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Araştırma Makalesi

**AN ECOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF *CIRCE* BY MADELINE
MILLER: RECONSTRUCTING THE RELATIONS AMONG DIFFERENT
FORMS OF BEINGS THROUGH FIGURATIVE RECONCEPTUALIZATIONS**

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Abstract

*Madeline Miller is one of the most renowned "revisionist mythmakers" in the 21st century. Miller's prize-winning novel *Circe* (2019) is an attempt to recreate the histories of the mythological past in the revised versions of herstories. Madeline Miller intends to deconstruct the phallogocentric narrations which have established the literary canon by recreating the same stories from a feminist perspective. To do so, she rewrites the myth of Circe who is a formidable sorceress and is treated as a minor character in the male-authored *The Odyssey*. Miller explains what she aims to do as follows: "I wanted her to be the center of the story. I wanted it to be an epic story about a woman's life. And for her to have all the attention and all the adventures and the growth, the errors, the virtues, that heroes like Achilles and Odysseus have in their stories" (Nicolau, 2018, p. 7). In this sense Circe can be described as a "female epic" or a "mythographic metafiction" (Nunes, 2014, pp. 231–232). Miller, along with the perspective, changed the dominant ideologies embedded in man-centered epics and she subverted androcentrism and a hierarchical view of the world with her ecological insight. This article will place the emphasis on Miller's creative use of language through which she promotes a novel understanding of intra and inter-specific relations in the universe. Thus, it will examine Miller's stylistic choices with an ecolinguistic approach by focusing specifically on her use of similes to find out why she employs this figure of speech with high frequency and*

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what discursive effects she has created and what ideological implications her use of similes offer. The ecolinguistic examination of how and why she employs the similes in Circe reveals that Miller skillfully brings together an ecologically conscious language and thought to reflect her vision which can be characterized as ecosophic wisdom.

Key Words: *Ecolinguistics, Feminist revisionism, Ecocriticism, Circe, Ecosophic wisdom.*

MADLINE MILLER'İN KIRKE ADLI ESERİNİN EKO-DİLBİLİMSEL ANALİZİ: FARKLI VARLIK BİÇİMLERİ ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİLERİN FİĞÜRATİF KAVRAMSALLAŞTIRMALARLA YENİDEN İNŞASI

Öz

Madeline Miller, 21. yüzyılın en ünlü "revizyonist mit yaratıcılarından" biridir. Miller'in ödüllü romanı Kirke (2019), mitolojik hikayelerin yeniden gözden geçirilip, mitolojik eril tarihi kadın bakış açısıyla yeniden yaratma girişimidir. Angela Carter ve Margaret Atwood gibi; Madeline Miller, var olan hikayeleri feminist bir bakış açısıyla yeniden yazarak edebi kanonu oluşturan fallogosantrik anlatıları yapıbozuma uğratmayı amaçlar. Bunu yapmak için, erkek yazar tarafından kaleme alınan The Odyssey'de küçük bir karakter olarak görülmesine karşın korku salan bir büyücü olan Kirke'nin efsanesini, Kirke'nin bakış açısından yeniden yazmıştır. Miller ne yapmayı amaçladığını şöyle açıklamaktadır: "Hikayenin merkezinde onun olmasını istedim. Bir kadının hayatı hakkında destansı bir hikaye olmasını istedim. Aşil ve Odysseus gibi kahramanların hikayelerinde bulunan, tüm maceraların ve karakter gelişiminin, hatalarının, erdemlerinin, onda toplanmasını istedim" (Nicolau, 2018, s. 7). Bu anlamda Kirke bir "kadın destanı" veya "mitografik bir üstkurmaca" olarak tanımlanabilir (Nunes, 2014, s. 231–232). Miller, bakış açısıyla birlikte, erkek-merkezli destanlarda yer alan egemen ideolojileri de değiştirmiş ve ekolojik bir anlayışla erkek merkeziliği ve hiyerarşik dünya görüşünü alt üst etmiştir. Bu çalışma, Miller'in evrendeki tür içi ve türler arası ilişkilere dair yeni bir anlayışı teşvik etmek için yararlandığı yaratıcı dil kullanımına vurgu yapacaktır. Bu makale Miller'in dil seçimlerini eko-dilbilimsel bir yaklaşımla incelemeyi, özellikle onun teşbihleri kullanma biçimine odaklanarak, benzetme sanatını ne sıklıkta kullandığını ve Miller'in sistematik seçimlerinin ne gibi söylemsel etkiler yarattığını ve romanda kullanılan teşbihlerin hangi ideolojiyi yansıttıklarını bulmayı amaçlamaktadır. Kirke romanında yazarın kullandığı benzetme sanatlarına dair yapılan eko-dilbilimsel inceleme, Miller'in ekosofik bilgelik olarak nitelendirilebilecek vizyonunu yansıtmak için ekolojiye duyarlı dili ve düşüncüyü ustaca bir araya getirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Eko-dilbilim, Feminist revizyonizm, Ekoeleştirici, Kirke, Ekosofik bilgelik.*

INTRODUCTION

Madeline Miller is the author of internationally bestselling novels including *The Song of Achilles* (2011), *Circe* (2018), and *Galatea* (2022). Karen Armstrong, in her book *A Short History of Myths*, puts forward that "Myths are universal and timeless stories that reflect and shape our lives – they explore our desires, our fears, our longings, and provide narratives that remind us what it means to be human" (p. 157). In her novel *Circe*, Miller reimagines and reconstructs Odysseus's epic story by giving a voice, active agency, and power to a witch goddess Circe who struggles to gain her independence, self-reliance, and autonomy by breaking from the androcentric outlook and demands. Lefkowitz (2007) suggests that when women get access to language and discourse, "they are able to speak not only for themselves, but for humankind in general" (p.53). Circe is the daughter of Helios, the god of the sun, and a water nymph Perse and thus takes on both the features of the sky and the earth. She is a lesser goddess with a human voice. Miller makes use of analogical expressions to make the reader understand what Circe is like. She is resembled to "a goat for her ugliness", an owl for her "screechy" voice (M. Miller, 2019, p. 6) and a hawk for her yellow eyes and "thin sound" of her crying (p.6) and to "a rock" because of her dullness (p. 35). In this respect, Circe emerges as a liminal and hybrid character, a mixture of the features of the mortal, immortal, animals, and inanimate natural entities in the novel. Circe's decision to give up on her immortality and transform herself into a mortal being at the end of the novel can also be taken as the celebration of the cross-fertilization of beings, places, and ideas as promoted in the novel. Circe's ontological constitution has a destabilizing and transgressing potential and she, through her acts, poses a challenge to a well-established patriarchal order. Because of her practices of pharmaka, which is the art of magic by using herbs, she is perceived as a threat to the male power. Thus, she is forced to live a life of exile on the island Aiaia, as Circe herself figures it out: "What could make a god afraid? I knew that answer too. A power greater than their own" (p. 39).

The island functions as the meeting place of intra- and interspecific relations. Thus, Aiaia can be characterized by hybridity, fluidity, mixture, and transformation since there are no clear-cut boundaries among beings, things, and entities. The mortal and the immortal, the divine and the non-divine, the magic and the ordinary all co-exist both separately and within each other. Circe removes the distinction between wilderness and civilized order by bringing the wild animals and plants inside her palace on the island and she makes them an essential part of her daily life. Although she turns the whole island into a laboratory to gain mastery over the art of magic, the island functions as an ordinary place for her son Telegonus, who unlike her mother, is a normal human being. Miller created the island in a network of symbiotic relations

and with the stylistic aspect of her language, she entrenched her ecological insight in the story. Macmillan (2019) suggests that this island can be regarded as "the threshold chronotope" in Bakhtinian terms: "It is the main place where crisis events occur, the falls, the resurrections, renewals, epiphanies, decisions that determine the whole life of a man" (Bakhtin, 2002, p. 248). In this sense, the threshold is "where inside and outside meet and form contact zones, mixed places middle grounds, perhaps heterotopia in one of the meanings of that term provided by Foucault" (Mackenthun, 2016, p. 66). Foucault explains that "heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real space several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (Foucault, 2017, p. 6). It functions as a microcosm, "spaces of confrontation with or opposition against a dominant regime" (J. Miller, 2015, p. 5). This paper aims to explore how Miller fosters a new way of perception and understanding of the universe and the interspecific relations in it. In order to do so, we have examined Miller's stylistic choices by focusing specifically on her use of similes from an ecolinguistic perspective. Our aim is to find out why she employs the figures of speech with high frequency and reveal their discursive effects and ideological implications. The ecolinguistic examination of how and why she employs the similes in *Circe* reveals that Miller skillfully brings together language and thought to reflect her vision which can be characterized as ecosophic wisdom.

ECOLINGUISTICS

Ecolinguistics is a puzzling and challenging term to comprehend since it combines two seemingly distinct fields: Ecology and Linguistics. However, there exists a significant connection between these two fields. Since language deeply affects our thought processes and behavioral patterns, it can determine and alter the way we think and act. It can also change our attitude towards nature in a positive or a negative way. Ecolinguistics focuses on the various ways nature is constructed, represented, and approached in a given language with the purpose of exploring the socio-cultural and ideological implications of these different linguistic and discursive constructions and aims to help towards the creation of a more ecologically conscious language. "Ecolinguistics re-orientates linguistics so that its practitioners become sensitive, responsible, and active share takers and participants in the local, global and universal communities of humans and non-humans whose point of departure is patterns of language and communication" (Steffensen & Fill, 2014, p. 14). As Stibbe (2015) asserts, "Ecolinguistics, then, is about critiquing forms of language that contribute to ecological destruction and aiding in the search for new forms of language that inspire people to protect the natural world" (p.1).

Einar Haugen (2001) comes up with the concept of "language ecology" which is defined as the study that focuses on the relation between the environment and the language:

Language ecology may be defined as the study of interactions between any given language and its environment. The true environment of a language is the society that uses it as one of its codes. Language exists only in the minds of its users, and it only functions in relating these users to one another and nature, i.e., their social and natural environment. Part of its ecology is therefore psychological: its interaction with other languages in the minds of bi- and multilingual speakers. Another part of its ecology is sociological: its interaction with the society in which it functions as a medium of communication. The ecology of a language is determined primarily by the people who learn it, use it, and transmit it to others (Haugen, 2001, p. 325).

With an emphasis on psychological, sociological, cultural, and ideological aspects of language, ecolinguistics aims to explore linguistic phenomena "in inter-language, inter-human, and human-nature relationships from the perspective of ecological philosophy" (Chen, 2016, p. 109). Ecolinguistics emphasizes "the interdependency of language, mind, and the living world" (Zhou, 2017, p. 125). Stibbe (2015) states that ecology and language are closely related and humans interact with nature, ideologies, and worldviews via language. He also suggests that the connections and relations fail if ecology does not consider human as an organism that functions along with other organisms within the ecosystem. Ecology should be viewed within the holistic framework: "An inclusive view would be that ecology consists of the relationships of humans with other humans, other organisms, and the physical environment" (Wu, 2018, p. 646) and the intertwined network of relationships among different forms of beings cannot be understood, studied and improved without the ecological aspect of language.

Ecolinguistics is recognized as "a life science" (Zhou, 2017) that is concerned with the promotion of the integration of human and non-human aspects of nature, environment, and culture. Zhou (2017) maintains that the current ecolinguistic framework should be expanded to include the axiological and ethical dimensions because a new linguistic approach is required to "address the axiological issues connecting language, life forms, and the environment" (p. 125). According to Zhou, ecolinguistics should seek "conceptual harmony, methodological harmony, and philosophical harmony" (p. 125) with the integration of scientific worldview and non-scientific worldview. As Westerlund (2013) maintains, "a strictly scientific worldview is of limited usefulness because it lacks moral and existential relevance" (p. 2352). What we need is a more holistic approach to achieve a more inclusive and unified

ecolinguistic framework that will enhance "a synthesis of science, axiology, and aesthetics in fostering human bio-ecological awareness" (Zhou, 2017, p. 125).

When we focus on the major problems of our age, we gradually come to an understanding that they cannot be comprehended and solved in isolation. These issues need to be viewed as various manifestations of a single crisis, which is primarily a crisis of perception, mindset, and a value system. There is an emerging consensus that "The fundamental roots of the environmental disaster lie in the attitudes, values, perceptions, and basic worldview that we humans of the industrial-technological global society have come to hold" (Metzner, 1993, p. 163). A new language will contribute to the development of the fresh way of thinking and acting which is essential to deal with a globally over-contaminated world (Capra, 1997, p. 4).

Ecolinguistics has been used in various fields for different purposes including literature, archeology, anthropology, and economics. Ecolinguistic studies have been conducted to examine language diversity, some endangered dialects, and languages in particular areas, and to study ecologically concerned texts. Ecolinguistics is essential and crucial for an eco-discursive analysis of a given text. Stibbe identifies three types of discourses that can be examined from an ecolinguistic perspective: destructive discourses, ambivalent discourses, and beneficial discourses. In the destructive discourse, there is a contradiction between the dominant ideology and the worldview of the text, and the ecological philosophy of the reader. In beneficial discourses, rather than contradictions, there exists consistency and harmony between the promoted ideology and worldview of the text and the ecological attitude of the reader. Ambivalent discourses can be defined as the middle discourses since ambivalent discourses foster positive purposes that can however be negatively affected by the political and economic interests of the hegemonic groups (Stibbe, 2015). *Circe* can be regarded as a destructive discourse that poses a challenge to the dominant ideology of the patriarchal mindset. Such an ecolinguistic analysis of discourses provide useful tools to be employed to uncover and expose the hidden stories within the stories that we live by. According to Korten (2007), there are four stories that include nature in the western civilization: "prosperity story", "biblical story", "security story", and "secular meaning story" (p. 208). The stories can be studied from an ecological perspective in terms of their positive or negative effects on the human perception of and attitude towards nature. Ecolinguistics aims to undo the effect of the stories which justify or ignore ecological destruction and to contribute to the creation of new stories to render possible the development of ecological awareness and green consciousness.

In recent years, there is an increasing interest in ecological discourse analyses. For instance, Xinya Zuo (2019), in her work *An Ecological Analysis of Emily*

Dickinson's "The Grass", digs out the hidden ideology embedded in the discourse in order to bring to light the correlation between the language of the poem and the attitude of Emily Dickinson towards nature. Zuo states that the poet's ecological thoughts which can be stated as "All things in the world are equal, they all have their own purpose of reproduction, development, prosperity, and death" (p. 852) are manifested and reinforced by the way she uses the language in her poems. N.A. Alghamdi (2019) focuses on exploring the manifestations of the human-animal relationship via a synchronic ecolinguistic analysis of Al-Bahah animal proverbs within a socio-pragmatic framework. The study reveals that Al-Bahah proverbs have sociolinguistic and ecological dimensions (Alghamdi, 2019). In another study, Maryanti E. Mokoagouw (2018) focuses on the triple dimensions of the environment in fairy tales, i.e., bio-logics dimension, ideo-logics dimension, and socio-logics dimension with a dialectical ecolinguistic perspective.

In "An Ecolinguistic Analysis of *The Wind Gourd of La'amaomao*", Kristiawan Indriyanto (2021) explores the native Hawaiians' relation with culture and nature by examining the language in a Hawai'ian folktale. The ecolinguistic analysis in this study reveals that the native population has deep respect for nature and appreciates its intrinsic value. The names of Hawai'ian places and wind naming pattern also show that the people and the place are closely related and interconnected (Indriyanto, 2021). Angin et. al (2020) analyzed three songs in Pagu which is a nearly extinct language in North Halmahera, Indonesia from an ecolinguistic perspective in the article entitled "*An Ecolinguistic Analysis of Folksongs in Endangered Pagu Language*". The analysis suggests that there still exist strong ties between the natives and nature. The songs include cultural values and traditions, which not only preserve and reinforce the cultural identity of the Pagu natives but contribute to the sustainability of natural systems (Perangin-Angin & Dewi, 2020).

Although numerous studies are available on ecolinguistics, a solid theoretical framework has not been developed yet. Steffensen and Fill (2014) express their dissatisfaction with the lack of a theoretical basis for ecolinguistic studies and they attempt to develop a conceptual framework to provide a sound ground. They redefine ecolinguistics by pointing out the four various conceptualizations of the ecology of language:

A symbolic ecology (the idea of languages co-existing and interacting in an inter-language ecology in a given geographical area), a natural ecology (the idea of language as dependent on the natural habitat of language users), a sociocultural ecology (the idea that linguistic interaction both constitutes and is constituted by larger social and societal structures that include institutions, economic processes, and sociocultural resources), and a cognitive ecology (based in Gibson's ecological psychology and the

environmental affordances for the organism's action-perception cycles) (Kravchenko, 2016, p. 110).

It is obvious that ecolinguistic studies need strong conceptual and theoretical frameworks for more fruitful and insightful analyses. This paper attempts to provide a systematic ecolinguistic analysis that can be utilized for the ecocritical studies of literary texts.

AN ECOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF *CIRCE*

Aims, Purposes and Methodology

In this study, the emphasis has been placed on a figurative language and an analogical discourse in *Circe*. The analysis does not include all Miller's analogical expressions but are exclusively limited to the similes which are based on nature as the source domain in her conceptual framework. Descriptive and content analysis methods are employed to closely examine Miller's use of similes in order to find out whether she uses the figures of speech systematically and consciously and whether there are recurrent patterns or not in her choices. Miller describes things and beings through the analogy of shape, size, sound, scent, taste and feeling in order to appeal to senses to enhance readers' experience; thus, her metaphorical language is rich with descriptive imagery. The semantic implications of her stylistic devices of analogy encourage readers to think their relations and the world with new perspectives since "The comparison between two distinct semantic fields challenges readers to search for the underlying analogy/contrast (or similarities or dissimilarities), therefore evoking ideas, feelings, values, and stereotypes" (Forti, 2008, p. 8).

Figures of speech are conscious and deliberate uses of words (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008). Similes are rhetorical and as a figurative use of language, point out similarities and resemblances in the comparison of two things. They are described as expanded metaphors (Kjærsgaard, 1986) or "sub-species of metaphor" which means that similes "keep the notion of comparison explicit" (David Punter, 2007, p. 3) via the use of words such as "like", "as", "compare", "resemble" and so on (Knowles & Moon, 2004, p. 6). Similes and metaphors capture the reader's attention and enhance understanding through vividness, strangeness, and abnormality of perception, which activates and stimulates thoughts and feelings.

It is possible to identify different categories of similes depending on the conceptual domains. Like metaphor, simile can be defined as "understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain" (Kovecses, p. 4). In the conceptual metaphor theory, the source domain refers to "the conceptual domain from

which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain" while "the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain" (Kovecses, p. 4). The analogical quality of Miller's figurative language has been examined under four categories which are determined by the selections of the source domain.

1-Similes based on human as the source domain (anthropomorphism)

2-Similes based on animals as the source domain (zoomorphism)

3-Similes based on plants as the source domain (floramorphism)

4-Similes based on non-living natural entities as the source domain (inanimatemorphism)

These four categories offer anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, floramorphic, and inanimatemorphic representations since Miller derives her metaphorical expressions from humans, fauna, flora or inanimate entities as the source domains. The analysis of this study, in addition to the identification of the types of similes, aims to discover the motivations that determine Miller's preferences and the discursive effects she intends to achieve with her systematic choices of similes. To do so, the following questions are raised.

Types of Similes

- Are the similes conventional?
- Are the similes culture-specific?
- Are the similes gender-specific? Do they reflect or promote a certain gender or sexual ideology?

Functions of Similes

- Are the similes subversive and transgressive? Do the similes challenge, disturb or problematize the dominant established culture or the hegemonic ideology?
- Are the similes creative? Do the similes offer a new perspective and a novel understanding? Do they introduce or promote a new idea or thought?
- Do the similes provide the explanation, clarification, and elaboration for vague and abstract ideas?
- Do the similes reinforce or destabilize and unfix the existing hierarchies and dualities among the species?

Language reflects how humans interact with nature and natural phenomena. A.V. Kravchenko (2016) suggests that language and "linguaging" determine "our plant–animal–human–cultural formation" (p. 111). Wittgenstein points out the significant role metaphors play in determining cultural meanings and thoughts. Figurative language reflects not only how we do things but also how we should construct and perceive ourselves, a world, and other entities. "Language is not a direct analogy of the objective reality but a reflection of the way the reality is perceived, segmented and labeled by human beings" (Rinkauskaitė & Selmistraitis, 2011, p. 39). Miller's figurative discourse also foregrounds certain modes of relations, certain forms of beings/becomings, and certain definitions of the self and the other.

Language itself is inherently metaphorical. The metaphor "is not an extra beauty stuck into language; it is language" (Johnson, 1955, p. 259). Metaphorical thinking is a fundamental aspect of human nature and mind. The modern study of metaphors can be traced back to Aristotle (Kjærgaard, 1986, p. 13). Aristotle suggested that "Thought is metaphoric and proceeds by comparison, and the metaphors of language derive therefrom" (quoted in Richards, 1965, p. 72). The first law of learning is a metaphor because nothing new can be understood unless it shares a characteristic with something we are familiar with. Metaphors function as "the primordial epistemological principle of similarity mixed with a difference" (Johnson, 1955, p. 259). A metaphorical analogy is also the basic principle of reasoning. According to Aristotle, "Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy" (quoted in Travis, 1997, p. 399). Metaphors facilitate transferences and transmissions from one ontological category to another inside an "ordonnance of ontological classes" (Travis, p. 410) which are distinct from each other but also share similarities and overlappings.

Miller (2019) makes use of analogies to develop a more insightful epistemological and ontological understanding of the other species. Analogies can provide a new relational system to overcome the foreign and unknown aspects of the other, which can enable human beings to transgress the rigidity of ontological categories by pushing back the existential boundaries. In *Circe*, the fluidity and mobility of the body and being negates the idea of superiority or inferiority of one species over another. Scylla, for instance, has been transformed from the nymph into a monster and then into a rocky mass. Circe turned the men who came to her island into pigs. Glaucos, a poor fisherman is turned into a God and Circe, at the end of the novel, gives up on her immortality and divinity and transforms herself into a human being. In the novel, the flexibility of the ontological boundaries is reflected through the analogical expressions. Gods and human beings are resembled to animals and other

entities in nature to describe who the characters are, what they are like, what they do and how they do things. "I [Circe] was nothing, a stone " (Miller, p.18). "She [Scylla] jerked, lunging against the water, snapping those huge jaws like a dog fighting its leash" (Miller, p.101). "His [Aeetes'] eyes were fixed on the horizon. They were sharp as the eagle he was named for, and could pry into all the cracks of things, like water pricking at a leaky hull" (Miller, p.24). Such comparisons can help human beings to develop a novel understanding and awareness to discover non-hierarchical relationships that promote and celebrate common experiences and interdependencies. Travis (1997) asserts that metaphor's analogy systems display the quasi-artificiality of the hierarchical categories that have been culturally and historically accepted as the organizing principles of the world. He highlights "the inevitable metaphoricity that binds together all such hierarchical and logical" categories (p. 424). Travis refers to the Aristotelian doctrine of the "analogical unity of the multiple meanings of being" as mentioned in Paul Ricoeur's *Rule of Metaphor* (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 258) and suggests that philosophers including Aristotle and Aquinas defined the purpose of metaphorical uses of language as "to unify, through some mediating principle of correspondence, several discrete and radically different doctrines" (Travis, 1997, p. 421). Travis explains that analogy establishes two kinds of relations among different forms of beings; one is horizontal and the other is vertical: "First, there is the 'horizontal' relation of the categories of substance, which honors the 'equivocal' and species-specific differences among natural kinds. Second, there is the 'vertical' relation of created things to the Creator, which honors the 'univocal' (generic) principle of the metaphysics of essence" (p. 421).

Miller, in her use of similes, does not underestimate or deny the differences among different species. However, rather than horizontal relations which expose dissonances, Miller foregrounds vertical relations which are based on similarities, commonalities, mutualities, and shared qualities. All the deities depicted in the novel possess similar qualities with other forms of beings. "But though I [Circe] looked and sounded like a mortal, I was a bloodless fish" (p. 327). "Gods love novelty, as I have said. They are curious as cats" (p.311). "Her [Athena] voice was dark as ore.She smiled like a temple snake over its bowl of cream. She looked like an eagle who had been diving on a rabbit and the next moment found itself in the mud" (pp. 303-304 -305). From a philosophical perspective, Miller's similes, like Freud's uncanny, are strangely familiar and familiarly strange at the same time (Travis, 1997) since they point out that the other is an integrated part of the self. Metaphor is, therefore "a throwback to a more primitive and earthbound way of thinking" (p. 407), which fosters connections and cooperation rather than separations and differences. Similarly, Miller's analogy offers a unifying principle for the ontological classes and aims at bringing

unification and harmony by developing an inclusive and integrative cosmological paradigm. Since analogies are the products of human cognition, they can enable human beings to develop a sense of humility and to recognize the principles of interdependence and reciprocity in the ecosystem, which will, in return, help human beings to adapt themselves to the environment as equal partners. In this sense, what Miller does is to destabilize and uproot the hierarchical categories of the species that are deep-seated in the Western mindset, which offers "transgressive pleasures" (pp. 402-405). "He Telegonus fell like a toppled stone.... His body sagged, then he scrambled away, staring wildly back at me like a cornered beast" (p. 225). "If Athena came, she would be forced to turn aside, like a shark meeting fresh water" (p. 223). "Odysseus drew the world to him," she said. "Telegonus runs after, shaping as he goes, like a river carving a channel" (p. 291).

Miller, through her literary language, attempts to heal the feeling of disconnection from nature in the postmodern world. This necessitates radical changes in linguistic, social, and cultural realms so that we can attain more holistic, and encompassing perception along with more enriching and productive ways of thinking, and acting. To renew and reestablish fertile and healthy bonds among human, nature, and culture and between human and non-human species, Schroll offers three types of transformations:

1. Transforming the human-to-animal interaction
2. Transforming the human-to-plant interaction
3. Transforming the interaction of humans to the elemental environments of earth/land, water, and air (Schroll, 2007, pp. 44-45).

Such transformations can be rendered possible through the attainment of an ecological mindset, green perceptual and conceptual structures, and a new green language. Miller's metaphorical conceptualization which locates nature and living entities in human culture by foregrounding interrelatedness between them can be characterized by ecologically conscious images, symbols, and analogies. Miller poses a challenge to the dualistic opposition between culture and nature by using nature as the source domain in her metaphorical expressions. She obviously offers a redesigning of the relation between culture and nature on the basis of interconnectedness and commonly shared values and hence promotes a more unified, inclusive and integrated cultural order through her distinctive use of language in *Circe*.

According to Kalevi Kull (1998), ecosemiotics reflects cultural semiotics and thus how a human perceives, constructs, and represents nature is always determined by socio-cultural and historical facts and ideologies. Kull states that an ecosemiotic

perspective allows for the study of "categorization, contextualization, and signification of the elements in the representation of the relation between culture and nature" (p. 351). In this sense, thanks to ecosemiotics, it is possible to comprehend "how human culture interprets nature" in textual representations (Nöth, 2001, p. 7). Miller's ecosemiotics offers a new "cultural modeling of the natural world", in which "the natural space and the elements and organisms that inhabit it" are re-culturalized through her use of language by bringing nature closer to culture (Kull, 1998, pp. 351–355). Miller's Circe is a transgressive and subversive character who destabilizes oppressive patriarchal order and challenges the man-dominated scientific outlook that demystifies and disenchants nature. The way the language is used in the novel offers an alternative way of interpreting the natural world through an alternative cultural framework. The linguistic representations are reinforced by the kind of life Circe leads on the island. Circe has no intention to dominate, possess or control but lives in harmony with the natural environment and the beings in it. She acknowledges the power of nature and appreciates and celebrates what nature provides for her.

Figures of speech do not only provide a way of understanding the world but a way of deconstructing/reconstructing the world. A close examination of the similes used in the novel reveal that Miller uses them not to marginalize, separate or assimilate a certain form of being but to integrate, harmonize and unify different species by rejecting a great chain of beings that promote hierarchically constructed binaries and dualities. Rather than celebrating a worldview that presents the relations and networks in simplistic terms, Miller's use of figures of speech in *Circe* points out the complexity and diversity in the nature of creation. Ecologically sensitive use of language has the power to overcome the Cartesian thought and anthropomorphic self-centeredness of a human. The extensive use of similes to resemble feelings, actions, and behavior of gods and human beings to natural phenomena can contribute to enlarging and promoting the understanding of the interrelatedness, unity, and harmony among the species and between the living and the non-living.

The similes in *Circe* have been examined in terms of their pragmatic functions that display the performative aspects of language.

1. **Attributive Function:** Her comparisons in the novel draw attention to the likeness of shapes, voices, attitudes, appearances, and characteristics between two distinct entities/species by attributing qualities of one entity/species to another entity/species. Such similes help the reader to create mental images in the visualized form to better describe and understand how human beings or deities feel, sound, and seem by highlighting a resemblance among humans, animals, plants, and inanimate natural entities.

2. Explanatory Function: Miller employs similes to provide clarification and elaboration for complex concepts, abstract ideas, and situations since observable nature and natural phenomena offer a sense of familiarity gained through sensory experiences, which develops more insightful human comprehension. The similes used with this function in the novel mostly explain the manner of action or an event.
3. Emotive Function: Miller makes use of figurative language to reflect the mental and sentimental landscape to intensify and enhance feelings, and emotions.

With the above-mentioned functions in mind, we have identified four different motivations to find out what determines Miller's choice of figurative representations in *Circe*.

1. Cognitive Motivation (to make a better sense of what is mysterious, incomprehensible, and inaccessible)

2. Affective Motivation (to describe the inner psychology, to reflect a mental and emotional state and response to overcome the fear caused by strange, hostile, or ambiguous aspects of beings or circumstances by recreating them as familiar and less threatening.)

3. Cultural Motivation (to reflect the habitual modes of thinking that come from general and conventional knowledge, perceptions and practices embedded in culture)

4. Subjective Motivation (to reflect creative imagination and personal understanding, reflective thinking, and perceptions)

Miller employs similes mostly with intellectual/cognitive motivation for the clarification and elaboration of complex, obscure, and intricate meanings. The second most dominant motivation behind her use of similes is psychological through which she makes unfamiliar or strange more familiar and less menacing. The way she uses similes does not reinforce general cultural perceptions and conceptualizations or reproduce the existing relations and images in the patriarchal order. She is not interested in creating radical, innovative, and subversive ways of expression either. Her figures of speech are subjective rather than cultural and reflect an ecological understanding of the universe with feminist awareness and feminist wisdom.

Anthropomorphic Representations in *Circe*

Anthropomorphism is based on the interpretation of nonhuman things or events in terms of human characteristics. "Perceiving humanlike characteristics in either real or imagined nonhuman agents is the essence of anthropomorphism" (Epley, Waytz, Akalis and Cacioppo, 2008). Anthropomorphism has already become a normative perception and representation. The personification of nature and natural entities has a very well-established and deep-seated pattern that provides conceptual and mental conditioning that determines our relations with other entities. Different theories have been put forward in order to explain what gave rise to the emergence of anthropomorphism. According to *Social Motivation Theory*, social connection is the basic need for humans and in the case of the lack of social connection, it is inevitable for a human to compensate for this lack via anthropomorphizing non-human agents. Anthropomorphism may also result from *Effectance Motivation* which refers to the desire to render non-human behavior comprehensible, controllable, and predictable (White, 1959) for different forms of interactions among human and non-human beings. Similarly, Rips (1975) suggests that anthropomorphism represents an example of induction through which people make inferences about a stimulus that is unknown based on a more well-known representation of a related stimulus. This can lead to anthropomorphizing religious agents (e.g., God) to make them more accessible and available or to perceiving nonhumans as more humanlike (e.g., pets) to overcome their strangeness and perversity and to make them more manageable. According to *A Three-Factor Theory of Anthropomorphism*, the large body of attained knowledge about humans' results in anthropomorphism. The knowledge about human is the essence of anthropomorphism since it is acquired earlier and much more detailed when compared to the knowledge gained about nonhuman agents (Epley, Waytz and Cacioppo, 2007). As a result, cognitive functions like perception and comprehension occur in human terms.

Numerous philosophers, natural scientists, and literary critics have touched on anthropomorphism throughout history, and a great majority of what has been written has a critical tone and calls for a reconsideration of anthropomorphism since it reveals human's failure to appreciate the intrinsic value of other forms of existence because of man's self-centeredness and exaggerated sense of self-importance. Our worldview, according to Spinoza (1670-1951), is merely an extension of our self-perception. Humans have a "universal tendency" to "conceive all beings like themselves," (Hume, 1957, p. 29). Nietzsche believed that all human knowledge is deeply and inescapably anthropomorphic (Stack, 1980). For writers like Nietzsche, anthropomorphism is a mistake that should be avoided at all costs.

However, *Circe* does not anthropomorphize to impose the supremacy or superiority of humans over the other forms of beings. The deities are attributed to the physical and mental qualities of humans in the novel. As W. Johnson (1955) argues, in our perception and construction of Gods, there always exist two oppositional directions due to "our desire for both intimacy and ultimacy in God" (p. 256), and the tension between God's immanence and transcendence. We perceive gods as personal, sub-personal, and as super-personal. By personal, gods are meant to be "characterizable by terms used definitively of human persons" (p. 256). Sub-personal gods are characterized "by terms used definitively of organic and inorganic beings below man in the scale of evolutionary development, or of abstractions from actual beings, or of merely possible beings". Super-personal gods, on the other hand, are "supremely, ideally, or normatively personal", "a being from whom the physical, and moral limitations of human persons have been refined away" (p. 256). Miller's portrayal of Gods is mostly personal and sub-personal and as Johnson suggests, through analogy, the different poles are brought together in some sort of synthesis. The deities in *Circe* share a lot of qualities with other species. Miller playfully demonstrates the irony in the helplessness and inefficiency of Gods in the face of nature. Circe's final decision to transform herself into a human being comes as a challenge to the supremacy of gods and the hierarchical perspectives.

The act of anthropomorphizing divine beings turns upside down the great chain of beings which is based on hierarchy and dualism in the order of the creation. Psychological motivation can be observed in the anthropomorphized representations of Gods in the novel. A transcendental vision of God creates fear and anxiety in men because of the unknown and unpredictable nature of the divine power. In order to overcome this dread and distress, Miller constructs unknowable, unspeakable, and invisible Deities as comprehensible, accessible, and available through anthropomorphism and thus Gods are perceived not as uninvolved, forbidding, and unapproachable but as an integrated and essential part of the life on Earth in the novel. Moreover, by creating Gods with flaws, weaknesses, and errors in judgments, she destabilizes the image of a god as perfect and immaculate.

Anthropomorphism blurs and confuses the distinctive qualities of species. By bringing Gods down to the level of human beings, fauna, and flora, Miller challenges both the ontological and epistemological certainties and transgresses the strict and well-defined boundaries among the different forms and modes of existence. Such an approach in representations problematizes the idea of the difference and superiority of one species over the others. Miller rejects the binary oppositions which keep the species distinct and apart and instead draws attention to the symbiotic relations which

are based on the principles of mutualism and commensalism, which invalidates the supremacy of gods and god-like man.

Zoomorphic Representations in *Circe*

Zoomorphism is "the attribution of animal traits to human beings, deities, or inanimate objects" (VandenBos, 2007, p. 1011). In other words, zoomorphism refers to the representation of divinities and human beings with the attributes of animals. Throughout history, men have tried to explain the social, cultural, psychological, and physical aspects of the human through their likeness to animals. Therefore, it can be stated that animals reflect the way human beings experience and make sense of the world. Rinkauskaite and Selmistraitis (2011) maintain that the social realm is represented through the animal sphere since animals have similar characteristics and people make use of them to analogically produce psychological and physical associations.

Throughout history, animals have been used, in all cultures to reflect the nature of humanity, symbolizing societal and individual characteristics. The traits of individual animals are very simple to observe and recognize, whereas human behavior is more intricate and difficult to describe. Animals are familiar creatures, which mutely encourage projection of people's emotions and attitudes onto them and can be used to convey deep dimensions of human feelings and ideas (p. 33).

The relationship between humans and animals is of cultural significance. Lotman (1988) asserts that metaphorical thinking allows for different expressions of man's "animalistic tendency" (p. 30) in culturally determined artistic and discursive representations. For instance, in African tribes, people decorate their bodies with animal embellishments to represent "transformation and connection through interspecies communication" (Lorenz, 1999, p. 42). Zoomorphic characters such as Spiderman and Batman are also examples of cross-species transmission and hybridity in the modern world (Ulbricht, 2005).

According to Juri Lotman (1988) and Sebeok (2001), in the natural environment the individual acts as the "sender and receiver of informational flows (that is, exchanges with the environment or between/within species)" (p. 65). This is not necessarily verbal communication. In human semiotics, the interaction with other beings is represented in complex ways. "The appropriation of animal behavior through certain zoomorphic metaphors supposes that humans and other beings somehow exchange some kind of information. The semiotization of these *semiotic encounters* is reflected in the "rhetoric order of culture" (Ponce, 2016, p. 242). As Juri Lotman (1988) maintains, early hominids conveyed complex information by imitating the action, sounds, qualities, and behaviors of a predatory animal. Imitating animals as

cultural practices brings out a "character of dialogue" (Lotman, p. 27) that provides ways of communication with the other natural entities. Maran (2001) also suggests that practices of mimicry "connect humans with the rest of nature and which have shaped out cultural consciousness and understanding of nature in general" (p. 334). The interplay between the experience of humans and the experience of animals creates a strong sense of interrelatedness between human and non-human worlds. As Anat Pick and Guinevere Narraway point out, "zoomorphism expresses the interconnectedness of human and other life forms, our implication in and filtering through material networks that enable and bind us" (Pick & Narraway, 2013).

Since the bodies are created as fluid in *Circe*, therianthropy, which is the ability to metamorphose into animal shapes, emerges as a common pattern in the story. The similes of animals in the novel fulfill different functions including attributive function, emotive function, and explanatory function. Miller makes use of animal similes to create vivid mental images in which attributes of animals are assigned to gods or human beings to provide readers with a better and deeper understanding by evoking a sensory experience. The creation of visual pictures with words through the analogy of animals renders whatever is represented more familiar and more accessible. Through the emotive use of animal similes, Miller also evokes a certain emotion or feeling. This strengthens the emphatic effect and generates a more profound, and intense response. Lastly, in the explanatory function, she describes or explains ideas, actions or feelings through the comparison between animals and gods or human beings. In this category, cognitive and psychological motivations are more prominent behind her stylistic choices.

The characters in *Circe* who have zoomorphic features reveal the animalistic nature of humans and gods. In many zoomorphic similes with an attributive function, Miller resembles Gods or human beings to animals to highlight their physical ugliness or unpleasant voice to devalue and devalorize them. Abnormal and strange behavior and attitudes are also described through the similes of animals. This can be taken as a challenge to the otherization of animals on the basis of their supposed inferiority since whatever qualities of animals are considered lowly and unworthy are also possessed by Gods and human beings, which confuses the existential boundaries between the species. In few cases, Miller foregrounds and praises good qualities and virtues such as physical strength and courage through animal images with an emotive function. Representations of gods and humans through the attribution of both positive and negative qualities of animals reflect man's ambivalent attitude towards animals. Animals are both respected and admired but at the same time scorned and disdained by men and gods. This complex and contradictory feeling results from culturally passed codes that value and celebrate man-animal connection and psychological motivation

that urges men to deny their animalistic side. Zoomorphism in the novel also draws attention to the commonality among animals, human beings, and gods in the sense that they are all identified with a combination of good and bad features. Lastly, Miller makes use of animal analogy to describe the manner of action performed by gods or human beings for the purpose of explanation and clarification. The resemblance between the way animals and men carry out their action is also crucial to destabilize the hierarchy of beings.

Examples From the Novel

Attributive function

- "Her eyes are yellow as piss. Her voice is screechy as an owl. She should be called Goat for her ugliness" (M. Miller, 2019, p. 6).

- "His eyes were fixed on the horizon. They were sharp as the eagle he was named for, and could pry into all the cracks of things, like water pricking at a leaky hull" (p. 24).

- "Her ankles are so small and delicate, like the sweetest doe in the forest" (p. 47).

- "A hideous leg. Like a squid's, boneless and covered in slime" (p. 50).

- "My voice is not pleasing to others. I am told it sounds like a gull crying" (p. 81).

Emotive function

- "A strange feeling was rising in me. A sort of humming in my chest, like bees at winter's thaw" (p. 18).

- "Every time she said his name, a fierce eagle love flashed in her eyes. She had him in her grip and would clench him till he died" (p. 151).

Explanatory function

- "The sound of my uncles' laughter was a chaos, the squeaks of dolphins, sea barks, water slapping rocks" (p. 22).

- "What a divinity like...like breezes on a crag. Like a gull, screaming from its nest [...] a Shell [...] a Shell like a clam or like a conch" (p. 24).

- "Glaucos' coming it was all like bees without a sting" (p. 35).

- "She was flailing very strangely, like some sort of drowning cat" (p. 49).
- "His hair was greener than ever, fanned out like a lion's mane" (p. 51).
- "I would see them sometimes, sporting like dolphins in the deepest crests" (p. 52).
- "I felt the sudden urge to throw myself in, like a frog into a pond" (p. 68).

When the zoomorphic similes are examined, it is observed that Miller uses explanatory similes more frequently than the other two types of similes. The emotive similes are the least frequently used type of analogy. Basically, two motivations are more prominent in Miller's use of the attributive similes of animals in the novel. They are either employed to refer to an undesirable and unwanted quality like the ugliness, unattractiveness, and unpleasantness of body and bodily parts, hideousness of voice, or to praise a quality or a virtue which makes one better and greater than other members of the community. In the two cases of emotive similes, Miller foregrounds physical and emotional strength, determination for victory and success, and the weirdness of the felt emotion. In the explanatory similes, Gods and human beings are likened to animals to describe the manner of their bodily actions, responses, sensory performances, and their behavior. In many cases, Miller's similes of animals are not transgressive or subversive. Miller prefers to use traditionally and culturally established analogies. However, what makes her similes striking is that Miller uses the similes with such high frequency and intensity that the reader is automatically encouraged and invited to pay close attention to undeniable and organic ties and connections between different forms of beings and existence. This increases awareness and offers a novel perception and recognition of the naturally existing system in ecology which is based on reciprocal and mutualistic interactions, processes, and partnerships. Moreover, some of Miller's similes are gender-specific and reflect a certain gender ideology. It is usually the female characters who are identified through the analogy of animals like birds, owls, and dogs to refer to the ugliness of their voice, frailty, and physical weakness. It is striking that in these examples, the female characters make themselves fit into the cultural order and display submission and subordination. Male characters, on the other hand, are associated with animals like a lion and an eagle to highlight their positive qualities. Miller's discursive strategy here spotlights the problematic aspects of such cultural attitudes towards genders with a critical tone so that they can be called into question.

Floramorphic Representations in *Circe*

Floramorphism is the ascription of characteristics of plants to people, gods or objects. Resembling humans to the members of flora has always been common and popular in literary discourses for various reasons. Miller's floramorphic similes do not function as rhetorical ornaments. She does not aim to embellish her expressions to make her diction elegant and dignified to achieve stylistic distinctiveness. Miller makes use of floramorphic similes for the elaborate amplification of her holistic view of the universe with interspecies connections.

Miller employs the similes of flowers (lily, lily petals) to signify the beauty, fragility, vulnerability, helplessness, or purity of the characters. In this category, she mostly uses explanatory similes. The similes with emotive function in this category can be rarely observed. The floramorphic similes in the novel are gender-specific in the sense that the majority of the examples refer to the resemblance between flora and female figures. The gendered aspect of such similes reflects the cultural teaching and ideology that supports the idea that the greatest merits of women and plants are their physical beauty, inactivity, and passivity. Miller, by making this cultural perspective prominent, encourages readers to question the patriarchal culture and imagine better alternatives. The most frequently used floramorphic similes refer to a mushroom, tree, leaves, and grass as the source. Miller highlights not only the positive but also negative qualities of deities through the analogy of flora. The analogy of tree, leaves, and mushroom connotes separation, disconnection, loneliness, bareness, and thinness. Grass as a simile, on the other hand, refers to freshness, youth, liveliness, and vividness. So-called female behavioral qualities and responses like cruelty are also represented through flora (e.g. weed).

Examples From the Novel

Attributive function

- "At Minos and Pasiphae's wedding, the huddle of mortals I had glimpsed seemed distant and blurred, as alike as leaves on a tree" (M. Miller, 2019, p. 93).

- "When he placed his hand upon my sister's delicate arm, suddenly, he looked like a tree in winter, bare and shriveled-small" (p. 28).

- "I had forgotten how vivid she was, how beautiful. Even in her pain, she commanded the room, drawing all the light to herself, leeching the world around her pale as mushrooms" (p.105).

Explanatory function

- "Her cruelty springs fast as weeds and must any moment he cut again" (p. 18).
- "Her excitement and innocence, easy and green as grass" (p. 92).
- "Daedalus' face had gone soft as ripe fruit, his eyes full and shining" (p. 122).
- "A man wants a wife like new grass, fresh and green" (p. 149).

Emotive function

- "The rapes and ravishments, the abuses. I found it hard to believe. They (nymphs) looked weak as mushroom gills" (p. 26).

Inanimatemorphic Representations in *Circe*

In the novel, Miller creates a resemblance between deities/human beings and inanimate natural phenomena. There is a variety of types of natural forces "as operating on and affecting us in many ways. The forces take many shapes in the physical world: waves, wind, storms, fire, and agents pushing, pulling, driving, or sending another thing. These forces affect various changes in the thing acted on" (Kovecses, 2010, p. 22). Miller is an acute observer of the natural world and centralizes nature as the organizing principle of perception and understanding of the outside world. As in the zoomorphic and floramorphic representations, Miller draws attention to the interspecific similarities and interactions to reinforce the sense of the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of different species in inanimatemorphic similes.

Examples from the Novels

Attributive function

- "Circe is dull as a rock" (M. Miller, 2019, p. 35).
- "Ours [Lampetia and phaethousa] are bright as fire, and our hair like sun on the water" (p. 7).
- "His [Glaucos] face was like the sand, showing a hundred impressions" (p. 38).
- "She (Scylla) moves like water, does she not?" (p. 45).
- "He was like that column of water he had told me of once, cold and straight, sufficient to himself" (p. 65).

- "All who were wise feared then god Apollo's wrath, silent as sunlight, deadly as plaque" (p. 80).

Emotive function

- "His voice was gentle in my ears, sweet as summer winds" (p. 32) (emotive, auditory)

- "I felt numb, barren as a winter" (p.149)

- "The thought of returning to my father's halls like a white coal in my throat" (p. 35).

Explanatory function

- "In nature," I said. "Poor in possessions, yet rich in spirit and courage, and shining like a star" (p. 37).

- "He sighed. It must be wonderful to be a god and never bear a mark my brother once said it feels like water" (p. 34).

- "A look flashed in his eyes, like teeth in a wolf's mouth" (p. 58).

- "My cousins flowed away from me like water around a rock" (p. 63).

- "Her eyes shone bright as torches. She drew off her veil, revealing hair like the sun on Crete's hills" (p. 143).

- "I said to myself, do not just stand there like a stone. Try something" (p. 72).

- "My Powers lapped upon themselves like waves" (p. 74).

The most frequently used inanimate natural entities for analogy are the sun, star, stone, rock, waves, and wind. There is a recurrent pattern that has been observed in the novel. Miller makes use of water images (ocean, river, stream, and waves), light images (star, sun, sunlight, dawn, lightning strike), and stone images (rock, boulder). The similes with water (waves, stream, river, ocean) can be contrasted with the similes with stone. While the similes with water refer to fluidity, dynamism, mobility, productive force, life-affirming energy and self-sufficiency, the analogies of stone (rock, boulder) suggest disapproval and describe motionlessness, lifelessness, inertia, unproductivity, and low spirit. The sun as a simile has the connotation of brightness, power, light, and might. Miller benefits from the comparison between flora and human/deities to strengthen the effect of her descriptions of the physical qualities, actions, manners, attitudes, and behaviors of divine and human characters to emphasize they are not above or beyond nature but an integral part of nature bearing similar features with other natural entities.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, ecological crises cannot be solved via scientific means only. Solutions require a multidisciplinary approach. It is a multilayered problem whose solution requires fertile interaction among ethics, philosophy, linguistics, and science. Zhou (2017) asserts that "The ecological crisis urges scientists and humanists to synthesize the collective efforts from other disciplines like axiology, environmental philosophy, and ecological ethics to strive for various alternatives to prevent this deterioration" (p. 124). A detailed ecolinguistic study of Miller's systematic choices in *Circe* reveals that her figurative language in the novel contains anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, floramorphic, and inanimatemorphic representations. Miller makes use of similes to liken one entity to another in terms of their physical appearances, attitudes, manners of action, behavioral patterns, and emotional or mental states or to describe a situation, condition and a way of being. She mostly uses similes to illustrate negative and positive qualities in one entity, to praise a merit, to foreground a virtue, or to highlight personal weaknesses and flaws in a critical tone, or to draw attention to abnormal and eccentric behaviors. The second more frequent pragmatic function of similes in the novel is to describe the way action is performed or an event takes place. In the third place comes the description of the mental and psychological states of the characters. The least frequent function her similes fulfill is to describe the external features of physical entities including their shape, sound, or weight.

Miller's well-chosen comparisons do not function as "the sole device of creative literary imagination" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008, p. xii) but through her wit, they turn into a "valuable tool" (p. xii) to raise ecological consciousness and awareness and to reflect her own ecosophic wisdom that rejects deep-rooted hierarchy and dualism among the species. The frequency of the use of the similes in the novel leads to the emergence of perceptual selectiveness. To put it differently, her metaphorical conceptualization motivates our minds to make sense of the complex interspecific relations in a certain way as intended by Miller. Similes provide a more direct way of showing the relations between two things and explain and describe entities with much more clarity and thus influence the mind in a more powerful manner. "Every simile ought to operate on the mind as a clear and obvious demonstration of a thing proposed" (Schultes, 2012, p. xiii). In Miller's figural representations, the culture/nature boundary is bridged through fostering symbiotic relations among the species that accentuate the similarity between "cultural and natural gestures" (Barei, 2015, p. 58). Miller semiotizes the relations among the entities and phenomena of nature from a social and cultural perspective in such a way that liminal subjects that display "transference between spheres" emerge (Barei & Ahumada, 2008, p. 10). It can be concluded that Miller does not valorize or idealize non-human beings. She does not foreground the

superiority of human beings or deities either. What she does through her systematic choices and stylistic use of similes is to draw attention to both positive and negative qualities commonly shared by the species, which can contribute to the construction of more positive interspecific interactions and relations.

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