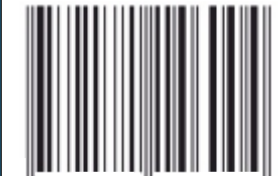
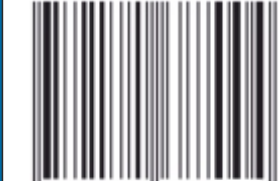


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### THE ANALYSIS OF THE SETTING IN THE ECO-FICTION NOVELS “TIME IS A RIVER”, “SWEETGRASS”, “THE SUMMER OF LOST AND FOUND” BY AMERICAN WRITER MARY ALICE MONROE

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**Abstract: The relevance of the research.** This article reviews that setting in a literary work can alleviate some of the writer's difficulties in describing the time and space by allowing a reader to focus on the story's plot and characters. Since the works of Mary Alice Monroe are of an environmental nature, it is explained that the author skillfully portrays real places in her works, such as an island, a beach, a mountain, a fertile plantation, and other wildlife environments. In the article the setting is referred to include a context beyond the immediate surroundings of the story. Elements of setting may include culture, historical period, geography, and hour. Along with the plot, character, theme, and style, setting is considered one of the fundamental components of fiction.

**The objectives of the research.** The article is aimed at to study the literary analysis of the setting and its functions in the eco-fiction novels “Time is a River”, “Sweetgrass”, “The Summer of Lost and Found” by American writer M.A. Monroe. We distinguish 5 functions of setting in these novels: 1) Setting as a background for action; 2) Setting as an antagonist; 3) Setting as a means of creating appropriate atmosphere; 4) Setting as a means of revealing character; 5) Setting as a means of reinforcing the theme.

**Research methods.** The method employed in this research is a semantic-stylistic analysis which aimed at identifying functions of setting since setting in fiction is called on to perform a number of desired functions.

**Conclusion.** The functions of the setting in the eco-fiction novels “Time is a River”, “Sweetgrass”, “The Summer of Lost and Found” are distinguished and reviewed with examples from the novels in the research. The writer's goal is to create a real world of stories. To do this successfully, the writer must remember that the foundation of a literary work is the setting. The analysis of the setting in a work plays an important role because, when done correctly, it enhances the story line, characters, themes, and even the mood of the novel.

**Keywords:** eco-setting, antagonist, background, literary theme, characters, appropriate atmosphere, setting, eco-motives.

#### **Introduction.**

Setting is a literary device that allows the author of the story to determine the time, place and environment of its occurrence. This is an important element of the story because space and time tell the reader when and where the events will take place. [1,276] In addition to specific geographical locations, specific types of environments are often used as settings in literary works. By setting a story or narrative in a familiar setting, the writer can be relatively sure that the reader will have a general understanding of the characteristics of that setting, such as the terrain, climate, culture, etc. This relieves some of the writer's difficulty in describing and allows the focus to be on the story's plot and characters. [3,220]

In the 21st century, at the peak of globalization, information technology and cybernetics development, engineering and the use of space for human benefits, the return of people to nature, the enjoyment of the environment in which it originated, and the scope and factors of its psychological impact on the individual as a part of nature, both scientific and spiritual study today is becoming relevant. While the influence of this social and natural phenomenon on literature has been observed since ancient times, in the context of modern development, the figurative expression of nature and ecology is becoming more significant. For this reason, it is important to study the characteristics of the eco-fiction genre in literature, to clarify its uniqueness, especially to observe its manifestations and laws in the literature of developed countries.

By the 21st century, the problem of ecology has become the most urgent for the whole world. Environmental problems such as animal population, air quality, water quality, and global climate change are



reflected in the novels of contemporary American literature, especially in Rachel Carson's "*Silent Spring*", James Graham Ballard's "*The Drought*", Ursula Le Guin's "*The Dispossessed*," and in "*Carbon Dreams*" by Susan M. Gaines and "*Solar*" by Ian McEwan.[12,385]

As a result of the environmental movements led by women, in the 90s of the 20th century, novels created by women writers expressing their sympathies through both feminism and environmental themes began to appear in the world, enriching American literature and this new type of criticism against the dominant system in American culture was founded by ecofeminists. Eco-feminist writers including Joan Lynn Slonczewski, Ursula K. Le Guin, Miriam Simos Starhawk, Sherry S. Tepper, Suzy McKee Charnas, Suzette Haden Elgin, Octavia Butler, Barbara Kingsolver, Margaret Atwood, Sally Miller Gearhart, Dorothy Bryant, Marge Percy, Marian Engel and Alice Walker, opposed gender discrimination and criticized androcentrism and anthropocentrism. They created works imbued with the feelings of preserving the environment, sympathy for the fate of the Mother Earth, always being in harmony with nature, and left their names forever sealed in world literature.

The famous writer Mary Alice Monroe, who entered the modern American literature with her novels that uniquely describe the relationship between man and nature, showed herself in a series of novels of the eco-fiction genre with a style that combined her deep sympathy for people and a naturalistic worldview. M.A. Monroe's books on environmental topics make him known as a bestselling novelist. As a result of the writer's family's move to the Isle of Palms, a major event occurred in the Monroe's evolutionary development. Her writing began to combine feminist themes with environmental messages and metaphors, thus bridging her life as a writer and conservationist.

Mother Nature is the main theme of M.E. Monroe's "House on the Beach" series and the novels "Time is a River", "Sweetgrass", "The Summer of Lost and Found", although the author describes this theme as a family that we experience in everyday life. Monroe was able to illuminate human's complex but sacred feelings related to the environment.

### **Methodology of the research.**

*The notion of a setting and its functions are studied in many prominent books and manuals related to the theory of literature such as in "Стилистика современного английского языка" (1973) by I.V. Arnold and "Stylistics" (1971) by I.R Galperin. Chronotype – is a term coined by M.M. Bakhtin to describe the way time and space are described by language, and, in particular, how literature represents them. Functions: Realistic (to render the verisimilitude), Suggestive, Symbolic ( the setting stands for smth else- idea, character, abstract notion).[2] The issue of eco-fiction genre and eco-feminism in English literature has been deeply discussed by various critics and literary scholars such Truby John, Obstfeld Raymond, Levin Donna, Lodge David, Roberts Edgar V and Zweig, Robert, Rozelle Ron. It was specially studied in the works of Russian literary scientists such as E.R. Martynova, E.S. Burmistrova and S.V. Grechishkina [4,137].*

**Research methods.** The method employed in this research is a semantic-stylistic analysis which aimed at identifying functions of setting since setting in fiction is called on to perform a number of desired functions.

### **Results and discussions**

Based on the nature and potential of poetic, prose, and dramatic works in world literature, the relationship between man and nature at various stages of the artistic creation process have been thoroughly analyzed in studies. The works of the famous writer Mary Alice Monroe, who entered the modern American literature at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century with her novels that uniquely describe the relationship between man and nature, has taken an incomparable place in world literature. After all, such a literary heritage influenced people's minds and feelings, enriched their thinking about the harmony of nature and man, and led their morals towards goodness. The analysis of her works in terms of the depiction of human and nature relations, the themes of feminism and eco-feminism manifested as the author's style, stylistic tools for describing nature, features of the eco-fiction genre, and nature symbolism in the author's works is of urgent importance in order to inform the world literary and scientific community.[13,108]

**Setting** is defined as a time frame or location in which a narrative takes place in literature. The 3 main types of setting are time, place and environment. A setting can show the **time period** in which a story takes place. This gives context to the social climate of a story and a background about the social cues and expectations that characters should adhere to. Place refers to a **specific place** in a **novel**. Environment (physical and social) refers to a broader geographical area or a social environment. The **social environment** is

the surrounding environment that social events occur in. This also shows the culture that characters are educated in and the institutions and people they are involved with.

Since the works of Mary Alice Monroe are of an environmental character, the author chooses real places in her works, such as an island, a beach, a mountain, a fertile plantation, and other wildlife environments. The historic city of Charleston, South Carolina and the nearby Isle of Palms were chosen as unique locations for the 7 novels in the Beach House Series. To analyse setting in a work of literature, you first need to **identify** the types of settings featured (time, place and environment). When you have successfully identified those types, you must consider the context around them. Consider how the setting reflects the behaviour of the characters. Think about what happens if the setting changes - do the characters alter with it? Characters are not only influenced by the setting but they also influence the setting.

In Monroe's works, we can find the usage of the setting in the following 5 functions:

**1) Setting as a background for action.** To find out whether setting serves as essential elements in fiction, or whether it exists merely as a decorative and functionless backdrop, we must ask ourselves: Can the work be set in another time and place without significant harm? If the answer is "yes", then it can be said that the background image serves as a decorative background. In M.A.Monroe's "The Summer of Lost and Found" the actions are set during the pandemic. Due to unemployment and the stay-at-home order during the pandemic, Linea and Anna have to live together in a beach house for several months: *Three days later, the weather changed again. A blustery wind rattled the windows, sending the palm fronds scratching at the windows. Both she and Anna had retired to their rooms after an early dinner of comforting lentil soup, Gouda cheese, and chunks of sourdough bread.* [5,96]

In this passage, we can see that there is no artistic purpose in this passage, which depicts a typical daily life in a beach house. Artistic time and space cover all elements of the work. In particular, it is impossible to show the moods and experiences of the characters without the depiction of the artistic time and space. Also, the depiction of the mental state of the hero in parallel with the space and time determines the author's style. Setting gives context to the characters' actions in a story line. It can also create the mood (how the reader or viewer feels). It's easier to understand why the characters in the story are doing what they're doing when we know where they are. The time of day, time of year, and ages of the characters will also affect how they act and what they say:

*Only palm trees, wild grasses, and flowers sprouted around the cottage, especially in the spring, when the island was practically bursting with life. Wildflowers colored the dunes with soft yellows, vibrant blues, and fiery oranges. In the trees birds sang out mating calls, while overhead migrating birds soared, returning home from southern climes. This side of the beach house faced the long stretch of dunes that reached out to the Atlantic Ocean. The mighty sea reflected the mood of the sky—sometimes dark, turbulent, and gloomy, other times a soft, introspective gray-blue. Today the water was the color of unbridled joy and hope, a blue so vivid the horizon line disappeared where sea met sky, creating an infinite stretch of blue. Sunlight danced on the ocean, making it appear a living, breathing thing.*[5,14]

The passage displays that around Caretta's house, only palm trees, wild grasses and flowers sprouted, especially in spring, when the island was almost alive. Wildflowers painted the dunes soft yellows, bright blues, and fiery colors. In the trees, birds sang their mating calls, migrating birds returned home from southern climes. This side of the beach house extended to the long dunes that bordered the Atlantic Ocean. The mighty sea reflected the mood of the sky - sometimes dark, restless and gloomy, other times soft, gray-blue. the water had become an expression of endless joy and hope, where the sea met the sky the horizon disappeared, creating an endless blue.

**3) Setting as a means of creating appropriate atmosphere.** Many authors use their portrayal of the setting as a means of raising the reader's expectations and setting the appropriate state of mind for what is to come. When Monroe starts living in Mia Landon's Watkins Cove shack in *Time is a River*, everything that hits her seems terrifying: *Outside the wind continued to blow and the hovering trees scraped their branches against the glass, like bony fingers tapping to get in. Her mind started playing tricks on her and she wondered wildly if that tapping wasn't a tree, but a bear...or a man? ... Three eerie, mournful hoots of an owl broke the silence, ending with a catlike snarl.* [6,24]

In "Sweetgrass", when Mary June tells her husband Preston that despite the bitter truth that her husband is leaving, she finally finds courage and is happy about it, the author uses the image of thunder and storm to describe Preston's state of mind:

*Around them the storm broke. Fat drops of rain splattered loudly on the dry ground in gaining crescendo. With each gust of wind the grasses swayed and shook, rattling like castanets. Then the sky opened*

*up and the heavens cried. The roof provided no shelter from the torrents of rain, and both felt the lash of water that whipped through the air.*[7,12]

Rain is usually associated with feelings of loneliness and sadness. In this sense, it is very similar to human tears.

In "Time is a river" too, Mia Landan, after her husband's infidelity, visits an abandoned and abandoned cabin in the middle of the wild to live in solitude. *The cabin was sheltered by a mountain ridge to one side covered with tall trees and lush vegetation in every shade of green imaginable. Yards away the river cascaded over white rocks, tumbling in its mellifluous music into a deep, bluish green pool.* [6,105]

**2) Setting as an antagonist.** In Monroe's works, the setting appear as antagonists in the following cases:

- In the novel "Time is a river", when the main character Mia Landan starts to live in the cabin in "Watkins Cove", it is described by such adjectives as *"creaking floor, old wood stove, rustling hoots and snaps outside, the wind gusted, windows rattled, cobwebbed and filthy cabin"* the desolation of the cabin and the terrible weather outside cause Mia to hesitate about her decision to live in the mountains.

- In the novel "The Summer of Lost and Found", Linea Rutledge describes the environment during the pandemic and her temporary unemployment ("The aquarium was closing its doors to the public because of the pandemic"), making the character of Linea, who strives for new things and striving for new things, depressed ("bidding teary fairywells to every fellows").

**4) Setting as a means of revealing character.** The ratio of the place and time in the work often shapes the personality and fate of the characters: it is a direct cause of what qualities people have. A person who grew up in a small, cozy house in the city may have a different outlook and approach to life than someone who grew up in the vast countryside, in close contact with nature. Stories sometimes show us characters who are direct products of their environment, reflecting its moods and values. Often, however, the stories depict characters who rebel against their restrictive environment of space and time and struggle to break free from the suffocating environment. Mary Alice Monroe also shows how in her novels she uses symbolic representation of real space to reveal the inner world of the character.

In Monroe's "Time is a river" Mia Landan, the protagonist of the play, found a chest in a shack on Wetkins Mile, where she is now living, a picture of valuables belonging to the original owner of the abandoned shack: *"priceless tire plate hand painted with a different wildflower", "heavy sterling silver tableware, each piece engraved with a bold KW", "vintage evening gown of royal blue taffeta", "white silk scarf", "two bamboo fishing rods"* indicates that the owner's lineage goes back to a noble family. The author does not directly convey the portrait of Kate Watkins in the novel to the reader, but through his personal diary, which contains the letters of Kate Watkins and his valuable advice on fishing, as well as messages and news from old newspapers found in the archive, Kate's appearance and inner character are understood.

**5) Setting as a means of reinforcing the theme.** In a literary work, the author's skillful use of time and place can emphasize the theme of a novel or short story, in which the physical environment in which the action takes place can symbolize the central ideas of the work. In almost all of Monroe's nature-oriented novels, the harmony of man with nature is expressed as the main theme. In particular, in "Time is a river" Mia Landan, the protagonist of the work, portrays the difficult lifestyle of Charleston, medical worries, ubiquitous bills, the smell of hospitals, the noise of cars, the oppression of people, the betrayal and the heart of the river, away from the wildlife of the mountain and the river. through it, he manages to skillfully convey to the reader the miraculous and healing effect of nature on man:

*She heard the melody of water over rocks and felt the movement of the river swirl around her legs, nudging her in its current. Lifting her gaze, she watched how the river captured the light and held it, shimmering on the surface. The colors of the river changed depending on the water's depth and movement. In the deep pockets the still, shadowed water was the color of green tea. The shallow water rushing over pebbles with noisy splashes sparkled in the sunlight like shards of crystal. Mia felt the colors of the river seep into her skin to race in her veins.* [6,58]

In this passage, Mia feels the movement of the river around her feet, pulling her into its current, and observes how the river reflects the light and shimmers on the surface, the color of the river changes according to the depth and movement of the water, the shallow water flowing over the rocks with noisy splashes, sparkling like crystal fragments in the sunlight. At the time, Mia is described as feeling the colors of the river seep into her veins and skin. In the eco-fiction novel "The Summer of Lost and Found", M.A.Monroe describes the desolation of busy streets, public recreation and eating places at that time in order to give the atmosphere during the pandemic:

*"The long-awaited warm weather returned. Despite the sunshine, however, the pandemic worries and fears hovered over the lowcountry, as they did the world. It was strange not to participate in Easter church services, neighborhood egg hunts, or spring breaks. April was the beginning of the peak wedding season, and Charleston and its surrounding plantations and beaches were the top wedding destinations in the county. Yet this year the spring weddings were canceled, shops were closed, restaurants were shuttered, and few people ventured from their homes. [5,32] Or the following passage from M.A. Monroe's novel "Sweetgrass" serves to emphasize the fact that wild animals are left homeless due to the construction of new structures in the urbanizing desert area: The lizards, snakes and few birds of prey that survived in this area were compelled to fight fiercely for the scarce bits of habitat. [7,155] The analysis of the setting in a work plays an important role because, when done correctly, it enhances the story line, characters, themes, and even the mood of the novel.*

In all works of the writer calling for the preservation of nature, including the heptology included in the "Beach House Series": ("Beach House"(1), Beach House Memories(2), "Swimming Lessons"(3), "Beach House for Rent"( 4), Beach House Reunion(5), "An Ocean Boulevard"(6), "The Summer of Lost and Found(7)" and "The Butterfly's Daughter", "Time is a River", "Sweetgrass" and "Skyward", we can observe that the names of environmental organizations help to create an environmental culture during the reading of the work. In addition, each of Monroe's During the writing of the work, it was studied that she spent a long time in these organizations and became closely acquainted with their activities and contribution to nature. Since many of the author's works are eco-fictional, she uses metaphors, metonymy, epithets, similes, exaggeration, periphrasis, compound phrases, and a wide range of phonetic methodological tools to express natural scenes, environmental images, and similarities between man and nature were used in an artistic and figurative way.[12,386]

### Conclusion

The setting is generally a physical location that shapes a story's mood, its emotional aura and quality. Real or imaginary, concrete or symbolic setting is the dramatic backdrop for a story. In the in the eco-fiction novels "Time is a River", "Sweetgrass", "The Summer of Lost and Found" by American writer M.A.Monroe the setting reveals prevailing atmosphere or mood of the story, shows internal and external conflicts, highlights potential contrasts between characters or ideas. In addition, the setting aims at determining the fate of the protagonist, reflecting character and often embodying the theme. Setting gives context to the characters' [actions](#) in a story line. It can also create the mood (how the reader or viewer feels). It's easier to understand why the characters in the story are doing what they're doing when we know where they are. The time of day, time of year, and ages of the characters will also affect how they act and what they say.

All forms of literature will have some form of setting; even backdrop settings have an age range of the characters, which is part of time, and a location, either indoors or out, for example. Without a setting, readers and viewers cannot follow a story plot. M.A.Monroe's analysis of artistic space and time plays an important role in the work because it enhances the storyline, characters, themes, and even the mood of the novel. Since the works of Mary Alice Monroe are of an environmental character, the author's works show that real places, such as an island, a beach, a mountain, a fertile plantation, are embodied as a place of wildlife.

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