

Ecofeminist Connotations in Alice Munro's *The Beggar Maid: Stories of Flo and Rose*

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دلالات النسوية البيئية في مجموعة أليس مونرو القصصية «الخدّمة المُتسوّلة: قصص فلو و روز»

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Abstract

The paper explores the ecofeminist concept in Alice Munro's *The Beggar Maid: Stories of Flo and Rose*, with a special concentration on the character of Rose and her life in the socially stratified and patriarchal society. The paper explores the gender inequality, marginalization of classes, and environmental situation of the intersection of the narrative. The study uses a qualitative- analytical approach to assess the narrative anthology. Based on the results, social structures, patriarchal expectations and environment that surround Rose as a person, affect her life. Munro portrays the description of domestic spaces, social setting, and natural environment to argue that the experiences of women are not alienated by the bigger structures of domination and exclusion. The research adopts the ecofeminist approach to show that, in *The Beggar Maid*, women, the social hierarchy problems, and symbolical position of environment are closely connected. In the end, the paper identifies to illustrate how the heroine manages to illustrate the complete the complex interaction of gender, power, and environment, which can be of interest to the modern literary research field because of the feminist and ecological problems presented in the novella.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Female Identity, Resistance, Gender, Environment.

المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة مفهوم النسوية البيئية في المجموعة القصصية «الخدّمة المُتسوّلة: حكايات فلو وروز» للكاتبة أليس مونرو، مع التركيز بصورة خاصة على شخصية روز وحياتها داخل مجتمع يتسم بالتراتبية الطبقية والبنية الأبوية. تبحث الدراسة في قضايا عدم المساواة بين الجنسين، والتهميش الطبقي، وعلاقة الإنسان بالبيئة كما تتجلى في قصة مونرو حيث تعتمد الدراسة على النظرية الإيكوفيمنزمية لتحليل القصص المختارة من خلال التحليل النصي النوعي والقراءة المتأنيّة للنصوص. وتُظهر نتائج التحليل أن البنى الاجتماعية والتوقعات الأبوية والبيئة المحيطة بروز تؤثر تأثيرًا كبيرًا في تشكيل تجربتها الحياتية. كما توظف مونرو وصف الفضاءات المنزلية، والبيئة الاجتماعية، والعالم الطبيعي لإبراز أن تجارب النساء لا تنفصل عن البنى الأوسع للهيمنة والإقصاء. ومن خلال منظور النسوية البيئية يتضح أن قضايا النساء، والتسلسل الطبقي في المجتمع، والمكانة الرمزية للطبيعة مترابطة ارتباطًا وثيقًا في أعمال مونرو. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن المجموعة القصصية «الخدّمة المُتسوّلة» تكشف عن

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التفاعل المعقد بين النوع الاجتماعي والسلطة والبيئة، وهو ما يمنحها أهمية خاصة في سياق الدراسات الأدبية المعاصرة التي تهتم بالقضايا النسوية والبيئية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النسوية البيئية، الهوية النسوية، المقاومة، الجنس، البيئة.

Introduction

Literature has been a very potent source in reflecting social realities and exploring the human experience and all its possibilities. This trend has been on the rise and has attracted a significant scholarly consideration in the contemporary study of literature with focus being placed on writings that depict the lives of oppressed communities and individuals especially women. Narrative representation is one of the ways through which literature tends to mirror the cultural, social and economic systems that form the lives of human beings. Several modern authors have thus concentrated on gender inequality, identity construction, and the social order which depicts subtle representations of how women live in patriarchal societies.

Alice Munro is one of the most successful modern short story authors. In 2013, she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, with the Nobel Committee saying she was the master of the modern short story. Her fiction is concentrated upon the experiences of women and especially on their emotional, social, and psychological challenges in daily life. In many of her stories, Munro depicts the narratives of women who have to bargain over identity, social class, gender norms, and individual freedom in a normal social context (Nobel Prize 2013).

It is necessary to place the work of Alice Munro in the context of her literary career and her theme issues before exploring the ecofeminist issues in the character of Rose. Munro is mostly recognized as short story writer and has made a lot of collections during the many decades. Her publications are *Who Do You Think You Are?* (1978), *The Moons of Jupiter* (1982), *Runaway* (2004), *The View from Castle Rock* (2006) and *Too Much Happiness* (2009), and her subsequent collection, *Dear Life*, was published in 2012. The work *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* (2001) also inspired the film *Away from Her* (2006) later, directed by Sarah Polley (Ibid). Even though Wheelock (2000) points out that Munro fiction is frequently addressed in the context of such aspects as gender, memory and social identity, critics began to note that her stories also contain valuable information about the relationship of man and the natural world (pp. 73-80).

Though there is no direct environmental crisis in the works of Munro, the description of nature and the way the characters perceive it are represented in great detail, making the aspects of nature's description and The character's reaction to it central to the locations of the ecocritical analysis. Specifically, the idea of the complicated relationship between human and nature discussed by Munro accentuate the role of the natural world in personal development, socialization, and cultural identity (Zhao 33). Such an expanded ecocritical approach allows seeing in the narrative world of her Rose's stories that Munro is especially concerned with the environment and social context. *The Beggar Maid* (1978) is composed of interconnected tales, which are about the life of the protagonist named Rose and her experiences throughout her life, since childhood up to adulthood. Munro represents the issues of poverty, social mobility and emotional maturation with the help of the character of Rose. The story describes how Rose tries to break free of the context she is subjected to by her social status and to face the constraints of the society she inhabits. Showing the complications of the relations between Rose, her personal desires, and her social struggles, Munro offers a deep insight into the problem of identity and femininity.

To have a clearer approach towards the way in which Munro develops these themes of class, identity, and female struggle it is essential to briefly describe the narrative's development of the collection. The novel starts with the life of Rose in the small town of Hanratty in Canada where she spends her childhood in poverty living with her step mother, Flo, following the death of her mother. Rose is conscious of the social stigma of her lower-class roots, particularly when she is in school and meets other students whose families are more privileged. Then, she becomes determined to transform her life and eventually she quits Hanratty to attend university through a scholarship.

It is during this time that Rose gets hooked up with Patrick Blatchford, a rich and elegant young man who has a privileged background and ends up marrying him. Their marriage, however, reveals the acute difference between them in terms of classes, values and expectations. Gradually, Rose understands that even in the world of socialization, she represents an outsider despite her efforts to fit in the social life of Patrick. Their relationship ends up breaking and

Rose even separates with Patrick and moves on to live her own independent life. The opening story ends with Rose looking back at her experiences as well as relationships and determining that she is still grappling with her origin and how she feels about her identity as it changes.

Statement of the Problem

This study examines how ecofeminist concerns are represented in Munro's novel *The Beggar Maid: The Stories of Flo and Rose*. Although there has been much research on how Munro addresses gender and social class, there has been little interest in women's relationship to social ranking and environmental symbols in the text. This research fills this gap by analyzing Rose's experiences from an ecofeminist perspective.

Research Objectives

This paper aims to study the environmental feminist dimensions in *The Beggar Maid: The Stories of Flo and Rose*. It attempts to explore the links between class gender and environmental representation in the narrative and examine how these elements contribute to the formation of female identity and resistance.

Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How does Munro perceive the tie between females, their community, and their social environment in the novel?
2. In what ways do gender discrimination and class exclusion affect Rose's identity?
3. How can ecofeminist theory contribute to deepening our understanding of how narrative addresses power and resistance?

Significance of the Study

This study serves the ecofeminist literary criticism by offering a new vision of Munro's works. It highlights the connections between issues of gender, class and environment in *The Beggar Maid: Stories of Flo and Rose*. It also enhances the current dialogue on feminist and environmental issues in modern literature.

Theoretical Framework

The study uses the ecofeminism in probing the ecofeminist theory, which examining the interconnected relationship between gender suppression, social hierarchy, and environmental issues. Ecofeminism discusses that the domination of women and the exploitation of nature originates from the same patriarchal institutions that organize society. In this context, literature is perceived as a space in which these power relations are represented and critically examined. Accordingly, Munro's *The Beggar Maid: The Stories of Flo and Rose* is analyzed through the character Rose, whose experiences reflect the intersection of gender inequality, class marginalization, and symbolic representations of the environment. This theoretical approach allows for a deeper understanding of how Munro depicts identity, resistance, and social constraints within a patriarchal and classist society.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research method to examine the environmental feminist connotations in *The Beggar Maid: The Stories of Flo and Rose*. It adopts an in-depth textual analysis to examine the link between gender, class, and environmental representation within the narrative. The theoretical framework of ecofeminism is used to interpret the selected text and reveal the underlying structures of power and resistance.

Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a significant theoretical framework that analyzes how women and nature are intertwined in oppressive patriarchal systems in oppressive systems of patriarchy. Based on the same ideological framework used to oppress women, ecofeminist theorists state that the exploitation of the natural environment is justified by the same ideological framework used to oppress women. In this respect, there are no independent phenomena of gender inequality or ecological degradation, but they are linked manifestations of larger systems of domination. According to Yildiz Merve Ozturk, ecofeminism is an interdisciplinary critical approach that argues that a relationship exists

between environmental and feminine problems due to objectification of women and nature in the male dominated society.

According to this theory, the system establishes a hierarchical and dualistic male-dominated order, which establishes inequality within the society and offers superiority to men (706). Ecofeminist theorists hence focus on the necessity to destroy the cultural and ideological premises that undermine women and nature and instead promote the balanced ecological view where people acknowledge the fact of their interconnection with nature.

Probably, one of the most important achievements in the ecofeminist theory is the work by Val Plumwood whose interpretation demonstrates the intertwining of gender hierarchy and environmental domination. Plumwood believes that the ecological crisis cannot be fully explained without arriving at the philosophical traditions that create hierarchical dualisms between human beings and nature. She further argues that in Western culture, dualism has traditionally been used to define the relationship between human beings and nature. According to her, the Western concept of human/nature relations, as she says, possesses the features of dualism and demands the anti-dualism solutions (41). In this paradigm dualism is in play by the exclusion and marginalization of what Plumwood refers to as the subordinated other (Ibid). Such a hierarchical thinking creates oppositional categories like culture versus nature, male versus female and rationality versus emotion where the first term is privileged and the latter is put down.

Ecofeminist literary criticism is also an emerging subfield of environmental humanities. In her work, especially in discussing how women, animals, and nature are all interconnected, Greta Gaard points to how the ecofeminism reveals the systems of domination which are similar. In addition, the ecofeminist analysis shows how the narratives of a culture usually justify the exploitation of women as well as the natural world, in addition to providing opportunities to build better ethical contacts between humans and nature (1).

Similarly, the introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader by Cheryl Glotfelty* is an influential work as it highlights the larger context of the theory of ecocriticism as the relationship between literature and the physical world. According to Glotfelty, ecocriticism is the study of the interaction between the physical environment and literature (xviii), which implies the concept of studying the way in which ecological concerns and environmental relationships are reflected in literary texts.

Karen J. Warren's *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Approach to the Question of What it is and Why it Matters* is another major contribution to ecofeminist theory. According to Warren, hierarchical dualisms are based on man/woman, culture/nature, reason/emotion, and so on. are also the foundations of the reliance on patriarchal society to legitimize systems of domination. Not only do these conceptual structures support gender inequality but also legalize the exploitation of the environment. These interconnected forms of domination are critical to comprehending so that ethical systems might be created that not only oppose gender, but also ecological degradation (1-4).

Ecofeminism also relies on the feminist views which lay stress on the role of women in bringing and maintaining life. Judith Lorber points out that ecofeminism uses the thinking of maternal and radical feminists of exploiting the body of women in protecting the environment and activism. According to Lorber, ecofeminism is a movement that uses the method of thinking like a mother and radical feminism concepts of exploitation of the female body to environmental protection and anti-killing of animals to obtain fur and meat (91). She also shares that feminist appreciation of women as nurturing has led to the rise of feminist ethics, feminist spirituality, and women- related health and environmental responsibility movements.

The ecofeminist views have also been implemented in other cultural settings. The ecofeminist scholars in Africa are keen on highlighting the interrelationship between environmental degradation, gender inequality, and racial oppression. It can be said that female-male, and racial conflicts are echoed and interlock in the history of This point of view underscores this dynamic of ecological devastation, colonial pasts, and social inequalities as connected systems of control that cause human society and environmental conditions.

Similarly, ecofeminist thought gained significant influence in South Asia through Vandana Shiva's contributions. In *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India*, Shiva argues that the traditional ecological knowledge of Indian communities has been linked to the role of women in maintaining life and safeguarding the natural resources. She describes that the Indian culture traditionally interpreted human existence as one that was tightly associated with the rivers, forests, and other natural factors, but the industrialization of the modern world has

interrupted this process. Shiva also argues that technological and economic development is also a project of colonialism and patriarchy that silences nature and the knowledge system of women. The term 'Prakriti' is a part of Indian philosophical traditions denoting the living process of the material nature and linked to the feminine principle that is a sustaining force of life, as cited in (Kramarae & Spender 250). Therefore, these ecofeminist views offer a comprehensive theoretical framework for analyzing the intricate connection between gender, power, and environmental representation in works of literature.

Other ecofeminist scholars focus much more on how women and the natural world are closely connected, but vary in the manner in which they explain how the connection exists. To some of these theorists, such a relationship is considered to be biologically based at the traditional nature/culture divide. An example is Ariel Salleh, who associates the experiences of women and material and ecological processes associated with body, reproduction, and care. In the same manner, Starhawk indicates that women are spiritually and ecologically connected to the natural world. The other ecofeminists however, have their take on the relationship that is not determined as biologically but rather as a broad philosophical-cultural and ideological construction being based on the certain social system. Although they vary slightly these differences notwithstanding, ecofeminist scholars have concurred that understanding the relationship between women and nature is challenging due to the silencing of women in traditional environmental scholarship and the exposing of the historical structures that have subdued women and nature. Ecofeminist approach introduces a critical tool for analyzing the social and class marginalization which Rose has suffered from in the story.

Women Marginality vs. Patriarchal Structures

In *The Beggar Maid*, Alice Munro presents Rose as a female subject positioned at the intersection of gender and class marginalization. From childhood, Rose becomes aware that her identity is shaped not only by poverty but also by the patriarchal social structures that assign value according to wealth, femininity, and social conformity. Her early awareness of class difference emerges through her recognition that she belongs to "the working-class part of town" (Munro 111), a statement that reflects her growing consciousness of social stratification and her place within it.

The concept of 'ecofeminism' can explain the marginalization of Rose as it focuses on how domination systems operate against women, marginalized communities and nature in general. Ecofeminism brings to light the interconnectedness of the oppression that women endure; and, one cannot separate women's oppression from other forms of oppression such as class oppression, colonial oppression, or poverty. This framework can be useful to gain insight into the social position of Rose and the effect of this on her experience of gendered exclusion. Throughout the collection, Rose is required to consume the negative social designation of poverty, to internalize such a label. Rose was growing up to be a booby on the subject of poverty, and would continue to be for many years (66).

The statement reveals Rose's sense of self in her relationship to others and herself as an economically marginalized person is a psychologically marginalized person. The novel also makes explicit the patriarchal attitudes towards poor women in one of the more extreme of the novel's statements: "poverty in girls is not attractive unless combined with sweet sluttishness, stupidity" (78). This quotation is evidence of the double oppression of the lower-class women, who are judged economically, but based on the male conception of femininity. These are also a set of patriarchal relations that Rose exemplifies in her relationship with Patrick Blatchford. The representation of Patrick as a symbol of institutional privilege goes against Rose as a symbol of marginality. In attempting to become a part of her world, Rose is compelled to challenge the illusion of a socially fabricated hierarchy. Looking at such buildings, she says, "What fraud, thought Rose, what fraud for everybody? We come from unions which don't have in them anything like what we think we deserve" (154).

Rose's awareness of class and patriarchy also reveals from an ecofeminist point of view the binary opposition that is present in structures of domination such as privileged and marginalized, male and female, nature and culture. Her rejection of social assimilation is a rejection of imposed identities and hierarchical social structures that attempt to define her as a classed and gender subject.

Rose tries to leave behind her past and Patrick but it becomes clear that she cannot. She is symbolically returned to her background, poverty, Hanratty, Flo, Billy Pope- Patrick's hated roots. In this moment, identity is seen as still being heavily influenced by social and environmental factors and it cannot be suppressed or redefined by the

power of patriarchy. This is what Rose represents in this way: the ecofeminist challenge to domination - how a marginalized identity can survive the intersectionality of multiple forms of domination: patriarchy, class, culture. Munro shows through Rose's experiences that the exclusion of women is not just a personal experience, but is created by the interlocking economic, social and cultural systems that are in constant production of women's identity.

Ecofeminist Implications in Rose's Character

The themes of ecofeminism are seen in Rose's character in *The Beggar Maid*, which explores interconnections between various forms of oppression: gender, class, social exclusion and resistance to hierarchies. Alice Munro, instead of seeing Rose as just a woman from a disadvantaged social class, portrays her as a female subject who is always negotiating her identity with the structures of power that seek to identify her based on class, gender, and social origin. Rose appears as a character who questions the interconnected systems that determine "how one treats women, people of color, and the underclass on the one hand, and how one treats the nonhuman natural environment on the other" (Warren 1), from an ecofeminist point of view. Rose's perspective as a poor female in a patriarchal society places her in just this field of interlaced oppression. Rose has been socially different since her childhood. Her sense of belonging to "the working-class part of town" (Munro 111) is not just geographical, but it also marks the start of her realization that she has a socially constructed identity, based on class boundaries and cultural exclusion. This awareness slowly gets internalized and therefore affects her perception of herself with regard to others. When Munro writes, "Rose was becoming a prig about poverty, and would remain one for a long time" (66), she clearly demonstrates this psychological formation. This poverty is not just an economic state but rather a way that Rose sees and understands herself. The process of identity formation is explained within the framework of ecofeminist theory. In systems of domination, she says, the other is defined as other human 'Other', groups whose identities are constructed by exclusion and subordination (Warren 3). Rose obviously in this space of the collection, her gender and class consistently marginalize her from socially privileged spaces. Likewise, Val Plumwood describes the fact that when people are described as 'other', they are described as 'alien', 'different', or 'inferior' (41). Patriarchal society places gendered expectations on women from disadvantaged backgrounds, which Munro also reveals. This is clearly stated in the blunt comment: "poverty in girls is not attractive unless blended with sweet sluttishness, stupidity" (Munro 78). This statement unveils the very way in which women's identities are appraised, not only economically, but also on the basis of the male-dominated cultural expectations. Rose's consciousness of these attitudes helps to fuel her burgeoning opposition to outside notions of femininity. She does not take these social claims at face value, but instead learns to critically engage with the systems that seek to control or regulate her identity. This resistance is more evident in both Rose's interactions with Patrick Blatchford who embodies wealth, institutional authority, and patriarchal power, and her interactions with the others. The world of Patrick is the "logic of domination" (Warren 46), meaning "a structure of argumentation that leads to the justification of subordination" (Ibid).

But when Rose confronts Patrick, she has to face this logic head-on because she learns that many social relationships are negotiated through performance, hierarchy and inherited privilege. Her awakening becomes clear when she comments: "What fraud, thought Rose, what fraud for everybody. We come from unions which don't have in them anything like what we think we deserve" (Munro 154).

Rose is also an ecofeminist in that she possesses a strong memory, sense of place, and sense of personal history. Her identity is always connected to the working class world of her childhood, Hanratty. "Rose knew quite a few people who would have liked to have been poor and not poor, and she would queen it up on them, giving them all sorts of scandals and bits of squalor from her childhood," says Munro (25). Rose does not forget her marginalized backgrounds but gradually recovers them as part of her identity. Her recollections of the "little dark or painted shacks" turn from shameful to places of emotional truth and self-recognition.

This is an important ecofeminist principle- identity and environment are connected. It seems that Rose is emotionally connected to Hanratty, meaning that identity is inseparable from the physical and social contexts in which it is created. Her thoughts about place, relationships and self-understanding continue to be tied to place, and her self-reflection is in opposition to patriarchy's notion of social mobility, which would require her to abandon her roots.

Rose's struggle reaches a turning point when she attempts to end her engagement with Patrick. It is a perfectly innocuous phrase that quickly conjures up "poverty, Hanratty, Flo, Billy Pope- Rose's roots which Patrick hates"

(Munro 146). The scene is an example of the fact that Rose's identity cannot be completely absorbed into the privilege of the patriarchy, because her sense of self is rooted in her social and environmental identities.

Rose's story ends with Rosemary Radford Ruether's observations that "women must see that there can be no liberation for them... within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination" (Ruether 204). By rejecting the privileges and freedoms available to Patrick in his world forfeit to self-erasure, Rose opts for authenticity, memory and self-recognition. In her character, Munro gives us an ecofeminist vision of resistance, one that is defined not by conformity to systems of patriarchy, but rather by the constant refusal to be defined by such systems.

This more ecofeminist reading is also consistent with the original vision of Francoise d'Eaubonne who was the first person to coin the term ecofeminism in *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974). D'Eaubonne notes that the oppression of women cannot be isolated in relation to the exploitation of other disadvantaged groups, such as the poor, racial minorities, and those who are not part of the initial systems of social power since all dominance emerges out of the same patriarchal logic of dominance, hierarchy, and exploitation. Her argument is that social injustice and environmental degradation are not distinct conditions but an interrelated manifestation of a single structure of power. Munro demonstrates how Rose's constant resistance to the constructions she has been subjected to shows the very intertwined conflict between the periphery and the rest of social and environmental oppression.

Nature as a Space of Resistance and Identity

Nature in *The Beggar Maid* is not just a setting, but a physical environment in which Rose deals with memory, identity, and resistance. Ecofeminism sees the environment as an issue that intersects with women, questions the dichotomy of culture and nature, male and female, and center and margin. Instead, identity is created in the ongoing process of self and physical interaction. The emotional development of Rose throughout the collection is just as much a product of this interconnectedness of female subjectivity and an environmental experience.

Hanratty is inextricably linked to Rose's formative experiences, which are her earliest. Her self-awareness that she is part of "the working-class part of town" (Munro 111) is not just about class consciousness, but also about a geographical sense in which the geographical location is one of one's identities. Hanratty is not just a place; it is the environment in which Rose's social and emotional growth take place.

The memories of childhood illustrate Rose's love of place. "Rose knew a lot of people who wished they had been poor and not been," says Munro, "so she would queen it over them, offering various scandals and bits of squalor from her childhood" (25). Rose's sense of place is also evident in her interactions with Cora when they were children. "She would try to walk and act like Cora, repeating every word she could remember from Cora" (Munro 34). This moment is only a glimpse of Rose's early effort at building identity through social and environmental attachments. Her performance of Cora is not just a case of admiring her, but a wish to place herself in a familiar social context.

The relationship between memory and physical space is most clearly illustrated by the adult Rose's return to Hanratty emotionally and imaginatively. The relationship between memory and physical space is made most apparent by the adult Rose's emotional and imaginative return to Hanratty. She sees the frozen landscape of her kitchen window and she remembers her childhood and how it is always linked with Flo, and how memory, place and identity are never separated (Munro 24). The landscape here serves as an impetus to self-recognition, proving the ongoing influence of environmental memory in Rose's identity.

This relationship can be understood in light of the ecofeminist theory. Ecofeminism illuminates the way in which there are no hierarchical separations between the self and nature, and human oppression and environmental domination are interrelated, says Karen J. Warren (1). Ruether also notes that "the connection has sometimes been invoked to offer a partial validation of both women and nature, as, for example, in the romantic tradition" (193). In Munro's story, though, nature is not romanticized; instead, it is a place where Rose engages in social memory and remakes identity.

This connection comes to a head when Rose tries to leave Patrick's privileged world. The simple statement, "I'm going to the john" immediately conjures up 'poverty, Hanratty, Flo, Billy Pope- Rose's roots which Patrick despises' (Munro 146). Throughout her social shifts Rose's identity is brought back to the environment and social

settings of childhood. She is connected to the landscapes which formed her consciousness, and her roots will never be separated.

Nature is not mere backdrop for the story here, but a place of resistance and remembrance as well as formation of identity through Rose's relationship with Hanratty. In an ecofeminist perspective, Rose's bonding to place turns into a mechanism of rebellion towards the system of patriarchy and class which require forgetting one's origins for social inclusion.

Susan Griffin's ecofeminist approach further extends the relationship of futurity against female identity and resistance and the natural world. Griffin reconsiders nature as not a passive object but as a living companion of the experience of suffering, endurance, and survival, which women have had to endure. She writes, "This earth is my sister I love her daily grace, her silent daring, and how loved I am... how we admire this strength in each other, all that we have lost, all that we have suffered, all that we know: we are stunned by this beauty" (219).

The imagery Griffin creates is that women find strength in their understanding of their shared heritage of endurance with the natural world, in which both nature and women exist neither as victims of domination nor as sources of strength and renewal. This ecofeminist vision is quite in tune with the relationship of Rose with Hanratty in that her repeated visits to the same landscapes she knows as a child reflect not the feeling of nostalgia alone, but it is a process of regaining memory, strength and identity through her relationship to the place.

Conclusion

The study *The Beggar Maid: Stories of Flo and Rose* highlights important ideas about caring for the environment and treating women fairly. The story tells of Rose's suffering in the face of injustice due to her gender and social class, and how society ignores her. In an ecofeminist reading, it can be seen that Munro uses the structure of patriarchy and social hierarchy to pose questions on female identity and relate her personal memory to that of the physical space and nature. The devotion to Hanratty by Rose, or her opposition to being imposed social roles, as well as her constant seeking of any manifestation of selfhood, demonstrates that identity, place, and resistance are closely intertwined. Finally, Munro demonstrates that Rose is more than a mere figure of an individual character, it is a highly effective image of the way women are constantly bargaining with systems of domination, making *The Beggar Maid* a highly useful piece of text on which ecofeminist literary work can be built.

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