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CONTEMPORARY ECO-FICTION AND THE ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN WRITER MARY ALICE MONROE'S NOVELS

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Annotation

The article reviews a discussion of exactly what ecofiction is. It debates ever evolving issue according to many valid and varied perspectives. Contemporary ecofiction is incredibly complex and varied. The article aims to categorize contemporary eco-fiction into sub-genres. Furthermore, the study attempts a detailed study of the principles of the eco-fiction genre in the works of American writer M.A.Monroe's fiction.

Key words.

eco-fiction, spiritual, philosophical, animals, eco-feminism, characters, setting, eco-motives.

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1970s a veritable fusillade of new fiction emanating from the environmental movement exploded onto the American literary scene. As with the new feminist fiction, these books weren't mere escapism, even though many were action-packed and entertaining. As critics joined the ranks of readers, a new term emerged: **ecofiction**. A look back at the literature reveals that ecologically oriented fiction had existed over a century previously, and that it can be considered an important precursor to contemporary ecofiction.¹⁷⁸ This research work is one of the first scientific studies devoted to the study of the characteristics of contemporary eco-fiction and its principles in the novels of the American writer Mary Alice Monroe. Its relevance serves to introduce the genre to Uzbek-speaking and other worldwide readers and expand the scope of research in this field.

Although most any text can be analyzed ecocritically, some are more inherently ecological than others, including many works of contemporary fiction. Fiction that deals with environmental issues or the relation between humanity and

¹⁷⁸ Jim Dwyer " Where the Wild Books Are: A Field Guide to Eco-Fiction" (2010) p:24

the physical environment, that contrasts traditional and industrial cosmologies, or in which nature or the land has a prominent role is sometimes called ecofiction. The earliest use of “ecofiction” I have encountered is as the title of a seminal 1971 anthology containing both science fiction and mainstream stories. Perhaps because of ecocriticism’s relative infancy, there is ecocriticism and ecofiction not even consensus on spelling. It is usually spelled as one word, but sometimes hyphenated or split into two words: “eco-fiction” and “eco fiction.” The terms “environmental fiction,” “green fiction,” and “nature-oriented fiction” are sometimes used interchangeably with “ecofiction,” but might better be considered as categories of ecofiction.

Ecofiction is a composite subgenre made up of many styles, primarily modernism, postmodernism, realism, and magic realism, and can be found in many genres, primarily mainstream, westerns, mystery, romance, and speculative fiction. Ecofiction has deep literary roots and a rich and growing canopy of branches. Extending this arboreal analogy, one might consider this book to be a sort of silvicultural analysis and survey of fiction. In the literary old-growth mixed forest, we find that there are many different species (genres and subgenres) that have coevolved and are interdependent. It is also not uncommon for ecologically oriented authors to write in many different forms: poetry, fiction, literary or philosophical essays, environmental activism, and natural history. **Edward Abbey, Mary Austin, Jim Harrison, Barbara Kingsolver, Rick Bass, and Leslie Marmon Silko** are good examples of nature-oriented authors who have mastered many forms.

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.E. Monroe's books on environmental topics make him known as a bestselling novelist. As a result of Monroe’s family's move to the Isle of Palms, a major event occurred in the writer'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.A. Monroe's “*Beach House Series*” and the novels “*Time is a River*”, “*Sweetgrass*”, “*The Butterfly’s Daughter*”, “*Skyward*”, although the author describes this theme as a family that we experience in everyday life, it was analyzed that it was able to illuminate in communion with the complex but sacred feelings related to the environment.

METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The notion of an eco-fiction and its principles are studied in many prominent books and manuals related to the theory of literature such as in Patrick D. Murphy's *Further Afield in the Study of Nature-Oriented Literature*. (2000), Jim Dwyer's "This Way to Sustainability Conference", Mary Woodbury's "Dragonfly Eco-fiction Database"(2014), Mike Vasey's "Bioregional Studies" Correspondence with Jim Dwyer. (1996), R.Nesh's "Dikaya priroda i amerikanskiy razum"(Wildlife and American Mind) (2004), John Stadler's "Eco-fiction"(1978), Carolyn Merchant's "In Radical ecology: the search for a livable world" (1992), Charlene Spretnak's "Ecofeminism: Our Roots and Flowering. *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Feminism*, edited by Irene Diamond and Gloria Ornstein (1990). The theme of eco-feminism was also specially studied in the works of Russian literary scientists such as E.R. Martynova, E.S. Burmistrova and S.V. Grechishkina.

Research methods. The method employed in this research is descriptive, semantic-interpretation and stylistic analysis which aimed at identifying principles of eco-fiction genre.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

M.E. Monroe was able to skillfully interpret global ecological ideas and the fact that nature protection is a topical issue through her many works. As a result of this research, it is necessary to highlight several unique artistic elements of the author's works related to the eco-fiction genre:

- Eco-epigraphs
- Aphorisms
- Scientific facts
- Organization names
- Personal diary
- Pictures
- Environmental calls (point of view, sound)

1. We can find meaningful words of H.D. Thoreau, a naturalistic writer, about nature in Monroe's novel "Time is a River". One of the chapters in this work of the writer, who is used to starting the chapters of his works mainly with **epigraphs** and scientific facts, begins with the following thoughts of Thoreau:

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to face only the essential facts of life and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived" .In this passage, it is mentioned that it is possible to learn what the meaning of life should be while living in the mountains, and then it is necessary not to regret that it was not enough to live.

In another chapter of the work, there is another wise word: "*Time is the substance from which I am made. Time is a river which carries me along. But I am the river.*" The above words of J.L. Borges can be clearly understood through the proverb "Time erodes a mountain, water gnaws a rock." Time, like a river, flows only forward. It cannot be stopped or reversed.

2. In all the eco-fiction works of M.A. Monroe, any animal or animal takes part, of course, **scientific facts** are given at the beginning about the way of life, species and characteristics of that representative of nature, as well as, if we talk about a place, interesting specific information about the landscape, flora and fauna of this place.

*Hatchlings are two inches long when they emerge from the nest. Adults weigh in at 250-400 pounds and the shell length can measure more than three feet in length. It takes 20-30 years for them to mature and reproduce but no one knows for certain how long they live. It could be as long as 100 years.*¹⁷⁹

Providing such information serves to ensure the scientific and genre complexity of the work. There is no doubt that the balance of both scientific and literary texts in one work will help the reader to improve his ecological and geographical knowledge and spirituality.

3. The presence of **the names of organizations** involved in environmental protection in all works of the writer calling for the preservation of nature helps to form ecological culture while reading the work. In addition, during the writing of each work, Monroe spent a long time in these organizations and became familiar with their activities and contribution to nature. Monroe is still active as a conservationist. Among other things, Monroe serves on the South Carolina Aquarium Board and is a member of The Leatherback Trust, a non-profit sea turtle conservation organization. He is especially proud of his 20 years as an official volunteer with the Island Turtle Team, the group that first sparked his love of sea turtles and is the inspiration for his Beach House series saga. The names of the following environmental organizations can be found in Monroe's environmental works:

Island Turtle Team, South Carolina Aquarium, Sea Turtle Hospital, South Carolina Center for Birds of Prey, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, La Cruz Habitat Protection, the Coastal Conservation League, The National Trust for Historic Preservation, Friends of Coastal South Carolina, Ducks Unlimited, Surfrider International, Charleston Waterkeeper and etc.

¹⁷⁹ Monroe M.A. *An Ocean Boulevard*.—New York: Gallery books, 2020.—p.152

In the prefaces to “Beach House”, “Swimming Lessons”, “Sweetgrass”, and “Skyward”, M..A.Monroe expresses his gratitude to organizations and passionate workers who are willing to teach people about the preservation of nature and its unique secrets. At the end of the works, he gives personal appeals to the readers urging them to contribute to the protection of ecology, environment and wild nature. Along with being influenced by the textile events during the work, giving the names of such real environmental organizations encourages the characters in the work to feel as if they are standing next to us.

CONCLUSION

It is the need of the hour for a mature person of the new century to be able to show the elements of ecological culture. Ecological culture is a high indicator of practical activity aimed at acquiring a deep knowledge of the environment, a sense of nature protection, caring for plants and animals, rational use of natural resources, concern for their reproduction. A person who can reflect these qualities can be called the owner of ecological culture.

In Monroe's novel "Skyward", the character of Roy Simmons, who is far from ecological culture, always hunts birds of prey to bring food to his family. At a time when eagles, hawks, falcons and other game birds are included in the Red Book, this hero's act is a sign of neglect of nature. His son, Brady, takes responsibility for his father's deed and is sent to a care center for injured and distressed birds of prey as moral punishment. During the play, while serving his sentence at the bird treatment center, Brady has to take care of an eagle shot by his father, and the love of the staff causes Brady to take a positive turn and increase his environmental culture. If we pay attention to the address at the end of the book, we are once again convinced that Monroe is not only an artist, but also an environmental conservationist:

*“How many of us have looked into a brilliant sky and felt our emotions stir at the sight of a hawk, falcon or eagle riding a thermal? Yet few of us know much about them.....Human interference through loss of habitat, toxins and trauma is by far the greatest cause of their death.”*¹⁸⁰ The author calls the reader to environmental awareness so that all birds of prey can live safely, like the image of birds in need of care mentioned in the work.

In the current era of globalization, the problem of ecology has become the most urgent for the whole world - scientific and technical progress, although it changes human life for the better, does not pass without harmful consequences for nature and does not affect human health. Such problems are reflected in the

¹⁸⁰ Monroe M.A. Skyward. —Canada: Mira Books, 2003.—p.317

contemporary literature of the United States, which can be seen in the environmental features of Mary Alice Monroe's works.

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