



THE ANTHROPOCENE AND BARBARA KINGSLOVER'S FLIGHT BEHAVIOR: A STUDY

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



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Abstract

The Anthropocene evidences a tension, according to Dipesh Chakrabarty in his paper 'The Human Condition in the Anthropocene (2015)' between two conceptions of the human: the Latin 'homo' and the Greek 'anthropos'. Homo, the rational individual of humanism, acts purposefully, reasonably and socially, with a sense of justice. Anthropos, the human as species, acts blindly, from self-interest and with often ruinous cumulative force. The inability of homo to rein in anthropos affects nature in such a way as to occasion unforeseen climate change and migration of animals and insects. This failure of the homo to control anthropos and the consequences of this failure is foregrounded in Barbara Kingslover's novel *Flight Behavior* (2012). Set in Appalachia the narrative centers on human drama with proportionately vital account of environments, and chronicles a community's reactions to the surprising arrival of thousands of monarch butterflies. The novelist interweaves the story of Dellarobia Turnbow, a housewife living with her husband and two children in Feathertown, a fictional town located in rural Tennessee, and dreaming to run away from the family, with the alighting of the monarch butterflies to ensure the survival and propagation of their species. Dellarobia's struggle to deal with the consequences of her past decisions and the possibility of a new life with the coming of Ovid Byron parallels with the collective efforts of the butterflies to acclimatize in a new space. It is Ovid who opens up new vistas to Dellarobia whose ultimate coming-of-age opens up various options for her and her children. With this novel Kingslover enables readers to better understand and imagine the effects of climate crisis in their own time

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The term Anthropocene was supposed to be a viable name to render the changed history of the Earth and the probable negative impacts of human activity in global temperature and climate in the year 2016 when the International Union of Geological Sciences convened a study on the role of the human on Nature and a new academic journal was named as Anthropocene (Trexler: 2015, 1). From the year 2000 Paul J. Crutzen, a Dutch meteorologist and a Noble Prize winner, led his fellow researchers to argue that post 2000 period should be described as the Anthropocene as contrasted to the Holocene period that existed for the last 11,700 years beginning with the ice age. The Anthropocene was initially proposed in 2000 by Paul Crutzen and marine ecologist Eugene Stoermer (Parham: 2021, 1). Looking at the speed of human progression on Earth it is axiomatic to believe that the rapid increase in atmospheric carbon due to urbanization is leading to extreme and unpredictable weather events such as drought, flood, fire and hurricanes. The frequencies with which these natural disasters occur further lead to rising sea-level, acidification of oceans and ultimately to extinction of species. This crisis and change in the environment which is tangential to material and scientific progress is known as Anthropocene. This twenty-first century term signals that human activity, most of the time, depletes, denudes and desiccates Nature in such a way that is comparable with the suddenness of a natural disaster. The Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty in his lecture titled 'The Human Condition in the Anthropocene' compares between two conceptions of the human: the Latin 'homo' and the Greek 'anthropos' and exemplifies how 'Homo', the rational individual of humanism, acts purposefully, reasonably and socially, with a sense of justice while 'Anthropos', the human as species, acts blindly, from self-interest and with often ruinous cumulative force. The inability of 'homo' to rein in 'anthropos' affects nature in such a way as to occasion unforeseen climate change and migration of animals and insects (Chakrabarty: 2015). In the Introduction to his book *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* Dipesh Chakrabarty opines "Scientists claimed that humans, in their billions and through their technology, had become a geophysical force capable of changing, with fearsome consequences, the climate system of the planet as a *whole*" (Chakrabarty: 2021, 3). Yet the reflection of this consequence has

not much been addressed in a vast body of literature that should have staged an interdisciplinary engagement between the sciences and the humanities. In 1968, an urgent warning appeared in Time magazine on Friday May 10: “The false assumption that nature exists only to serve man is at the root of an ecological crisis that ranges from the lowly litterbug to the lunacy of nuclear proliferation. At this hour, man’s only choice is to live in harmony with nature, not to conquer it”. The interdependence of man and nature is often forgotten to foreground temporary advantage and a substantial owning of responsibility towards Nature is forgotten. In this regard the American legal scholar and commentator Judediah Purdy in the Prologue to his book *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene* observes:

Talking about the Anthropocene, then, can be a call to take responsibility for a changing planet. In this use, the idea of the Anthropocene is simultaneously at its strongest and at its weakest. The language of responsibility-taking easily becomes merely high-minded and sermonizing. It can mistake serious thinking, the earnest naming of problems, and heroic intentions for a high form of action in themselves. The appeal of the language of responsibility is often a delusion: the instinct that talking that way, all by itself, will help to call into being the agent of responsibility—a person or community that can do something (Purdy: 2015, 3).

Purdy opines that the three great modes of ecology, economics and politics in which human makes a home converge on the point that no system is stable and is prone to collapse and thereby the urgency of the Anthropocene begins to note that “after nearly ten thousand years of relatively stable climate and burgeoning human wealth, ecological systems are intensely stressed” (Purdy: 2015, 13). The survival of the ecological systems depends on human choices while ideas about natural ecological equilibrium are lost. In the “Preface” to his book *Ecocriticism* Greg Garrard refers to Lawrence Buell’s *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005) presents the ecocritical insurgency of the 1990s as a ‘first wave’ canonising nature writing, Romantic literature and eco-poetry. At this stage the endeavour was to protect Nature from the misrepresentations and depredations of human cultures (Buell: 2005, 18). Later ‘second wave’ ecocriticism adopted a more ambivalent relationship to science and emphasised the interpenetration of the domains of nature and culture stressing that Nature is not natural anymore and aligned itself with the legal aspect of the environment movement. In 2009, Scott Slovic and Joni Adamson described ‘a new third wave of ecocriticism, which recognizes ethnic and national particularities and yet transcends ethnic and national boundaries’ (p.7). This wave would encompass eco-cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic, transnational and queer/trans ecologies. All these waves in the ecocritical writings turns Anthropocene crises into occasions of common responsibility requiring a politics that finds a way to merge, or at least hold together, certain questions that have discrete configurations like ecological conservation or questions of justice. The term has rapidly become adopted in the humanities in a sense beyond the strictly geological. The force of the term is such that it suits to “all the new contexts and demands – cultural, ethical, aesthetic, philosophical and political – of environmental issues that are truly planetary in scale, notably climate change, ocean acidification, effects of overpopulation, deforestation, soil erosion, overfishing and the general and accelerating degradation of ecosystems” (Clark, 2015:2).

In his book *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* Timothy Clark traces the how the concern for Nature persisted in the writings of the Michel Serres. He writes how more than a decade before the term ‘Anthropocene’ was even coined, Michel Serres’s *The Natural Contract* (first published in 1990) offered one of the earliest considerations of the deeper implications of humanity having become a geological force. Clark quotes from Serres to explain some basic stakes for the concept:

Serres’s book had called for a ‘natural contract’ to supplement the hypothetical ‘social contract’ that underlies human beings living together in ordered groups. This would acknowledge and address the violence humanity has waged against the Earth itself. Serres’s essay poises itself on a moment of simultaneous supreme danger to humanity and the Earth, and the possibility of humanity as steward and ‘mother’ of the Earth, taking on a kind of cosmic role. (Clark: 2015, 4)

The stress that Serres gave was for a ‘natural contract’ to replace the hypothetical ‘social contract’ that underlies human beings living together in ordered groups. The sense of the ‘natural contract’ would acknowledge and address the violence humanity has waged against the Earth itself. Serres’s apprehensiveness rests on a moment of simultaneous supreme danger to humanity and the Earth, and the possibility of humanity as steward and ‘mother’ of the Earth, taking on a kind of cosmic role.

Barbara Kingsolver, American novelist, essayist and poet, in her 2012 novel *Flight Behaviour* makes us realize that the survival of the ecological systems is essential to avoid recurrences of disasters like climate change, global warming and species extinction. Kingsolver in this novel projects a realistic picture and moves to what is unsettling about the realistic. Set in Appalachia the narrative centers on human drama with proportionately vital account of environments, and chronicles a community’s reactions to the surprising arrival of thousands of monarch butterflies in Tennessee. The butterflies appear in the novel collectively as ‘orange boughs’, ‘golden darts’, (p.52) ‘a whole butterfly forest’ (p.94) and so on. That Kingsolver insists on an imaginative account of a real event is reinforced in the Author’s Note to the novel:

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: 2012).

Such a fusion of scientific study and imaginative outpouring anticipates a writer's genuine concern for the climatic change. Though the novel muses on the issues like identity crisis, corruption of media, poverty, rural life and religion Kingsolver's primary focus in the novel is to share scientific knowledge through fiction and confirms her claim of "a fictional story within a plausible biological framework" (Kingsolver: 2012). The metaphorical presence of the butterflies in the novel visualizes the environmental hazards inflicted by humans through which the author delineates a global crisis like climate change. The novelist elaborates the story of twenty-eight years old Dellarobia Turnbow, a housewife living with her husband Cub and two children Preston and Cordelia in Feathertown, a fictional town located in rural Tennessee, and dreaming to run away from the family with a twenty-two years old Jimmy. But as Dellarobia tries to elope with Jimmy as planned after meeting him at a designated place set by Jimmy at the top of their pasture, she is stunned by the sight of a quivering mountain blaze, that revealed to be upon closer inspection thousands of monarch butterflies alighting on trees like firs to ensure the survival and propagation of their species after losing their habitat due to flood in Mexico (Kingsolver: 2012, 319). Dellarobia is awe-struck at the appearance of the monarch butterflies and rushes home back to reveal what she had seen, later narrated as a 'vision' by her husband at the church congregation. Her husband Cub who 'did every single thing in his life in first gear' (Chapter 2, 52) works with his father Bear and mother Hester in their family farm named Turnbow Farm and raises sheep. His other intermittent income was what he could get driving a truck that delivered gravel. His father earned more by repairing machines than from the farm. Bear had borrowed a great amount against land to expand his machine shop at a time when transportation departments everywhere suddenly got strapped. Cub cannot go against his father who when fails to repay the bank loan settles to sell a portion of their land to a logging company. As Bear maintains silence on the issue, the crisis involves everyone in the family and Dellarobia, when she comes to know about it asks Cub what would happen to them if the farm 'gets folded in half overnight'. This unfolding of the crisis at the very early stage of the narrative may trick us to consider it as a prime one. But the actual crisis Kingsolver insists us to ponder is the sight that welcomes Dellarobia when she looks at the whole mountainside where the forest 'blazed with its own internal flame' (Chapter 1, P. 26).

Kingsolver's strategic narrative technique thus makes the reader conversant with two different kinds of crisis: internal and external. The internal economic problem in the family is dwarfed by the external occurrence of the sudden migration of the monarch butterflies. To Dellarobia 'it had meant to something' (Chapter 1, P. 26) and she remains busy to make out reasons behind for this occurrence in her own way by revisiting the place. In this regard Jean Jacques Rousseau's advice in *Emile*, his treatise on education and moral development becomes relevant: "Observe nature and follow the path it maps out for you (Rousseau: 1979, P. 37)". Again, Dellarobia's reaction to the view reminds one of John Evelyn, the English forester and author of the first tract on air pollution (Evelyn: 1661, 2), who praised nature for being terrifying and was of the opinion that terror was a lesson in obedience. Dellarobia had to terminate her plan to elope.

The moment Dellarobia's 'vision' has become public, people of the area and neighbourhood come in groups to visit the place giving Hester a chance to earn some quick money. It also allows the novelist to group the responses of the people in positive or negative terms. If the dislocated family from Michoacan, Mexico, tells Dellarobia that the butterflies are native to their village the daughter, Josefina, Preston's classmate, explains that they had to flee Michoacan after flooding a result of logging in the forest destroyed their village a couple of months ago, forcing all of its residents to flee along with the monarch butterflies, the Norwood people do not consider the relocation of the butterflies as a threat to the existence of their continuation in the locality. As news spread a broadcast company came to give the incident a coverage with a conversation between Dellarobia and Tina Ultner, the TV journalist. It is Ovid who opens up new vistas to Dellarobia whose ultimate coming-of-age opens up various options for her and her children. There are passages in the third person narrative of the novel that intricately link Dellarobia's plight with the plight of the monarch butterflies. Coincidentally, the proposed separation of Dellarobia from her husband and Dellarobia's decision to continue her study in a college in Cleary and work in a lab ¹⁰, happens to happen with the flood in the region and the flight of the monarch butterflies to the south:

The numbers astonished her. Maybe a million. The shards of a wrecked generation had rested alive like a heartbeart in trees, snow-covered, charged with resistance. Now the sun blinked open on a long impossible time, and here was the exodus. They would gather on other fields and risk other odds, probably no better or worse than hers. (Chapter 14: 620)

Dellarobia's struggle to deal with the consequences of her past decisions and the possibility of a new life with the coming of the American Ovid Byron, the lepidopterist wandering from the Mexico State to Turnbow Farm at Feathertown with his group of researchers Pete, Bonnie and Mako to verify the veracity of the news of the migration of the monarch butterflies, parallels with the collective efforts of the butterflies to acclimatize in a new space. From the time Dellarobia saw the monarch butterflies she felt a fascination for them: "Fascination curled itself around her fright" (Chapter 1, p. 29). and took her in-laws to the mountain to have a look at the forest that seems to be burning. The precarity of the butterflies covering the branches of the firs in their farm reminds Dellarobia of her position in the family because of the domineering presence of Hester in Cub's life and in the words of Kingslover 'being around Hester tended to invoke an anguish for Cub's childhood that made Dellarobia wish she could scoop him up and get him away from there (Chapter 2, p. 45). Dellarobia feels that her daughter Cordelia though born defiant like her mother would not get any favour for that nature and would be unable to challenge the power of in-laws (Chapter

9, P. 350). In addition to it, the prospect of the losing a part of the farm to a logging company and the subsequent loss of home to the butterflies make Dellarobia belligerent. Initially, she can only say “They can’t log that mountain.” Being a housewife and dwarfed by the patriarchal set-up in the family she cannot hope either to educate herself further or to spend a life of her own as she envisaged the same at the beginning of the novel. But even then, when she read the sign of the mountain at blaze she interpreted it to be a negative sign and hurried back home to embrace what she had been before without any grudge.

Afterward, when Dellarobia asks Hester if Bear is still planning on cutting down the forest and going through with the logging deal she is told that they’re planning on having a prayer meeting with Pastor Ogle to discuss the decision. The novel thus questions the sway of religion on the impoverished people of the locality. When the Pastor Bobby Ogle tries to launch Dellarobia as a saint who has the foreknowledge of an impending incident, Hester is dissatisfied to accept it because of her deflated stature as the most religious woman in the locality. The impoverished condition of the people living at Feathertown accepts every incident as natural one and do not subscribe to any extra scientific explanation of an event. Bear’s indecision what to do in the context of the logging company ready to cut down trees and his readiness to accept the opinion of Pastor Ogle indicate the novel’s thematic fixation on religion and its role in communities. Dellarobia senses that Hester is angry after Dellarobia is praised by the church members for his supposed “vision”—Hester desires to be the center of attention within the church, hoping to position herself as the most righteous woman in the community. Dellarobia inadvertently gaining a new role as the church’s central figure creates irony: a woman who repeatedly confesses to not feeling strongly faithful has become the beacon of piety—a role she only gains by lying and concealing her adulterous desires. At the end of the novel the animosity between Dellarobia and Hester softens the moment Hester shares the darkest secret of her life: she has to give her first son for adoption when Bear was serving the American Force in the Vietnam War. With this knowledge Dellarobia is intrigued to question her mother-in-law about the present condition of the child and from the cue given by Hester understands that the child is the Pastor Bobby Ogle.

With this piece of information Dellarobia is forced to recollect how Cub terminated her study in a college after their sudden marriage because of her pregnancy. Though she dissects to Ovid Byron the quality of education in the school where she studied, her intelligence becomes apparent to Ovid while he takes an interview of her. Dellarobia always thinks of her missed opportunity to study and at the end of the novel confronts Cub on the issue. Cub’s silence corroborates Dellarobia’s contention that their marriage was a forced one and they are incompatible to each other. She explains that on the day she saw the butterflies, she had been planning to run out on their marriage. Cub accuses her of falling in love with Ovid, but Dellarobia doesn’t respond. As they conclude the conversation, he says that he wishes the butterflies had never come to their land. Brendan T. Hawkins’ “‘Charged with Resistance’: An Ecocritical Reading of Barbara Kingsolver’s *Prodigal Summer* and *Flight Behaviour*” explores the role of Kingsolver’s female characters in breaking down the dualist or patriarchal culture with an ecofeminist lens. In this novel Kingsolver deftly retraces the dominative patriarchal and political structures that exploit women and nature equally and exemplifies how the oppressed resist the authoritative in order to retain a dignified life (See Hawkins).

Dellarobia’s mediation between Ovid Byron and her Appalachian neighbours is motivated by concern for her children’s future, in that, as Adeline Johns-Putra argues, she ‘combines her experience of poverty-stricken parenthood with her new ecological understanding of the threatened global environment into a very particular view of posterity’ (2019: 160). Greg Garrard in his book *Ecocriticism* views the beautiful and enigmatic monarch butterflies as symbol of ‘climatic disruption’ (P. 205) and analyses the temperament of Ovid Byron towards science and the inevitable mortality of the butterflies in the mountainside of the Turnbow Farm in the following words:

He is caught, like many environmental scientists, in an excruciating double-bind: deeply committed to the survival and flourishing of the monarch butterflies, whilst imagining himself bound by scientific protocols not to *feel for them*. (P. 206)

According to Garrard by placing this quandary at the centre of Dellarobia and Byron’s relationship, the novel elevates it into a metanarrative that shows why such writings need to exist: to get past social and scientific norms of emotion that rule out feelings of panic, love and grief. It is no gainsaying to say that in this novel Kingsolver with her thematic concern and narrative pattern drives us towards a universal appeal and to see ourselves as part of something larger. A similar response to the novel is given by Greg Garrard. In his article “Conciliation and Consilience: Climate Change in Barbara Kingsolver’s *Flight Behaviour*” (2016) in *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, edited by Hubert Zapf he identifies the difference of opinion in the discussion of climate change in diverse regions and cultures. In literature, he regards it as a ‘risk’ factor because of the limitations in the not-so-specific discussions of the topic. Garrard (2016) categorizes *Flight Behaviour* as a “metanarrative of climatic risk” because “the novel itself implicitly enters a plea for the importance of imaginative literature in a consilient re-conceptualization of climate change” (2016, p. 302). If literature is one of the contributing factors for the study of bioregionalism’s socio-political and cultural dimensions. Since a work of art is deeply rooted to someplace, be it in an imaginary mindscape of an author or from where he or she had close connections with, literature is essential for ‘bioregional imagination’.

Dellarobia explains how the butterflies have suddenly shifted their migration patterns away from Mexico and landing in Tennessee, where the Turnbow Farm is located. Ovid tells the family that he is an entomologist who teaches at a university in New Mexico. He exclusively studies monarch butterflies; the key focus of his research has become the change in migration of monarch butterflies after environmental and weather disasters struck Mexico. The Turnbow farm, he explains, is the first location in recorded history where the butterflies have congregated outside of Mexico. Ovid employs Dellarobia and asks her

to help his students in data collection about the health condition, number, sex and size of the butterflies. This gives Dellarobia a sense of purpose in her life. As a housewife, Dellarobia is locked into a set of behaviors, manners, and rules that she must follow within her home and around her family, community, and children. Ovid and the graduate students begin to wear down those boundaries, allowing Dellarobia to see another life that she yearns for. Setting her novel in the place she intuitively knows, Kingsolver projects the interrelatedness between the community and ecosystem, an individual's desire to live in a community and to do something for the region. Being a biologist Kingsolver's novel is full of scientific accuracy. When Tina asks Ovid about facts on monarch butterflies Ovid responds her that scientists are at pains to see the damage inflicted on Nature.

He tells Tina: She opened her mouth, but he cut her off. "What scientists disagree on now, Tina, is how to express our shock.

The glaciers that keep Asia's watersheds in business are going right away. Maybe one of your interns could Google that for you. The Arctic is genuinely collapsing. Scientists used to call these things the canary in the mine. What they say now is, The canary is dead. We are at the top of Niagara Falls, Tina, in a canoe. There is an image for your viewers. We got here by drifting, but we cannot turn around for a lazy paddle back when you finally stop pissing around. We have arrived at the point of an audible roar. Does it strike you as a good time to debate the existence of the falls?" ... "How will you feel ten years from now, when a serious lot of the farms in the world don't have a damn rainy season anymore? And you were party to that?" (Chapter 12, P.510)

Ovid rues that television news reporters like Tina do not accept opinions without a corroborating visual and he asks Tina to be little imaginative to realize the gravity of the situation without continually running after facts with corresponding visuals. One of Ovid's references is a key to unlock the subtext running throughout his interview with Tina. His mention of Philip Morris and Exxon Mobil is significant. As he speaks to Tina, Ovid accuses her of letting a "public relations firm" write her scripts, adding that the media has gone "off the Philip Morris payroll" and into the "Exxon pocket." Ovid, here, refers to the 20th-century advertising and public relations boom, pioneered by Edward Bernays—considered the "founder" of public relation and was hired by the American Tobacco Company to increase sales of Lucky Strike cigarettes among women. Bernays's advertising skill greatly contributed to the rise in popularity of smoking. Bernays was one of the first to run advertisements that framed smoking as a trendy activity, and Philip Morris, a tobacco company, was accused in a later trial of deceiving the American public about the risks of smoking. Philip Morris was just one of many tobacco companies that paid media outlets to promote smoking's false health benefits in order to push sales. Because of Ovid's connotation we get to know how the media at large is being paid off by oil and gas executives in order to cover up the truth about global warming. By constantly putting the risks of global warming as an uncertainty, Tina and reporters like her are complicit in the conscious and unconscious denudation of Nature. Without doing their jobs responsibly they only aspire to get good ratings from their audience. Dellarobia, despite her little formal education, is able to sense that something sinister is going to happen in Tennessee and it is signalled by the appearance of the monarch butterflies. Her apprehension is proved to be true when at the end of the novel the area is engulfed by water flowing from the hilltop where due to rise in temperature snow begins to melt:

Outdoors she was startled by watery brightness. The ground was spongy with snowmelt and sank strangely under her feet. The hill on the other side of the road remained fully snow-covered in its own bluish shadow, north facing, but on this side the sun had leveled its light and the whole mountain of snow was melting in a torrent. Every channel gouged in this slope by a long wet winter was now filled to overflowing, and the runoff swelled out into sheet flow across the full breadth of the pasture. ... She was alone out here. Water poured over the tops of her boots, as clear and cold as the ice it had recently been, and numbed her feet and pressed down the grass all around, the sodden pelt of a drowned earth. Tall weed stalks intermittently rose at angles above the water and were slammed down again, waving like skeletal arms. (Chapter 14, P. 600)

Kingsolver contrives the plot in such a way as not to allow prevarication. That the rising environmental temperature is a global phenomenon and a threat to the existence of species is infused in the shape of the flood. However, another irony also emerges as the climate changerelated expectations of upper-class activists clash with the abilities of lower-class citizens in the town. When Leighton Akins, a climate activist, comes to Dellarobia's home in order to try and get her to sign a "sustainability pledge," she finds that every single one of his suggestions doesn't apply to her life. When he asks her to buy second-hand, recommending that she use Craigslist, she tells him that she doesn't even know what Craigslist is because she doesn't have a computer. His final request—for Dellarobia to "fly less," meaning go on fewer flights—is met with an ironic silence; Dellarobia, having never even traveled outside of the state, doesn't even need to explain to Akins how inapplicable his advice is to her own life. Akins demonstrates a total lack of understanding about how people in Dellarobia's area, a lowerclass, agricultural town in Appalachia, and their lifestyles. This kind of fissures in understanding a problem happen because of the difference in perspective. Elizabeth M DeLoughrey in her book *Allegories of the Anthropocene* opines that "the primary rupture in knowledge constitutive to the Anthropocene is that our experience of local weather is not commensurate with understandings of global climate" (DeLoughrey: 2019, 3).

The scenes where Dellarobia talks to Akins or Tina or Ovid, while different in tone, serve as parallels for each other, both demonstrating how differing agendas and class backgrounds can cause people to view a central issue in different ways. Tina is concerned with the ratings performance and profits of her news show, while Ovid cannot understand how anyone can so vehemently avoid the facts that he researches. Akins, a believer in climate change, cannot understand how Dellarobia—who

also believes in climate change—could not react with the same form of activist fervor and lifestyle change that he believes in. The novelist at last narrates Dellarobia's thought when she finds the flight of the monarch butterflies:

In the middling distance and higher up they all flowed in the same direction, down-mountain, like the flood itself occurring on other levels. The highest ones were faint trails of specks, ellipses. Their numbers astonished her. Maybe a million. The shards of a wrecked generation had rested alive like a heartbeat in trees, snow-covered, charged with resistance. Now the sun blinked open on a long impossible time, and here was the exodus. They would gather on other fields and risk other odds, probably no better or worse than hers. (Chapter 14, P. 619)

Flight Behavior is a kind of subpoena asking the humanity to take responsibility for the damage inflicted to Nature and suggests ways to restore sustainability. The concern of men like Ovid for the monarch butterflies is not generated as compulsion of his office, but from a deeper understanding that the extinction of a species not only disturbs the biodiversity of the planet but also belittles the beauty of nature. An environmental activist suggests: 'The best arguments in the world won't change a person's mind. The only thing that can do that is a good story' (Parham, P. 4). Unfortunately though even when great writers like Jack London and Ernest Hemmingway have shown Man against Nature is a weak opponent doomed to fail Man often forgets his subservience to Nature is productive. The Anthropocene, as Timothy Clark puts it, 'enacts the demand to think of human life at much broader scales of space and time' than those typically depicted in a novel (2015, P. 13). This contention is subsumed in the thematic concerns of the novel.

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