



"Out of the Dark into the Light" - The changing attitude of Cosima Noline towards death alters her life

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Seminar paper from the year 2000 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: 2,0, University of Flensburg (Englisches Seminar), course: Reading Contemporary American Fiction: Barbara Kingsolver, 5 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: Introduction

The main thesis: Death determines the life of Cosima Noline and finally changes it The main character in the novel "Animal Dreams" by Barbara Kingsolver, Codi Noline, is a person who has always denied the possibility and importance of change in peoples lives. Her sister Hallie has a positive attitude towards the way of the world and thinks "nothing stays with you all your life" [p. 31], which means everything can be changed to turn out well. In Codi's opinion there is nothing she can ever steer in the world not even in her own microcosm and although the name Cosima means "order in the cosmos" [p. 13], she feels that she "must have sensed the lack of cosmic order in (her) future" [p. 13]. When she grew up in Grace, Codi felt "unfit to live" [p. 184], also in present she has "no more mission in life than I'd been born with [p. 28]. She believes she is born as the bad part of the two sisters. The one who goes hand in hand with death. When Codi once looks at the plants before her front step, she thinks they are "right down to death's door, but water always brought them back" [p. 89], whereas she "could only wish for such resilience" [p. 89] to escape death. In opposition to her fate as being the death angel, her sister Hallie has got the gift to protect life because she knows how to grow plants and how to help people in emergencies.

The roles cannot be changed. Codi is surrounded by death. Her mother died when she was a child and at the age of sixteen Codi had a miscarriage. She is the first person who explores the poison which is killing Grace from underneath. For her it seems to be just another bad omen of her failed life. She does not recognize the positive images around her, for example the strong relationship with her sister Hallie, not also that she is the savior of Grace, because she has enabled the people of Grace to take the last chance and save their hometown. In the end of the novel, the life of Codi Noline turns upside down and this dramatic change is on one hand the result of Hallie's death in Nicaragua. The closest person in her lifetime, whom Codi always believed was the better part of herself has now gone forever. On the other hand that she survived the airplane flight accidentally is the second occurrence on her way towards a new life. Suddenly she recognizes that "so much of life is animal instinct" [p. 319]. It is a new aspect on her life, that she as a human being also inherited "fear and the will to live" [p. 319]. However, these are the traumatic incidents she always seemed to need. It does not make her life seemingly unbearable but turns her despair around. Halimeda, which means "thinking of the sea" [p. 13], nevermore the center of Codi's life, is dead. But the sea is the origin of all life on earth and becomes the bearer of Codi Noline's "new life". The discontent that has chased her since she was born is now unraveled.

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