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MARY ALICE MONROE: «GREEN» NOVELS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

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Abstract: The article analyzes the literary contribution and achievements of American novelist Mary Alice Monroe. Monroe is the New York Times bestselling author of 22 novels, published worldwide, and the author of two children's picture books. Her green fiction explores the compelling parallels between nature and human nature. The chronological order of Mary Monroe's novels is given in the article. Many of her novels deal with environmental issues. She writes richly textured stories that delve into the complexities of interpersonal relationships and the parallels between the land and life.

Keywords. green fiction, human nature, Beach House series, trilogy, environmental issue, bestsellers, literary achievements

Introduction

Mary Alice Monroe is a best-selling author known for fiction that explore the compelling parallels between nature and human nature. Many of her novels deal with environmental issues. For example, *The Beach House* and *Swimming Lessons* refer to the plight of injured sea turtles. Monroe currently resides in South Carolina, and many of her novels are set in the southern United States and feature "strong Southern women". Her novel *Time Is a River* is about breast cancer survivors in a fly-fishing group in North Carolina, and *Last Light Over Carolina* describes the life and times of the shrimping industry. Monroe has received numerous awards, including the 2008 Award for Writing from the South Carolina Center for the Book, 2014 South Carolina Award for Literary Excellence, 2015 SW Florida Author of Distinction Award, the RT Lifetime Achievement Award, the International Book Award for Green Fiction.

MAIN PART. Mary Alice Monroe is particularly famous for writing her novels based on the environmental fiction genre. She believes that moving to the coastal South Carolina was the ultimate decision which helped her to get close to the nature and write environmental fiction novels. Before moving there, she was already a noteworthy author. But, her new home allowed her to witness the fragility and the beauty of nature surrounding her new home. [4] The quickly changing habitat

of the region made her experience the necessary and the strong things, which she used in her books. Many of the books written by Mary are richly textured and delve into the numerous complexities of the parallels and the interpersonal relationships of the life and land.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY is to illuminate the classification and brief information about Monroe's novels. Mary Monroe's books fall under several categories such as:

- Fiction
- Children's books
- Non-fiction
- Anthology

The novels written by Monroe have been published all over the world and have also been translated into a number of foreign languages. The success of the novels has allowed author Mary to be included in a number of bestseller lists, including the USA Today, the New York Times, and SIBA.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. Mary Alice Monroe's writing is always sensitive and true, as inspiring as the natural wonder about which she writes. Monroe knows how to weave a tale...She creates vibrant characters [who] live and love in the paradise like world of the South Carolina low country. It is a magical place in many ways, especially in the words with which Monroe describes it.

Here we can see the chronological order of the author's novels:[6]

I. Standalone Novels

Name of the novel	Publication Year
The Long Road Home	(1995)
Girl in the Mirror	(1998)
The Book Club	(1999)
The Four Seasons	(2001)
Skyward	(2003)
Sweetgrass	(2005)
The Secrets We Keep	(2005)
Time is a River	(2008)
Last Light Over Carolina	(2009)
The Butterfly's Daughter	(2011)
Second Star to the Right	(2013)
The Summer Guests	(2019)

Monroe's early fiction, including *The Long Road Home*, *The Girl in the Mirror*, *The Book Club* and *The Four Seasons* evokes themes of strong women with personal struggles who overcome tragedy and develop healing interpersonal relationships. Writing under her married name Mary Alice Kruesi, later Monroe published two romantic fantasy novels: *Second Star to the Right* and *One Summer's*. Both novels weave fairy tale fantasy worlds with romantic story lines. [5]

Monroe's New York Times bestseller, *The Butterfly's Daughter* (2011), follows four women along the migration path of the monarch butterfly between Wisconsin and Mexico. This coming-of-age story focuses on the spiritual journey of the main protagonist, Luz Avila, as she carries her grandmother's ashes to Mexico. Winner of the 2011 International Book Award in the category of "Fiction: Environmental/Green Fiction," this title was also selected as a Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance (SIBA) Book Award finalist.

II. Beach House Series

Name of the Novel	Publication Year
The Beach House	(2002)
Swimming Lessons	(2007)
Beach House Memories	(2012)
Beach House for Rent	(2017)
Beach House Reunion	(2018)
On Ocean Boulevard	(2020)
The Summer of Lost and Found	(2021)

Marking a considerable development in her evolution as a novelist, her writings began to blend both women's fiction with environmental messages and metaphors—thus tying together her life as a writer and conservationist. First seen in her southern fiction debut, *The Beach House* (2002), Monroe artfully blends the emotional dynamics of a mother-daughter relationship with a conservationist's efforts to protect endangered loggerhead sea turtles.[2] Her novel, *The Beach House*, was adapted into a Hallmark Hall of Fame movie starring three-time Golden Globe nominee Andie MacDowell, Minka Kelly, and Chad Michael Murray.

III. Lowcountry Series

Name of the Novel	Publication Year
The Summer Girls	(2013)
The Summer Wind	(2014)
The Summer's End	(2015)
A Lowcountry Wedding	(2016)
A Lowcountry Christmas	(2016)

In this enchanting trilogy set on Sullivan's Island, South Carolina, Monroe captures the complex relationships between

Dora, Carson, and Harper, three half-sisters scattered across the country—and a grandmother determined to help them rediscover their family bonds.

New York Times bestselling author Pat Conroy praises the novel *Summer Girls* as the following:

“*In The Summer Girls, she sings a song of praise to the bottlenose dolphins that bring so much joy to the men and women who gaze at the creeks and rivers of the lowcountry each evening. Like all her books, The Summer Girls is a call to arms.*” — **New York Times bestselling author Pat Conroy** [3]

IV. Children's books

Name of the Novel	Publication Year
Turtle Summer (A Journal for My Daughter), picture book	2007
Butterfly Called Hope	(2013)
The Islanders	(2021)

Teaching children about coastal conservation, this juvenile title eventually won several awards including the ASPCA Henry Bergh Award for 2007 and the Children's Book Council Award. Monroe's first Middle Grade book, *The Islanders*, will be released June 15, 2021. [1]

V. Anthologies

Name of the Novel	Publication Year
Reunion Beach: Stories Inspired by Dorothea Benton Frank	(2021)

Monroe has achieved many lists, including the New York Times, USA Today and SIBA and starred reviews. She has received numerous awards, including several Readers' Choice Awards, RT Lifetime Achievement Award, the Girls Scouts of America Woman of

Distinction Award, the 2008 South Carolina Center for the Book Award for Writing and was featured at the National Festival of the Book, the 2008 International Book Award for Green Fiction for *The Butterfly's Daughter*, the 2015 Florida Book Festival Distinguished Author Award, and the ASPCA Henry Bergh award for Children's Fiction. Monroe's *A Lowcountry Christmas* won the 2017 Southern Prize for Fiction. Her novel, *The Beach House*, was adapted into a Hallmark Hall of Fame movie starring three-time Golden Globe nominee Andie MacDowell, Minka Kelly, and Chad Michael Murray. In 2018 Mary Alice Monroe was inducted into the South Carolina Literary Hall of Fame.

CONCLUSION. Mary Alice Monroe, a successful author, was captivated by the beauty and fragility of the nature. Her experiences living in the midst of a habitat that was quickly changing gave her a strong and important focus for her novels. For instance, Monroe, “skilled storyteller, who never lets her readers down” (*Huffington Post*) returns to her beloved Beach House series with most tales of new beginnings, resilience, and one family's enduring love. Other “authentic, generous, and heartfelt” (Mary Kay Andrews, *New York Times* bestselling author) novels from the *New York Times* bestselling author are about the bonds and new beginnings that are born from disasters and how, even during the worst of circumstances—or perhaps because of them—we discover what is most important in life.

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