

MEN, WOMEN, AND NATURE IN
SARAH O JEWETT'S "A WHITE HERON"

A MASTER'S PROJECT
BY
TODSAPORN IT-NGAM

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Master of Arts degree in English
at Srinakharinwirot University
May 2008

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ผู้ชาย ผู้หญิง และธรรมชาติ ในเรื่องสั้น “อะ ไวท์ เฮรอน” ของซาร่า โอ จีเวิร์ด

บทคัดย่อ
ของ
ทศพร อึ้งงาม

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา
ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ
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งานวิจัยนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ของผู้ชาย ผู้หญิง และธรรมชาติ ในเรื่องสั้น “อะ ไวท์ เฮรอน” ของซาร่า โอ จีเว็ต โดยวิเคราะห์ผ่านแนวคิดสตรีนิยมสายนิเวศ (Ecofeminism) ผู้วิจัยพบว่าแนวความคิดสตรีนิยมสายนิเวศปรากฏอยู่ในเรื่องสั้นนี้อย่างชัดเจน และลึกซึ้ง ผลของการวิจัยพบว่าความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิงและผู้ชายปรากฏในตัวละครหญิง ได้แก่ ซิลเวียร์ และนางธิลลีย์ซึ่ง ถูกกดขี่โดยตัวละครชาย ที่เรียกว่าชายหนุ่ม (The young man) การกดขี่มีลักษณะ 2 แบบคือ ในฐานะคนใช้ในบ้าน และในฐานะแรงงานในระบบทุนนิยม ตัวละครชายมีสถานะเป็นนายจ้างที่หาประโยชน์จากงานและองค์ความรู้ของผู้หญิง ส่วนความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้ชายและธรรมชาติพบว่า ธรรมชาติถูกคุกคามโดยผู้ชายเช่นกัน สาเหตุเพราะตัวละครชายมองธรรมชาติเป็นเพียงทรัพยากรที่ถูกใช้ตามระบบทุนนิยม ส่วนความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิงและธรรมชาติพบว่า ตัวละครหญิงอยู่ใกล้ชิดกับธรรมชาติมากกว่าผู้ชาย ทั้งผู้หญิงและธรรมชาติสามารถเป็นมิตรที่ดีต่อกันได้ อย่างไรก็ตาม เนื่องจากทั้งคู่ถูกคุกคามโดยผู้ชาย ในที่สุด ผู้หญิงและธรรมชาติจึงร่วมมือเพื่อช่วยเหลือซึ่งกันและกัน ปลดปล่อยตัวเองจากการคุกคามของผู้ชายได้ ผลของการวิจัยจึงสามารถสรุปว่าเรื่องสั้น “อะ ไวท์ เฮรอน” ของซาร่า โอ จีเว็ต สามารถจัดเป็นงานเขียนที่แสดงให้เห็นถึงแนวคิดสตรีนิยมสายนิเวศได้

MEN, WOMEN, AND NATURE IN
SARAH O JEWETT'S "A WHITE HERON"

AN ABSTRACT
BY
TODSAPORN IT-NGAM

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Master of Arts degree in English
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The objective of this research was to study the relations among men, women, and nature in Sarah O Jewett's "A White Heron" by using the ecofeminist perspective. The researcher found that the idea of ecofeminism was clearly and profoundly demonstrated throughout the story. First, the relation between women and men was presented through both female characters – Sylvia and Mrs. Tilley, and the male character – called the young man. The female characters were dominated in 2 ways: as domestic workers and as industrial labourers. The male character, on the contrary, became an employer who exploited women's work and knowledge. Second, regarding the relation between men and nature, it was found that nature was dominated because men saw nature as a resource for capitalism. Last, dealing with the relation between women and nature, it was revealed that women were closer to nature than men. Women and nature were valuable companions. Further, because they were dominated by men, women and nature decided to help each other and were liberated from men's domination. This study concludes that Sarah O Jewett's "A White Heron" could be read as an ecofeminist text.

The Master's Project Advisor, Chair of the Master of Arts degree in English, and Oral Defense Committee have approved this Master's Project as partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts degree in English of Srinakharinwirot University.

Master's Project Advisor

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(Dr. Supaporn Yimwilai)

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(Dr. Prapaipan Aimchoo)

The Master's Project has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's of Arts degree in English of Srinakharinwirot University.

..... Dean of the Faculty of Humanities

(Associated Professor Chaleosri Pibulchol)

May, 2008

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Globalization creates an illusive relationship between women and nature. Many women have now become a part of an industrialized economic system. In other words, they have become a part of the system that heavily exploits natural resources. Consequently, our ecosystem seems to become worse day-by-day. The warming of the Earth is not the only environmental problem we find these days; air pollution, acid rain, and loss of species can be included in the long list of problems. All of the problems occur as a result of industrialization, which has rapidly exploited the amount of natural resources for two hundred years (Guterl and Underhill 48). However, in the structure of capitalism, women are extremely exploited in the same way as are natural resources. Furthermore, at the top of this complicated structure is male domination. Both women and nature, as a result, are the victims of this male-dominated society.

This relationship has been shown in many literary works with different perspectives. For example, Jennifer Micale, in “Strange New Worlds: Ecofeminism and Science Fiction”, studies Amy Thomson’s *The Color of Distance* (1999). She concludes that women have an important role in protecting natural resources and local people (qtd. in Wannaporn 11). Alice Walker’s works during the 1980s, also, demonstrate the exploitative relationship between races, gender, and nature (Delveaux 1-3).

However, Willa Cather’s *My Antonia* (1918) seems to be most well-known in this scope. Jeffrey Myers is one of the researchers who studied this story. He links the problems of race to environment and claims that women should give respects to natural processes of the land. In Thailand, Wannaporn Petchdee also studied this story in 2003. She claims that the relationship between women and nature influences women’s identity

development and spiritual growth. It can be concluded from the studies discussed above that women will be empowered when they work in cooperation with nature.

In the 1880s, about a hundred years before the green movements and about three decades before *My Antonia* was written, Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909) produced many literary works, most of which were concerned with women and nature. She carefully sketched the scene of her hometown and townspeople's lives, especially females, in her works. Most of her protagonists have the responsibility to protect or rescue their region from intruders or any civilization. This is because of the fact that her peaceful town was changed rapidly from an agricultural base to an industrial base with the arrival of newcomers from Canada and Ireland. Her works were written before the green movement, but her concern about women and nature was embedded in all of them. Jewett's best known work is *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1869), which is a novella. Her best known short story is "A White Heron" (1886).

Jewett's "A White Heron" is remarkable because the story is simple, but it conveys the power of male domination and the duty of women to protect the land. Written in 1886, "A White Heron" is a story about Sylvia, a young girl protagonist, who moves from the 'city' to live with her grandmother in the rural 'farmland'. She feels this farmland is better than the city in terms of beautiful nature, friendly creatures, and her kind grandmother. However, her beautiful day is intruded upon by a villain – 'a young man with a gun (who is from the city)'. This man is hunting a white heron. He wants to stuff it as a part of his collection. He asks Sylvia if she can tell him where the bird is. Sylvia makes the decision not to tell him the secret of her farmland although he offers her some money. The story ends with the strength of Sylvia in protecting her nature from the male-intrusion. Her decision shows the notion that women and nature can help each other and can be liberated together from the male-dominated society.

Some feminist critics such as Anabel Rodda also agree with the notion similar to Sylvia's decision that women have a sense of nurturing and they can be good managers of natural resources. Ecological feminism, or ecofeminism, emerged in the 1970s. This movement leads many feminist researchers to study roles and relationships between women and nature in various fields, including literature. Also, this study employed the concept of ecofeminism to study the relation of men, women, and nature in Jewett's "A White Heron".

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze Sarah O Jewett's "A White Heron" by using the notion of ecofeminism in the following aspects:

1. The relationship between women and men in the story
2. The relationship between men and nature in the story
3. The relationship between women and nature in the story

Significance of Study

1. This study will help readers better understand Sarah O Jewett's "A White Heron" from an ecofeminist perspective.
2. This study will help readers have a responsibility for protecting nature shown in the literary work.
3. This study can be used as a guideline for further studies.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is to analyze Sarah O Jewett's "A White Heron" from an ecofeminist perspective.

Procedures of the Study

1. Related literature was surveyed as follows:
 - 1.1 Study the concept of ecofeminism
 - 1.2 Study research on ecofeminist literature
 - 1.3 Study Jewett's life and works
 - 1.4 Study the related works on Jewett's "A White Heron" and other works
2. Jewett's "A White Heron" was examined and analyzed by applying

ecofeminist concepts as follows:

- 2.1 The relationship between the female and male characters
 - 2.2 The relationship between the male character and nature
 - 2.3 The relationship between the female character and nature
3. The findings of the study were concluded
4. Topics for further studies were suggested

Definition of Terms

Ecofeminism refers to one of the feminist movements that brings together the ecological and feminist concerns. Ecofeminists believe that both women and nature are exploited by men. In this way, ecofeminists believe that women and nature should help each other. In this paper, ecofeminism refers to three kinds of the relationships:

1. The relationship between men and nature
2. The relationship between men and women
3. The relationship between women and nature

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter is an overview of the related literature including Sarah O Jewett's biography and her works. The background of ecofeminism is also reviewed alongside the related research on the short story of Jewett's "A White Heron".

SARAH O JEWETT'S BIOGRAPHY

Sarah O Jewett, according to *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, was born in 1849 into a middle-class family in South Berwick, Maine. At the time she was born, her town and region had already begun to change rapidly. By the end of the Civil War, textile mills and cannery largely replaced agriculture and shipbuilding, which were previously the economic bases of her community. Her townspeople, accordingly, became more heterogeneous which Jewett did not like. New French-Canadian and Irish immigrants moved to Berwick and caused her hometown to change.

At the age of 16, Jewett began writing seriously after she graduated from Berwick Academy. One of her first efforts was accepted in 1869 and published in the prestigious *Atlantic Monthly*. Her most enduring work is *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896). However, she was famous because of the publication of the collection *A White Heron* in 1886. This collection was claimed to have carefully 'sketched' the landscape, people, and dialect of the remembered life. As a result, she became one of the regional or domestic women writers.

Throughout her life, Jewett continuously produced both short and long stories, which were published in more than 90 issues of *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, *Scribner's Magazine*, and others. *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, one of her

best known stories, was also published in *Atlantic Monthly* before being reprinted as her own book. Other short stories were reprinted in the collection after they appeared in the monthly magazines.

However, “A White Heron” is one of her stories that were not printed in the monthly magazines. Jewett once mentioned that this story was not a very good magazine story, but she really liked this story and aimed to keep “A White Heron” for her own book with other short stories (qtd. in Heller 182). She was successful because “A White Heron” was included in *Tales of New England* (1890). Now, this short story has become Jewett’s most famous story.

Jewett’s last work was “The Tory Lover”, which was partially printed in *Atlantic Monthly* between November 1900 and June 1901. She had to give up writing after she incurred serious injuries in 1902 and died in 1909.

ECOFEMINISM

The first person who used the word ‘ecofeminist’ is Françoise d’Eaubonne in 1974. She used it to call upon women to lead an ecological revolution to save the planet (Merchant 184). Ecofeminists are referred to all women who bring together feminist and ecological concerns in both formal and informal movements and do not necessarily identify themselves explicitly (Mellor, *Feminism & Ecology* 4).

From the perspective of ecofeminism, liberal, cultural, and socialist feminists have all been concerned with improving the relationship between humans and nature, but contributed in different ways (Merchant 184). Cultural ecofeminists, for example, argue that a patriarchal system causes environmental problems. They also offer that ecofeminism could liberate both women and nature. Socialist ecofeminists, on the other hand, ground their analysis in capitalism and industrialism to reveal the domination of

women by men and the domination of nature by men (Merchant 184-185). In sum, ecofeminists have tried to profoundly explain the relationship between women and men, men and nature, and women and nature.

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MEN, WOMEN, AND NATURE

In the existing capitalist development, women and nature are both subordinated to male domination. They are, furthermore, seen as inherent in the market economy which uses them both as resources.

1. Women and Men

Women in capitalist society are dominated by men. Mary Mellor explains in “Ecofeminist Economics: Women, Work and the Environment” that, in the modern economy, although women have always worked, they are particularly exploited as low-wage laborers (8). They have lower pay and less job security than men. When women’s work is taken into the male-valued economic system, its pay rates and work conditions are poor. Therefore, women’s work often deals with nursing, catering, and cleaning.

Women have been engaged in domestic responsibilities and routine life (Mellor, *Feminism & Ecology* 8). That is because women’s work is limited by space. Due to women’s duties at home, they cannot move far from their responsibilities. In contrast, their work is unlimited by time. Their domestic work is routine and endless (8-9). That causes women’s limited perception of the world. As a result, they are viewed as commodities or resources in the economic system.

Men’s work, on the contrary, is unlimited by space since they can work far from home regardless of local availability. Men’s work also has a beginning and an end in each working day. This illustrates that it is limited by time. Lastly, men’s work is

rewarded by pay and prestige. These characteristics of men's work create a superior position for males that allows them to dominate women.

2. Men and Nature

Nature in the capitalist society is also dominated by men. Susan Prentice, a cultural ecofeminist, argues that what men do to the planet earth is bad (qtd. in Merchant 193). The earth is dominated by male-developed and male-controlled technology, science, and industry. Although those male-designed and produced technologies are seen as advancements of all human beings, ecofeminists argue that those technologies neglect the effects of nuclear radiation, pesticides, hazardous wastes, and household chemicals on the ecosystem (192).

The male-valued economy sees nature as a resource of the economic system and ignores ecological problems. According to Mellor, in "Ecofeminist Economics: Women, Work and the Environment", the male patriarchal economy is unconcerned with the loss of resources for the future generations, loss of habitat for other species, loss of biodiversity, loss of peace, quietness, and amenity – unless it can be sold (9). This indicates that capitalism has great impact on the male-valued economic system.

However, ecofeminists argue that nature is an active subject. It should not be seen as a passive object to be consumed and dominated neither by men nor by capitalism (Merchant 196). Moreover, the existing technologies of exploiting natural resources are over-consuming and unsustainable. Humans must develop sustainable relations with nature, which are the relations of women and nature.

3. Women and Nature

Both women and nature share the same characteristic of subordination in the male-dominated society. In "Woman & the Land", Linda Marina shows that, in Western culture, capitalist and patriarchal systems are the key factors that allow men to exploit

women and nature. She states that “the land and women were created to serve man and that each required civilization’s shaping to meet man’s needs” (15). This value has been embedded in western society before the ancient Greek period (17). It is not easy for either women or nature to liberate from the capitalist and patriarchal society.

Ecofeminists propose a solution claiming that women associated with nature could be liberated together from that society. In other words, women and nature must help each other. Carolyn Merchant states that women are the first ones who can help nature. The majority of the activists in the grassroots movement against pollution are women (192). They can see what is happening to the earth because they are closer both to nature and to pollution in nature. Women, using information passed from generation to generation, know how to harmoniously live with nature.

Sustainable development is the most important goal of women-nature liberation. Ecofeminists see women’s work as the ‘bridge’ between sustainable development and human existence (Mellor, “Ecofeminist Economics: Women, Work and the Environment” 9). Annabel Rodda, in *Women and the Environment*, studied the roles of women in many developing countries, and found that many rural women have traditionally learned to live in harmony with their ecosystems, which is categorized into eight types (47-69).

First of all, women are seen as ‘users of nature’ because most of the work that women perform deals with nature such as cooking, nurturing, and farming. Second, due to their domestic work, they are seen as ‘collectors of three “Fs”: fuel (i.e. firewood), food, and fodder’. Rodda claims that women have traditionally gathered those Fs from the trees and other plants for a variety of family uses. Third, women are seen as ‘water collectors and carriers’ because of their knowledge about the source and the quality of the local water. They are also responsible for controlling its use. Next, women are seen as

target ‘consumers’ of capitalism because women are in charge of providing commodities for themselves and their families. Fifth, in the agricultural sector, women are seen as ‘producers of agricultural production’. However, in the industrial sector, women are seen as ‘workers’, which might produce harmful products and cause environmental damage. Seventh, women have a close relationship with the rate of ‘population growth’. Ecofeminists believe that fewer births will benefit both women and the environment. Finally, Annabel Rodda concludes that women can be seen as ‘natural resource managers’ because they are key agents in the balance between human beings and nature for sustainable development.

In addition, Colette Dehlot comes up with a deeper study about women as natural resource managers. She claims that although women have been perceived to be part of the environmental problem, they are seldom seen as parts of conservation and of the environmental solutions. Despite top-down development as capitalism, she points out that bottom-up development, based on women’s requirements and their traditional know-how, creates the sustainable development. This means women should have more activities in conservation and in the solutions (qtd. in Rodda 72-76).

These relations, again, illustrate that women and nature are deeply concerned with each other. Ecofeminists believe that if women protect the earth, nature will protect women in return. As a result, both women and nature can liberate themselves from male-dominated society.

RELATED LITERATURE

Sarah O Jewett wrote “A White Heron” in 1886. It is one of the most admired American short stories of the nineteenth century (Hovet 63). However, the researcher found only three studies related to this story.

Theodore R. Hovet, in “ ‘Once upon a Time’ Sarah Orne Jewett’s ‘A White Heron’ as a Fairy Tale”, is the first person who suggests that this story is for children. He carefully analyzes the structure of the story and claims that it can be read as a fairy tale (63-68). Vladimir Propp’s “The Morphology of the Fairy Tale” is used as an analysis tool. Hovet found that “A White Heron” precisely follows the linear sequence of the first twenty functions of a fairy tale’s twenty-two functions. He concludes that Jewett’s fairy tale permits him to explore sexual conflict in a way that the real children’s stories cannot. He also found that “A White Heron” reflects the industrialization in American society.

However, Michael Atkinsons chooses to analyze Sylvia as an innocent character. He claims in “The Necessary Extravagance of Sarah Orne Jewett: Voice of Authority in ‘A White Heron’ ” that Sylvia is an innocent character who does not develop as innocence lost, but as innocence preserved (71-74). What she does to the young man and the heron seems to be innocent, but it indicates her weakness and meaningful naivety. She keeps her innocence throughout the story. This makes this story remarkable.

Instead of analyzing a single element such as an analysis of character or plot, Jules Zanger, in “ ‘Young Goodman Brown’ and ‘A White Heron’: Correspondences and Illuminations”, observes a wider framework. She compares Jewett’s “A White Heron” to Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown”. Zanger reveals that there is a series of shared elements such as themes, settings, narrative sequences, images, and dynamics. For example, both stories begin at sundown. Both protagonists, Sylvia and Brown, have to face the strangers or intruders who are revealed to be hunters and tempters. Zanger claims that “the frequency and directness of these shared elements make it possible to read “A White Heron” as a personal variation upon the Hawthorn story” (347).

The related studies mentioned above deal with literary elements in Jewett’s “A White Heron”. However, in this study, the profound relationship between Sylvia and the

land will be studied. By the use of ecofeminist perspective, this story might illustrate a solution that women associated with nature can liberate themselves from the domination of industrialism and of men.

In Thailand, the researcher cannot find any studies regarding Jewett's works nor ecofeminist analysis of Thai literature. However, there is some research about Thai women in capitalist societies. Ua-endoo Reungprasertvit, for example, studies women in an industrial area in 2004. She finds that many women have suffered from industrialism because of mutual benefits, unemployment, dismissal from work, and low wages. However, when they change their job and become homeworkers – performing work such as clothes-making at home, these women are more empowered. They have increased knowledge and self-confidence in the leadership ability. The study also suggests that although these women become the leader of a family instead of men, they still bear the brunt of housework. Moreover, some women can change their husbands' attitude regarding household responsibility, which can lead to female empowerment in the future.

The relation of women and nature in Thailand has been studied as well. Susinee Vorasrisothon in 2003 analyses the meaning and value of Cheewajit health care management given by women and the way this holistic health care empowers those women. Vorasrisothon finds that the process of Cheewajit or natural therapy could empower women. It can be concluded that, through Cheewajit, women could enhance their mind and spirit as well as provide care for others. In addition, Vorasrisothon's study suggests that, by nature, Thai women have a sense of nurturing and caring, which is similar to Annabel Rodda's suggestion about women in general.

Although the study of ecofeminist perspective in Thai literature has not been found yet, the research mentioned earlier maintains that many Thai women are in the same place as other women in other parts of the world – dominated by men and

capitalism. To be liberated, those women have to stay away from industry and become closer to nature. Therefore, even though this study analyzes only an American short story, the solution suggested from this study can also be applied to the Thai context.

CHAPTER 3
AN ANALYSIS OF MEN, WOMEN, AND NATURE
IN JEWETT'S "A WHITE HERON"

Chapter two presents the concept of ecofeminism informatively so as to provide a better understanding about relations among men, women, and nature. In this chapter, the concept of ecofeminism will be applied to analyze Sarah O Jewett's "A White Heron." The chapter is divided into three main parts: women's association with nature, men's domination over women and nature, and the return of women's harmony with nature.

WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION WITH NATURE

According to ecofeminist perspective, women are closer to nature than men. By their nature, women understand how to live harmoniously with the world. This idea is clearly seen in Jewett's "A White Heron." In the beginning of the story, it is shown that Sylvia lives harmoniously with the nature surrounding her although she is a newcomer to this community in the countryside. Before being interrupted by the young man, women have good relationship with nature. The story depicts the relation between women and nature, which is very close to each other and they are seen as if they are intimate companions.

"A White Heron" begins by showing the close relation between women and nature. Sylvia first appears riding on her old cow one June evening taking a short journey from the woods to her grandmother's house in the countryside. Apparently, the relation between women and nature is expressed through various situations the little girl encounters.

Jewett illustrates that Sylvia and nature can be immediately harmonious. Even though the nine-year-old girl has been in this countryside for only one year, Sylvia becomes quickly associated with all creatures and the surrounding natural features in the woodlands. Walking from the woods to her house, Sylvia acts as if she were a regular member of the woods. Sylvia narrates that she and her old cow “were going away from the western light, and strike deep into the dark woods, but their feet were familiar with the path, and it was no matter whether their eyes could see it or not (Jewett 161).” This implies that Sylvia believes she will not get lost in the deep, dark woods because she is so familiar with nature that, without seeing, she can walk through her home. Within only one year, the little girl has proven that she can easily become harmonious and familiar with nature.

In spite of the fact that both Sylvia and nature are quickly harmonious, they do not feel they are forced to be; on the contrary, nature gives her a very warm welcome to become a valuable part of the land. It is shown that the animal is eager to be Sylvia’s playmate and offers her a tour in the woods. This creature treats the girl with kindness because she is a “valued companion”. This shows that nature welcomes Sylvia as a member of the countryside.

Mrs. Tilley is another woman who presents a close relation with nature. The old woman recognizes that women should associate closely with nature. She believes that women should not belong to the town which is full of people and manufacturers. Therefore, she and her grandchild live in this isolated countryside. The old woman reveals that her nine-year-old grandchild, Sylvia, has been in the countryside for only one year. Before this, Sylvia lived in a crowded manufacturing town with her mother in a house full of children. Sylvia did not feel well when she lived in the town. Then, Mrs. Tilley took Sylvia from the town to the countryside because she strongly believes that a

little girl should live in nature or close to nature rather than in a manufacturing town. Furthermore, she finds that her decision is correct because “Everybody said that it was a good change for a little maid who had tried to grow for eight years in the manufacturing town (162).” Sylvia agrees with her grandmother’s decision too. She feels that “it seemed as if she never had been alive at all before came to live at the farm (162).” In addition, Sylvia states on the day she reached the isolated house that it is a beautiful place to live in, and she does not want to live in the town. She feels that living in the country is happier than living in the town because she has found that the place is surrounded by nature, animals, and wildlife. Regardless of age, both Mrs. Tilley and her grandchild express that women are closer to nature than to an industrial town.

Like ecofeminists’ idea, Mrs. Tilley has a close relation with nature, which can be seen from her work. Annabel Rodda, in *Women and the Environment*, proposes that most of women’s work deals with nature such as nurturing, cooking, and farming. Mrs. Tilley’s chores deal with nature too. She graciously describes her work that she has her own cow from which she can gain milk anytime she wants. She also has husks and features that she raises all by herself. She also knows that “There’s good pasturing for geese just below here towards the ma’sh (164).” This means most of her work deals with nature, and Mrs. Tilley’s relation to nature is very close indeed.

In addition, this short story suggests that when women stay close to nature: women can profoundly comprehend nature through their senses. In “A White Heron”, Sylvia absorbs nature when she is on the way home. “The companions followed the shady woodroad, the cow taking slow steps, and the child very fast ones (162).” Although Theodore R. Hovort in “‘Once upon a Time’: Sarah Orne Jewett’s ‘A White Heron’ as a Fairy Tale” states that this tardy homeward trip results in a tragic outcome (64), Sylvia’s appreciation of the surrounding nature demonstrates that Sylvia can deeply absorb and

comprehend nature through the five senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching.

First, while Sylvia is taking a rest with her old cow, she absorbs nature through her sense of sight. She notices multitudes of birds and tiny creatures in the great boughs overhead. She consequently understands the nature of birds. Their movement and noises express that they are either “going about their world” or “saying goodnight to each other in sleepy twitters”. This means that Sylvia also employs her senses of seeing and hearing to comprehend the birds’ calls.

Then, her senses of smell and taste are required when she inhales the air in the woods which is not only soft, but also sweet. Lastly, while she is standing still and letting her bare feet cool in the water, great twilight moths struck softly against her. This shows that her sense of touch is employed to absorb nature. This scene, in short, beautifully demonstrates that women use their senses to profoundly absorb nature.

In addition, the close relationship between Sylvia and nature suggests that women and nature can be seen as valuable companions. “A White Heron” implicitly conveys that women are a valuable friend of nature. It shows the significance of being valuable companions; without Sylvia, the old dairy cow would only be an ordinary cow kept in the farm. The story conveys that Sylvia treats the cow very well. This claim is strengthened by the fact that “There was hardly a night the summer through when the cow could be found waiting at the pasture bars; on the contrary, it was her [the cow’s] greatest pleasure ... to play hide and seek [with Sylvia] (161).” Since the girl arrived at the farm, both the girl and the cow often go playing together. Sylvia never thinks that the cow is not an important creature; in fact, it is her true friend.

“A White Heron” also conveys the idea that nature is willing to be women’s intimate and valuable friend. Naturally, animals often become aggressive if annoyed.

However, despite thinking that the girl is annoying, the old cow feels pleased to tag along with Sylvia and to become her playmate in the hide-and-seek game. The story describes the cow's new status as a playmate as its greatest pleasure and "she [the cow] lent herself to this amusement with a good deal of zest (161)." The cow, which is later named Mistress Moolly, expresses her willingness to be the girl's good companion. We may interpret that Mistress Moolly represents nature and nature has a tendency to be friendly with women and girls.

Nature is not only Sylvia's valuable friend, but also her assistant in many ways. In "A White Heron," nature helps Sylvia at first by being her friend in the woodlands. Because she has just arrived in the countryside and lives in her grandmother's isolated house, the little girl does not have any friends. Besides, the house is surrounded with farms, pastures, and woods. To enable the girl to survive in this new land, Mistress Moolly dedicates herself by becoming Sylvia's playmate and a source of amusement. Without the cow's sacrifice, the girl may not easily become familiar with nature. Moreover, the woods, birds, and other creatures also help the girl to get familiar with and survive in this new land. Although she came from a town, she has never been lonely because she has nature as her friend.

Second, nature also helps women travel conveniently from place to place. The cow sacrifices herself for Sylvia by becoming her vehicle. Although the old cow is "a plodding, dilatory, and provoking creature (161)," this creature is the honest vehicle that carries Sylvia from place to place. For example, when the couple is playing hide and seek on the way home, "The old cow was not inclined to wander farther, she even turned in the right direction for once as they left the pasture, and stepped along the road at a good pace (161)." Besides, the creature knows when it is the right time to return home. It does not want to worry Mrs. Tilley who is waiting for them at home. The creature's assistance

shows that the girl is a part of the surrounding nature. Sylvia actually becomes an integral part of nature herself.

In conclusion, the relation of women and nature, without men's intrusion, is absolutely harmonious. Sylvia and her grandmother live happily in the countryside because they have great respect for nature. Both women in the story have good understandings of nature. In return, nature helps women survive happily in the woodlands. Finally, both women and nature can become good companions, remarkably without men's intrusion.

MEN'S DOMINATIONS OVER WOMEN AND NATURE

In the capitalist society, both women and nature seem to be dominated by men. Susan Prentice, a cultural ecofeminist, argues that what men do to the planet earth is bad (qtd. in Merchant 193). Similarly, the idea of women and nature are dominated and exploited by men seems apparent in Jewett's "A White Heron."

In the beginning, Sylvia and her grandmother represent women who live in harmony with nature. However, once the young man arrives at the countryside, both of them become gradually dominated by him.

First, Sylvia is attracted by the young man. He gradually exploits her during the time he spends with her. In the woodlands, the young man makes his first appearance while Sylvia is on the homeward journey with her cow. He sees the girl, but she tries to hide herself behind some bushes as if she was playing hide-and-seek. She does not want to be found by him because she is afraid of him.

In this part, "A White Heron" shows that women are dominated by men. This claim is presented when she plays hide-and-seek. Sylvia plays the game three times with three playmates, and she gains different experience from each one.

Before meeting the young man, Sylvia plays hide-and-seek with her old cow in the woods. As discussed earlier, the girl finds that the cow is her good playmate. Furthermore, she profoundly appreciates nature, and nature is her good companion. However, when she plays hide-and-seek with men, Sylvia feels different. The girl plays the game twice with men.

First, Sylvia used to play hide-and-seek with a town boy. When she is reminded of this, she feels that she is being chased and frightened rather than playing the game. The boy is described as “the great red-faced boy who used to chase and frighten her (163).” Although playing hide-and-seek with a boy is the same as playing with the old cow in the woods, the cow never chases or frightens her in the game. Despite being a playmate, the town boy in the game can be seen as an enemy.

Second, the girl has to play hide-and-seek again with the young man who appears from nowhere in the woods. Due to the fact that Sylvia used to be chased and frightened by the town boy, as soon as she hears a clear whistle in the woods, she suddenly knows that it is a man’s whistle, not a bird’s. Sylvia, furthermore, mentions that the bird’s whistle has “a sort of friendliness,” but the boy’s whistle is “determined, and somewhat aggressive (Jewett 163).” Clearly, her assumption about the boy’s whistle is a direct result of her terrifying experience in the past.

Sylvia, nonetheless, plays hide-and-seek with the owner of that aggressive whistle. As she fears and does not want to encounter the male stranger, “Sylvia left the cow to whatever sad fate might await her, and stopped discreetly aside into the bushes (163).” This implies that she hides herself from the young man because she assumes that the whistle owner is hazardous. However, it is too late. The stranger discovers her presence and calls her.

Sylvia's hide-and-seek with both men and with the cow suggests the relations of men and women and women and nature. When she plays the game with the old cow, both players are delighted. Sylvia, furthermore, becomes a seeker while the cow is delighted to be the hider. In contrast, when playing with the men, both in the town and in the woodlands, Sylvia feels terrified because she is chased and frightened. She is not a seeker but becomes a hider in the game. Certainly, playing hide-and-seek with three playmates implies that, while Sylvia lives with nature, both are good friends. On the other hand, if Sylvia stays with men, she will be chased, frightened, and oppressed by men.

Although Sylvia feels that the young man is not as friendly as her old cow, she shows her warm hospitality to him. It is presented when he asks her for accommodation and some food. Sylvia takes the young man to her grandmother's home. While staying at her home, the young man demonstrates men's attitude toward women and their hospitality of the country people.

First, "A White Heron" shows the capitalist perception about women's status. While the young man is presented as a "wayfarer" or a traveler from far-away, both women in "A White Heron" are presented as domestic workers. According to this belief, the young man cannot comprehend women's folk hospitality. Besides, his capitalist experience drives him to dominate both women.

The young man positions himself higher than women. After he meets Mrs. Tilley, he asks her if he could stay overnight at her house. He begins presenting his dominative behavior by ordering the old woman to "Put me anywhere you like ... I must be off early in the morning, before day; but I am very hungry, indeed. You can give me some milk at any rate, that's plain (164)." He requests both food and accommodation from Mrs. Tilley, who is dominated as if she is his servant.

On the contrary, Mrs. Tilley does not see her service to the young man as a sort of domination. Her kind service is her true hospitality instead. According to ecofeminist perspective, women have the sense of nurturing by nature. Therefore, Mrs. Tilley's service is to express her hospitality to the young man. The humble old woman says to the young man that "You might fare better if you went out on the main road a mile or so, but you're welcome to what we've got. I'll milk right off, and you make yourself at home. You can sleep on husks or feathers (164)." She also tells Sylvia to serve the young man, "Now step round and set a plate for the gentleman, Sylvy! (164)."

From the ecofeminist perspective, Mellor proposes that women have been engaged in domestic responsibilities (*Feminism & Ecology* 8). That is because, by women's nature, they have a sense of nurturing which can easily be awakened. Mrs. Tilley's hospitality is also described as it "seemed to be easily awakened (Jewett 164)." This means although Mrs. Tilley seems to be dominated by the young man, she does not feel she is forced because of the sense of nurturing that is embedded in her mind.

However, the young man's ignorance of women's hospitality can also be explained by the ecofeminist perspective. While Sylvia and her grandmother warmly welcome the young man with their folk hospitality, the young man presents his attitude toward the world and the country via his capitalistic perspective. His experience from the city shapes his view and leads him to insult the countryside.

The young man believes that he is from a better class of society because "The young man had known the horrors of its most primitive housekeeping, and the dreary squalor of that level of society which does not rebel at the companionship of hens (164)." Contrary to his expectation, he found that Sylvia's house is very clean and comfortable.

Moreover, the young man's capitalist perspective makes him feel that Sylvia's family is very poor. He describes Sylvia's house "This was the best thrift of an old-

fashioned farmstead, though on such a small scale that it seemed like a hermitage (164).” He believes that Sylvia and her grandmother have a lower quality of life than the townspeople.

According to the capitalist perspective, the young man ignores the women’s hospitality because he views Sylvia’s house to be the same as ordinary hotels in the capitalist city. According to the fact that the young man positions himself as a ‘guest’ of a lodge, he wants only to consume the benefits of that place. For example, after supper, the old woman tries to share her family story with him. She tells him about her four children who have left her. While the old woman is telling about her sorrows, the young man ignores her story because it does not match his purpose. The young man’s view toward Mrs. Tilley’s sorrow also shows different perspectives between those from men’s eyes and those from women’s eyes. The old woman sees the young man as a friend with whom she can share her sorrowful story although she has just met him. She expresses her sincere hospitality to the young man. However, the young man sees Mrs. Tilley as a service provider and expresses himself as a guest or a customer who wants Mrs. Tilley to respond to his needs instantly. In other words, the young man does not feel that she is his friend.

On the contrary, he shows his eagerness and interest when Mrs. Tilley tells him about her grandchild that “There ain’t a foot o’ ground she don’t know her way over, and the wild creature’s counts her one o’ themselves. Squer’ls she’ll tame to come on’ feed right out o’ her hands, and all sorts o’ birds (165).” The reason of his interest is that this information is beneficial to him. The young man is interested in the information about Sylvia’s knowledge, and he tells Mrs. Tilley his purpose that he is on a hunt for the white heron – the rare bird which he aims to include in his collection of birds. In addition, “A White Heron,” reflects the author’s belief about science and technology in 19th century society that women and nature are also dominated in this sphere. According to her belief,

men were closer to science and technology than women. Moreover, many women were impeded to join the flow of scientific advancement (Wegener, vii-xxxv).

In “A White Heron”, the perspectives toward natural science are differently demonstrated through the young man and Sylvia. Sylvia’s interest and the young man’s interest in birds are also completely different. The little girl sees the birds as her friends and she becomes their caretaker. Her grandmother remarks “Last winter she got the jay-birds to bangeing here, and I believe she’d ’a’ scanted herself of her own meals to have plenty to throw out amongst ’em, if I hadn’t kep’ watch (165).” On the contrary, the young man sees the birds as test subjects of an ornithologist. He talks about the birds he has caught that “they’re stuffed and preserved, dozens and dozens of them (165)” and “I have shot or snared every one myself (165).” Nonetheless, since what the young man has explained is based on the male’s perspective, Sylvia finds that “she could not understand why he killed the very birds he seemed to like so much (165).” This also supports ecofeminist perspective that “what men do to the planet is bad (qtd. in Merchant 193).”

Due to the fact that the young man has been influenced by the patriarchy system and industrialization, he does not notice the close relation between women and nature in the countryside. He reveals the real objective of his travel: he is following a white heron which he saw flying three miles away from Sylvia’s house. He says that white herons have never been found in the area before. He wants to catch one of them.

The characteristics of the young man represent Jewett’s belief that men and science are both on the same side of the binary opposition. According to Sir William Cecil Dampier’s *A History of Science and the Relations with Philosophy and Religion* (1948), travelers had played a significant role in the development of zoology during the 18th century. Dampier explains that the knowledge of animals was stimulated and developed by the information brought back from travelers. The young man who was

previously described as ‘the wayfarer’ now becomes described as ‘the ornithologist’ after revealing that he stuffed and preserved dozens and dozens of birds. Since white herons have never before been found in that district, the reason that he wants to catch it is to acquire more knowledge about the rare bird.

Yet, the young man’s belief that men are the owner of scientific knowledge is challenged by Sylvia. The young man expresses his interest in science, especially zoology. He reveals that he is interested in studying about birds – “I am making a collection of birds myself. I have been at it ever since I was a boy (165).” Instead of saying ‘since I was young,’ the young man says ‘since I was a boy.’ This implies that only males are interested in science. Accordingly, he feels surprised when he hears that Sylvia is also interested in birds. He exclaims “So Sylvy knows all about birds, does she? (165)” Although the grandmother tells him that Sylvia knows about all wild creatures in that area, the young man looks at Sylvia with “the hope of discovering that the rare bird was one of her acquaintances (165).” He is not so confident of her knowledge. Therefore, he gives her more information about the white heron stating that it is “A queer tall white bird with soft feathers and long thin legs. And it would have a rest perhaps in the top of a high tree, made of sticks, something like a hawk’s nest (165).” It can be concluded that the knowledge that he wants to acquire from Sylvia is not scientific knowledge, but only where the rare birds can be found. Nonetheless, in fact, Sylvia knows much more than the young man does. “She knows that strange white bird and had once stolen softly near where it stood in some bright green swamp grass away over at the other side of the woods (165-166).” Sylvia’s knowledge reflects that science is no longer limited to men. In other words, women also know about the earth.

Although Sylvia demonstrates that she has more ornithological knowledge than the young man, her close relation to nature is altered by the young man’s temptation.

Because he wants to exploit Sylvia's knowledge to help him hunt for the white heron, the young man employs two devices: capitalism and sexual temptation.

First, the young man introduces capitalism to Sylvia's country world. He aims to use this device to dominate the girl. The concepts of capitalism and value of money have been presented during the conversation of the young man, Sylvia, and Mrs. Tilley. The young man's knowledge, once again, shows a hazardous capitalist agenda which exploit both women and nature.

Capitalism may have invisible ability to damage the value of community. It aims to promote people to think only about individual benefits, instead of communal benefits. Moreover, it destroys spiritual value, ethics, and environment throughout its heavy consumerism (Nartjamnong, 57). The young man in Jewett's "A White Heron" explicitly shows these cruelties of capitalism.

Although the young man knows that the white heron is a very rare species, he still expresses his inner capitalist passion that he wants to exploit this natural resource. He says about a white heron that "They have never been found in this district at all (Jewett 165)." This means he knows that the white heron is a very rare species, but he does not stop exploiting this pitiful creature. He says to Sylvia and her grandmother that:

"I can't think of anything I should like so much as to find that heron's nest," the handsome stranger was saying. "I would give ten dollars to anybody who could show it to me," he added desperately, "and I mean to spend my whole vacation hunting for it if need be. Perhaps it was only migrating, or had been chased out of its own region by some bird of prey (166)."

This quote implies that the young man's passion for the bird is driven by capitalism.

Although his latter sentence presents his ornithological knowledge and he might want to

get the heron for scientific purposes, he employs the most popular capitalistic device to get that bird. That capitalistic device is best known as ‘money’.

The young man uses money for capitalistic purposes. According to money in capitalism, there are three main functions: a standard of value, a medium of exchange, a store of value. In sum, money reflects the exchange value. In “A White Heron,” money reflects the exchange value of the rare white heron. From the young man’s point of view, he hires Sylvia to help him hunt for the bird. In fact, the rare bird belongs to Sylvia’s environment. Hiring Sylvia is similar to buying the bird from Sylvia, and the price is ten dollars. This is similar to buying a thing from a grocer’s shop in capitalist society. In fact, money reflects the exchange value of the white heron.

The young man not only uses money to exploit Sylvia, but also sexual temptation. It is found in “A White Heron” that women can be dramatically dominated by men due to temptation. Despite being frightened, Sylvia’s assumption toward the whistle owner is altered when the girl is close to the young man. When she is discovered and called by the young man, nine-year-old Sylvia feels that the voice of the young man is neither ‘determined’ nor ‘aggressive’. On the contrary, the voice is “a very cheerful and persuasive tone (163).” She looks at the man who is described as a “tall young man, who carried a gun over his shoulder (163).” Sylvia talks to him and introduces herself. Furthermore, she feels that the young man’s speech is kind and gallant. Sylvia, at the age of nine, is challenged by her passion for the young man. Unfortunately, her passion leads her to be exploited by the young man.

The young girl’s belief is altered by sexual attraction, as is the case with other young women, although she realizes that nature is more valuable and friendlier than men. In Sylvia’s mind, she still wants an actual human relationship. Sylvia’s passion for the young man has been psychologically explained by Joseph Church in “Romantic Flight in

Jewett's 'White Heron'." Church explains that Sylvia is fatherless (27). Besides, when she moves to the farm, she finds that her uncle is absent (27). She does not have any close relationships with men. As a result, Sylvia "experiences nascent sexual feelings, and in the darkening woods she meets and joins an appealing and cultured young man (27)." In other words, nine-year-old Sylvia is now driven by her sexual interest.

The young man comes from nowhere, but Sylvia rapidly gets familiar with him because of the nascent sexual feelings. When she is asked by the young man if he can spend the night at her house and go out hunting early in the morning, Sylvia does not turn down his request. Furthermore, she tries to protect him from her grandmother's refusal. Although Sylvia knows that her grandmother might blame her for guiding this young man to the house, the girl believes that "It did not appear to be her fault (Jewett 163)" and nobody "could have foreseen such an accident as this (163)." It should also be noted that when Sylvia is asked to introduce herself, she introduces herself as 'Sylvy' – her nickname. That means she wants to be accompanied by him. The young man now becomes Sylvia's companion on the homeward journey.

At the same time, Sylvia's relation to the cow declines. On the way home, Sylvia, the young man, and the old cow are walking together. It can be seen that while the relationship between Sylvia and the young man becomes more obvious, the role of the cow is now reduced to being only a vehicle that they drive from the woods. The young woman who is fascinated by her nascent sexual feelings has ignored her close relationship with nature.

When the trio arrives at the house, Sylvia's grandmother is standing in the doorway. Her grandmother thinks that the young man is "one of the farmer-lad of the region (163)." Although Sylvia knows by her instinct that her grandmother misunderstands and does not comprehend the gravity of the situation, she does not correct

her grandmother's mistaken idea. Once again, it is proven that Sylvia has been completely fascinated by the young man.

Moreover, when the young man presents his proposal about the white heron at night, Sylvia becomes fascinated by both his money and her sexual feeling. The young man wants to exploit nature through women. According to ecofeminist perspective, money can be seen in a more negative way. The young man is going to exploit both women and nature by paying only ten dollars. He sees women as his workers and the bird as a commodity.

However, women see nature as their good company rather than a commercial product. Therefore, it is interesting to observe the responses of both the grandmother and Sylvia to the young man's intention. The grandmother's and Sylvia's responses are significantly different. After being offered, the former is described by "Mrs. Tilley gave amazed attention to all this (166)." She was surprised because her experiences have been limited to the countryside. Therefore, she is not so familiar with pricing a product, which is usually done in any capitalist society. In addition, Mrs. Tilley's response implies that she cannot accept the value of money as a medium of exchange in her countryside.

Sylvia's response, on the other hand, reflects her prior experience obtained from the industrialized city. The nine-year-old girl seems to be more familiar with the value of money than her grandmother does. Her familiarity with capitalism is awakened by the young man's offer. Thereby, she does not feel surprised. That night, Sylvia dreams of the young man's ten dollars, which the girl might use to buy dresses or some women's accessories.

Like ecofeminist perspective discussed in chapter 2, Sylvia is exploited as a female worker in patriarchal capitalism. At the same time, she is driven by her sexual feeling. Therefore, the next day, both Sylvia and the young man travel to the woods to

find the white heron. Influenced by her former background in the capitalist town, Sylvia becomes fascinated by the young man's money. Moreover, her sexual awakening drives her to ignore 'her initial fear' of the man and finds that he is 'friendly', 'most kind' and 'sympathetic'. As a result, her perspective toward nature is changed. The wild creatures are the same as industrial products sold in the capitalist society.

Sylvia completely becomes a worker in an "industrial factory". Her subordinate status is obviously presented while she is searching for the bird in the woods with the young man. At the same time, the man also treats her as if he were her employer. At first, the young man gives her an instruction. He tells the girl "many things about the birds and what they [the birds] knew and where they lived and what they did with themselves (166)." Providing this information is aimed to instruct her to help him catch the right bird – the white heron. Then, he gives her 'a jack-knife.' For Sylvia, this is a great treasure. Nonetheless, from the capitalist perspective, it is an industrial machine provided for a certain purpose – catching the white heron.

Furthermore, Sylvia loses her confidence and her bravery. She believes that "she would have liked him vastly better without his gun; she could not understand why he killed the very birds he seemed to like so much (166)." The girl wants to ask him this question, but she decides to keep silent. On the way in the woods, both Sylvia and the young man "speak to each other rarely and in whispers (167)." Although she is so familiar with this forest that she could walk through correctly even without seeing, she continues to walk behind the young man's step. It is described that "the young man going first and Sylvia following, fascinated, a few steps behind with her gray eyes dark with excitement (167)." Even on the way home, their positions remain the same: "...but she did not lead the guest, she only followed and there was no such thing as speaking first

(167).” This implies that Sylvia becomes subordinated to the young man. Similar to other female workers, Sylvia is dominated and exploited by the man who is a capitalist.

It can be concluded that, like ecofeminist perspective, Sylvia and the white heron are dominated and exploited by the young man. The girl becomes his labourer by helping him find the white heron. Additionally, the rare bird is consumed as if it is one type of the natural resources which feeds capitalism to grow. Thus, both Sylvia and the white heron are in the same status – being exploited by the young man. This can be seen as a triangle relationship in which women and nature are both subordinated to male domination especially in the existing capitalism.

THE RETURN OF WOMEN’S HARMONY WITH NATURE

Ecofeminists believe that both women and nature will be liberated together from their subordinate status if they help each other (Merchant 184-185). This belief is clearly illustrated in the final part of “A White Heron”.

Because of the temptation, Sylvia decides to travel into the woods alone at night to find the white heron’s nest. Her journey into the woods illustrates that Sylvia is completely fascinated by the young man’s charm and money. The purpose of this journey, furthermore, illustrates that women are dominated by men to exploit nature, previously presented as her good friend in the beginning. As Sylvia becomes the young man’s worker, her knowledge and courage are exploited in order to serve the young man’s demand – hunting for the white heron. The first destination of Sylvia’s night journey is a great pine-tree. It is described that “Half a mile from home, at the farther edge of the woods, where the land was highest, a great pine-tree stood, the last of its generation (167)” and “But the stately head of this old pine towered above them all and made a

landmark for sea and shore miles and miles away (167).” This means the great pine-tree is the highest one in the woods, and Sylvia knows it well.

The girl uses her knowledge to help the young man. She plans to climb to the top of the great pine-tree in the early morning because she believes that she will be able to “see all the world and easily discover whence the white heron flew, and mark the place and find the hidden nest (167).” Nonetheless, before Sylvia met the young man, she also wished to climb up the pine-tree, but with a different objective. She originally thought that whoever climbs to the top of it could see the ocean, and the wind at its top always stirred no matter how hot and still the air might be below. Sylvia forgot all about her prior belief. She decides to leave home that night and walk steadily to the great pine-tree.

Her original and later claims imply that her attitude toward nature has changed. Before Sylvia met the young man, nature is her good friend. On the contrary, when Sylvia was fascinated by the man’s charm and money, nature dramatically becomes either a resource to be consumed or a device to consume other natural resources such as the white heron and the great pine-tree.

On the way from home to the great pine-tree, Sylvia shows that her expertise in traveling in the woods is also used to serve the young man’s demand. Before the young man appears, Sylvia and her old cow are described as “their feet were familiar with the path, and it was no matter whether their eyes could see it or not (161).” This means she knows much about the path and the creatures in the woods. However, this time, she has to use her knowledge to work for the man. That night, Sylvia steals out of the house and follows “the pasture path through the woods, hastening toward the open ground beyond, listening with a sense of comfort and companionship to the drowsy twitter of a half-awakened bird ... (168).” Due to her expertise, it is not too difficult for her to walk through darkness to the great pine-tree.

Although Sylvia is familiar with the path and the woods, it seems that she abandons her harmony with the trees and all creatures. It is noticeable that Sylvia's feeling about wild creatures changes. Mrs. Tilley previously described her grandchild as "Squer'ls she'll tame to come an' feed right out o' her hands, and all sorts o' birds (165)." However, when she begins climbing to the tree top, she is not harmonious with nature. The girl destroys nests of those creatures while she climbs and creates havoc among the dark branches and green leaves: "a bird fluttered of its nest, and the red squirrel ran to and from and scolded pettishly at the harmless housebreaker (168)." It is obvious that Sylvia's attitude toward nature is changed. Instead of a caretaker of wild animals, the girl is described as "the housebreaker" of those creatures. Nature and Sylvia become separated from each other. Moreover, trees and creatures are all damaged by Sylvia in her quest to gain the young man's approval. Yet, she does not see this destroying as exploitation, but rather "the great enterprise." Her perspective shows that Sylvia is still fascinated by the young man's temptation of money.

According to Reungprasertvit's study, many women dealing with industrial work suffer from industry and capitalism. Similarly, Sylvia suffers and is also exploited when she becomes the young man's worker. She first realizes that the way to the pine-tree is very hard. It is described that "she must reach far and hold fast, the sharp dry twigs caught and held her and scratched her like angry talons, the pitch made her thin little fingers clumsy and stiff as she went round and round the tree's great stem, higher and higher upward (168)." Compared to her journey before she met the young man, it is different from the one after. While the previous journey presents the harmony between the girl and nature, the latter illustrates that Sylvia and nature are no longer united. Moreover, the result of her attempt to exploit nature is pain.

However, while climbing up the great pine-tree, Sylvia's attitude changes again. She has a chance to become harmonious with nature. After the young man appears, Sylvia gets far away from nature. She loses senses about nature. She also stops thinking that nature is her good friend, but her profound relation with nature is rekindled on the way up to the tree top. Sylvia begins to realize that her knowledge about nature is very minimal. She earlier presumes that the way to the tree top is easy, but she finds that "The way was harder than she thought (168)." Furthermore, she feels that "The tree seemed to lengthen itself out as she went up and to reach farther and farther upward (169)." She does not really know everything about the woods. Eventually, Sylvia realizes that she is not only a 'dull little life' but also 'a weak creature'.

The higher Sylvia climbs, the closer she gets to nature. While Sylvia climbs to the tree top, she absorbs a natural feeling again. Nature tends to bring her familiarity back. Therefore, the girl hears that "The bird sang louder and louder (167)." Then, her eyes see that "At last the sun came up bewilderingly bright. Sylvia could see the white sails of ships out at sea, and the clouds that were purple and rose-colored and yellow at first began to fade away (169)." Because her relation to nature becomes closer, Sylvia receives a sign from nature and sees the rare bird again, which is closer than ever:

Look, look! A white spot of him like a single floating feather comes up from the dead hemlock and goes larger, and rises, and rises, and comes close at last, and goes by the landmark pine with steady sweep of wing and outstretched slender neck and crested head. (169-170)

The white heron makes his debut nearly at the end of the story. The main reason for his appearance is to remind Sylvia that the bird is still her good friend. The bird flies very close to Sylvia to present real natural beauty.

As soon as the girl reaches the tree top, Sylvia and nature become harmoniously united. Sylvia experiences the world from a different point of view, which is described as follows:

Yes, there was the sea with the dawning sun making a golden dazzle over it, and toward that glorious east flew two hawks with slow-moving pinions.

How low they looked in the air from the height when before one had only seen them far up, and dark against the blue sky. ... Westward, the woodlands and farms reached miles and miles into the distance; here and there were church steeples, and white villages; truly it was a vast and awesome world.

(169)

The quotation above illustrates that Sylvia is very much impressed by nature. Then, her fascination with the young man gradually declines. This proves that although the relation of women and nature is intruded upon by men, the relation can be easily reunited. That is because women are close to nature, in ecofeminist perspective.

Climbing down from the tree top, Sylvia recognizes that nature is her good friend. At the same time, she also receives the result of exploitation by men. While she climbs down, she feels so much pain that she is “ready to cry sometimes because her fingers ache and her lamed feet slip (170).” Sylvia’s injury is a result of capitalism introduced by the young man. In addition, the fact is that many women who work in the capitalist system are also exploited and suffer some kinds of injury as Sylvia does. The girl comprehends that the bird would also be hurt. Sylvia recognizes that both she and the white heron are exploited by the young man. Consequently, she decides to keep the secret about the white heron.

However, Sylvia’s intention to protect the white heron has to be challenged once again by the young man. He waits for her at her house with the belief that the girl will tell

him about the heron because her family is very poor and he can make both Sylvia and her grandmother rich with money. Moreover, he knows that the girl is fascinated by his charm. Therefore, he plans that “now she must really be persuaded to tell (170).” That is evidence that the young man wants to employ Sylvia to exploit nature. If the girl accepts his offer, it means both Sylvia and nature will be exploited by the man; this exploitation is usually found in any capitalist society.

Fortunately, Sylvia has realized pain and exhaustion of being subordinated to the young man. Furthermore, she has recognized that nature is her true friend rather than him. Sylvia does not want the bird to be hurt or injured. Therefore, “Sylvia does not speak after all, ... though the young man’s kind appealing eyes are looking straight in her own (170).” Although the young man tries to use his charm to fascinate the girl, Sylvia is more impressed by the white heron, especially when it flew very close that morning. It is described, “she remembers how the white heron came flying through the golden air and how they watched the sea and the morning together (171).” The glorious nature influences the girl’s decision to protect nature and her village’s properties. Realizing these points, Sylvia decides to stay silent even though she is still interested in the young man. She does not say any words to the young man, including the white heron’s secret.

According to an ecofeminist perspective, when women and nature help each other, they both will be liberated from men’s capitalist society. Sylvia and the white heron are very good examples of this claim. When they help each other, they have more power and courage to conquer the young man. At the end, both of them can overcome the man and capitalism and can liberate themselves from the men’s domination and exploitation.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

This chapter presents the outcome of the study, including conclusion and a discussion. In addition, some interesting issues for further study are suggested.

CONCLUSION

In this study, Sarah O Jewett's "A White Heron" is studied through ecofeminist perspective, and the researcher finds that the relationship of men, women, and nature belongs to the same ideology.

1. The Relationship between Women and Men

It is found that women in "A White Heron" are dominated and exploited by a young man. Both Sylvia and Mrs. Tilley are also dominated by a young man. Naturally, women tend to be close to men. Therefore, it is normal that Sylvia is easily fascinated by the charm of a young man. Her sexual feelings also drive her because of the absence of her father and uncle. In addition, the young man introduces capitalism to Sylvia's world. By using money, he exploits both Sylvia and her grandmother in two ways. First, they become domestic workers as they instantly provide the young man, as a guest, with food and accommodation. Second, Sylvia is exploited as industrial labour because she is employed by money and the young man's charm. She voluntarily helps the young man hunt the white heron with only ten dollars to. Therefore, Sylvia herself is exploited, and she is used to exploit nature.

2. The Relationship between Men and Nature

Actually, men and capitalism are on the same side of the binary opposition, according to ecofeminist perspective. Men, who are driven by capitalism, dominate nature.

In “A White Heron”, the young man is also a capitalist who exploits nature. He sees nature as the source of raw materials for industry. Therefore, he constantly insults the countryside and the woodland. He believes that people who live in the countryside are poor and dirty. In spite of his belief, he finds that Sylvia’s house is better than he expected. Moreover, driven by capitalism, he tends to believe that money can be used to buy everything. He wants to buy the rare white heron from Sylvia with only ten dollars. This rare bird represents his desire and power to control and exploit nature.

3. The Relationship between Women and Nature

According to ecofeminist perspective, women are close to nature. By their nature, women understand how to live harmoniously with the world. In “A White Heron”, this notion is clearly presented through both female characters – Sylvia and her grandmother. Both women illustrate that women and nature can be harmonious. They live in the countryside due to the grandmother’s belief that women should be associated with nature. Most of their routine works are also associated with nature such as cooking, farming, and milking. Although these chores can be seen as domestic work, women are very keen and willing to do them. Moreover, women tend to profoundly comprehend nature through their senses.

In addition, women and nature help each other because they are both dominated by men. Sylvia is exploited because she is attracted by the young man and his money. Then, nature is exploited because the young man wants to find the white heron and shoot it. Unfortunately, when Sylvia is completely fascinated by the young man’s charm and money, nature dramatically becomes either a resource to be consumed or a device to consume other natural resources such as the white heron and the huge pine-tree which stands stately in the middle of forest.

However, Sylvia finds the glory of nature and realizes that it is her responsibility to protect her village's property. Her adventurous journey in the woods at night reminds her of her relation to nature. In the end, "A White Heron" suggests that women will be empowered when they work in cooperation with nature. Sylvia makes a decision not to tell the young man about the white heron. Therefore, both Sylvia and the white heron are free from exploitation of the young man.

This study reveals that Sarah O Jewett's "A White Heron" can be profoundly reviewed and analyzed through ecofeminist perspective. The story also implies that women have an important role in protecting regional and natural resources. Therefore, the relation of women and nature in many parts of the world should be given more attraction because they have potentials to be responsible for conserving nature. Like Sarah O Jewett's idea suggested in "A White Heron," people should live in harmony with nature.

Apart from Jewett's "A White Heron", women and nature in many societies are exploited by patriarchal capitalism. Although the result of this study implies that women and nature should help each other to liberate themselves from the exploitation, women do not have a chance to do so. One of the difficulties is that there is embedded belief which has existed before the ancient Greek period (Marina 17) that women and nature were created to serve men. Because of the fact that it is impossible to create a society without men and capitalism, the question is how women and nature can be liberated.

Sylvia in "A White Heron" illustrates that it is women's work to help nature. The role of Sylvia reflects the ecofeminist's belief that women understand nature and know how to live in harmony with nature. This implies that women in general should be promoted to recognize their importance in protecting the world from exploitation. Carolyn Merchant, who studied the relation of women and nature in many countries, also found that the majority of the activists in the grassroots movement against natural

exploitation are women (192). Therefore, the way to liberate both women and nature from men and capitalism is that women's knowledge about nature should be widely promoted.

Finally, ecofeminists believe that sustainable development is a preferable solution in which men, women, and nature can live together harmoniously. Regardless of gender, both men and women can share the same planet. Akiyoshi Tanaka proposes that "an area equal to one green soccer field disappears from the surface of the earth every second (Tanaka 14)." The earth is suffering from the civilization of human beings. Woodlands are replaced by cities and factories. "A White Heron" implies that actually men, women, and nature can live in harmony without exploiting each other. In this way, Sarah O Jewett's "A White Heron" can be read as a text to instill ecofeminism to younger generation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

To promote further study on ecofeminist perspective presented in literature, which will lead to better understanding and appreciation of the relationship between women and nature, the following topics are suggested.

1. As Willa Cather and Sarah O Jewett are female writers whose works mainly concern regions, women, and nature, it is recommended that a comparative analysis to study similarities or differences between their works be conducted. For example the comparison between Cather's *My Antonia* and Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* may be of much interest.

2. It will be useful to conduct a comparative study between women and nature in 19th century and 20th century literature. The comparative study between Sarah O Jewett's works and Alice Worker's writings is recommended, for example.

3. In Thai culture, there are some literary works suggesting women take an important part in protecting and promoting the communities. These works can be studied and compared with some American writings. For example, it will be interesting to study the female protagonist in A. Chaiworasilp's *Mea Sai Sa Uen* (แม่สายสะอื้น ของ อ. ไชยวรรคิลป์) and compare her writings with either Cather's *My Antonia* or Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*.

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