, guilt entwines with sorrow, complicating the grieving process. This is especially true if we view ourselves as caregivers or trustees who are somehow responsible for the lives or well-being of those entrusted to us. These losses must be both mourned and repented.” (Cunsolo and McGill 40)

Such emotions of perplexed grief, mourning and guilt about the ecological crimes committed are essential in persuading community based activism and climatic action. Environmental activity is widely dispersed and incomprehensible to individuals who do not have the adequate information to process the chaos. The recognition of a degrading system is a set of alarming sirens spaced and dispersed across timelines and geographical terrains. He explains it by putting forth how “A photo cannot prove a child is growing, but several of them show change over time. Align them, and you can reliably predict what is coming. You never see it all at once. An attention span is required” (Kingsolver 387).

The latter group is not a group of anthropocentric fascists but are people who genuinely lack the climatic knowledge necessary to understand the Age of “hyperobjects” (Morton 1). As Timothy Morton says the “World is an aesthetic effect based on a

blurriness and aesthetic distance. This blurriness derives from ignorance concerning objects. Only in ignorance can objects act like blank screens for the projection of meaning” (104). The transition from climate ignorance to climatic learning paves way for academic or intellectual marginalisation of the uneducated from the sphere of climate action. Kingsolver ponders on this concept of intellectual marginalisation and the surmounting ignorance of the people in Tennessee about the reality of the climatic crisis. Dellarobia did not have college education and could not accept that the “spectacular thing in her life” ended up being “a sickness of nature”. (Kingsolver 205)

Kingsolver proceeds to analyse how there is a divide not only between climatically ignorant and aware but also amidst people who are climatically aware but make the conscious decision to deny the reality of climate change. The conscious decisions made have turned into “a divide” of propagandas: “conservatives or liberals” (Kingsolver 443). But Ovid stresses upon the ability to choose a side and take a stand of either facing “up to a difficult truth, or” to “run away from it” (445). Dellarobia rejects the superficial remark made by him by saying how if he had known her as a waitress, he “would not have included” her in conversations and action oriented discussions about “roosting populations and your overwintering zones. People shut out the other side. It cuts both ways.” (446)

Kingsolver sheds attention on the “territory divide” of “calm, educated science believers and the scrappy, hotheaded climate deniers?” (443) The divide is a fine line of “*optimism bias*” (Wells) on the one hand and “*pessimism bias*” on the other hand. The former places enormous emphasis on overconfidence and exhibit traits of “bystander effect” (Wells): of waiting for others to undertake action or “confirmation bias” of seeking evidence to ascertain one’s assumptions “rather than endure the cognitive pain of reconceptualising our world.” (Wells) Kingsolver presents how for the privileged, climate action or inaction does not have the same consequences as it does for the others.

Dellarobia describes the other side “wears I don’t know what, something expensive. They get recycling and population control and lattes and as many second chances as anybody wants. Students e-mailing to tell you they deserve their A’s” (Kingsolver 444). She proceeds to echo the concept of climate justice of how the people responsible for the downfall and have the resources that would climate proof the world should bear the burden of the same. She talks about how the “environment got assigned to the other team” of the privileged residents. Worries like that are not for people like us. So says my husband.” (445)

The factor that would bridge the gulf of intellectual marginalisation, according to affective ecocriticism studies is the concept of shared unity in committing ecological crimes and gaining feelings of remorse and guilt from it. This shared emotional tie is referred to by Zadie Smith as inescapable as both the climate change deniers as well as doomsayers are responding to the crisis in the shared emotion of guilt. Dellarobia questions the scientists this prevalent marginalisation concerning the debates of climate change: “you’re not selling to us. Maybe you’re writing us off, thinking we won’t get it. You should start with kindergartners and work your way up.” the scientist replies that, “It’s too late for that. Believe me.” (Kingsolver 443)

Kingsolver’s depiction of the climate crises in the novel envelops the indication of “bioregionalism” thereby pointing out “that when humans begin to understand their place within an evolving biological context, their actions will move toward the sustenance of and care for their human and nonhuman communities” (Cusick 214). The characters in the novel are not in stagnant mental or intellectual capacities and as they widen their grasp on the changes, they initiate such climate activist measures. Their attempts to understand climate change, formulate coping measures and undertake action results in an upsurge of climate trauma.

Gaining of climatic awareness, learning about the collective measures that have to be taken, foreseeing the consequences of prolonged degradation and trying to initiate collective resistance and activism creates ‘solastalgia’, ‘environmental melancholia’ and ‘climate grief’, mourning, and anxiety. This diversity of terminology reflects the complexity of the emotional responses to the climate crises. The magnitude of the rapid extinction rates, loss of flora and fauna and the loss of familiarity and a shared sense of home create a complicated series of psychological responses in the victims.

The persisting emotions of grief in the characters propel them to create an activist outlook and contribute to the preservation of what is left. Grief is not entirely positive as it can create an activist experience or “might deter them from future engagement in direct-action activism.” (Cianchi 152) It is crucial to monitor the consequence of “circumspectness about the emotional engagement they make with the nature they are defending” (152). *Flight Behaviour* is one of the few climate fictions that focus on the two sides of the concept of ecological grief. For certain characters, it pushes them to commence climate positive measures whereas some perceive the Anthropocene as “more and more about unacknowledged denial.” (Clark 159)

In the novel, grief and the other emotional responses to the climate change situation which was deemed as an area of sciences and research unite the characters into putting up community based activist measures. The wide range of characters involved in the novel “separated by massive geographical distance become temporally bound together through performed acts of grieving, mourning and witnessing” (RDLS 97). The residents of Tennessee “developed the motivation to become activists in the presence of other activists. I recognise that being in community with other activists is a significant element of activist experience.” (Cianchi 155)

The attempt to find resolution for the questions concerning multispecies justice and harmony makes the argument for climate justice in the novel. Climate justice like environmental justice aims to track the contours of justice beyond determiners of race, creed, nationalities, and species and so on. The various terminologies used to define justice depending on the issue that it addresses is believed to “produce a sense of action and agency.” (qtd in Chang 3)

The terminology of multispecies justice in rising climate debates instead of the monopoly of the term environmental justice or climate justice has significance beyond superficial perception as it subverts the power hierarchy and agency of the humans. Environmental justice has been long perceived “as an extension of human rights” and “ecological justice” is inclusive of ecosystems sharing rights but “species justice” extends rights to nonhumans who “are recognised as having inherent rights that exist independently of human needs.” (Cianchi 4) According to green criminological justice framework, such categorisation of justice is “viewed as a continuum from a human-centred criminology in which the victimization of humans, within the context of environmentally harmful activities, is the key concern, to a non-anthropocentric approach that extends its concerns to the whole biosphere” (4). In the novel, to extend the scope of justice by facilitating the sustenance of the monarch butterflies requires the kind of environmental justice that departs “beyond the human and the law” (Chao) and invites “new possibilities for decolonizing multispecies relations, and the concept and practice of justice itself” (Chao).

Flight Behaviour registers the participation of volunteers, scientists, media, tourists, common people and a wide range of people dispersed across continents that form a community beyond borders of distinction to save the monarch butterflies. The activism

and kinds of resistance put forth in the novel provide scope for survival and rehabilitation for the displaced monarch butterflies.

Dellarobia's contribution to the conservation of the monarch butterflies is singlehandedly the source of all climatic action displayed in the novel. She was the first character to have noticed the butterfly phenomena that Anna Tsing calls "The Arts of Noticing" (138). This approach has been exhibited by Dellarobia as it "involves paying attention to charismatic forms of life—like plants, birds, and butterflies" (138) as well as nonhuman components like the Milkweed plant and parasites that might affect the life cycle of the monarch butterflies. She not only notices the relocation but also takes tremendous effort in learning, educating and performing climate activist measures for the conservation of the butterflies. She associates the butterflies with her dead child and as per affective studies; such an association instils in her the urgency to undertake action to save what she can. She relates the threats the butterflies face to a loved one's demise and as she says "You do everything you can... And then, I guess, everything you can't. You keep doing, so your heart won't stop." (Kingsolver 441)

Dellarobia's display of activism can be viewed as a reflection of motherhood environmentalism as the activist measures she adopts can be viewed as her expression of motherly emotions to the more than human environment. Bradley in *Ghost Species* resonates on a similar maternal theme: "And so she does what mothers have done since the beginning of time, since before we were human: she draws filaments from the darkness and weaves them together to create meaning, purpose, shape, arranging the elements to reveal the world, or perhaps to make a new one" (Bradley). Dellarobia tries to do the same for the butterflies as she tries to carve a niche for their survival and rehabilitation.

She unlearns her ignorance and anthropocentric ideologies, learns about climate change and its impact and takes up consistent action to cope with the same. She

undertakes remarkable action to ensure the rehabilitation of butterflies from measuring “trees by looking at them through a little yellow instrument, and measured wingspans using tweezer things called calipers, and measured what they called wet weights using tiny scales that looked like drug-dealer equipment to Dellarobia, not that she knew” (Kingsolver 206). She calculates the count of the butterflies, the resources and factors that will aid their survival and invests herself completely in the task. She was also given the task of watching “the roosting colonies and track their flight behavior.” (Kingsolver 431) It was not easy as “The butterflies were showing some signs of restless movement, actually leaving the roost trees in significant numbers.” (431) Amidst such chaos, she had to monitor their flight behaviour and take notes of the changes which required “concentration to watch for the small explosions of flyers, then locate individuals with the binoculars and follow the wobbling specks that vanished through gray air.” (431)

The kind of collective efforts initiated by the common people like Dellarobia may not be ideal but have to be given credit as it is an exhibition of their learning and processing of the climatic situation and offering ways to help instead of living in climate denial. For instance, Mr. Akins is a testament of this feature as he persuades “people to sign on to a lifestyle pledge to reduce their impact on the planet” (Kingsolver 434). But he is not as climatically aware as the scientists in the novel but tries to perform his role of being an active agent by volunteering “his truck to transport the butterflies to Florida. Some nature park, I guess, where he’s got family ties” (436). Dellarobia acknowledges a level of absurdity involved in the plan but she is marvelled at the concern he shows for the species.

The reason behind the monarch butterflies’ successful migration event despite its challenges has been the power of community and group dynamics. The species has managed to embark on its trans-national migration pattern that is seasonal as well as

multigenerational is an evidence of the shared kinship and dynamics within the community. As Ovid says “An animal is the sum of its behaviors...Its community dynamics. Not just the physical body” (Kingsolver 437). The approach taken to understand the butterfly phenomenon must be inclusive of their “Interactions with other monarchs, habitat, the migration, everything.” (438)

The butterfly species just like “Humans are hardwired for social community,” (Kingsolver 446) Ovid said. “There’s no question, we evolved with it. Reading the cues and staying inside the group, these are number-one survival skills in our species. But I like to think academics are the referees. That we can talk to every side” (446). The academics also hold the culpability to showcase “environmentalism that is not (just) about saving the (external) environment from a distance but about learning to respond (in specific local places) to affective ecologies that humans are a part of” (Singh). The ecology and all its agents require human intervention in the phase of the Anthropocene as the planet is metamorphosing “Into a whole new earth. Different from the one that has always supported them. In the manner to which we have all grown accustomed.” (Kingsolver 449)

The threshold of motherhood environmentalism as part of affective ecocriticism is the characteristic approach of a commingling of feminism and indigenous studies by “bringing the heart, feelings and senses back into the research praxis, not separate from reason but with mind/reason” (Haverkamp 5). Such environmentalism demands an “understanding absence, sense of place, and the spectral haunting that comes from more-than-human loss” (Cunsolo and McGill 3). It is not only about the impact of nonhuman loss on the collective humankind but “It is about decentring subjectivities, healing environmental grief, and living connectivity and interdependency. It is about mourning that resists the artificial separation between bodies that can and cannot be mourned. It is about asking what counts as a mournable body (and what does not).” (3)

Dellarobia's environmentalism belongs to the same lineage of precession of climatic awareness and formulation of climate activism that is affective, inclusive and emotive. Dellarobia's grief in the novel is an intermingling of environmental grief as well as personal grief: the former is equated to the latter, thereby horizontalising the hierarchies as per their treatment rather than association. For instance, the day that she had her first baby "That didn't live" (Kingsolver 265), much attention was not paid to the loss as she says "Nobody talked about it. Cub and I didn't. You don't get to feel sad about a baby that never had a name and doesn't exist" (266). The same reaction has now been given to the butterflies, which are not named, who will not exist in a matter of years and their lives will not be grieved as they are "extinguished as the animals disappear, one by one, the irreplaceable wonder of their knowledge of the world wiped away with them" (Bradley). Dellarobia is a pioneering female character that exhibits "motherhood environmentalism" that "runs strong in ecofeminist environmental ethics of earth care." (Buell 75)

For Dellarobia, the loss is not forgettable and it is an indispensable part of her everyday life and it impacts her decisions, actions, emotions and familial relationships. She expresses to Dovey how if the child were alive "He'd be turning eleven today. If the child had lived, he'd be that old now. We'd be having a fifth-grader birthday party here. I can't find any possible way to make that real in my head" (Kingsolver 269). She displays what Spargo and Patricia Rae call "resistant mourning" as she "refuses consolation, and consciously chooses to hold on to the feelings of pain and grief to spur a sense of responsibility for the loss" (Cunsolo and McGill 14). Likewise, she holds the same emotive response towards the butterfly crisis as she associates the species as a metaphor for dead children. Her refusal to mourn for both her personal and ecological loss "becomes an ethical protest against the larger structures of injustice and oppression that trivialize and minimize the death and loss of some bodies." (14)

Dellarobia's grief had begun when she went to the mountain trying to run out of her marriage but reveals "I wasn't going to kill myself. They put that on the news, but it's a lie. I was going to run out on our marriage in a stupid way." (Kingsolver 528) She believes that the butterflies had instilled sense into her because it had made her "come back and do the right thing" (528). Though the climate debates have justified the butterfly phenomena as "a symptom of vast biological malignancies, and all nicer bets were off" (531). Such a viewpoint neglects any emotive interpretation or personalisation of the experience but the butterflies due to traditional construction of the poetic species as metaphors for metaphysical elements have led Dellarobia to extract greater metaphorical meaning. Juliet reveals how the monarchs are widely believed to represent grief as "Even now. Some people believe they're the souls of dead children." (536)

She does not heal from the loss as the anthropocentric institution that has crafted its ideologies and has denied responsibility for any loss: caused or occurred. The climatic fluctuations as Cub says was declared "the Lord's business" (Kingsolver 361) and every loss that Dellarobia had "ever borne had been declared the Lord's business. A stillborn child, a father dead in his prime" (361). She had been "running away from things. That's the long and the short of it" (287). She witnesses the butterfly phenomena when she "couldn't live it anymore. I wanted out. So I came up here by myself, ready to throw everything away. And I saw this. This stopped me" (287-88). She assumes the phenomena as a sign in the beginning of the novel and the progression of events justify the same as she is the one "driving the narrative through her activism" (Defehr 6).

The loss and the suicidal motive in the female protagonist bears a striking resemblance to that of Charlotte McConaghy's *Migrations*, as she also tries to escape from the mourning process of her child and associates that with the threats faced by the Arctic Terns. She describes her loss saying "no matter how often I try to leave it behind there will

never be an end to this ache, this pain, the feel of her unbearable weightlessness in my hands” (122). Both the female protagonists express tinges of resistant mourning, which is also called “activist melancholia” as it has the potential to “encourage positive social change as we accept a sense of responsibility for both past losses and losses to come. In resistant mourning, then, experiences of loss and associated grief are mobilized to expose systematic marginalization, political injustices, and systemic violence” (Cunsolo and McGill 15).

This leads the characters to fight for the security of what is on the verge: monarch butterflies for Dellarobia. She pushes her emotional responses to the backseat by performing even heartrending actions like taking “these butterflies in hand, one at a time, and toss them into the air. Some would crash. And some would fly” (Kingsolver 394). She witnesses the entire process of relocation, rehabilitation, death and a very slim margin of survival as either by the end of winter “The butterflies would have survived to fly away by then, or they would have died (399).

The butterfly crisis was viewed as “an inexplicable sight” (Lloyd and Raison 1) and the residents learn from the scientists late on that “Apparently a result of climate change, their roosting site in Mexico has been destroyed, and thus the butterflies set down in rural Tennessee... Scientists and tourists then descend on Tennessee, and Dellarobia’s life, changing not only the family’s sense of themselves, but also its sense of place and planet” (1). The role of scientists in translating the climatic event, which does not unfold to climatically ignorant people of rural Tennessee is crucial to encourage rehabilitation of the butterflies.

The scientists in the novel, especially Byron who can be considered the secondary lead activist of the story takes a balanced stand: scientific as well as emotional. Such a stand, aids in people being able to connect to the scientific phenomena and undertake

climatic action. Ovid expresses his unscientific thoughts but which are highly relevant in climate change conversations by questioning “what was the use of saving a world that had no soul left in it. Continents without butterflies, seas without coral reefs, he meant. What if all human effort amounted basically to saving a place for ourselves to park? He had confessed these were not scientific thoughts.” (Kingsolver 438)

The scientists’ educational measures undertaken and activist tendencies expressed have been crucial in subverting the “*anthropocentric thinking*” and “human supremacy” as in the age of the anthropogenic crisis, the “climate scientists have mocked: “The planet will survive,” they say; “it’s the humans that may not” (Wells). “In the field of literary scholarship” (Cusick 215), the population has been segmented into groups of shared value of intellect, status, power and so on. The equivocal nature of climate change has horizontalised the impacts but has not nullified the groupings of the population which means “Camps of scientists and poets have been preaching to their own choirs, but with too little impact on the wider masses that remain unaware, or unconvinced, of how and why as citizens of this earth we should care about the ecological sustainability of our daily choices and impulses” but kingsolver’s works mark a change as she displays “a practical application of ecocritical scholarship” (215).

He offers to enlighten people about the “Sustainability Pledge” (Kingsolver 451): “a list of things you promise to do to lower your carbon footprint. That means to use less fossil fuel. To relieve the damage of carbon emissions to the planet” (450-51). He offers practical ways of making lifestyle changes like bringing “your own Tupperware to a restaurant for leftovers, as often as possible.” (451), “bringing your own mug for tea or coffee”, carrying “your own cutlery, use no plastic utensils, ditto ditto.” carrying “your own Nalgene bottle instead of buying bottled water.” ; (451-52), reducing “the intake of

red meat in your diet.”; “Skipping ahead to Everyday Necessities. Try your best to buy reused. Use Craigslist”; planning “your errand route so you drive less!” (453) and so on.

The attention shed by the media, the popularity of Dellarobia’s vision and the Scientists’ interpretation of the climatic phenomena has pulled in volunteers from the environment club of community colleges. The spurge of youth campaigns, protesting for climate justice and the rehabilitation of the monarch butterflies are not as long term as the others as they belong to the category of “popcorn protests reflecting the way in which they rapidly spring up but often equally as rapidly subside.” (qtd in Goodier 615)

The role of media is unavoidable in its inclusion of diverse and dispersed communities in the butterfly crisis. In the section titled “Activism with(out) activism: understanding digital climate change action” of *Environmental Activism: A Reference Handbook*, John Goodier brings to the forefront the kinds of climate activism measures that are adopted: “organized spaces of climate change activism” (579) and “climate activism in digital spaces” (581). The former includes “prefigurative activism” (580), direct activism, outward reaching protests, student environmental groups, student volunteers, grassroots climate movement, climate camps, climate action networks and local climate action groups. It also brings to light the kind of activism that is not collective but has a powerful impact. Such approaches are considered to be rooted in an on-going process of individualisation, where the focus is on individual action and practices. Such individual actions are also “significant because they highlight that there are spaces beyond collective arenas where action on climate change may take place” (Goodier 580). The role of media and the digital protests registered in the novel to gain climate awareness and extract climate activism is a set of individualised action directed towards collective climatic progress.

The influence of media in broadcasting the climate crisis is essential to widen awareness among those “living in supposedly protected and artificially maintained city spheres,” as they “have difficulties seeing themselves as part of the larger ecological system” (Mehnert 57). The interviewer, Tina represents the climatically ignorant city population who are not aware of the impacts of climate change on distant and isolated spheres. She embodies climate denialism as she says “Scientists of course are in disagreement about whether this is happening, and whether humans have a role” (Kingsolver 505). The prevalent toxic neglect of responsibility by expressing denialism and projection is countered by Dr. Byron who retorts “Even the most recalcitrant climate scientists agree now, the place is heating up” (505). The media has shown disconcert for intangible phenomena especially under the realm of ecological stability and damage. Byron demolishes the bridled attention of the media by questioning, “Intangible things are outside your range? Can’t you people be a little imaginative?” Tina did not reply. “An election result!” he said, looking a little nuts. “A stock market! Those are intangibles. And yet you manage to cover them. Ad nauseam!” (507)

The influence of media through telecast, broadcast in various internet platforms and social media coverage has deemed digital action as a potent measure to create spaces for climatic action. Though “Online activism is often stereotyped as less effective” (Goodier) it has been crucial in “marking the materialisation of activist tendencies and the spreading of climate awareness.” (Goodier) Amongst the various activists gathered in Tennessee, digital activists who come in the form of tourists’ population are discarded out of the activist space due to the divide. The tourists do not create any direct activism but direct the dispersed attention of the media to the crisis by physically displacing themselves to actively experience the phenomena. The tourists are not only those who embark on a physical journey but also those who digitally participate, evoke conversations on

conservation and climate justice, host online campaigns on multispecies justice and other measures. Kingsolver subtly through her inclusion of various activists brings out “digital dualism” “in the distinction of the online and offline spaces” that “creates the intersectioning and deepens the divide for accepting the contribution of activist tendencies from such spaces.” (Goodier)

Mehnert explores how in *Flight Behaviour*, “the World Wide Web functions as a site of global connectivity as well as of political empowerment.” (67) It features as a potent tool in spreading messages, enabling communication and creating change. The interview between Tina and Byron is posted on You Tube and “allows for the information given in the video to be transmitted all across the world... The Internet underscores the space-time compression of globalization, and makes it possible for Juliet to be informed of an event without being present and without having to talk to the people involved.” (Mehnert 67)

Van Laer brings out the potential for digital action and through an undertaken research of nine protests in Belgium, and has arrived at the findings that “activists who reported using online activist spaces were younger, better educated and were highly interested in politics, while those who did not do online activism tended to be the opposite.” (Goodier 581-582) The longevity of any climate movement relies on “conscious activism” (581) which is inclusive of climate education, awareness and action. Digital spaces have been essential in its inclusion of dispersed communities, providing platforms for engaged learning, conducting awareness programmes through climate discussions and propelling climate action through just interventions and organised protests.

The scope of spaces for digital activism has led to the inclusion of the knitting community of women, who display resistance by “knitting the earth together, one unraveled sweater at a time” (Kingsolver 468). The action of knitting is not merchandising

but is a significant bridge of participation and “connecting the parts of one’s life and connecting to other women-creating a sense of community and wholeness.” (Yavas 52) In traditional literature, “representations of quilting, sewing, and/or knitting have provided female writers with a novel outlet for self-expression, community-building and an opportunity to write (her) stories in a male dominated society.” (52)

The group of women knitters from “Women Knitting the Earth” (Mehnert 65) initiative brings out that place is a construct that has lost its permanence as climate change has created global mechanisms and their intrusions into former isolated places thereby knitting the places and its communities together. Dellarobia “meets two women (mother and daughter) from England, who heard about the butterflies because of Dellarobia’s internationally broadcasted TV interview, and decided to do a sit-in against global warming” (65). They are part of a grassroots campaign and knit small butterflies from used orange sweaters “that are being sent to them by people from around the world, and hang them up on the branches as a memorial for the butterfly population whose survival is endangered by global warming.” (66) The community based action to memorialise, grieve, as well as take the urgent measures to conserve the butterflies can be perceived as “symbolic tokens of a disembedding mechanism”(66) as the climate context of the Turnbow mountain has been widened from its local context into the global campaign of interconnectedness and climatic awareness.

The women knit butterflies near the site and hang them up on the trees as a sign of silent protest and resistance by using “knitting as a symbolic act of making the “intangible” tangible” (Yavas 58). The act has blurred geographical boundaries and deconstructed social divides among the viewers and the activists as the right comprehension of the ecological breakdown must be coupled with the breakdown of exclusion and unjust segregation. They have also created active spaces for participation by

mobilising people to send their used orange sweaters. The entire act of knitting is ecologically viable as they have reused the material and have also displayed commitment to the issue at hand. Throughout the novel, Kingsolver celebrates all aspects of the feminine situated in diversified spaces of segregation whether domestic, scientific, professional and so on. Juliet from the scientific space, Tina from the media, Dellarobia from the domestic realm, the knitters from diversified spaces, and a wide range of women from various walks of life are acknowledged, glorified and empowered. Kingsolver artistically manipulates the stereotypically feminine acts into globally powerful movements through the depiction of female characters, their contribution towards the climate phenomena and by intertwining their personal growth with ecological upliftment. Thereby, the craft of knitting “not only celebrates the power of the feminine but also claims this “domestic” handcraft as a source of solidarity.” (Yavaş 58)

The collective efforts of the activists in mobilising campaigns and undertaking relentless efforts to conserve the population of the monarch butterflies have a positive impact as “they flew out to a new earth” (59). The concept of the new earth is dystopian as it possesses hoards of unanswered questions on the futurity of the species but Kingsolver and McConaghy arrive at a similar end note of a reminder for collective action and agential participation: “We are not here alone, not yet. They haven’t all gone and so there isn’t time for me to drown. There are things yet to be done” (254). The novel ends with the note of resurrection of empowerment for Dellarobia as well as resurrection for the butterflies as the “little trees looked alive again, resurrected. Enveloped with the souls of dead children.” (Kingsolver 579)