

## MASTER'S THESIS

### Going green: community and ecofeminism in Barbara Kingsolver

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*Date of Award:*  
2010

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**Going Green:  
Community and Ecofeminism in Barbara Kingsolver**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Master of Philosophy**

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**HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY**

**August 2010**

## Abstract

My thesis examines the representations of communities in four Barbara Kingsolver's novels. I argue that the hybrid and oppositional elements in such communities reflect and vindicate what ecofeminism has advocated—an alternative to dualism. In my introduction, I briefly review the development of ecofeminism since 1970s. I consider ecofeminism as a possible path to break down dualistic thinking because it combines all isms and dominations. Starting from gender, ecofeminism takes into account racism, classism, colonialism, and environmentalism. Understanding these “isms” helps one understand the subordination of women. But as far as ecofeminist literary criticism is concerned, most still concentrates on sexism and environmentalism, while ignoring the interconnection between other forms of domination. Thus, my project aims to pinpoint the inner relationships between different forms of dominations as represented in Kingsolver.

This project is based on close-readings of the following four novels by Kingsolver: *The Bean Trees* (1988) and its sequel *Pigs in Heaven* (1993), *The Poisonwood Bible* (1998), and *Prodigal Summer* (2000). From an ecofeminist philosophical approach, I examine: first, how different issues concerning isms and dominations are interwoven into Kingsolver's fiction; second, I explore underprivileged alternatives to prevailing patriarchal systems; and third, I investigate the roles women play in interconnecting all of these elements. Kingsolver's fiction depicts different types of communities crossing the boundaries between gender, race, class, religion, and land ethics. Kingsolver explores the value of Native Americans, indigenous peoples in the Congo, and mother Earth, all of which provide challenges to individualism, colonialism, imperialism, and mechanism. Kingsolver's highlighted minority groups finally find their voices and agency through the establishments of hybrid and reciprocal communities. These models offer us insights, by which to dismantle or correct prevailing dualism. They also serve to furnish invaluable instructions for grassroots ecofeminist movements.

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