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Coming Home to Eat: Re-imagining Place in the Age of Global Climate Change

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Abstract

In this essay, I set Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* into a context that includes Gary Paul Nabhan's *Coming Home to Eat: The Pleasures and Politics of Local Foods*; Michael Pollan's *Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*; and Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation*. By focusing on local foods, each of these authors raise complex questions for environmental writers and critics including the following: Must environmental writers, critics, or activists, find a local place to which they are willing to commit? Is it even possible in the modern world to live out your life in one place, or have a commitment to one place? Do traditional definitions of "sense of place" continue to be meaningful in the global age? Should environmental writing and criticism reflect, focus or redirect the proliferation of ecodiscourses away from place as it is traditionally understood, and towards an awareness of global ecological developments such as climate change? Building on the work of ecocritics Lawrence Buell and Ursula Heise and anthropologist Arun Appadurai, I analyze how *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle,* with its focus on Kingsolver's small farm in Virginia, advances the spirited recent discussions surrounding place studies and literary concepts of "sense of place." I explore

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how Kingsolver's latest book is providing approaches to food production, energy conservation, and climate change that both build upon the best characteristics of conventional eco-localist nonfiction while reimagining the meaning of "sense of place" in the context of globalizing processes.

Keywords: ecocriticism, sense of place, localism, globalization, food justice, bioregionalism, climate change

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina and the cyclone in Myanmar, there is growing consensus that global climate change is presenting us with challenges to planetary survival on a scale never before witnessed. Al Gore's documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, foregrounds images of Katrina, with people waving from the roofs of their flooded homes as evidence that we have reached a pivotal moment in human history. In *The 11th Hour*, another documentary examining climate change, actor/narrator Leonardo DiCaprio notes that the United Nations estimates that ignoring this crisis could result in over 150 million "environmental refugees" and a rapidly increasing extinction rate by the middle of this century. As the subtitle of DiCaprio's documentary makes clear, we have a choice: face catastrophe or *Turn Mankind's Darkest Hour into Its Finest*. Leaders in the fields of Environmental Justice, Sustainability, Green Design and Economics, Bioremediation, and Alternative Health who make appearances in *The 11th Hour* agree that it will take more than technology to address challenges which are primarily social in their origin and solution. It will take leadership and it will take imagination.

For over ten years, a group of environmental writers have been providing leadership and imagination on the issue of global climate change by coming home to their own kitchen tables to eat. These writers are arguing that there are connections between the way we eat and how we might address the challenges of climate change. They have been advocating a return to "time-tested," organic methods of food production and energy conservation. Each of these writers is discussing their own experiences with what has alternately been called the "local foods," "slow foods," "food justice," or "food sovereignty movement." By eating only foods produced within 200 miles of their homes, each author is attempting to address climate change by "thinking globally, eating locally." Eating close to home, they assert, is an act of deep cultural, emotional, and environmental significance. Included in this growing number of books is Gary Paul Nabhan's *Coming Home to Eat: The Pleasures and Politics of Local Foods*; Michael Pollan's *Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*; and, most recently, Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*.

By focusing on the connections between food and the challenges of climate change, these authors are raising important, complex questions for environmental writers and literary critics. For example, in focusing on local places and the food that can be produced within 200 miles, these writers seem to be suggesting that "saving the planet" will require each of us to find a local place to which we can commit. But in the modern world, is it even possible to live out your life in one place and procure all your foods from one region? In the age of globalization, are traditional literary concepts such as "sense of place" still meaningful? Or, as

ecocritics Lawrence Buell and Ursula Heise have suggested, should environmental writing and criticism reflect, focus or redirect the proliferation of ecodiscourses away from place as it is traditionally understood? In *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, Lawrence Buell notes that the concept of place has been a rich and tangled arena for environmental humanists. Place is "a term of value that even advocates perceive stands in need of redefinition" (Buell 62). Ursula Heise would seem to agree. In "Local Rock and Global Plastic," an analysis of Karen Tei Yamashita's science-fiction novel, *Through the Arc of the Rainforest*, Heise explores how literary texts negotiate the juncture between ecological globalism and localism. She observes that the "[o]verwhelming majority of eco-localist texts rely on the assumption that local place exists in the way it did in earlier times" (132). Heise surveys the work of celebrated environmental non-fiction writers and poets such as Aldo Leopold, Scott Russell Sanders, Gary Snyder, and the writer with a deep influence on Barbara Kingsolver, Wendell Berry. Each of these writers, Heise asserts, valorizes similar visions of what "life lived with a 'sense of place' would entail" (130). They reject certain aspects of modernization such as geographical mobility and advocate a "return to the local" that would prize ecologically sustainable occupancy of a site and such activities as "building one's own home or working one's own farm" and aspiring to "self-sufficiency in terms of energy and food" (130-31). This is problematic, Heise observes, when viewed in light of the work of scholars including David Harvey, Anthony Giddens, John Tomlinson, among others, who put into question the notion that there is an unchanged, pre-modern place to which it is possible to return. Each of these theorists convincingly argues that "the character of the local has changed fundamentally through the processes of globalization," which take the forms of new technologies and media, global institutions such as the World Trade Organization and the World Bank, and new forms of communication and transportation, along with widespread displacement of humans and nonhumans, either through forced exile resulting from political upheaval or large-scale development projects or by personal choice to immigrate (Heise 132, 128).

Heise assets that unlike conventional nature writers who celebrate notions of "sense of place" that are based on the assumption "that local place still exists in the way it did in earlier periods of history" (132), contemporary writers of science-fiction novels such as Yamashita are admirably imagining how "reattachment to the natural can take place in a general context of globalizing processes" (132). In *Through the Arc of the Rainforest*, Yamashita tells a "somewhat futuristic story" in which "nature in its local manifestation does not appear as a stable ground in which human identities can be firmly rooted, but as a dynamic force of constant transformation" (Heise 149). In this essay, then, taking Lawrence Buell's and

Ursula Heise's critiques into consideration, I will assert that it is possible to successfully negotiate the junctures between the local and the global in a nonfiction text that does not employ the speculative features of fiction set in the future. I will focus on Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle,* which draws much of its inspiration from the "ecolocalist" texts which Heise critiques, such as those of Leopold and Berry. I will explore how *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle,* with its focus on Kingsolver's small farm in Virginia, advances the spirited discussions surrounding place studies and literary concepts of "sense of place." I am interested in examining how Kingsolver's latest book is providing approaches to food production, energy conservation, and climate change that both build upon the best characteristics of conventional eco-localist texts while reimagining the meaning of "sense of place" in the context of globalizing processes.

In taking up these debates about place studies, I will be taking a somewhat different position than Heise. In much of her work, including her recently published book, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*, Heise has consistently celebrated the ability of science fiction to speculate on the possibilities for reattachment to place in the face of globalization, while raising trenchant questions about ecolocalist nonfiction that argues for attachment to real, material places in the world today (as opposed to fiction set in the future). Heise has implied that, to date, there have been few if any, nonfiction environmental texts which satisfyingly answer the question of "whether it is possible to make cognitive, ethnical and more broadly cultural imperatives coincide with this reattachment [to place] in the way that is envisioned in many environmental utopias of the local" (132). Heise's use of the word "utopias" to describe the work of Aldo Leopold and Gary Snyder, which is a word they themselves do not use to describe their own work, reveals her doubt about the usefulness of employing the work of "ecolocalist" writers to offer readers a usable "ecologically based sense of place in the age of globalization" (132). While Heise's doubts are certainly understandable given what has been written in the field to date, I will argue that *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* represents a promising shift in ecolocalist narratives and does successfully reimagine place-attachment in the global age. In addition, I will argue that Kingsolver's newest work answers the call of anthropologist Arun Appadurai for writers, scholars, and educators to produce accessible "vernacular discourses" about the global that are "concerned with how to plausibly protect cultural autonomy and economic survival in some local, national, or regional sphere" (Appadurai 3). Kingsolver's text, I will argue, is a fine example of how creative nonfiction can contribute to the design of "new forms of civic association and collaboration" and support new "collective patterns of dissent and new designs for collective life" (6).

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle emerges out of what has recently come to be called, by turns, the "Slow Foods," "Local Foods," or "Food Justice" or "Food Sovereignty Movement." This growing movement, which was founded in 1986, is considered a branch of the worldwide Environmental Justice Movement.[1] What has been transformative about the globally networked branches of the Environmental Justice Movement, writes Giovanna DiChiro in "Defining Environmental Justice: Women's Voices and Grassroots Politics," is not the elevated environmental consciousness of its grassroots activists but the ways in which it has transformed the possibilities for fundamental social and environmental change through redefinition, reinvention, and construction of innovative political and cultural discourses and practices. The new ideas and practices of Environmental Justice advocates, like their predecessors in the civil rights, feminist, and anti-toxics movements, have revealed how environmental problems are a manifestation of other, larger problems endemic to our culture, and our social and economic structures. Revealing these systemic problems, has led directly to what Luke Cole and Sheila Foster see as the transformative possibilities of "movement fusion" (164), in which mainstream U.S. environmental groups such as the Sierra Club and the Nature Conservancy have found common cause on linked social and environmental issues with Environmental Justice groups from around the globe such as the United Farm Workers in the United States and Ogoni tribal members in Nigeria.[2]

Appadurai observes that these linked global networks might be called "grassroots globalization" or "globalization from below" (16). He notes that while it is quite well known that global markets and deregulation produce greater wealth at the price of increased inequality among the poor and small farmers and business owners and increased pressure on cultural autonomy and economic survival, it is less well known that globalization presents "new possibilities for

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[1] For discussion of the Slow Foods Movement, which was founded in 1986, see Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* (55-56). For discussion of the Environmental Justice movement, see Cole and Foster who trace the rise of the Environmental Justice movement and how it "turned the ocean liner" of public policy and the mainstream Environmental Movement by demonstrating that environmental hazards have been inequitably distributed throughout the world, with poor people and people of color bearing a greater share of the burden than richer people and white people. See *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement* (New York: New York UP, 2000).

[2] For discussion of the United Farm Workers, see Teresa Leal's remarks in "Environmental Justice: A Roundtable Discussion," and "Throwing Rock at the Sun," both included in *The Environmental Justice Reader*, ed. Joni Adamson, et. al. ; for discussion of the Ogoni tribe, see Susan Comfort's ""Struggle in Ogoniland: Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Cultural Politics of Environmental Justice," also included in the *Environmental Justice Reader*. For discussion of the parallel development in academia of Environmental Justice Critical Studies, see Adamson, "What Winning Looks Like: Critical Environmental Justice Studies and the Future of a Movement."

equity hidden in its workings" (1). These new possibilities take the form of new social forms that have emerged to "contest, interrogate, and reverse these developments and to create forms of knowledge transfer and social mobilization that proceed independently of the actions of corporate capital" (3). Appadurai's concern is that for ordinary people, there is a "growing disjuncture between the globalization of knowledge and the knowledge of globalization" (4).

The Slow Foods Movement, which was founded in Europe, is an example of one of these new forms of social collaboration that are contesting, interrogating, and attempting to reverse the gains of an increasingly corporate global food system that exerts more and more pressure on local food ways. This movement, which is now international, has contributed to the construction of innovative political and cultural discourses and practices, linked issues surrounding food and justice, and sought to "protect the pleasures of the table from the homogenization of modern fast food and life" (Kingsolver 55). Kingsolver notes that this movement promotes the protection of local heritage foods and agricultural biodiversity of traditional crops and seeds; its "Ark of Taste" initiatives also catalogue and publicize forgotten foods and seeds that are in danger of extinction. With her characteristic humor, Kingsolver notes, "You can't save the whales by eating whales, but paradoxically, you *can* help save rare, domesticated foods by eating them. They're kept alive by gardeners who have a taste for them, and farmers who know they'll be able to sell them" (56, emphasis in the original). In her promotion of the Slow Foods Movement, Kingsolver might be said, to use the words of Appadurai, to be working to promote "globalization from below," defined as making information about transnational corporate practices accessible to a general public (3). Appadurai has emphasized that it is important to "globalize knowledge" so that those on the grassroots level have reliable information about how they might respond. He calls this "globalization from below" or "grassroots globalization" (3). In accessible prose, Kingsolver offers her readers information about how global corporate cultures work and suggests ideas about how they might resist the increasing industrialization of the food chain.

To understand Kingsolver's passion for the Slow Foods Movement and for resistance to industrialized food systems, one must understand why both activists and scholars are increasingly discussing access to healthy foods in terms of justice and human rights. According to University of Washington anthropologist and ardent food justice activist Devon Peña, people have a sovereign right to fresh, wholesome foods. In "Farmers Feeding Families," a lecture delivered at the University of California at Berkeley, about community gardening in Los Angeles, California, Peña defines "food sovereignty" as the relationship "between people and the plants they cultivate understood as a pathway to their own wholesome

identity as a people and community in place" (4). Peña's lecture focused on migrants from Mexico and South America who were establishing community gardens in Los Angeles not only to feed their families with more traditional and healthy crops, but as a way to address some of the more uneven processes of globalization, including the rising costs of food produced by large corporate agribusiness to the disadvantage of small, subsistence farmers and/or small local farmers. By building their own community gardens, low-income and migrant peoples in large urban areas such as Los Angeles are resisting the increasing reach of corporate foods and insisting they have a right to the healthier foods they and their ancestors have grown for centuries, such as corn, squash, potatoes, tomatoes, cabbage, rice, and chilis, even if they live in large metropolitan areas.

The notion that people at all economic levels have a sovereign right to healthy foods in their local areas is very much in the news as I write this essay, in the Spring of 2008, as fuel prices rise dramatically, and we hear news reports almost daily of food riots from Haiti to Bangladesh to Egypt caused by the soaring costs of basic foods. According to the executive director of the United Nations' World Food Program, Josette Sheeran, these riots reveal some possibly troubling connections between food and initiatives meant to address climate change. "Those battling global warming by promoting biofuels may unintentionally be adding to skyrocketing world food prices," and creating what Sheeran calls a "silent tsunami" in developing nations. Prices for food are rising everywhere as cereals crops are used to produce biofuels instead of food. Sheeran adds that this is particularly dangerous in developing countries, where the situation could plunge "more than 100 million people on every continent into hunger."[3] Some of the fiercest struggles around notions of food sovereignty, for example, are being waged around the globe over the relationship between corn, soy and rice crops and biofuels. From Africa, to Asia, to South America, news agencies report, people are being driven from their lands, and forests are being cleared, to make room for the booming biofuel industry.[4]

Concepts of food sovereignty are at the center of much of the environmental nonfiction focused on food and culture that precede and enrich Kingsolver's *Animal,*

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[3] See "U.N. Expert: Food Crisis 'A Silent Tsunami.'" CNN Online. http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/americas/04/14/world.food.crisis/ Accessed on April 14.

[4] As I was writing this essay, the World Bank reported that "In just two months . . . rice prices have skyrocketed to near historical levels, rising by around 75 percent globally and more in some markets. . . . In Bangledesh, a 2-kilogram bag of rice . . . now consumes about half of the daily income of a poor family." See "Riots, Instability Spread as Food Prices Skyrocket," CNN Online. http://www.cnn.com/2008/TECH/science/04/22/food.biofuels/index.html Accessed on April 22, 2008. However, the argument that too much land is being used for biofuel and that food costs are rising as a result of biofuel production is highly contested. See note 6 below.

Vegetable, Miracle. Reading these books offers fresh understanding of why we are currently seeing so much controversy on the nightly news on the subject of food, and this only increases appreciation for the timeliness of Kingsolver's latest effort. The first of these nonfiction books, *Coming Home to Eat*, for example, describes ethnobotanist Gary Nabhan's long campaign to raise awareness about the preservation of seed diversity, the wisdom of Native American food traditions, and the deep cultural and environmental significance of eating local foods. Nabhan details the threats to ancient seed crops and the insects that help to pollinate them posed by extensive use of genetically-altered crops of corn that are increasingly funneled into the booming biofuel industry. Both Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* and Michael Pollan's *Omnivore's Dilemma* describe how corn is processed to make biofuels and also how it has become the major crop used to increase beef production for the fast food industry. These authors raise questions about diverting food crops away from the world's people and into transnational meat, fast food, and biofuel industries which have negatively impacted both human and environmental health.

But environmental nonfiction is not the only genre that illuminates the meaning of food sovereignty. Many works of literature and film also make the cultural connections between people and food clear. Set in the 1830s, *Pushing the Bear*, a novel written by Choctaw writer Diane Glancy, depicts the threat to life and health that depriving a people of their traditional foods and gardens presents. Glancy's story follows the Cherokee of North America along the Trail of Tears, from the moment they are forcibly torn from their gardens of corn and squash, through the wrenching days of hunger they experience as they are driven along the trail, mourning those who die along the way, and lamenting the loss of their sacred seed corn. In *Garden's in the Dunes*, set in the late 1800s, Leslie Marmon Silko tells the story of Sister Salt and Indigo, the Sand Lizard sisters, whose tribe is hunted, rounded up, removed to reservations and displaced by the building of a dam on the Salt River. After the loss of their mother and grandmother who taught them to provide for themselves through subsistence gardening, the sisters struggle to find their way in a changing world and face one of the largely unexamined consequences of colonization, which is the threat to a people's food sovereignty.

Set in the 1990s, Ruth L. Ozeki's *My Year of Meats*, which is clearly reminiscent of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, brings conversations about food culture into the present day, as it exposes the unethical practices of an American meat industry marketing its product to Japan. Ozeki's fiction dramatizes a corporate culture that degrades the production of its products and makes convenient, yet unhealthy foods available to consumers. Like *My Year of Meats*, the 1973 science-fiction

film, *Soylent Green*, set in the year 2022, seems almost prescient in its depiction of the complicity of transnational corporations in an unethical industrialization of the food chain. In the film, young police detective Thorn, played by Charleton Heston, and his elderly partner, Sol, played by Edward G. Robinson, try to solve the mystery of how the Soylent Green Corporation is producing food for a grossly overpopulated and underfed world that has been dramatically changed by ecological catastrophe. In one of the most memorable scenes, main character Sol's eyes tear up when his police partner and friend, Thorn, presents him with fresh food that Thorn has stolen from the house of a Soylent Green Corporation executive. Sol is old enough to remember what it was like to eat fresh food, while Thorn, who is at least twenty years younger than Sol, is experiencing the taste of an apple and fresh meat for the first time in his life. Though the set looks oddly cliched to a modern audience used to computer-generated special effects, the film nevertheless is considered a classic for the ways in which it depicts the relationship between food and human cultures and seems to predict something very much like the political and economic struggles over climate change initiatives, alternative fuels, and food we are currently seeing on the nightly news.

Like these writers and filmmakers, Barbara Kingsolver is also engaged in imaginatively depicting the issues surrounding food sovereignty. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* is cowritten with Steven L. Hopp, Kingsolver's biologist husband, and Camille Kingsolver, her daughter. The book weaves together memoir written by Kingsolver, journalistic investigation provided by Hopp, and recipes added by Camille. This latest nonfiction venture, which won the 2007 James Beard "Writing on Food" Award, follows Kingsolver's best-selling novels including *Animal Dreams, Pigs in Heaven, The Poisonwood Bible*, and *Prodigal Summer*. Her previous nonfiction essay collections, *High Tide in Tucson and Small Wonder*, like her novels, have also been New York Times best sellers. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* follows the Kingsolver/Hopp family as they move from Tucson, Arizona, to a small farm in Virginia where the family commits to eating only foods they produce themselves and to living an entire year very much like Henry David Thoreau, who built a cabin in the woods, planted a garden, and determined he would "live deliberately" at Walden Pond.

Kingsolver's work has long been singled out for both praise and criticism by environmental literary critics because her fiction and nonfiction seem to offer a politics of resistance to the vagaries of the global age, while at the same time, exhibiting some seemingly unexamined lapses of nostalgia that, like much traditional environmental literature, imply that saving the environment will require return to an "original" place. Kingsolver was born and raised in the Appalachian mountains of Kentucky, in the Southern United States, but after

college, she relocated to the American Southwest, where she took a Master's Degree in Biology and eventually became a celebrated writer. Much of her fiction and nonfiction benefits from her solid knowledge of biology and ecology and takes an approach to the environment that imagines place-attachment in local and regional contexts.

In *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, Lawrence Buell writes that three especially important projects of environmental writing and criticism have been to intervene powerfully within and against traditional notions of place through the "reimagination of localized places . . . the reconception of place at the 'bioregional' level" and "experiments in imagining planetary belonging" (76-77). Buell reads Kingsolver's essay, "The Memory Place," from *High Tide in Tucson* as an example of the first level of intervention, or a "traditional portrait of localism" (77). In the essay, Kingsolver travels with her small daughter, who was born in Tucson, Arizona, back to Horse Lick Creek in the Appalachian Mountains. The writer reminisces about her own childhood spent roaming the mountains and is delighted when her daughter comments, "This reminds me of the place I always like to think about" (Kingsolver, *High* 170). Kingsolver comments, "Much of what I know about life, and almost everything I believe about the way I want to live, was formed in those woods" (*High* 171). Kingsolver goes on to convey a sense of anxiety that Horse Lick Creek and its endangered species of mussels, may become victims of the strip-mining which makes the waters muddy and contaminates the fresh water the mussels need to survive.

Kingsolver is calling for her readers to better appreciate the beauties of endangered places like Horse Lick Creek and develop a "sense of place" through acquiring detailed knowledge of a local environment. Only in this way, she implies, will humankind gain an emotional or intuitive tie to the land and an attitude of stewardship and responsibility toward it. Like much of the work of her fellow Kentuckian writer, Wendell Berry, Kingsolver's essay implies that a small, bounded place is "likely to remain basically what its residents want it to be" if only they will forge the will to keep it that way (Buell 77). Buell's critique of Kingsolver's narrative takes the form of observing that it performs the pastoral nostalgia we have come to expect in traditional writing about place without questioning what the concept of place means in an age when so much of the world's population lives in locations that are shaped to a great extent by translocal—ultimately global—forces. Buell argues that her position is nostalgic in the sense that few people in the world have the economic means or opportunity to develop such detailed knowledge about a place. Buell calls for more transparency about social positioning in narratives that focus on place-attachment since millions of people in the world do not have the luxury of returning to an original place, or may not have

an original place to which they can return. As environmental biologist and educator Mitchell Thomashow reminds us in *Bringing the Biosphere Home*, for some people, "mobility reflects the privilege of their wealth, for others, it's a characteristic of uprootedness, and sometimes a measure of desperation" (Thomashow 167). It is estimated that there are over "100 million migrants and 20 million refugees in the world today," writes Thomashow, adding, "10 million people have left homes because they can no longer make a living from their land. . . . Approximately one out of every sixty people living on earth is a migrant" (169). Such staggering transience, concludes Thomashow, calls on environmental writers and critics to put concepts of place and place-attachment "in perspective" (182). Despite these criticisms, Buell concludes that "The Memory Place" cannot be described in terms of "bad faith or self-deception. True, it sentimentalizes by opting for a selective and stereotyped portrayal of the experiences of return" (76). But since Kingsolver's clearly articulated message is that we must all act to save small, still savable places like Horse Lick Creek, Buell concludes that Kingsolver does an admirable job in dramatizing her worthy environmentalist point (76).

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle draws on the characteristics of some of the best known traditional environmental or "ecolocalist" writing, including that of Henry David Thoreau and Wendell Berry. Like Thoreau's *Walden*, the book follows the family through four seasons, from the first crop of spring asparagus, to the sowing of heritage varieties of tomato, corn, and squash, to some hilarious adventures raising chickens and turkeys, to the preserving of foods during the harvest, and finally, the preparation of delicious, healthy meals during the cold winter months. Like much of Wendell Berry's work, Kingsolver's newest narrative implies that a mere visit to a beloved place is not sufficient; only prolonged residence in a place will bring about the kinds of change that can fight the forces threatening the place and the people who live there. However, Kingsolver clearly means for her latest nonfiction memoir about her return to live in on a Virginia farm to do much more than her earlier essay about her short visit to Horse Lick Creek. Whereas "The Memory Place" intervenes *within* the traditional literary notions of place, Kingsolver's new book aims, in terms of Buell's rubric, to intervene against conventional literary notions of place as Kingsolver connects the local to the global at both the level of the "bioregional" and the level of the "planetary" (Buell 76-77).

That Kingsolver is thinking bioregionally and, at the same time, imagining "planetary belonging" is made apparent throughout the book. Bioregionalism is a philosophy about living ecologically and sustainably within the limits of a place. This philosophy views the region as bounded by natural markers such as watersheds. Kingsolver plays with the notion of bioregionalism and natural markers by writing that it is her intention to "internalize a trust in one's own foodshed"

(343). Thus she transforms "watershed" into "foodshed" and this wordplay stakes out her goal to live within the limits of her bioregion while satisfying her family's food needs sustainably. Although she feels "panicky" at first about whether or not she can learn to do without French wine and bananas, she finds that living on a small farm provides her with richly satisfying options that support the goals of the Slow Foods Movement. Wine grown and processed in Virginia is surprisingly satisfying. Heritage varieties of tomatoes give pure joy to the tongue and nose while locally-gathered wild strawberries take the place of exotic fruits, such as bananas which require more than a little fossil fuel to be transported from Central America. Referring to her family's goals for their year eating only local foods, she writes, "We hoped a year away from industrial foods would taste so good, we might actually enjoy it. The positives, rather than the negatives, ultimately nudged us to . . . explore the local food landscape" (Kingsolver 22).

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle clearly demonstrates that Kingsolver both builds on traditional notions of "sense of place," while at the same time, conveying an awareness that the character of her local place has been changed fundamentally through the processes of globalization. As noted above, Ursula Heise critiques "ecolocalist" texts which fail to acknowledge these processes, since they rely on assumptions that the local still exists "in the way it did in earlier periods of history" (132). However, Kingsolver is clearly not working on this assumption as she provides ample detail about how her family's year eating local foods is well informed about how global forces are shaping her Virginia community and her farm. Her husband, biologist Steven Hopp, provides journalistic sidebar comments throughout the narrative which dig deeper into various aspects of transnational food-production science and industry. Kingsolver and Hopp set their discussions of growing heirloom varieties of eggplant and tomato, making their own artisan cheeses and raising turkeys into discussions not only of the nutritional health of their own family but into discussions of how their own activities have implications for addressing world hunger. They argue that the world's farms currently "produce enough food to make every person on the globe fat" (18), but politics and poverty prevent fair distribution of food to those who need it most. Kingsolver and Hopp decry the food sellers who "prefer to market more food to people who have money, than those who have little" and criticize "[w]orld food trade policies" which "most often favor developed countries at the expense of developing countries" (19).

Kingsolver also connects her meat-producing activities on the local level to ecological issues at the global level. Humorously, yet respectfully, she reports on her efforts to raise her own turkeys, from egg to harvest. She notes that she was inspired to raise her own meat when she learned more about the operations

of industrial meat producers who keep thousands of animals caged or fenced in spaces too small for this large number of animals. She writes that she "lost heart for eating any steak dinner that's been shoved through the assembly line of feed-lot life" (221). Following Wendell Berry, who writes in *What Are People For*, "I dislike the thought that some animal has been made miserable in order to feed me. If I am going to eat meat, I want it to be from an animal that has lived a pleasant, uncrowded life outdoors" (qtd. in Kingsolver 221-22). She observes that she does not enjoy killing her turkeys, but she values the process because of what she learns from it, which includes a better understanding of "the purpose for which these animals were bred" (223). She determines that while most who eat meat may feel deeply that they could not kill the animals they consume and she can sympathize, she realizes that raising her own animals has allowed her to understand more deeply the ways in which "the living take every step in tandem with death" (237). Ultimately, she makes her decision to raise her own meat because she becomes increasingly aware of the widespread processes taking place in the global meat industry that put her children at risk every time they eat commercially-produced products, including the treatment of animals with hormones and antibiotic-resistant bacteria and the possibilities for this meat to be infected with deadly strains of *E. coli* (228).

To those who have read *Coming Home to Eat, Fast Food Nation* and *Omnivore's Dilemma*, none of this will be new. Kingsolver and Hopp both happily give credit to Nabhan, Schlosser, and Pollan, for what they have learned about the meat and food industries from reading their books and comment on the ways in which each of these authors has contributed meaningfully to an increasing international interest being focused on food. Kingsolver observes that by learning about food systems from Nabhan, Schlosser and Pollan and by yearning for food which is "more local, more healthy, more sensible," her family has stumbled on "a powerful new topic of the American conversation" (*Animal* 17).[5] Of course, none of us necessarily needs any of these books to tell us how important the topic of food

[5] According to the *Washington Post*, the powerful new topic of conversation that Kingsolver mentions is entering the academic mainstream. All across the U.S., university departments of anthropology, economics, English, environmental studies and sociology are offering food and culture-related courses with high enrollments. "There's a generation of students that understand that the modern world has been shaped by agriculture, and they are turning to their curriculum to understand those connections," says Melina Shannon-DiPietro, director of the six-year-old Yale Sustainable Food Project. Other schools, such as Boston University and New York University, have offered food studies programs for more than a decade. The University of New Hampshire this year will launch a dual major in eco-gastronomy and the University of California at Davis will introduce a food concentration for American studies majors. See Jane Black, "Exploring Culture, Politics and the Environment: Food Programs Hit the Academic Mainstream."

is; each day, our own stomachs alert us to this truth. But what is new and important in this widening conversation on the topic is its emphasis on the importance of "food sovereignty," or the concept of preserving the connections between peoples and their culturally significant and/or local foods.

Kingsolver clearly rejects threats to her local food sovereignty and becomes part of what Appadurai has called "grassroots globalization" or "globalization from below" by making her family's return to the farm a reexamination of the 1970s Green Revolution which led directly to the phenomenon we now call "globalization." The Green Revolution "promised that industrial agriculture" with its proliferation of synthetically produced fertilizers and herbicides, "would made food cheaper and available to more people. Instead, "[these chemical fertilizers and herbicides have] helped more of us become unhealthy" (*Animal* 19). Opposing the basic premises of the Green Revolution, Kingsolver asserts that if food is produced organically it is much more healthy because it does not require the use of herbicides or fertilizers, which are both produced synthetically from oil and, in turn, produce toxins that can enter the food chain and, eventually, the human body when toxin-laden foods are consumed. Kingsolver's husband, biologist Steven Hopp connects Kingsolver's observation about the Green Revolution to global patterns connected to transnational corporate food production in a journalistic sidebar titled "Hungry World." He notes that many of the world's problems with losses of food sovereignty can be traced to social and political problems that grew out of the disruptions to traditional food production methods caused by the Green Revolution rather than to lack of enough food. Today, "Numerous field trials . . . have shown that organic practices can produce commodity crop yields (corn, soybeans, wheat) comparable to those of industrial farms" (*Animal* 18). However, to solve global problems with hunger, social and political problems with distribution will have to be addressed since, today, most of the corn, wheat, and soybeans produced in the world goes to feed animals for meat production or to produce biofuels (*Animal* 19).

By growing their food organically and eating locally, Kingsolver and her family are practicing a resistant "food sovereignty," which aims to address global climate change issues not through the use of biofuels, but by producing foods locally, with more time-tested, organic methods, and therefore increasing energy-efficiency by reducing the amount of oil it will take to produce their food. If food is consumed close to where it is produced, Kingsolver adds, it reduces both the farmer's and the consumer's carbon footprint because it does not require the application of oil-based herbicides and pesticides and it does not have to be transported thousands of miles to its destination. Kingsolver steadfastly refuses to "believe a fuel-driven food industry was the only hand that could feed my family"

(346). Thinking of global climate change, she insists, hopefully, "We so want to believe it's possible to come back from our saddest mistakes, and have another chance" (345). She hopes that growing her own food or buying locally grown produce might be one way to give humanity another chance.

But how realistic is Kingsolver's advocacy of a return to local food culture and what are the implications for environmental literary conceptions of "sense of place"? Is it really possible to live in one place in the modern age and to procure all your food from one region? Most people in the world today are not wealthy enough to have access to small farms where they might grow their own food nor can they move from one bioregion to another better suited for agriculture. Millions of people live in the world's largest cities. As Sarah Murray points out in *Moveable Feasts*, people living in London would not be able to enjoy salads with healthful olive oil dressing or salmon caught off the shores of the American northwest, if people had access only to local foods. She argues that city dwellers would also lack variety in their diets. Dramatic declines in death and disease, she continues, can be traced directly to the delivery of larger and more varied quantities of food. Murray concludes that from Roman civilization forward, the "advance of civilization has depended on being able to convey food from where it is grown or produced to shops, kitchens, and dining rooms" in far away places (226). Equating "the distance traveled by food with damage to the environment does not provide an accurate picture of the 'carbon footprint' of food transport" (225). "Calculating carbon emissions is a complex business. The buildings we live and work in . . . generate, by some estimates, 40 percent of the carbon dioxide and other emissions that contribute to climate change" (225). In her celebratory description of the relationship between food and the "advance of civilization," Murray, who is a British travel writer and contributor to the *Financial Times*, a London online publication, rather glaringly leaves out any examination of the human cost of the transport of sugar, spices, bananas, or salmon. There is no discussion of the connections between sugar and slavery, no discussion of the 11 million lives lost to the sugar trade and slavery before the early 1800s when the British empire ended the slave trade, no discussion of European wars of competition over spice trade routes, no discussion of the current human and nonhuman rights abuses associated with the processing of salmon in China. But Murray's larger point, that the global market in foods and carbon calculations may be much more complicated than Kingsolver asserts is well taken.

Murray's other key argument, that millions of people live in cities and would not be able to eat a varied, healthful diet without having their food transported hundreds of miles, and sometimes half way around the world, is also a point worth addressing. Kingsolver notes that hundreds of families across the U.S.

are flocking to farmer's markets. These organic farmers, farmer's markets and small exurban food producers "now comprise the fastest growing sector of the U.S. food economy" (21). She describes a new breed of restaurant owner and customer who are "dedicated to buying locally produced food" (20). These restaurants are driving the dramatic increase of diversified "food-producing farms on the outskirts of cities" which comprises the "fastest growing sector of U.S. agriculture" (114). It is often argued that the local foods movement is a movement of only the well-to-do, but Devon Peña's discussion of "Farmers Feeding Families," addresses the issue of class, as he examines the organizing work of low-income people in large urban areas such as Los Angeles engaged in community gardening projects. So while it may still be difficult to procure all one's food within 200 miles, in the U.S. at least, many people are already eating locally, and affordably, in urban areas and there is documented consumer movement in the direction of local foods in urban areas.[6]

As noted above, the implications for literary conceptions of "sense of place" of Kingsolver's advocacy for a return to local foods becomes more clear when the book is evaluated within the context of recent literary criticism, particularly that of Lawrence Buell and Ursula Heise. Kingsolver's narrative is advancing discussions surrounding the relationship between the local and the global in some important ways. And yet, in some passages, as she does in "The Memory Place," Kingsolver still occasionally leans back into a nostalgic rhetoric that should raise some concern. Buell writes that taking place-attachment and stewardship too far can manifestly produce bad results that sometimes takes the shape of "inordinate hankering to recover the world we have lost" (68). Kingsolver's book certainly is not without its "hankerings." After lengthy discussions about making her own cheese and how many hours it takes her to can and preserve tomatoes, Kingsolver nostalgically harks back to an earlier time. She writes that "I belong to the generation of women who took as our youthful rallying cry: Allow us a good education so we won't have to slave in the kitchen. We recoiled from the proposition that keeping a husband presentable and fed should be our highest intellectual aspiration" (*Animal* 126). She adds that in trading homemaking for careers, women have made a "devil of a bargain," giving up "the aroma of warm bread rising, the measured pace of nurturing routines, [and] the creative task of molding our families' tastes and zest for life" (*Animal* 126-27). These words could come straight out of a 1950s treatise on the place of women in

[6] Nabhan, Pollan and Kingsolver all include appendixes with their books giving information about numerous international, regional and local organizations, farms, gardens, restaurants, consumer groups, etc. supporting the Slow Foods and Local Foods movement.

the home and the value of domesticity. They should raise something of a red flag as they challenge the gains that women have made in the fight for civil rights that has been waged in the U.S. for nearly 200 years and is still taking place around the world.

As cultural critic Andrew Ross cautions in his incredibly satisfying romp through the perversities of environmentalism, *The Chicago Gangster Theory of Life*, we often see punitive and repressive measures limiting people's human rights being put into place in conjunction with supposed material scarcity, especially in developing countries. At the 1993 UN conference on Human Rights, for example, representatives of third World member states argued that, in their societies, human rights ought to be considered "secondary to the right to economic development" (265). This illustrates that "political liberties," particularly for women, people of color, and sexual minorities, are often "bound up with perceptions of scarcity and underdevelopment" (265). For this reason, we "should be very wary of any discourse of limits that equates an 'excess' of rights and freedoms with the excesses of material growth and development generally held responsible for the ecological crisis" (264). Ross's observations simply serve to remind us that most people tend to accept that "limits"—whether they are socially chosen or imposed—are a necessary feature of any ecologically-minded reorganization of social life, but there are reasons to be cautious when these discussions of limits are associated with some kind of ecological citizenship. When Kingsolver lapses into the occasional moment of nostalgia and writes, "Cooking is good citizenship" (*Animal* 130), and adds, "I like the kind of family I can raise on this kind of food" (*Animal* 305), we should take pause. Simply put, we should be cautious about any kind of statement pointing to an "ecological citizenship," associated with discussions of ecological scarcity and limits, that might even possibly imply justification for a rollback of hard-won political and human rights.

Kingsolver's few lapses of nostalgia in *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, while troubling, may be forgiven, since the larger context of the narrative keeps the reader's focus constantly moving back and forth between the local, the bioregional, and the global. But is *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* as successful as the science fiction Heise discusses in helping readers redefine literary conceptions of "sense of place" in the global age? Heise writes that "the challenge that [Karen Yamashita's] *Through the Arc of the Rainforest* holds out to environmentalist conceptions of place is to imagine local environments not so much as foundations for an unalienated existence, than as habitats that are ceaselessly being reshaped by the encroachments of the global as well as by their own inherent dynamism" (149). Science fiction challenges the environmentalist writer or critic not so much to preserve pristine, authentic ecosystems as to ensure "their continued ability to change

and evolve" (Heise 149).

Kingsolver is not harking back to ahistorical notions of a premodern place, untouched by the processes of globalization, to which we should return; instead, she is going well beyond the "ecolocalist" environmental nonfiction that Heise critiques. As a writer and a trained biologist, Kingsolver engages in research to illuminate the constant dynamic forces of both environmental and global change at work. She reminds her readers that even in rural Virginia, "Global climate change has created dramatic new weather patterns, altered the migratory paths of birds and shifted the habitats of disease carrying organisms, opening the season on catastrophes we are ill prepared to predict" (304). Whether these catastrophes are bird flu or hurricanes and typhoons or the introduction of exotic species (like the starling) that compete with local species, Kingsolver's focus on the ecology of her small farm advocates the wisdom of learning about how global patterns impact local patterns and how these patterns help to shape our sense of place. As a farmer, Kingsolver is working to ensure the continued ability of her small piece of land to change and evolve ecologically by acquiring an intimate knowledge of the Virginia climate and soil, the history of animal, plant and human occupation in that place. Her desire is to live in ways that might positively affect global climate change. "If every U.S. citizen ate just one meal a week (any meal) composed of locally and organically raised meats and produce," Kingsolver's husband Steven Hopp writes, "we would reduce our country's oil consumption by over 1.1 million barrels of oil *every week*" (5). As both a writer and farmer, then, Kingsolver sees her work as providing readers with ideas for approaching food and climate change challenges with new perspectives. If, as Appadurai argues, there is limited access for most of the world's people to the "knowledge of globalization," then Kingsolver's text is providing readers with accessible knowledge about how the processes of globalization that are impacting local foodways. This information, presented imaginatively, offers readers opportunities to learn about or become a part of the Slow Foods movement, which is an example of "globalization from below" or the new "forms of civic association and collaboration" about which Appadurai writes (6).

Heise notes that science fiction deals in the realm of the speculative and therefore cannot really illustrate how to reimagine our attachments to local places or environments whose very "nature" may be global rather than local (149). I would agree. This is precisely why a nonfiction text such as Kingsolver's, about a real, material place, discussed in the context of the impacts of globalization, *can* illustrate how to reimagine our attachments to local places that are continually changing in response to dynamic, small- and large-scale processes. Kingsolver's text approaches problems that are global in nature (global food systems, climate

change) at the local level, and by doing so, offers readers practical, concrete ideas for how they might participate in the Local Foods or Slow Foods movement. I say "ideas" rather than "solutions" because I agree with Andrew Ross that "it may be better to think of [the state of our world] as an emergency, from which new ideas 'emerge,' rather than as a crisis, for which one finds a 'solution' which is more likely to be expediently exploited in the name of the status quo" (Ross 262). Thus the Local Foods movement should be seen as an emergent set of ideas rather than "The Solution" to the problems presented by global warming and industrialized food systems. Kingsolver is at pains to emphasize that her choices are personal and she would never force them on others. She admits that she did not grow her own wheat for bread and that she still drank coffee from South America and that she understands that not everyone has the land or time to grow their own food. She understands that drinking shade grown, fair trade coffees can promote justice and equity for the small farmers who grow it, and that this promotes food sovereignty. She encourages her readers to seek out the possibilities for procuring food in their local area in order to discover that it is entirely possible to "internalize a trust in one's own foodshed" (343). She is seeking to dispel the modern myth that contemporary societies or urban societies cannot live comfortably within their own regional foodshed. At the same time, she is encouraging readers to learn more about how international trade laws that negatively impact small farmers all over the world and how drinking "fair trade" coffees or other culturally significant foods can benefit local farmers and traditional food systems. Again, to use Appadurai's terms, this is the "globalization of knowledge" at its finest.

Heise observes that theorists who write about globalization have argued that the "ordinariness" of many of the daily experiences with the processes of global processes can be "quickly assimilated by those who undergo [these processes] and become part of what is considered normality" (130). This raises the difficult question of "how an endorsement of constant transformation and change would allow one to discriminate between inherently dynamic evolution of ecosystems and the kinds of disruptive change that might ultimately lead to serious ecosystemic problems and failure" (149). One cannot expect science fiction, Heise concludes, to deliver "detailed solutions to such complex theoretical problems" (150). Again, I would agree and add that this is exactly why ecolocalist nonfiction such as Kingsolver's can advance discussions of place-attachment. It has become clear over the past 35 years, according to Kingsolver, Nabhan, Schlosser, Pollan and others that the industrialized food chain is contributing to increased incidence of human and animal disease and environmental degradation. Each of these writers is exploring how "fast food culture" is contributing to problems that may take the form of diabetes or obesity, or water pollution and fish die-offs

downstream from industrial animal farms. Although running out to get a "super-sized" hamburger, French fries and a large milkshake may have come to seem "normal" or "ordinary" over the course of the last 35 years, there are also an increasing number of writers and activists, associated with the worldwide Slow Foods/Local Foods Movement, who are revealing how problems at the local level with health and nutrition can be connected to larger systemic problems with global food markets concentrated on producing convenience foods. Kingsolver writes, "Nobody should need science to prove the obvious, but plenty of studies do show that regularly eating cheaply produced fast food and processed snack foods slaps on extra pounds that increase the risks of diabetes, cardiovascular harm, joint problems, and many cancers" (116). Like many of the writers and activists celebrated by the Environmental Justice Movement (Rachel Carson comes to mind), Kingsolver's writing works to transform the possibilities for fundamental social and environmental change through the redefinition of what is "ordinary" or "healthful" in our food cultures and production systems. Kingsolver is arguing that unhealthy fast foods should no longer be considered "normal" or "ordinary," and she advocates a celebration of "slow foods," conservation of agricultural biodiversity and cultural identities tied to food production, and protection of "traditional foods that are at risk of extinction" (56).

Kingsolver is offering "emergent ideas," in beautifully written, humorous, creative, and accessible prose that reports a real life experiment in "planetary belonging." Her work is advancing discussions of the literary meanings of "sense of place" and, at the same time, providing creative ideas for social reorganization around food production. Speculative texts such as *Through the Arc of the Rain-forest, Soylent Green*, and *My Year of Meats* can certainly help us imagine a radically different future. But environmental nonfiction such as *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* is emerging from and helping to describe "globalization from below" as well as encouraging readers to imagine how grassroots reorganization of social life can take place in small, local settings, like a group of family and friends sitting down to eat home-grown or locally-grown foods at their own table. Kingsolver is illustrating how small acts at the local level can produce effects that flow out to and positively address global social and environmental problems like climate change. While her family is among the few and privileged who own land, she uses her experience to illustrate how each of her readers, including those who do not own land, might eat locally once or more a week, and thus participate in a movement to resist the globally industrialized food system "from below." Kingsolver's book, having already taken a place next to other classic ecolocalist nonfiction narratives, should also take its place beside each of the novels and films mentioned throughout this essay that articulate the connections between food sovereignty

and sense of place. Each of these writers and filmmakers is helping us imagine—and reminagine—conceptions of place-attachment and place-making in the global age.

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回家吃飯：在全球氣候變化的時代裡重新想像地方

摘 要

在本文裡，我把巴芭拉金莎芙(Barbara Kingsolver) 的《動物、蔬菜、奇蹟：食物生命的一年》放在含括賈立保羅奈布韓(Gary Paul Nabhan) 的《回家吃飯：在地食物的快感與政治》、麥可波藍(Michael Pollan) 的《雜食動物的兩難：四餐的自然歷史》、以及艾力克史拉瑟(Eric Schlosser) 的《速食國家》的脈絡裡。這些作家聚焦於在地食物上，從而爲環境作家與批評家引出複雜的問題，包含下列這些：環境作家、批評家、或行動主義者必須要找到一個他們願意全心付出的在地地方嗎？在現代世界裡眞有可能在一個地方過一生，或是全心奉獻給一個地方嗎？在全球化的時代裡，傳統的「地方感」的定義還有意義嗎？環境書寫與批評應否反映、聚焦於日益滋長的生態論述，或是把它由傳統所了解的地方移轉開來，而朝向全球生態發展的意識，如氣候改變之類的？我以生態批評家勞倫斯布爾(Lawrence Buell)及烏蘇拉海瑟(Ursula Heise)的著作爲立論點，分析《動物、蔬菜、奇蹟：食物生命的一年》這一本書，該書將焦點放在金莎芙在維吉尼亞州的一座小農場，闡揚晚近環繞在地方研究及文學上「地方感」之概念的熱烈討論。我探索金莎芙最近的一本書如何提供了食物生產、能源保護、氣候變化的研究方式，這些方式不但是建立在傳統的生態在地非小說之特點的基礎上，也同時在全球化過程的脈絡裡重新想像「地方感」的意義。

關鍵字：生態批評，地方感，在地主義，全球化，食物正義，生物地域主義，氣候變化