

Perspectives on Literature, Culture, and Social Imagination

Editor
F.GÜL KOÇSOY



BİDGE Yayınları

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MARRIAGE AND THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF FEMALE OPPRESSION IN ANITA DESAI'S *FASTING, FEASTING*

CHAPTER 1

KADRIYE BOZKURT¹

Introduction

Marriage is a socially accepted and regulated union, a societal institution and a legal contract that establishes the rights and responsibilities of spouses towards each other. As the basis of the family system, the institution of marriage is built on universal foundations such as emotional attachment, cohabitation, mutual support and the fulfilment of psychological, social and economic needs. While the institution of marriage possesses characteristics valid for all societies, it is also shaped by cultural norms, traditions, belief systems and existing ideologies. The existence of marriage and family structures has varied throughout history and between societies, with changing and evolving models emerging. Even within the same historical period, different societies and cultures have had different ideas and practices regarding the institution of marriage. Another noteworthy element is that social and cultural values, as well as prevailing ideological structures and discourses, also exert dominance over the institution of marriage.

In male-dominated societies in particular, marriage is seen as a symbol of power and authority for men, with gender roles being emphasised to the extent that rules are established that prioritise the male gender. This reveals the idea that, within a patriarchal order,

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marriage can be used as a mechanism to restrict women and place them under male authority. In her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), American feminist writer, activist and social critic Betty Friedan argues that marriage is an institution that produces restrictive roles for women. While Friedan does not reject the institution of marriage, she offers significant criticism of the roles and restrictions imposed on women. Indian author and professor Anita Desai's novel *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) illustrates that in societies where the ideal of marriage is subverted, individuals within the institution experience disappointment, loss of rights and even social, psychological, economic and physical violence. The novel highlights how women have been the ones to lose their rights, be subjected to violence, be silenced and be attempted to be subjugated within the institution of marriage, which has become a vehicle for the patriarchal order.

An Analysis of Marriage and the Institutionalisation of Female Oppression in Male-Dominated Societies in *Fasting, Feasting*

Ideally, marriage is the social and legal bond formed by individuals who wish to live together in an environment of love and trust, respecting each other's rights and responsibilities for the rest of their lives. However, as one of the most influential ideologies affecting the institution of marriage, patriarchy plays an active role in shaping it and determining the roles individuals perform within it. In this system, men are assigned the role of head of the household and holder of authority, while women are assigned roles relating to housework and childcare. Men are the primary decision-makers within the family by having the last word, managing its economic affairs and external relationships. Although there are clear distinctions between the roles of men and women in marriage, rigid patterns of thinking prevail regarding issues such as dominance and submission, sexuality, and property. In male-dominated marriage institutions, women are valued more as wives and mothers than as

individuals, and their roles within marriage reflect this. Women whose individuality is disregarded are compelled to fulfil the ideal roles of wife and mother within this institution. Friedan explains the scope of action and offered framework roles for women, particularly in the last 15 years, using American society as an example.

(...) for women, in all columns, books and articles, by experts telling women their role was to seek fulfilment as wives and mothers. Over and over women heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no greater destiny than to glorify in their own femininity. Experts told them how to catch a man and keep him, how to breastfeed children and handle their toilet training, how to cope with sibling rivalry and adolescent rebellion; how to buy a dishwasher, bake bread, cook gourmet snails, and build a swimming pool with their own hands; how to dress, look and act more feminine and make marriage more exciting; How to keep their husbands from dying young and their sons from growing into delinquents (Friedan, 1963: 15).

The sphere of existence of women is defined by the home environment and their household possessions. They are encouraged to take pride in housework, marriage and motherhood. Images of women who use their beauty and femininity to attract men and gain approval are promoted, presenting women with a limited life and role within the male-dominated world. In addition, issues related to women's education have been neglected over time, resulting in an attitude that women themselves have adopted. As Freiden also stated, "They were taught to pity the neurotic, uneminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or physicists or presidents. They learned that truly feminine woman do not want careers, higher education, political rights- the independence and the opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for"(Friedan, 1963: 16). As these statements emphasise, women are taught their roles. Their nature, desires and choices are shaped by male-dominated discourse, which is then imposed on women as if it were their own initiative. Having a career, opening up to the outside world and having a voice are presented as if they were the only options available to women

who failed to get married, causing even women to look down on each other.

As clearly presented through the characters in Anita Desai's novel *Fasting, Feasting*, unfortunately, the institution of marriage does not progress within every society and every relationship within the framework of the ideal definition of marriage, and as Friedan also emphasizes, it can be shaped around taught or imposed roles and values. It is plausible to suggest that the depiction of marriage and gender roles in the novel progresses within the framework of the hierarchical binary oppositions proposed by Jacques Derrida (1930–2004). Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) draws attention to the inherent hierarchy in these binary oppositions (Derrida, 1978: 272). Rather than appearing as complementary opposites that form a harmonious whole, the married couples in the novel are depicted as hierarchical oppositions that exist side by side. Consequently, many of the novel's opposing elements- fasting/feasting, female/male, silence/voice, restriction/freedom, dependence/independence, and private/public- manifest characteristics that constrain and dominate one another.

Unlike many other Indian writers, Anita Desai focuses on the psychological state of her female characters who are oppressed, and on the social and political issues they face. Desai presents India and America as two different settings in the novel, drawing attention to the differences in living standards and culture between the two countries. She also depicts how women in both countries are constrained by the patriarchy and its rules surrounding the institution of marriage, albeit in different ways. The character of Uma appears as the protagonist, representing the oppressed women of India. She comes from a conservative, upper-middle-class Indian family living in Bombay in the late 1970s. Consisting of two parts, the first part of the novel focuses on Uma's experiences and the traditional Indian household. In contrast, the second part recounts her son Arun's

education, life, and extravagant lifestyle in America. Desai does not tell the story in chronological order: the storyline opens in the present, with the family's excitement at sending food and a shawl to their only son, Arun, who is in America for his education. Uma's cousin Ramu visits the family and invites Uma to dinner. Then, through flashbacks, past events unfold, including Uma's school days, her relatives, and her family's struggles and efforts to arrange her marriage. The second part is set in America, where Arun studies and spends his summers with an American family.

The title of the book is significant both literally and metaphorically, highlighting two distinct cultures and the varied experiences of women in these nations. Fasting represents India, with its pious and conservative ideas, as well as its impoverished economy. The poverty-stricken state of India and the poor conditions of women are intertwined. People expect those women in Indian society who are silenced and suppressed to obey the rules. In a country where poverty and helplessness are prevalent, the idea of not having enough food or being unable to meet one's needs is conveyed to the reader through the term 'fasting', which is either a religious term or one chosen for its elegant connotations. This can also be interpreted as a reference to the society's sense of contentment, modesty, and familiarity with the situation. Feasting represents America; its excessive lifestyle and abundance resemble a festive environment. America's wealth is reflected in the mannerisms and conversations of its people. In addition to material abundance, America offers women greater freedom and opportunity in economic, social, and cultural spheres. However, this freedom comes with other restrictions and dissatisfactions. People often lose their sense of reason and become filled with mirth and joy in a festive setting. Therefore, attention is drawn to the American lifestyle, characterized by economic security and a focus on happiness, consumption, and pleasure.

The novel primarily centers on female characters, and Desai effectively depicts women's conditions, offering detailed, realistic portrayals of women with diverse experiences especially those related to marriage. The main issues are the massive disparity between men's and women's lives and the general condition of women in India. While girls are expected to marry at an early age, boys are given various educational opportunities and a brighter future. Girls are expected to learn domestic work, such as cooking and cleaning, and to have children without any control over their own lives. Uma is one of the novel's central figures who experiences its most unfortunate aspects. She exemplifies an oppressed and unhappy woman who rarely voices her opinions and constantly lives under the domination of her family. As she is good-natured and submissive, she is often taken advantage of by her family and other people. She always has to do the housework and serve her family.

After the birth of her brother, she also assumes her mother's responsibilities and cares for her younger brother. The birth of his little brother threatens the education of Uma because the education of girls is seen as a waste of money by the patriarchal mentality, so there is no need for her to be educated. Friedan brings up the similar mindset in the United States in the 1950s with the following words: "A century earlier, women had fought for higher education; now girls went to college to get a husband. By the mid fifties, 60 per cent dropped out of college to marry, or because they were afraid of too much education would be a marriage bar"(Friedan, 1963: 16). Evidently, whether due to family pressure or certain ideologies imposed on young women, the patriarchal system has unfortunately positioned marriage against education and self-development. In the novel, due to the familial responsibilities placed upon Uma, she misses the opportunity to continue her education at the age of fifteen. Even though she is not a successful student, she is eager to learn new things and ask questions at school. Her mother rejects her wish to

attend school, saying, “You know we can’t leave the baby to the servant. (...) He needs proper attention” (Desai, 2002: 31). She then decides to give in to Uma’s marriage at the age of sixteen.

The institution of marriage is presented through the various experiences of characters in the novel. The choice of spouse and the process of marriage emerge as one of the most fundamental issues, revealing the binary opposition/polarity created between men and women in society. In India, girls are unexpectedly accustomed to marriage by their mothers and everyone around them: “There was a time, a season, when every girl for the big, farflung family seemed suddenly ready for marriage” (Desai, 2002: 66) so and every word and action revolve around the topic ‘marriage’. The atmosphere forces single girls to prepare psychologically for marriage. Feeling the same way, Uma hopes for a peaceful marriage, as she is suffocated by domestic responsibilities and constraints at home. Lacking an understanding of the true meaning of marriage, she dreams of a quiet, restful life of freedom. After Uma’s niece Anamika’s wedding, the family decides that Uma is ready for marriage. They send a letter to relatives saying, “Uma is still young but may be considered of marriageable age and we see no reason to continue her studies beyond class eight” (Desai, 2002: 74). Since then, they have begun seeking suitable matches for Uma.

Within the framework of their beliefs and traditions, the mother has some reasons to be so eager to marry off her daughter because “Hindu marriage is a sacrament-for the husband one among many, but for the wife the only one through which she can acquire spiritual gains. (...) If a grown-up woman dies without this sacrament she roams about after her death as an evil spirit” (Mies, 1980: 50). So, Indian women believe in this sacrament of marriage and the concept of evil spirits after death, which is why they put up such a great struggle to marry off their daughters and single female relatives. Unfortunately, Uma is not so lucky when it comes to

finding a suitable match, as she is neither beautiful nor attractive, making it incredibly hard to find a suitor. When Uma's first marriage was arranged by Mrs Joshi, the aunt of Mrs Joshi and her son arrived to meet Uma and her family. During the visit, Uma and the potential suitor never talk; they see only each other's faces. After a while, news arrives from the suitor that he loves Uma's 13-year-old sister, Aruna, rather than Uma. This caused a scandal within Uma's family, who rejected his offer outright. While Uma is not asked for her opinion on her own marriage, the male suitor in the novel readily expresses his views on marriage and even proposes to his potential wife's sister. This clearly illustrates the difference in the freedom men and women have to make decisions and express their opinions.

After her first failure, the mother remains eager to marry Uma and continues to pursue her. They look at a marriage advertisement in the newspaper. There is only one suitable match for Uma: the Merchant's son. The two families meet, and the father and the Merchant discuss the dowry and agree to the marriage. The family is wealthy, owning land and houses. They accept the dowry from Uma's father because it is customary in India for families seeking to marry off their daughters to provide a dowry to the groom's family, enabling the groom's family to prepare the bride's house. Sometime later, the merchant's father sends news that his son has decided to further his education, but says that Uma can either wait for him or break off the engagement. Uma's family realises that they have been cheated, as have many other families in the town. In fact, the dowries they receive from these fake marriages are the source of their wealth.

Since Uma's family's primary concern was to marry her off, Mama never gives up on finding a husband for Uma; she puts an ad in the newspaper with Uma's photos. Even though they put makeup on Uma's face, only one man calls them about marriage. He is an older, overweight travelling salesman. At the wedding, Uma sees the

groom and decides to abandon her unrealistic dreams of the ideal man and marriage. The man is a sullen, sour-faced man without any enthusiasm; he is similar to other cold, proud, and ignorant men. Uma and her family are cheated for the second time because the groom is actually a married man with a family in Meerut. He wants to marry Uma to secure her dowry and save his family from bankruptcy.

The mother finally gives up her attempts to marry Uma; however, it is clear that “Staying unmarried literally makes an outcast of Uma” (Volna, 2005: 7). While Uma struggles with these unfortunate marriage attempts, the beautiful Aruna receives many marriage proposals. As the older, unmarried sister, Uma is like an obstacle in her way. She recalls the earlier period, when she was unsuccessful, and Aruna was praised for her success. Uma is not very good at doing anything except cleaning the house and caring for her baby. Now an adult, Uma feels worthless and unable: she is “the one no one wanted” (Desai, 2002: 88). She even feels a barrier between herself and Aruna and Arun. Neglected by her family and confined to the house, she wants to escape whenever possible, and she will take any opportunity to gain her freedom. When Dr Dott offers her a job running a dormitory, she accepts the offer. However, Mama rejects the offer, saying that she needs her at home because she is unwell. Uma says nothing about her eagerness to get the job and her desire for freedom.

Her obedience and silence confined her to the house. Regretting missing out on this job offer, Uma uses her father’s locked phone to call Dr Dott. She says it is necessary to speak with Uma’s mother to obtain her permission to employ her. At this point, it is vital to understand the extent of Uma’s confinement through her father’s reaction. When her father discovers that she has used the phone, he says, “costs Money, costs Money, never earned anything in her life, made me spend and spend on her dowry and wedding.

Oh, yes, spend till I am ruined till I am a pauper” (Desai, 2002: 146). Uma is not allowed to continue her education or work, and then her family complains about her needs and expenses. Her passive, naïve, and obedient nature meant she stayed at home and looked after her family. The only hope for Uma comes in the form of Ramu, her eccentric, carnivorous, Bombay-dwelling cousin, who offers to take her out. The present seems to give Uma free will in the novel, but this is not obvious.

Desai uses the character of Anamika to reflect a new perspective on the condition of women. Unlike Uma, Anamika is a successful, beautiful and good-tempered girl. Anamika is described as “a blessed one, she is beautiful and lucky, unlike her misfortunate brother Ramu” (Desai, 2002: 68). Anamika is an outstanding student, and she achieves a scholarship to Oxford: “Oxford, where only the most favoured and privileged son could ever hope to go! Naturally her parents wouldn’t countenance her actually going abroad to study” (Desai, 2002: 68). Anamika’s family uses the acceptance letter to advertise her as a prospective bride. It is ironic that the opportunity for a good education is available only to males, who study day and night to attain it. Although Anamika’s success with this scholarship is evident, it is one of the qualifications her family uses when searching for a husband. They lock the letter in a steel cupboard and proudly show it to every visitor and suitor.

There is a suitor who wants to marry Anamika. He is an old, grim-faced man who is proud of his medals and degrees. Acting superior, he shows no interest in Anamika’s beauty. Here, Desai explains men’s intentions behind marriage: “Men tolerate women and marriages because it is a custom, and because she would, by marrying him, enhance his superiority to other men. So they had to tolerate her” (Desai, 2002: 70). Marriage for men is a way of showing their superiority in a male-dominated society, not because of love or desire for a woman’s beauty. Uma’s lack of physical

attractiveness is seen as the reason for the breakdown of her marriages. Anamica's beauty, good nature, and success cannot help her establish a peaceful family life. She is confined by her mother-in-law's and husband's orders and wishes. There are rumours that she has been beaten by her mother-in-law and that her husband permits it. Even the order in which meals are eaten reveals the hierarchy between men and women at home: first the men eat, then the children, and finally the women. Anamica is the last person to eat and receives only what remains in the pot, although she spends her entire time preparing meals for the large family and performing other kitchen tasks. This attitude is one of the most beautiful examples of the coexistence of hierarchical opposites that Derrida has put forward. It is clear that women do not even come after men; even their own children are given status before women. As a married woman Anamica fulfils all the roles of a servant in this family.

Women's vulnerability and lack of protection are highlighted by the rumours about Anamika's miscarriage. She is said to have suffered a miscarriage after being beaten, which doubles Anamika's uneasiness, because most Indians believe that "woman is created only to enable man to continue his species through sons and gods" (Mies, 1980: 41). She cannot give birth again, which means "she is flawed" (Desai, 2002: 72). Friedan's statements about being a housewife and mother are quite consistent with the situation of Anamika: "As a housewife and mother, she was respected as a full and equal partner to man in his world" (Friedan, 1963: 18). Questions have been raised regarding her future and whether she will return home. Anamika's sole purpose – and her sole focus – is to serve her mother-in-law and husband. She puts aside her own identity and wishes in the process. Even her own family does not protect her, believing that this marriage is her fate, and telling her to be patient with her husband and mother-in-law. Anamika's family is

entirely indifferent to her suffering and refuses to provide her with any shelter.

The death of Anamika is under suspicion. She set herself on fire and killed herself by wrapping a nylon sari around her neck and knees. Similar cases have been investigated many times in India under dowry death and domestic violence laws. In these cases, the deaths of married women were initially reported as kitchen accidents, but there is a general suspicion that domestic violence may have been a factor. Apparently, there are rumours about this death. Neighbours suspect her mother-in-law of killing her with her husband because she had a miscarriage and may not be able to have a baby again. The mother-in-law has previously accused Anamika of planning her own death. Anamika's family does not attempt to find out the real reason for her death, treating it as if it were a very ordinary and common incident. Unfortunately, Anamika's intelligence and beauty do not make it likely that she will have a good husband and family, as no one around her appreciates these qualities. They only say it is fate: a fate characterised by male domination, torture at the hands of her mother-in-law, family ignorance, and a desperate life that ends in tragic death.

Aruna is one of the most fortunate women, both in the past and in the present. Aruna enjoyed much more comfortable conditions and more flexible rules than Uma did while growing up. She had the opportunity to experience things that Uma did not, and to do things that Uma was not allowed to do. Aruna wears floral clothes and goes out with her friends. She is pretty and attractive now, so she can choose a handsome, wealthy, educated man among many suitors. She has everything Uma wishes she had. Her wedding is ostentatious and unconventional. Arvind, Anamika's husband, works in Bombay, so they moved there. Aruna's life is like a dream, and she enjoys moving up to the next level with her wealthy life. Once, Aruna even said to her mother, "You people are villagers" (Desai, 2002: 105).

She rarely visits her family, but when she does, their upper-class manners, expensive clothes, and naughty behaviour draw attention and make the family uncomfortable. Aruna's husband and mother-in-law do not interfere in her business, and she is free to do whatever she wants. Moreover, she gets angry with her husband if he does something wrong. Unlike Uma and Anamika, Aruna is not confined to domestic life, but she is captivated by upper-class manners and vanity. She creates a perfect, wealth-filled world in her mind and confines herself to it.

The mother character is another character who is confined to the roles assigned to women within the patriarchal system and the institution of marriage. Mama symbolizes the traditional Indian mother. She lives with Father as if they are one entity. Although they have separate bodies, they make decisions together and rarely disagree. Most of the time, Mama obeys the father's instructions. The depiction of women as loyal, trusting, faithful, and forgiving in Hindu mythology is similar to that of a submissive wife and follower of a patriarchal system, such as Mama. Mama thinks that a woman should live her life for her husband's social standing. Although she is late in her pregnancy and it is risky to have a baby, she regards it as an opportunity for her husband to have a son. They already have two daughters so a son would be a blessing for the father in a male-dominated society. The family's eagerness for a son is so apparent that the second daughter's name, Aruna, is a reflection of the expectation of a son named Arun. When his son is born, Father dances with excessive happiness. Supporting her husband, Mother adheres to conventional ideas. She criticises modern views on women and marriage. She does not allow Uma to return to school; instead, she requires her to care for her brother and assist with household chores. Marriage is her daughter's primary concern, so the mother's aim is to marry her off to a wealthy, educated husband.

As a traditional woman, she has strong faith in the sanctity of marriage.

The novel features strong, free-spirited female characters, such as Mira Massi and Dr Dutt. Mira Massi is a widow and a religious woman who continues her rituals despite her old age. She travels frequently to temples and ashrams, and when Uma joins her on one of these pilgrimages, she finds an opportunity to escape her family's oppression and daily chores. Dr Dutt is a fifty-year-old unmarried working woman. It could also be claimed that the fact that one is widowed and the other is unmarried provides the grounds for these characters to live freely and without constraints. Although the father acts in a Westernised manner and tolerates her because of her high status, he does not like this female figure. These two women are not appreciated by their father, particularly because he does not want them in his house. Having these women around is not acceptable to him, especially in his family, because he thinks they could set a bad example for his daughter and go against traditional Indian life. The father's reaction can be interpreted as a sign of disapproval from a male-dominated society towards independent, free-spirited women who have their own ideas and are not dependent on men.

Alongside these female characters, who are trapped mainly by the patriarchal system, Desai presents excerpts from the enviable life of the male protagonist, Arun. As the only son, he receives all of his parents' attention. One of the clearest examples of the contrasting opportunities afforded to girls and boys within the family is the way the family treats Arun compared with the girls. In order to provide Arun with a prosperous future, his father does his best to support his education, with tutors coming to the house for every lesson and his father cancelling all his meetings and parties with friends to attend the courses. The father also prepares the paperwork for Arun's application to study abroad. These efforts on Arun's behalf

demonstrate the differential treatment that daughters and sons receive in society. As mentioned in the novel, these two sexes are socialized into various roles: “Sisters—who were, after all, being raised for marriage by Mama. (...) Papa insisted on in the realm of home and family then it was education for his son, the best, and the most, the highest” (Desai, 2002: 118). Although they come from different families, on one side, there is Anamika, a daughter who won a scholarship to Oxford but was forced into marriage, and on the other side, there is Arun, a son whose parents hired tutors so he could study abroad and whose documents were personally prepared by his father. In society, women are like shadows of men. Men walk one step ahead and set the rules that women are forced to obey. Men have far more opportunities for a better life than women’s confined existence.

Paradoxically, the novel depicts the father’s excessive care for his son, Arun, as a form of domination; the parents follow his every move and try to shape his life. Arun’s privileged treatment does not mean that he is free to live his own life. Although his sisters regard him as lucky and privileged, he remains constrained by the social roles expected of men. He is expected to assume responsibilities such as obtaining a good education, securing a prestigious job, and enjoying a prosperous future. This is why, after Arun goes to America, his family receives only superficial, simple letters from him, devoid of intimacy. In America, he wants to live his own life, free from any outside interference or responsibilities. He does not want to speak to anyone from India who will remind him of his life in captivity in India. “He had at last experienced the total freedom of anonymity, the total absence of relations, of demands, needs, requests, ties, responsibilities, and commitments. He was Arun. He had no past, no family and no country” (Desai, 2002: 172). America is a land of liberty for him, free from the oppression of his father’s expectations and responsibilities. By leaving his country, he

wants to leave his past experiences behind him too. Desai explains the reason why she gives wide publicity to a male character with these words:

Specially in my earlier work I found myself addressing the same things over and over again: very much about the life of women, specially those women who are confined to home and family, also the solitude from which a person can suffer even if living within a big family or surrounded by crowds. But after several years and several books I began to feel suffocated myself by the confinement of these subjects. I felt I was limiting the territory to such an extent that it created a kind of suffocation even for me. So I deliberately opened the doors, to widen the canvas, and started writing more about male characters and their lives, because I felt they had a wider experience of the world, and I could address a greater variety of experiences (Manu and Yadav, 2018: 72)

It is clear that Desai is trying to reveal that the patriarchal system not only limits the movement of women but also controls men's lives. The difference is that an oppressive life with limitations and imprisonment is presented to females, while a prosperous life is given to males as a reward for these limitations. In any case, Arun's character reflects another aspect of patriarchy, showing the stress and hardship of being male in a male-dominated society.

Throughout Arun's time studying in America and living with an American family, Desai has the opportunity to compare the two countries with respect to domestic life, gender roles, and the status of women. People living in different parts of the world share their stories, culture, and beliefs through multicultural literature. In multicultural literature, down-to-earth characters rather than generalised or stereotypical narratives present a true reflection of life. This allows individuals from minority or ethnic groups to be perceived without prejudice or generalisation. For this reason, Desai gives voice to women in both India and mainstream white America. The real-life stories of Indian women demonstrate that women's experiences across countries and groups are essential and valuable.

Furthermore, women's experiences can differ significantly and sometimes be strikingly similar, as it is suggested that:

Multiculturalism increasingly stands for a desire to rethink commons in the humanities- to rethink both their boundaries and their function. It also stands for a desire to find the cultural and political norms appropriate to more heterogeneous societies within and across nations, including norms for the production and transmission of knowledge (Chicago Cultural Studies Group, 1992:531).

Clearly, life in India and America is very different. The former has strict conventional rules, while the latter is a world full of freedom. Indian families often pressure their daughters to do housework, get married, and serve their own family, mother-in-law, and husband. The immediate family is very important in India, but the extended family also has an impact on people's lives. In contrast, American children grow up in a relaxed atmosphere. Even in the novel's depiction of an American family, the mother and father do not spend time together; they pursue independent activities and are unaware of each other's lives. The family is like a set of separate individuals without any sense of belonging. On the one hand, there is a strictly bound but oppressive Indian family; on the other hand, there is a free and separated American family.

In terms of female characters, Mrs Patton and Melanie are key figures in understanding the condition of women in American society. It could be argued that American society is also dominated by men. Although Mrs. Patton appears to be free from her husband's limitations, she is not as free as she believes. She is caught in the traps of American consumerism, always wanting to go shopping and buy new things. She feels lonely at home as no one cares for her, and she eats her meals alone. Her father does not spend enough time with her. Thus, the overly protective family type in India has been replaced in America by family types in which family members live apart and value individuality. Melanie is a typical example of an American teenager, obsessed with being slim and beautiful. She is

indifferent to the outside world, and the only thing she cares about is her body's beauty. According to her brother Rod, she "wants to turn herself into a slim chick" (Desai, 2002: 204), and so she vomits after eating sweets or other food. Melani does not eat the meals her mother cooks. Consequently, she looks ill and pale.

After discovering her illness, Mrs Patton sends her to an institution that deals with depression, hysteria, anorexia, and other diseases. The family is pleased to hear good news about her progress, such as her eating meals and making friends, as she had not had any friends before. The same pressure on women regarding their appearance is evident in Mrs. Patton. When she goes shopping with Arun, a cashier asks her if she is pregnant, which makes her angry. Then Mrs Patton begins sunbathing in the backyard of their home and pays more attention to her appearance. In a consumer society, the female body is treated like a commodity. It is a 'thing' that can be moulded to produce a standard of beauty and size. Desai emphasises that in both cultures, women cannot express their individuality. They are oppressed by people or the system.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the novel *Fasting, Feasting* illustrates how the patriarchal system produces silent, obedient and submissive female characters and imposes this on women. The author embraces cultural diversity, viewing people from different cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and religions as part of it rather than as 'the other'. While using binary oppositions to highlight the differences between India and America, the author also reveals the similar constraints that women experience under the patriarchal system in different countries. Female characters are subjected to various constraints and control mechanisms within the institution of marriage. As Friedan also points out, marriage can only be healthy when the partners are equal; otherwise, it becomes an institution that restricts women's

development. As exemplified in the novel, this can even lead to tragic endings. At the same time, the author sheds light on the position of sisters Uma and Aruna within the family, using the value placed on their brother Arun as an example of Derrida's concept of hierarchical oppositions. Through contrasting geographical settings, Desai illustrates how the patriarchal system, operating universally, shapes various institutions, particularly marriage, in accordance with its own objectives, reflecting a system of domination and authority.

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CHAPTER 2

JEREMY COLLIER AND THE MORAL IMAGINATION OF RESTORATION ENGLAND: THEATRE, VIRTUE, AND SOCIAL ANXIETY IN *A SHORT VIEW* (1698)

1. Sinan GÜL¹

Introduction

This study analyzes Jeremy Collier's *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) to explore how Restoration theatre was perceived as a site of moral and social danger. Across its six chapters, Collier develops a sustained critique of the stage, arguing that contemporary plays encourage vice, profaneness, and libertinism, corrupt audiences, and undermine both private virtue and public order. He supports this argument through a wide range of evidence: comparisons with classical drama, close readings of contemporary plays, and the authoritative judgments of Church Fathers, ecclesiastical councils, and civil codes. My thesis is that Collier's text functions not only as a moral and religious indictment of Restoration drama but also as an early attempt to theorize the social and psychological effects of theatre, situating it at the intersection of literary criticism, moral philosophy, and cultural history. By tracing Collier's use of classical, contemporary, and ecclesiastical authorities, this article demonstrates how he constructs a coherent moral argument against the stage while illuminating

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broader tensions between pleasure, virtue, and civic responsibility in late seventeenth-century England.

Collier's *A Short View* offers a systematic and multi-faceted critique of Restoration theatre, blending moral philosophy, literary criticism, and historical precedent to expose what he perceives as the dangers of contemporary drama. Across its six chapters, Collier examines the stage from multiple angles: he begins by assessing the immodesty and profaneness of plays, contrasting them with classical and Christian ideals of decorum and morality (Chaps. I–II). He then considers the specific abuses inflicted on the clergy and on social hierarchies by theatrical representations, before analyzing how dramatists encourage vice and reward libertinism through their characters and plots (Chaps. III–IV). The text moves from close readings of individual plays and poetic forms, including the *Mock-Astrologer*, *Amphytrion*, and *The Relapse*, to broader reflections on theatrical conventions, the misuse of stage music, and the misrepresentation of human passions (Chap. V). Finally, Collier situates the English stage within a longue durée of cultural and moral authority, appealing to the judgments of classical philosophers, Roman legislators, Church Fathers, and ecclesiastical councils to argue that the theatre has long been censured for its moral risks (Chap. VI). Throughout, his critique is informed by the ethical currents of late seventeenth-century England, particularly the moral philosophy of natural virtue, Christian doctrine, and the emerging notion of theatre as a public and social institution. By juxtaposing historical precedent, textual analysis, and theological authority, Collier constructs a sustained argument that Restoration drama, in its contemporary form, undermines virtue, education, and social order while offering a lens through which to examine the tensions between pleasure, morality, and civic responsibility in early modern England.

Collier's attack on the late seventeenth-century stage rests on a tightly interwoven set of rhetorical and moral strategies designed to frame the theatre not merely as a flawed institution but as an existential threat to Christian society. Collier constructs his argument on the premise that playwrights are active agents of cultural decay, presenting them as a collective whose works have "debauched the age" more than any other influence. This foundational moral claim enables a rhetoric of urgency: if the stage is the chief corrupter of public virtue, then Collier's intervention becomes a civic and spiritual necessity. His language relies heavily on moral absolutism, refusing any middle ground between artistic freedom and ethical discipline. By depicting dramatists as enemies of "Vertue and Regularity," he transforms aesthetic disagreement into a battlefield of good versus evil, thereby making moderation or compromise appear morally suspect. His most striking rhetorical move is the analogy between playwrights and "Foot-Pads" who not only rob but murder—an image that elevates theatrical indecency from mere impropriety to a deliberate assault on conscience itself. Here Collier's moral logic becomes clear: vice is dangerous not simply because it entices behaviour, but because it destroys the very principles that regulate behaviour. This shift from external conduct to internal moral architecture distinguishes Collier from earlier Puritan critics; he argues that the stage is pernicious precisely because it undermines the epistemological grounds of virtue, rendering conscience a "Bugbear" and moral choice unreasonable. His insistence on linguistic clarity—rejecting euphemisms like "mistress" and "lover"—further supports this project, since corrupt language, he claims, leads to corrupt judgement. In this framework, rhetoric becomes a tool of moral restoration: to name vice plainly is to contain it, and to expose theatrical immorality is to defend the fragile structure of Christian social order.

Collier opens his argument by establishing a crucial rhetorical baseline: the theatre's "business," he insists, is to "recommend Virtue, and discountenance Vice," grounding his polemic in a teleological definition of drama as a moral instrument rather than an autonomous art. This normative premise allows Collier to frame his critique not merely as a matter of taste but as a defence of the stage's "rightful" function against its degenerate modern form. In the *Introduction*, Collier deploys a strategic contrast between the theatre's potential—its power to move the audience through "Show, Musick, Action, and Rhetorick"—and its present "misbehaviour," a technique that turns the stage's aesthetic strengths into the very measure of its ethical corruption. He likens theatrical spectacle to "Cannon seized," a striking militarized metaphor that transforms poetic artifice into a weapon commandeered by vice, thereby elevating his argument from cultural complaint to moral emergency. Chapter I extends this rhetoric by attacking the Restoration stage's "Immodesty" through a method of strategic abstention: Collier pointedly refuses to quote the "Rankness" of modern comedy, claiming that the passages are too foul to repeat, thus preserving his own decorum while generating an aura of contamination around his opponents. His examples—from *The Country Wife* to *The Double Dealer*—are marshalled not for close reading but as moral exhibits, illustrating a theatre that violates both natural propriety and Christian virtue by placing obscene speech in the mouths of women, aristocrats, and even tragic heroines. This emphasis on violated decorum is central to Collier's strategy: by arguing that modern dramatists strip women of their "native Modesty," he converts aesthetic analysis into a defense of social hierarchy and gendered virtue, implying that the stage's indecency destabilizes broader norms of civility. Both the *Introduction* and Chapter I thus work together to construct a rhetorically fortified position in which the theatre is judged not only by its content but by its perceived social consequences. Collier's argument depends on

collapsing aesthetics into ethics: to him, obscenity is not merely a stylistic fault but a sign of cultural disorder, a corruption of taste that signals the erosion of moral instinct itself.

A further dimension of Collier's rhetorical strategy emerges when he shifts from cataloguing offences to diagnosing the philosophical error behind them. Throughout *A Short View*, he repeatedly insists that the stage has become an enemy to conscience because it teaches audiences to laugh at moral seriousness. As he declares, "Nothing has gone farther in Debauching the Age, than the Stage Poets, and play-house," (Collier, The Preface) a line that crystallizes his belief that theatrical wit functions as a corrosive epistemology rather than as harmless amusement. Collier argues that the comic stage "makes a Jest of Sin," and that this habitual ridicule trains spectators to regard vice as "harmless Liberty" (ibid, 5). His concern is not merely behavioural corruption but moral anaesthesia: "When People are taught to be Ashamed of Shame" (ibid, 10), he warns, they are in a fair way to be past all Remedy. This use of aphoristic moral logic allows Collier to transform specific textual complaints into universal ethical principles, enabling him to frame Restoration comedy as a system of moral deformation rather than an artistic form with occasional flaws. Even more revealing is his critique of the way playwrights depict religious figures, whom they "expose...to Contempt," (ibid, 58) thereby encouraging spectators to scorn the very institutions that sustain social order. These quotations demonstrate how Collier uses concise moral maxims to give his argument the force of general truth: the theatre is not simply indecent in isolated moments, but structurally aligned with mockery, impiety, and the erosion of virtue itself. In this way, Collier's rhetoric amplifies his moral thesis: the stage is dangerous not because it shows vice, but because it trains the mind to admire it and laugh at what should command reverence.

Collier's lengthy dissection of Aristophanes in *A Short* opens an illuminating window into his broader polemical method—one that depends on a hierarchical comparison between the “right” ancients and the morally wayward moderns. His critique relies on a carefully orchestrated contrast: the ancient authors whose authority he embraces (e.g., Aristotle, Plato, Sophocles, Euripides) versus Aristophanes, whom he casts as an outlier, even a corrupter of antiquity. As Collier insists, Aristophanes' precedent “signifies nothing in the case, since ‘the best Philosophers and Poets, Criticks and Orators, both Greek and Latin, both Antient and Modern, give the Cause against him’” (p. 37). What follows is an extraordinary catalogue of Aristophanic impieties, improprieties, and absurdities, offered to show that the comic poet is not a standard but a deviation. On Collier's account, Aristophanes is not merely licentious but fundamentally impious—“a downright Atheist” whose *Nubes* ridicules Socrates, “a Person of great Sence and Probity” who sought to restore theology “to the Standard of Natural Religion” (pp. 37–38). By portraying Socrates as a buffoon who teaches that “the Clouds are the only Deities” (p. 38), Aristophanes, Collier claims, aligns himself with those who mock providence and “the Distinctions of Good and Evil” (p. 42). This association of indecency with atheism is crucial: for Collier, aesthetic disorder directly reflects moral and theological disorder. This is why he can move seamlessly from Aristophanes' impieties toward the gods—such as making Bacchus and Hercules “talk Smut and rally like Link-boys” (p. 45)—to his dramatic “Absurdity” and “want of Judgment” (pp. 43–44): the one proves the other. A comic poet who mocks divinities cannot, in Collier's logic, produce coherent characters or maintain decorum. Thus Aristophanes becomes the archetype of everything a poet must not be: irreligious, inconsistent, sensational, and philosophically unserious.

Seen within a larger seventeenth-century intellectual landscape, Collier's polemic draws heavily on neo-Stoic, Christian humanist, and civic republican conceptions of art as a moral instrument. His insistence that a poet must "form the Audience to Virtue" and avoid "Lewdness" (p. 49) echoes the moral pedagogy found in Renaissance commentaries on Aristotle and Horace—particularly the widely diffused neo-Aristotelian view that poetry is a civilising force whose purpose is *prodesse et delectare*. Moreover, Collier's argument resonates with the era's philosophical anxiety over skepticism and irreligion, especially after the Glorious Revolution, when Hobbesian materialism, freethinking, and revived "ancient atheists" became polemical spectres. Collier belongs to a lineage of anti-theatrical critics who "employed a critical style and method modelled after Rymer" and "cited authorities from Aristotle to Dryden" to frame his attack (Cannan, 87). His method of reading Aristophanes through the lens of Socrates' theological "refinements" positions classical antiquity not as a monolith but as a field of moral exemplars and corruptors—a distinction that maps neatly onto the social and moral anxieties of Restoration England. In this respect, Collier participates in a broader seventeenth-century moral classicism, one indebted to patristic readings of pagan authors, Erasmus's Christian humanism, and neo-Stoic virtue theory (especially Lipsius), all of which aimed to sift the ancients for models of civic integrity. Thus his critique of Aristophanes also becomes a critique of the Restoration stage: if even the ancients can fall into impiety and indecorum, how much more must modern playwrights be censured? By constructing Aristophanes as a negative classical authority, Collier secures a larger principle—that true art aligns with virtue, and that the Restoration stage, much like Aristophanes, has strayed from the proper moral and philosophical lineage of antiquity.

From Oaths to Blasphemy: Collier's Theology of Theatrical Transgression

The second chapter II titled as “The Profaness of the Stage” sharpens and radicalizes the ethical logic sketched in his Preface and Chapter I by treating theatrical profanity as a theological as well as a moral offense. He opens the chapter by naming two clustered sins—“Their Cursing and Swearing” and “Their Abuse of Religion and Holy Scripture”—and immediately exemplifies the first by insisting that the modern stage abounds in “their wishes of Hell, and Confusion, Devils, and Diseases, all the Plagues of this World, and the next, to each other” (Collier, *A Short View*, p. 57). For Collier, swearing is not mere coarse ornamentation but a form of contempt so serious that it “brings in God to attest our Trifles” and therefore “renders [divinity] cheap and despicable” (Collier, p. 58). He repeatedly links this verbal irreverence to systemic impiety: when playwrights trivialize prayer, Scripture, and sacrament—turning the “Holy Rhetorick” into stage-jest—they do not merely offend sensibility but dismantle the cognitive and moral architecture that makes virtue intelligible (Collier, p. 69). Hence his rhetorical strategy in Chapter II is to translate moments of comic “smartness” into proofs of theological subversion: the comic device (oaths, biblical allusion, mock-rites) becomes evidence that the dramatist trains audiences to “make God, and Goodness contemptible” (Collier, p. 76).

Reading Collier alongside recent scholarship helps explain why he frames profanity as a species of cultural emergency rather than mere bad taste. Critics of Collier have shown that his attack fused moral pedagogy with a broader seventeenth-century anxiety about irreligion and social order: as Michael Corder observes, anti-theatrical charges about profanity often functioned as part of a larger campaign to reassert civic and religious norms against the perceived libertinism of Restoration comedy (Corder 2000, pp. 209–12).

Aubrey Williams likewise situates Collier in a contested public sphere in which priests and playwrights staged competing accounts of virtue; Collier's insistence that theatrical irreverence fosters skepticism and moral laxity reflects contemporaneous fears about scepticism, freethinking, and the social effects of theatrical imitation (Williams 1975, pp. 234–40). In short, Collier's Chapter II continues the move we traced earlier—collapsing aesthetic transgression into theological heresy—by arguing that (Collier, pp. 57–60).

In an extended comparison between ancient and modern dramatic traditions, Collier names with striking precision the playwrights and works he considers morally dangerous, thereby sharpening his larger argument that the “Moderns” are far worse than the Pagans. He begins by rehearsing the faults of classical authors—Terence, Plautus, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Seneca—but immediately qualifies their impieties by insisting that the ancients operated without Christian revelation and that their “Gods were Beings of ill Fame” (Collier, pp. 86–87). These examples serve as a launching pad for his real target: Restoration dramatists, whom he accuses of unprovoked, self-delighting irreligion. The pivot comes when he names John Dryden, censuring *Cleomenes* for its “Scene of a Famine” in which “the greatest part...is spent in impious Rants, and Atheistical Disputes,” a pattern so offensive that Collier mockingly notes that “This Scene...Mr. Dryden calls a Beauty” (pp. 92–93). Collier likewise attacks the playwright's representation of Cleora, whose lurid speech about nursing—“At last it drew so hard that the Blood follow'd”—he denounces as a symptom of moral and aesthetic decadence, proof that modern poets “love to say the worst Things in the best manner, to perfume their Poysons, and give an Air to Deformity” (p. 93). By framing Dryden's modern irreligion against ancient dramatic decorum, Collier constructs a moral hierarchy: even when Aeschylus or Sophocles allow characters to “bluster” against heaven, they always correct them through choral

rebuke or divine punishment, whereas the English stage “blaspheme[s] for their Pleasure” and leaves its “Madmen...very seldom reckon’d with” (pp. 94–95). The force of Collier’s critique thus lies not only in identifying who offends—Dryden foremost—but in showing why: because unlike the ancients, modern playwrights celebrate impiety, render blasphemy aesthetically attractive, and thereby “weaken the force of Conscience, and teach the Language of the Damn’d” (p. 96).

Representing the Sacred: Collier’s Indictment of Theatrical Attacks on the Clergy

Collier’s assault on the stage’s treatment of the clergy in Chapter III of *A Short View* extends his broader moral–philosophical argument that the Restoration theatre corrodes public virtue by aestheticizing irreverence and destabilizing the epistemic authority of moral instructors. Collier claims that playwrights “shoot chain’d-shot, and strike at universals,” launching an attack not merely on “the Men,” but on “the Business” of the priesthood itself (Collier, 98). For Collier, this is not simply a literary fault but a civic crisis: by rendering clergy ridiculous—through scenes of manipulation, drunkenness, or sexual duplicity—the stage undermines the very institutions responsible for maintaining ethical order. His anxiety resonates with the period’s broader debate about moral epistemology: since he maintains elsewhere that liberty cannot be restrained and moral principles cannot prevail over pleasure unless the clergy are first discredited, the theatre emerges as a rival pedagogic institution that trains spectators to view moral authority as inherently hypocritical. Critics such as James Sutherland have noted that Collier’s polemic is driven by a conviction that “dramatic poetry shapes the manners of a nation” (Sutherland 1976, 112), which aligns with Collier’s insistence that theatrical satire fosters a public habituation to vice by habituating its audience to laugh at sacred offices. Deborah Payne Fisk similarly argues that attacks on

the clergy in Restoration comedy perform a cultural work of relativizing religious authority at a moment when confessional identity was politically charged (Fisk 2000, 133). The examples Collier cites—Dominick the “pimp” in *The Spanish Fryer*, Harcourt’s mock-divinity in *The Country Wife*, Sparkish’s ridicule of clerical “college look,” or the chaplain in *The Orphan* who flatters aristocratic pride—serve as case studies in what Collier interprets as the theatre’s systematic attempt to produce a public imaginary in which the priesthood is equated with imposture, servility, or lewdness. This, for Collier, amounts to a civic deformation: the stage, by fictionalizing clerical vice as comic pleasure, teaches spectators to internalize suspicion toward institutions that traditionally mediate conscience, thereby eroding the very moral infrastructure that his neo-Aristotelian framework assumes to be necessary for virtue. Modern scholars such as Laura Rosenthal observe that Collier’s anxieties stem from the theatre’s “capacity to generate alternative forms of social knowledge” (Rosenthal 1996, 57), a capacity that, in Collier’s reading, becomes dangerous when used to desacralize the cultural authority of religious office. Thus the rhetorical energy of Chapter III, with its catalog of profane scenes and scurrilous epithets, exemplifies Collier’s larger philosophical claim: that dramatic representation is never neutral but always a form of moral pedagogy with direct consequences for the ethical formation of the polity.

In the later section of Chapter III, Collier meticulously catalogues the stage’s abuse of clergy by tracing specific playwrights and their characters, underscoring his claim that the English theatre has “always been out of Order, but never to the Degree ’tis at present” (Collier 1698, 127). He references Ben Jonson, noting that even in works such as *The Silent Woman*, Jonson includes clergy and civilians, but with a “handsom Excuse” that preserves the honor of the professions, demonstrating the contrast between careful satire

and wanton ridicule (127). Collier then turns to Beaumont and Fletcher, identifying plays such as *The Scornful Lady* and *The Spanish Curate*, where priests are transformed into fools or knaves, figures “brought in on purpose to make sport, and disserve Religion” (127–128). By naming these authors and their works, Collier signals his perception of a moral decline: whereas earlier dramatists maintained a balance between comedic effect and ethical propriety, contemporary playwrights, he argues, neglect the dignity and social authority inherent to the clergy. This critique is reinforced by his historical and philosophical arguments regarding the priesthood’s social and divine legitimacy. He emphasizes that clergy, from Josephus’ Aaronic line to the Egyptian and Persian priesthoods, were consistently integrated into the political and intellectual hierarchies of their societies, exercising both civil and religious authority (129–132). By presenting these genealogical and comparative examples, Collier frames his objection not merely as personal offense but as a defense of institutional and divine order: to mock the clergy on stage is, in effect, to attack God’s authority and the social structures that hinge upon religious legitimacy (133–134). Collier’s focus on specific names—Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, and characters like Cutberd and Morose—thus serves a dual purpose. First, it demonstrates the concrete literary practices that, in his view, violate the principles of decorum and moral pedagogy. Second, it situates his critique within a broader philosophical discourse on authority, conscience, and the civic function of religious office, aligning with his neo-Aristotelian concern for the theatre as a space that should cultivate virtue rather than habituate audiences to irreverence and disorder (Sutherland 1976, 112; Rosenthal 1996, 57). In this way, Collier’s analysis of named plays and playwrights exemplifies his methodological strategy: a precise literary critique grounded in historical, ethical, and theological reasoning, demonstrating how satire becomes dangerous when it confuses the failures of individuals with the dignity of the office they hold.

In Chapter IV, Collier extends his critique of the stage from its treatment of the clergy to the moral constitution of its principal characters, arguing that Restoration dramatists systematically conflate virtue and vice by rewarding the latter with social and romantic success (Collier 1698, 141–145). He insists that nature delineates vice and virtue in “very Legible Distinctions,” yet the stage actively blurs these lines, presenting lewdness and irreligion as marks of honor and breeding (141). Collier enumerates a series of notorious examples—from Wildblood, Bellamy, and Lorenzo to Valentine in *Love for Love*—whose vices, including atheism, debauchery, and betrayal, are paradoxically rewarded, thereby providing models for emulation rather than censure (142–143). This moral inversion resonates with his earlier critique of the clergy in Chapter III: just as playwrights misrepresent priests and thereby undermine religious authority, so too do they misrepresent ethical conduct, conferring prestige and pleasure upon vice. Collier situates his analysis within a philosophical and historical framework, invoking the classical tradition of Plautus, Terence, and Horace to demonstrate that the ancients intended comedy to instruct and refine moral sensibilities, rewarding virtue and punishing vice in accordance with the natural and social order (149–151). He underscores that while Dryden and other modern poets appeal to classical precedent to justify the felicity of libertine heroes, such defenses are inadequate: unlike the pagan context of Plautus or Terence, Christian society imposes moral and spiritual penalties upon vice, making its stage valorization not merely a literary choice but a social hazard (149). In connecting Chapters III and IV, Collier’s argument emerges as a coherent ethical philosophy of theatre: the misrepresentation of both religious office and moral character threatens the public’s capacity for reasoned conscience, erodes the social authority of virtue, and cultivates a taste for disorder disguised as refinement (Collier 1698, 141–145). Through his meticulous cataloging of named characters and plays, Collier enforces a neo-

Aristotelian vision of drama as a medium that ought to educate the audience, preserve social hierarchies, and align with divine and civic order—thus linking his theological concerns from Chapter III with a broader cultural philosophy of pleasure, instruction, and moral example (Sutherland 1976, 112; Rosenthal 1996, 57).

In Chapters III and IV of *A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage*, Collier constructs a sustained ethical critique of Restoration drama, linking the misrepresentation of religious authority with the moral inversion of theatrical characters. In Chapter III, he enumerates playwrights such as Ben Jonson, Beaumont, and Fletcher, noting how even in works where priests and clergy appear, their representation is often distorted for comic or satirical effect—priests are made fools in *The Scornful Lady* or knaves in *The Spanish Curate*, and their social and spiritual authority is undermined (Collier 1698, 127). Collier grounds his concern in theological and historical reasoning: priests possess inherent authority due to their relation to God, their civic and religious function, and the longstanding social privileges of the priesthood across cultures, from the Aaronic line in Judaic tradition to the Brahmin caste in India and the Vestal priestesses of Rome (130–133). Misrepresenting them on stage, Collier argues, is tantamount to an affront against God and the social order itself, reflecting his broader philosophical commitment to the alignment of theatrical representation with moral and divine law (134–138).

Chapter IV extends this critique to the general moral fabric of the stage, focusing on the treatment of principal characters. Collier laments the prevalence of libertine heroes such as Wildblood, Bellamy, Lorenzo, and Valentine in *Love for Love*, whose vices—atheism, lewdness, and betrayal—are rewarded with marriage, wealth, and social esteem (142–143). He contrasts these modern tendencies with the classical models of Plautus, Terence, and Horace, who, though occasionally permitting vices in their

comedies, consistently framed them within a moral and social economy that distinguished virtue from vice and rewarded the former (149–151). The philosophical underpinning of Collier’s argument is neo-Aristotelian: the stage is an educative instrument, meant to cultivate reason, conscience, and social sensibilities. When vice is adorned with honor and pleasure, audiences—particularly youth—risk moral corruption, while religion, social authority, and civility are rendered unstable (141–146).

Taken together, Chapters III and IV reveal Collier’s overarching ethical philosophy of theatre. The misrepresentation of clergy and the celebration of vice are two sides of the same moral disorder: both subvert established hierarchies of divine and civic authority, and both encourage imitation of improper conduct. Collier’s textual examples, drawn from specific Restoration plays and characters, serve not merely as literary commentary but as evidence of a cultural crisis in taste and virtue, one that conflates amusement with instruction in a manner contrary to the models of classical, Christian, and civic morality (Sutherland 1976, 112; Rosenthal 1996, 57). In this way, Collier presents a coherent vision of drama as a medium that should instruct, refine, and uphold the social and religious order, linking his critique of theatrical vice with his defense of clerical authority and, more broadly, his concern for the moral education of the English public.

In Chapter 4 of *A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage*, Collier constructs a careful moral critique of Restoration comedy by examining the treatment of vice and virtue across representative plays. He opens with Vanbrugh’s *The Relapse*, focusing on the character of Face, whose persistent deceit might seem objectionable. Collier emphasizes that the poet anticipates such criticism: “Face continued in the Cousenage till the last without Repentance. Under favour I conceive this is a Mistake. For does not Face make an Apology before he leaves the Stage? Does

he not set himself at the Bar, arraign his own Practise, and cast the Cause upon the Clemency of the Company?" (152). Here, Collier argues that Vanbrugh carefully embeds moral accountability, signaling the audience to recognize the wrongdoing. In contrast, characters like Wild-Blood and Jacinta in *The Mock-Astrologer* enjoy success without acknowledgment of fault. Yet even in these instances, Collier invokes Ben Jonson as a corrective standard: "The Mock-Astrologer urges Ben Johnson's *Silent Woman* as another Precedent...Dauphine confesses himself in Love with the Collegiate Lady's...yet this naughty Dauphine is Crowned in the end with the Possession of his Uncles Estate" (153). Although Jonson's characters may initially appear morally lax, Collier stresses that in works such as *Fox*, "the Poets end in this Play was the Punishment of Vice, and the Reward of Virtue...How ever he is pleased to commend the Performance, and calls it an excellent Fifth Act" (153), demonstrating that Jonson embodies a model in which comedic pleasure is tempered by ethical resolution. Shakespeare, too, provides precedents for this moral economy: Falstaff, despite his comical exploits, "goes off in Disappointment...The Pleasure he had given, would not excuse him" (154), showing that even humor cannot fully absolve vice. Similarly, Flowerdale in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Prodigal* attains fortune only after repentance, illustrating Collier's observation that the stage often enforces moral correction through narrative consequences (154–155).

Collier extends his argument to a broader philosophical and social framework, considering the role of pleasure in comedy and its ethical limits. While Dryden's *Mock-Astrologer* claims delight as the chief end of comedy, Collier critiques the dangers of unrestrained amusement, arguing that it risks normalizing vice and profanation: "To laugh without reason is the Pleasure of Fools...The exposing of Knavery, and making Lewdness ridiculous, is a much better occasion for Laughter" (156). He supports this position by appealing to

authorities such as Aristotle, Quintilian, and Rapin, while citing Jonson's prescriptive vision: "That 'tis impossible to be a good Poet without being a good Man...a Poet...able to inform Young Men to all good Discipline, and enflame grown Men to all great Virtues" (157–158). Collier also highlights social proprieties, criticizing the stage when it fails to respect rank and gender: nobles are lampooned, and women speak smuttily, as in the *Spanish Fryar* or *Love Triumphant* (170–176). By weaving these literary, moral, and philosophical references together, Collier constructs a rigorous argument: comedy may entertain and delight, but it must operate within the bounds of ethical instruction and social propriety, balancing laughter with the maintenance of virtue. His use of Jonson and other canonical playwrights provides both precedent and authority, allowing him to measure Restoration comedy against an ideal of moral and poetic discipline.

Judging the Playhouse: Collier's Case Studies in Profaneness, Blasphemy, and Dramatic Misconduct

In Chapter 5, Collier continues his systematic critique of Restoration drama by evaluating the moral, religious, and aesthetic proprieties of select plays, including Dryden's *Amphitryon* and *King Arthur* as well as Dufey's *Don Quixote*. He scrutinizes Dryden's *Amphitryon* for its extravagant depiction of Jupiter, whose divine omnipotence is paradoxically entwined with extreme licentiousness. Collier observes that Jupiter "express[es] himself in the most intemperate Raptures...willing to Renounce his Heaven for his Brutality, and employ a whole Eternity in Lewdness" (178), highlighting how vice becomes the spectacle itself, rather than the moral consequence of action. This transgression is exacerbated by the complicity of Alcmena, whose consent retroactively endorses the god's debauchery, and by other deities such as Mercury and Phaebus, whose behavior is described as "horribly smutty and profane" (184–185). Collier contrasts Dryden's liberties with classical exemplars:

Plautus's Jupiter maintains decorum despite boldness, Terence's Chaerea tells stories cleanly, and Homeric and Virgilian deities preserve grandeur without descending into obscenity (180–181). The critic underscores both aesthetic and ethical concerns, arguing that the spectacle of vice in a divine context risks desensitizing audiences: “Ribaldry is dangerous under any Circumstances of Representation” (181). Similarly, Dryden's *King Arthur* conflates Heathen and Christian cosmologies, angels and devils, and serious theological motifs with playful fantasy. Collier emphasizes the irreverent treatment of hell and the damned, noting that they become “a mighty Refreshment to a lewd Conscience, and a byass'd Understanding” (190), suggesting that theatrical entertainment here cultivates atheistic or libertine sensibilities rather than moral reflection.

Durfey's *Don Quixote* receives parallel censure for three related failings: profaneness, clerical abuse, and disregard for audience propriety. Religious transgression dominates, with passages satirizing creation, the Resurrection, and the Redeemer, the latter even applied to Don Quixote himself: “This adorable Name (Redeemer and Dear Redeemer,) is applied to the ridiculous Don Quixote” (198). Clergy are equally lampooned, from curates assisting in Don Quixote's knightly ceremonies to priests mocked as “a Pimp of a Priest” (201), granting comic license to characters of low station to verbally assault clerical authority. Collier further notes the unbridled coarseness of the play: sexual humor, bodily functions, and grotesque imagery—ranging from “Snotty-Nose, filthy Vermin in the Beard, Nitty Jerkin, and Louse Snapper, with the Letter in the Chamber-pot” (203)—are presented without regard for propriety. Collectively, these criticisms underscore Collier's central argument: the Restoration stage, when unrestrained by decorum or moral hierarchy, encourages vice, irreligion, and aesthetic disorder, whether in the debasement of divine figures, the trivialization of

sacred authority, or the coarseness of its social satire. Both Dryden and Dufey are thus positioned as emblematic of a theatrical culture that prioritizes entertainment and scandal over ethical or formal propriety.

Collier extends his critical framework by analyzing Congreve's *The Relapse*, framing it as a successor to Dufey's *Don Quixote* in its bold liberties with morality and dramatic form. He situates the plot around Young Fashion, whose scheming and libertine behavior dominate, noting that the title—*The Relapse* or *Virtue in Danger*—misleads: the narrative rewards vice rather than virtue, as Fashion's deception and rakeship secure him fortune and prominence (210–211). Collier views this as a fundamental ethical flaw, illustrating his concern that Restoration comedy often glorifies cunning, blasphemy, and libertinism under the guise of wit. He critiques the play's structural improbabilities, highlighting compressed journeys, uncharacteristic credulity in cautious figures, and episodic coincidences that breach the Aristotelian and Rapsinian unities of time, place, and action, while secondary characters such as Lovelace, Amanda, and Berinthia remain peripheral to the main plot (215–218; 230–231). Character and manners likewise fail, as Berinthia and Sir Tun-belly's daughter display excessive levity, and Young Fashion's manipulative discourse or misplaced humor in other figures undermines both plausibility and decorum (219–225). Collier condemns the language as profane and morally corrosive, noting recurring oaths, coarse jesting, and clerical satire, compounded by the author's Preface, which feigns ignorance of objectionable content while disparaging the clergy (232–233). Overall, Collier's reading demonstrates a coherent critical philosophy: unrestrained Restoration drama risks narrative incoherence and ethical distortion, rewarding vice while neglecting plausibility, social rank, and the instructive potential of comedy, and

his commentary seeks to uphold drama as both an aesthetic and moral medium.

Collier's critical philosophy consistently emphasizes the moral and structural responsibilities of the Restoration stage. Across his analyses of Dryden, Dufey, and Congreve, he identifies recurring failures: plays reward vice rather than virtue, distort character and manners, and violate the principles of plausibility and unity. In Dryden, Collier critiques the opportunistic liberties of libertine heroes whose wit and audacity secure social and romantic success, often at the expense of ethical propriety. Similarly, Dufey's *Don Quixote* is scrutinized for its moral laxity and excessive indulgence in whimsical contrivances, which obscure the play's ethical orientation. In Congreve's *The Relapse*, these concerns crystallize: Young Fashion's scheming and debauched behavior dominate the plot, secondary characters remain detached from the main action, and improbable coincidences and breaches of the unities of time, place, and action compromise the play's plausibility (210–231). Collier also denounces inappropriate manners and profane language, noting that characters such as Berinthia and Sir Tun-belly exhibit behaviors inconsistent with their social rank or education, while the play's blasphemous and coarse discourse further erodes moral decorum (219–233). Taken together, these critiques reveal Collier's vision of drama as both a reflective and corrective medium: the stage must balance wit and ingenuity with ethical clarity, social verisimilitude, and structural coherence, lest it cultivate vice under the guise of entertainment.

In Chapter 6, Collier broadens his moral and aesthetic critique by situating the English stage within a long historical and transnational discourse on theatrical vice. He structures his argument around three authoritative sources: classical philosophers, civil and ecclesiastical law, and modern examples, thereby demonstrating that concerns over the stage's moral influence are neither novel nor

culturally isolated. Drawing on Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, and Tully, Collier emphasizes the pedagogical and ethical dangers of theatre: plays, by stimulating passions and presenting immoral actions, risk perverting youth, undermining virtue, and fostering societal disorder (234–237). Roman historiography, from Livy to Seneca, reinforces this view, portraying theatrical spectacles as occasions for civic distraction and moral decay, a perspective echoed by Ovid and other poets who link dramatic display to sexual licentiousness and corruption of manners (237–240). Collier’s survey of state censure and English law—from Athenian regulation to Elizabethan statutes against unlicensed actors—underscores the institutional acknowledgment of these dangers, illustrating a persistent wariness toward theatrical influence across cultures and epochs (240–243). Modern examples, such as French attempts to curb indecency on the stage in the late seventeenth century, demonstrate the continued relevance of these moral concerns (243–244).

This chapter complements Collier’s earlier critique of *The Relapse*: while Chapter 5 focuses on specific dramaturgical and ethical failings in Restoration comedy—structural improbabilities, character incongruities, and the celebration of vice—Chapter 6 situates these failings within a broader historical and philosophical tradition. The classical and legal authorities he cites provide a framework that legitimizes his condemnation of Congreve: the play’s moral subversion is not merely a stylistic or technical lapse but part of a longstanding pattern in which theatre risks fostering vice and social disorder. By juxtaposing the historical record with contemporary Restoration practice, Collier reinforces his dual concern with aesthetic coherence and ethical responsibility, presenting the stage as a medium whose pleasures must be tempered by reason, virtue, and social accountability.

Reception and Reappraisal: Collier in Later Criticism

Collier's work has long been recognized as a cornerstone of late-seventeenth-century moral and literary debate, exemplifying the tension between the libertine theatrical culture of the Restoration and the ethical authority of the Church. Collier's pamphlet combines passionate censure of contemporary drama with meticulously reasoned appeals to historical, theological, and literary authority, drawing on Church Fathers such as St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and St. Hierom, as well as later moralists like Didacus de Tapia. By intertwining moral philosophy, rhetorical precision, and literary critique, Collier frames theatre not merely as entertainment but as a potent force capable of shaping the character, passions, and conscience of its audience. His work strategically mobilizes canonical Christian authorities alongside acute observations of contemporary theatrical practice, situating itself within wider intellectual currents concerning reason, virtue, and the social effects of pleasure, while anticipating Enlightenment anxieties about public morality and education. Understanding these strategies and the philosophical, ethical, and literary foundations of Collier's argument provides the necessary context for evaluating how later scholars have interpreted the pamphlet's significance, influence, and place within Restoration theatrical culture.

Scholarly assessments of Jeremy Collier's *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) consistently position the pamphlet as both a culmination of late-seventeenth-century anti-theatrical sentiment and a catalyst for the transformation of Restoration dramatic culture. R. D. Hume argues that Collier's attack did not emerge in isolation but rather "crystallized and legitimized" existing moral anxieties circulating in the 1690s, helping to accelerate a shift already underway toward more restrained forms of comedy (Hume 1976). Anthony Rose's foundational study similarly demonstrates that Collier's intervention sparked an extended controversy in which playwrights such as

Congreve and Vanbrugh mounted sophisticated defenses of the stage, revealing that the debate was less a simple moral denunciation than a complex public negotiation over the social uses of drama (Rose 1937). P. D. Cannan underscores the methodological novelty of Collier's critique, observing that his systematic citation of passages from contemporary plays distinguishes him from earlier anti-theatrical polemicists and marks an early example of text-centered dramatic criticism (Cannan 2006). More recent scholarship has reframed Collier not as the sole architect of the theatre's moral "reform" but as one agent among broader cultural, religious, and demographic shifts shaping theatrical taste; Laura Rosenthal, for instance, stresses how anxieties about sexuality, commerce, and spectatorship in the 1690s formed the larger cultural matrix in which Collier's critique gained traction (Rosenthal 2006). Likewise, Harold Love situates Collier within the period's increasingly interventionist regulatory structures, noting how his pamphlet resonated with evolving ideas of censorship, print control, and moral governance (Love 2001). Taken together, these studies demonstrate that the *Short View* was neither a singular moral thunderbolt nor a mere ideological relic, but a strategically crafted intervention whose influence derived from its ability to articulate—and intensify—ongoing debates about the ethical, political, and cultural function of Restoration drama.

Conclusion

Collier mounts a comprehensive moral and social critique of the theatre by appealing to the authority of early Christian writers, classical philosophers, and later moralists. He draws extensively on St. Chrysostom, St. Hierom, and St. Augustine, highlighting their consistent condemnation of public entertainments for fostering vice, lewdness, and moral indifference. Collier combines these citations with reasoned hypotheticals, illustrating how mere exposure to theatrical spectacles—through lewd songs, amorous plots, or

displays of revenge—can corrupt conscience and inflame passions, even among the virtuous. He extends his critique to the mechanics of performance, arguing that music, gesture, and dramatic representation serve to excite desire, distract reflection, and reinforce immoral tendencies. By integrating authorities like Didacus de Tapia, he shows the continuity of this moral stance into later centuries, framing theatre as a persistent threat to both personal virtue and social order. Even granting the artistic skill of actors or composers, Collier concludes that the stage's deleterious effects on conscience, education, and civic decorum leave it without legitimate defense, making his case as much practical as theological, persuasive by authority and reason alike.

In conclusion, Jeremy Collier's *Short View* articulates a forceful moral-aesthetic philosophy that both critiques the Restoration stage and reaffirms a classical-Christian ideal of drama. Across his chapters, Collier diagnoses the vices of his contemporary playwrights — their irreverent language, reward of libertine characters, and theatrical sensationalism — and grounds his critique not merely in personal outrage but in a broader philosophical tradition. He insists that plays should “*recommend virtue, and discountenance vice*”(Collier, p. 1), echoing the classical didacticism of Plato, Aristotle, and Horace, whom he repeatedly invokes (e.g., Plato banishing poets from his ideal commonwealth).

Importantly, Collier also connects this classical ideal with Christian moral authority. In his final chapter, he draws on the Church Fathers — notably St. Chrysostom, St. Hierom, and St. Augustine — to argue that the theatre is not a neutral form but a morally perilous one, capable of corrupting conscience, fostering concupiscence, and undermining Christian discipline. By doing this, he positions his argument within a moral-classical synthesis: he does not reject the power of dramatic art, but he contends that its potential must be harnessed by reason, virtue, and religious responsibility.

From a broader literary-historical standpoint, Collier's pamphlet marks a critical moment in the moral backlash against Restoration comedy. His work catalyzed what became known as the "Collier Controversy," sparking a wave of pamphlet debate about the purpose of drama. Scholars such as Aubrey Williams have shown that Collier's critique drew upon a deeply conservative, moral-reformist impulse that resonated widely; his pamphlet sold multiple editions quickly, reflecting a growing "climate of moral consciousness" around the turn of the eighteenth century.

Moreover, Collier's influence helped pave the way for later literary shifts: his denunciation of *wrights who reward vice* contributed to the rise of sentimental comedy, a genre that emphasized virtue, emotional sincerity, and moral reformation over the cynical, libertine wit of Restoration plays. In this sense, Collier can be seen as not only reactive — condemning what he sees as theatrical corruption — but also proactive, advocating a theatrical ideal rooted in ethical purpose, social order, and theological seriousness.

In sum, Collier's *Short View* is more than a moral pamphlet: it is a philosophical statement about the responsibility of art, a challenge to playwrights to align their craft with virtue, and a historically significant intervention in the evolution of English drama. By marrying ancient moral theory with Christian doctrine, Collier stakes a claim for a theatre that does not merely entertain, but instructs, reforms, and upholds the moral fabric of society.

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CHAPTER 3

DIGITAL SEAS AND SOLASTALGIA: ECOPSYCHOLOGY, VIRTUAL MEMORY, AND MARINE KINSHIP IN *THE MEMORY OF ANIMALS*

1. Ahmet ÖZKAN¹

Introduction

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerating climate collapse, a new strain of fiction has emerged that entwines psychological trauma, technological mediation, and ecological mourning. Claire Fuller's *The Memory of Animals* (2023) exemplifies this turn, merging the intimacy of pandemic isolation with the vastness of marine ecology and virtual immersion. Set in a near-future London ravaged by a viral outbreak and environmental degradation, the novel follows marine biologist Neffy as she participates in a clinical vaccine trial gone awry. Trapped in quarantine with a small group of survivors, she retreats into the Revisor, a virtual-reality device that allows users to relive personal memories and experience reconstructed seascapes. Through Neffy's oscillation between digital immersion and embodied memory—her recollections of rescuing an octopus named *H*—Fuller's narrative

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probes the question of whether technological nature can heal the psychological rupture between human and environment, or whether it simply reproduces the alienation that caused it.

Recent reception frames *The Memory of Animals* as a “pandemic dystopia turned introspective eco-parable” (Loon, 2023), while *Publishers Weekly* (2023) emphasizes its “tender balance of claustrophobic grief and oceanic wonder.” Carlill (2024), comparing Fuller’s novel with Jess Richards’s *The High House* (2022), identifies a shared atmosphere of eco-grief—characters haunted not only by global collapse but by their inability to act. Fuller extends this lineage of climate fiction into the marine domain, situating solastalgia—the pain of ecological loss—within the digitized mind. Fuller’s Revisor device literalizes the technological unconscious of the Anthropocene, staging a psyche that longs for the sea while remaining confined to the sterile interior of a laboratory. Whereas April De Angelis’s *Extinct* (2021) dramatizes communal mourning through theater (Zampaki, 2025), Fuller internalizes the process through virtual experience, translating environmental grief into immersive memory loops. In this sense, *The Memory of Animals* stands at the intersection of ecological fiction and digital ethics, dramatizing the paradox of virtual ecotherapy: technological nature appears at once palliative and perilous.

The novel’s preoccupation with healing, alienation, and nonhuman kinship resonates strongly with the intellectual trajectory of ecopsychology, a discipline that since the 1990s has sought to reconnect psychological well-being with ecological belonging. Theodore Roszak’s foundational *The Voice of the Earth* (1992) argued that modern pathologies stem from “the repression of our ecological unconscious,” the psychic dimension that links individual sanity with planetary health. Roszak proposed that “the needs of the planet are the needs of the person, and the rights of the person are the rights of the planet” (p. 14), establishing what he called the

ecological self. Following this insight, Howard Clinebell (1996) developed ecotherapy, describing it as a mutual healing process in which “we restore the Earth and ourselves together.” Andy Fisher’s *Radical Ecopsychology* (2013) advanced the field into critical terrain, insisting that psychological practice must confront industrial and technological alienation, for “ecopsychology cannot be merely therapeutic; it must also be transformative.” These thinkers converge on the premise that disconnection from the natural world is not simply cultural but psychogenic—a wound of perception.

Peter Kahn Jr.’s *Technological Nature* (2011) and his collaborative volume with Patricia Hasbach, *Ecopsychology: Science, Totems, and the Technological Species* (2012), extend this framework into the digital age. Kahn observes that contemporary humans increasingly experience “secondhand nature”—mediated by screens, simulations, or architectural proxies—arguing that while such encounters can partially fulfill biophilic needs, they risk “shifting the baseline” of what counts as natural (Kahn et al., 2008). This adaptation, though psychologically convenient, may erode our capacity for authentic ecological empathy. Hasbach (2012) calls this predicament the “*technological species condition*,” in which humans must relearn how to live as biological beings within technological systems. Fuller’s *Revisor* dramatizes this tension. It offers emotional relief through virtual seascapes, yet it also estranges the user from the sensuous, tactile reciprocity that defines the ecological self. The novel thus offers a narrative laboratory for testing ecopsychology’s central claim—that genuine healing demands embodied reconnection, not simulation.

The Conceptual Triad: Solastalgia, Biophilia, and Eco-Anxiety

The psychic landscape of *The Memory of Animals* can be mapped through three interlinked concepts that have come to define environmental affect in the twenty-first century.

Solastalgia, coined by Glenn Albrecht (2007), denotes the “homesickness one experiences while still at home”—a grief born from witnessing the degradation of one’s familiar environment. Unlike nostalgia, which looks backward to a lost home, solastalgia emerges amid the ongoing transformation of one’s habitat. As Albrecht et al. (2007) explain, it is “the distress caused by environmental change impacting people while they are directly connected to their home environment” (95). This condition, as elaborated by Cunsolo and Ellis (2018), manifests as ecological grief, encompassing sadness, guilt, and disorientation in response to ecosystem loss. In Fuller’s novel, solastalgia is internalized, as Neffy’s world collapses not through forced migration but through digital retreat. Her “home” becomes the Revisor’s virtual ocean—an archive of vanished marine life that both soothes and torments her. Cunsolo and Landman’s *Mourning Nature* (2017) frames such mourning as a potential catalyst for ethical action; yet in Neffy’s case, the therapeutic becomes addictive, echoing what Pihkala (2022) describes as the oscillation between despair and transformation characteristic of eco-anxiety.

Biophilia, introduced by E. O. Wilson (1984) and expanded by Kellert and Wilson (1993), refers to the innate human affinity for life and life-like processes. Wilson defined it as “*the urge to affiliate with other forms of life*” (p. 1), suggesting that our evolutionary history has woven the experience of nature into the structure of emotion and cognition. Yet biophilia also implies vulnerability, because when the living world is degraded, the psyche suffers—and Fuller translates this instinct into a marine idiom. Neffy’s attachment to octopuses—creatures of intelligence and fluid embodiment—embodies a biophilic yearning for kinship beyond species boundaries. Her compassionate acts toward *H* recall Donna Haraway’s (2016) call to “*make kin, not babies*,” and Astrida Neimanis’s (2017) description of bodies as “*watery archives*” that

blur human and oceanic boundaries. Neffy's empathy thus functions as ecological resistance against the sterile instrumentalism of her clinical environment.

Eco-anxiety, as conceptualized by Panu Pihkala (2020, 2022), captures the affective continuum from fear and guilt to empowerment in the face of environmental crisis. Rather than a pathology, eco-anxiety is a sign of moral attunement. Pihkala (2022) proposes a dynamic model in which anxiety may evolve into “*eco-agency*” if accompanied by community and meaning. Recent studies (Galway & Field, 2023; Sköld, 2025) elaborate this emotional spectrum, contrasting paralyzing *climate melancholia* with productive mourning. In Fuller's narrative, Neffy's confinement intensifies eco-anxiety. She fears both viral contagion and oceanic extinction. Her reliance on the Revisor becomes a coping mechanism that alternately relieves and reinforces her despair. Thus, Fuller transforms abstract ecological theory into affective phenomenology—solastalgia felt through biophilic memory, eco-anxiety modulated by digital mediation.

Empirical research supports these interconnections between nature contact and psychological health. Bratman et al. (2019) synthesize evidence that exposure to natural environments reduces rumination and enhances cognitive restoration, while White et al. (2023) propose a biopsychosocial resilience model linking green space with mental well-being. However, the substitution of virtual nature for real nature complicates this relationship. Meta-analyses reveal that actual natural settings improve mood more reliably than simulated ones (Browning et al., 2020), though immersive VR can still elicit measurable benefits (Mostajeran et al., 2023; Suseno et al., 2023). The key question, then, is whether such mediated experiences cultivate durable ecological consciousness or merely temporary relief—a question Fuller's Revisor brings to narrative life.

Virtual Ecotherapy and the Revisor

The therapeutic potential of virtual environments has gained increasing attention in psychology and digital health. Annerstedt et al. (2013) demonstrated that sounds of nature delivered through VR can induce physiological stress recovery, while Kim et al. (2023) confirmed VR's efficacy in mitigating COVID-19-related distress. Recent studies (Ramos et al., 2025; Ahn et al., 2025) show that even brief VR nature sessions reduce anxiety and improve sleep, and Jones and Li (2024) found that virtual ocean exposure enhances "*ocean connectedness*." Maggipinto and Hammer (2025) explicitly frame such technologies as "*transformational play*," fostering more-than-human empathy through interactive marine environments. Yet scholars like Guerra-Tamez (2025) warn that post-pandemic resilience built on digital immersion may encourage avoidance rather than adaptation. Fuller's novel anticipates these findings, as Neffy's use of the Revisor provides only transient calm while deepening her dissociation from physical reality. In Kahn's (2011) terms, the device exemplifies *technological adaptation*—a coping strategy that satisfies biophilic desire while perpetuating ecological amnesia.

Kahn et al. (2008) famously illustrated this dilemma through their "plasma window" experiment, where office workers exposed to a large digital display of natural scenes reported improved mood yet gradually accepted the simulation as adequate replacement. This phenomenon is often termed the shifting baseline problem. It encapsulates the danger Fuller dramatizes: the human capacity to normalize substitution. Roszak's ecological self finds here its digital counterpart—a self-comforted by projection rather than participation. As Fisher (2013) cautions, "the more we substitute representation for relation, the more the psyche withers." In *The Memory of Animals*, the Revisor functions as both lifeline and warning, serving as a seductive portal that turns memory into a

commodity and healing into recursion. Neffy's solastalgia becomes a feedback loop of remembrance without renewal.

Digital Environmental Humanities and the Marine Turn

To grasp Fuller's intervention fully, it is essential to situate her within the *Digital Environmental Humanities (DEH)*, an interdisciplinary field that interrogates how digital technologies mediate environmental knowledge and affect. Stacy Alaimo's *Bodily Natures* (2010) introduced the notion of *trans-corporeality*—the idea that human and technological bodies are porous within ecological systems. In Fuller's novel, trans-corporeality materializes as digital liquidity. The boundary between Neffy's mind and the Revisor's seascape dissolves, embodying what Alaimo calls "material interchanges that transgress human exceptionalism." Jussi Parikka's *A Geology of Media* (2015) expands this logic to the mineral substrate of digital devices, reminding readers that VR is itself an extractive ecology; the silicon and rare earths that compose the Revisor implicate it in the very destruction it seeks to assuage. James Bridle's *Ways of Being* (2022) proposes a counter-vision of planetary intelligence distributed across biological and artificial systems. From this perspective, Fuller's Revisor is not simply escapist but symptomatic of an emergent digital biophilia—a yearning for connection re-routed through code.

Marine-oriented digital theory deepens this reading. Mel Jue's *Wild Blue Media* (2020) and Steve Mentz's *An Introduction to the Blue Humanities* (2024) both argue that oceanic metaphors destabilize terrestrial epistemologies, inviting "fluid" modes of thought and ethics. Fuller's protagonist, a marine biologist confined to a lab, embodies this disjunction because her identity as an ocean-dweller persists only through virtual immersion. As Meyer and Persson (2022) caution, even the metaphor of "ocean health" can be misleading, implying mastery rather than reciprocity. Fuller subverts

this trope by rendering the ocean not as patient but as memory—alive, sentient, and ethically demanding. Within the broader DEH discourse (R, 2023; Ponce de León-Calero, 2024), the Revisor functions as a digital-ecological archive, preserving multispecies memories against erasure. Yet it also dramatizes the peril of entrusting ecological remembrance to proprietary technology, echoing Alaimo’s warning that “the traffic between bodies and environments is never innocent.”

Fuller’s narrative unfolds within pandemic temporality—a suspended present where past and future collapse. Neffy’s repetitive VR sessions mimic the recursive patterns of trauma memory described in ecological grief studies. Pihkala (2022) conceptualizes eco-anxiety as a “loop of awareness and helplessness,” in which the mind circles around loss without resolution. Fuller translates this psychology into form, as the novel’s fragmented structure mirrors Neffy’s fractured perception. Bratman et al. (2015) and Engemann et al. (2019) show that real-world nature exposure reduces rumination, yet Neffy’s virtual exposure intensifies it—her solace becomes solipsism. Thus, the novel stages an ecopsychological experiment by asking what happens when biophilic yearning meets digital mediation under conditions of global crisis; Fuller’s answer is ambivalence. Technology can simulate the aesthetics of nature but not its reciprocal agency. The sea within the Revisor is responsive to code, not tide.

By merging ecopsychology with digital humanities, Fuller participates in a broader intellectual movement toward what might be called *Digital Ecopsychology*—an inquiry into how technological environments shape ecological consciousness. In *Technological Nature*, Kahn (2011) warns that as people acclimate to simulations, their “psychological baseline for nature” declines. Roszak (1993) had already anticipated this when he wrote that the ecological self “cannot awaken through data alone but through sensory reciprocity

with the living Earth.” Fuller’s Revisor offers data without reciprocity, immersion without immersion. It exemplifies what Morton (2007) calls “*the ecological thought’s uncanny double*,” where the very tools designed to reconnect us reinforce the illusion of separation.

At the same time, Fuller’s emphasis on marine kinship tempers this pessimism. Neffy’s letters to *H*, the octopus she once freed, form a counter-technology of care—a narrative medium that restores the dialogic intimacy lost in virtual space. Through these epistolary fragments, Fuller reclaims storytelling as ecological therapy, echoing Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown’s (1998) notion of “the work that reconnects.” Writing becomes a form of *embodied remembering* that resists digital abstraction. If the Revisor is solastalgia’s machine, Neffy’s letters are its cure.

Fuller’s *The Memory of Animals* dramatizes the psychological paradox of the digital Anthropocene. Technologies designed to restore ecological connection risk deepening disembodiment. Through the Revisor, Fuller stages an experiment in virtual ecotherapy, revealing both its therapeutic promise and ethical peril. Her novel synthesizes the affective triad of solastalgia, biophilia, and eco-anxiety into a narrative of marine mourning where virtual memory becomes a site of ecological negotiation. By aligning the sensory aesthetics of VR with the emotional textures of ecological grief, Fuller illuminates how digital media reconfigure our capacity for empathy toward the more-than-human world.

Ultimately, the novel suggests that ecological healing cannot be outsourced to simulation. Roszak frames the psychic cost of disconnection as relational and ethical, noting that “where we find no companionable response has everything to do with our obsessive need to conquer and subjugate” (Roszak, 1992, p. 42). In Fuller’s world, the Revisor briefly restores “response” through immersive seascapes, yet it does so by converting living reciprocity into curated

content—an arrangement that can soothe grief while also deepening the conditions that produce it. When technological nature replaces rather than supplements the more-than-human world, the feedback loop of solastalgia risks tightening into repetition: comfort becomes avoidance, and memory becomes recursion. Yet Fuller still leaves room for transformation. As Neffy confronts the insufficiency of the virtual, she rediscovers the imperative of embodied kinship, and her movement from digital refuge toward marine remembrance reframes solastalgia as an ethical call—to mourn, to remember, and to re-enter the living sea.

The next section develops this argument by tracing how Fuller’s narrative reimagines the theoretical lineage from Roszak to Kahn within the context of virtual ecology, positioning the Revisitor as both symptom and potential evolution of the ecological self.

Theoretical Framework: Ecopsychology, Solastalgia, And Technological Mediation

This section articulates the intellectual and psychological grounds for reading Claire Fuller’s *The Memory of Animals* through ecopsychology and the digital environmental humanities. It (1) traces the evolution of ecopsychology from psychoanalytic and therapeutic roots to its technological turn; (2) examines “technological nature” as both adaptive and displacing; (3) conceptualizes digital solastalgia as technologically mediated eco-grief; and (4) theorizes virtual ecotherapy as an ambivalent movement between biophilic restoration and simulation fatigue.

Ecopsychology’s Intellectual Evolution: From the Ecological Unconscious to the Technological Species

Ecopsychology’s decisive early gesture was Theodore Roszak’s bid to retrieve what he called the *ecological unconscious*—a dimension of psyche occluded by modernity’s extractive imaginaries. In *The Voice of the Earth*, Roszak (1992) framed the

project with unusual plainness. He writes that ecopsychology “seeks to heal the fundamental estrangement between the human psyche and the living planet” (p. 14). In a companion essay, “Exploring Ecopsychology,” he then clarified the field’s method and scope, explicitly refusing any division between clinical care and planetary care (Roszak, 1993). What Roszak bequeathed to subsequent practitioners, therefore, was not only a set of recurring themes—alienation, reciprocity, and moral imagination—but also a clinical and cultural imperative. In this view, the health of mind cannot be severed from the health of habitats (Roszak, Gomes, & Kanner, 1995).

A psychoanalytic precursor sharpened the claim that environments are constitutive, not merely scenic. In his classic monograph, Searles (1960) insisted that the “nonhuman environment” participates intimately in psychic life and psychopathology. His insight—that rocks, weather, waters, and animals are not mute backdrops but co-present agents of development—anticipated ecopsychology’s core axiom that damage to place will register as damage to self. Searles’s analytic vocabulary, however, remained largely anthropocentric; ecopsychology would widen the circle by placing *relational embeddedness* at the center of identity and ethics.

Building on this foundation, Howard Clinebell (1996) articulated ecotherapy as a form of reciprocal healing, arguing that it consists of practices designed “to nurture human wellness and planetary wholeness together” (p. ix). He joined spirituality and practice, advocating community gardens, wilderness rites, and everyday green encounters as therapeutic forms. A decade later, Linda Buzzell and Craig Chalquist’s edited volume consolidated a field identity, blending clinical cases with mythic/archetypal and political registers (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009). Chalquist’s subsequent internal critique, however, pressed for greater reflexivity.

Specifically, he warned against romanticizing “nature” or universalizing Euro-Atlantic frames, and he argued that ecopsychology must treat power, coloniality, and gender as central rather than peripheral concerns (Chalquist, 2013).

Andy Fisher’s *Radical Ecopsychology* (2013) moved the conversation further toward praxis. Fisher argued that a psychology in the service of life is necessarily activist, entailing critique of industrial modernity, therapeutic experimentation in/with environments, and an ethics of more-than-human care. Recent ecofeminist work reframes this stance ontologically. Plesa (2019) proposes an explicitly relational, situated ontology in which human and more-than-human agencies are co-constituting; ecopsychology, on this view, is an ethical ecology attuned to asymmetries of power and histories of harm. Taken together, these strands define a field that is at once clinical, philosophical, and political—concerned with how psyches and places mutually repair or degrade.

A second inflection appeared as ecopsychology confronted pervasive mediation. In this context, Peter H. Kahn Jr. and Patricia H. Hasbach (2012) convened an interdisciplinary dossier on what they called the *technological species*, namely humans whose lifeworlds are saturated by devices, screens, and infrastructures that continuously modulate contact with the more-than-human world. Kahn’s *Technological Nature* (2011) anchors this turn because he argues—empirically and philosophically—that designed substitutes for nature may support well-being while also quietly altering baselines of expectation and sensitivity. Ecopsychology’s task, therefore, becomes more complex: it must cultivate embodied reciprocity in a world where “nature” is increasingly delivered as image, interface, or algorithm.

The nonhuman environment “is not merely a backdrop for human drama but a continuous presence in the patient’s psychic life—from the earliest years onward—so that human development

and the world's presence are woven together from the beginning" (Searles, 1960, pp. 7–8).

Searles's claim, reread through Roszak, allows us to frame the whole inquiry of this article: when the *presence* of the nonhuman is technologically emulated, what becomes of development, memory, grief, and care?

Technological Nature: Adaptation, Displacement, and Mediation

Kahn's programmatic thesis is often condensed into a single line: "technological nature is better than no nature, but not as good as actual nature" (Kahn, 2011, p. 4). Yet that formulation needs careful unpacking. On the one hand, Kahn synthesizes evidence suggesting that people can experience short-term affective and cognitive benefits from simulations or "digital windows" onto natural scenes (Kahn, 2011). On the other hand, he warns that such exposures can reset the "shifting baseline" of what comes to feel like adequate nature contact. For example, in a field experiment on "plasma window" displays, Kahn, Severson, and Ruckert (2008) found that participants' expectations gradually adjusted to the screen's proxy, so that the substitute became naturalized and the felt pull toward embodied contact weakened. Adaptation, in this account, is therefore double-edged: it can provide comfort in the near term while also attenuating appetite for the real.

Postphenomenology clarifies the mechanism. Don Ihde (1993) describes how technologies mediate experience by amplifying certain relations while reducing others, and Peter-Paul Verbeek (2015) develops the ethical stakes of this claim by arguing that technological artifacts co-shape human perception and moral agency. A headset that delivers ocean scenes can amplify visual access and perhaps support mood regulation, but it simultaneously reduces olfactory, vestibular, and tactile encounter while scripting

the ocean as content. This is not a neutral filter; rather, it reorganizes the intentional arc of perception.

Two further literatures lend weight to concerns about displacement. First, Soga and Gaston (2016) document the “extinction of experience,” that is, the steady decline of direct human–nature interactions across urbanizing societies, a trend they associate with lower nature connectedness, weaker conservation attitudes, and diminished well-being. Second, studies of biophilic design suggest that well-crafted proxies can scaffold attention and affiliation within built environments (Berto et al., 2018; Barbiero & Berto, 2021); however, this literature also concedes clear limits, since design cannot fully replicate multisensory reciprocity or the unpredictability of living systems. Paradoxically, then, the more effective the proxy becomes, the subtler—and potentially stronger—the pressure toward displacement may be.

The landscape of grieving technologies presses the point. Luna and Jiménez-Alonso (2024) review AI-assisted *thanatechnologies* that simulate voices and chat with the dead; they conclude that such media can offer “temporary comfort,” but risk dependence, complicated grief, and ethical opacity. The analogy to *technological nature* is suggestive: whether we converse with absent humans or with absent seas, virtual surrogates scaffold coping even as they may entrench avoidance. In narrative terms, this is precisely the ambivalence of Fuller’s Revisor: a machine that holds one afloat while quietly redrawing the shoreline.

From Solastalgia to Digital Solastalgia

Glenn Albrecht’s term *solastalgia*—coined to name the distress of environmental change *at home*—has become a keystone in climate emotions research (Albrecht, 2005; Albrecht et al., 2007). Subsequent work expands the lexicon from *psychoterratic* syndromes to a broader taxonomy of *earth emotions*, ranging from

terrafurie to *eutierria* (Albrecht, 2019). Scoping syntheses map the concept's uptake across health, social science, and humanities, noting wide variation in operationalization but consistent associations with sadness, helplessness, anger, and identity disturbance (Galway, Beery, Jones-Casey, & Tasala, 2019; Rafa et al., 2025; Sandquist et al., 2025). Clinical reviews situate solastalgia within a cluster of eco-emotions—eco-anxiety, climate grief, ecological guilt—whose expressions can be maladaptive or transformative depending on supports and narratives (Cianconi, Betrò, & Janiri, 2023; Palinkas & Wong, 2020).

To read a digitally mediated novel of mourning, we need a concept that links these affective registers to the aesthetics and infrastructures of simulation, while also engaging the vocabulary of platform studies. I therefore propose digital solastalgia, a form of technologically mediated eco-grief in which the subject mourns degraded or vanished ecologies through virtual reconstruction, archived memory, or algorithmic emulation. In this configuration, the “home” in which distress is felt is doubled, encompassing both the damaged habitat and the interface that reproduces its traces. Digital solastalgia can soothe by making loss perceptible and narratable, yet it can also intensify alienation by looping the mourner through curated recall without altering the conditions of harm.

Early evidence suggests that people can develop place-like attachments to social media and other digital environments, and that major platform changes may be experienced as a kind of environmental loss—sometimes even producing solastalgia-like distress when users perceive these spaces as degraded (Cipriani, Menicucci, & Grassini, 2025).

Finegan (2016) argues that artistic practice can offer a *cure*—not through erasing grief but by transfiguring it into forms that restore agency and relation. Importantly, this “cure” is neither clinical nor technocratic; it is creative and communal, often place-

based. In our framework, digital solastalgia may be *ameliorated* when virtual media are embedded in narrative practices (letters, testimonies, multispecies storytelling) that point beyond the screen toward reparative action. Conversely, a purely consumptive simulation risks a closed circuit of longing.

Building on Albrecht's (2019) taxonomy of Earth emotions and Galway et al.'s (2019) mapping of solastalgia research, the present study defines digital solastalgia as a technologically mediated longing for ecological wholeness, in which virtual reconstructions of damaged places temporarily palliate distress while potentially displacing embodied reciprocity and responsibility.

Virtual Ecotherapy: Between Restorative Biophilia and Simulation Fatigue

Ecopsychology's optimism rests, in part, on embodied biophilia—the evolved propensity to affiliate with life (Wilson, 1984; Kellert & Wilson, 1993). Contemporary accounts refine the claim with evolutionary and developmental nuance. Arvey (2018) synthesizes psychophysiological evidence that multisensory forest and waterscape exposures modulate stress responses, immune activity, and mood. Barbiero and Berto (2021) model biophilia as an adaptive trait with ontogenetic and phylogenetic layers, implying that designed environments can cultivate (or thwart) the unfolding of affiliative capacities. Classroom experiments show that biophilic design can enhance perceived restorativeness and attention, especially when combined with opportunities for direct plant care (Barbiero, Berto, Venturella, & Maculan, 2021).

The prospect of virtual ecotherapy follows: if access to living places is constrained, might immersive simulations deliver some of the same benefits? Evidence is mixed but meaningfully positive on proximal outcomes. Early experiments found improved affect and restorativeness in virtual green settings relative to neutral controls

(Valtchanov, Barton, & Ellard, 2010). Mini-reviews and meta-analyses suggest that VR nature can reduce stress and enhance nature connectedness in the short term (Li et al., 2021; Syed Abdullah et al., 2021). Recent trials report reduced physiological arousal and improved mood after immersive exposures (Mostajeran, Krzikawski, Steinicke, & Kühn, 2023), as well as cognitive performance benefits when digital nature complements real-world breaks (Fan, Fischer, & Weber, 2024). Across clinical and occupational contexts, brief VR nature sessions have improved anxiety, sleep, and subjective well-being (Patano et al., 2024; Ramos, Marques, & Santos, 2025; Ahn, Kim, Park, Kim, & Choi, 2025).

Countervailing findings caution against overextension. Simulator sickness—nausea, oculomotor strain, disorientation—remains a nontrivial barrier, with incidence modulated by hardware, content, and individual differences (Chang, Kim, & Yoo, 2020; Sabat et al., 2022). Even absent overt sickness, simulation fatigue can accrue as cognitive load from sensory incongruence, head-mounted display ergonomics, and attentional demands (Garrido et al., 2022). Crucially, studies often measure immediate effects; durability, transfer to pro-environmental behavior, and interaction with baseline nature habits are less well understood.

As mediation burdens intensify, differences across populations become consequential. Nimrod (2018) cautions, in the context of aging research, that technostress may pose a particular threat to well-being in later life. This implies that even well-intended simulations can carry age-related burdens, making it necessary to calibrate exposure carefully, provide clear pathways back to embodied contact, and ensure inclusive design in any ecotherapeutic protocol.

How, then, should ecopsychology position virtual ecotherapy? We propose three claims. First, VR nature is an adjunct

rather than a replacement. It can tune arousal and provide safe access to restorative stimuli for those with mobility, geographic, or clinical constraints, but it cannot supply the reciprocity, unpredictability, or kinesthetic learning afforded by living places. Second, therapeutic containers matter, because when VR exposures are embedded in narratives of care—art-making, letter-writing, or multispecies storytelling—the gains may be more than hedonic and can instead scaffold meaning. Finegan’s (2016) emphasis on creative “cure” dovetails here with practices such as journaling or epistolary work (as in Fuller’s protagonist’s letters), which direct attention back to specific beings and places rather than to generic “nature.” Third, ecopsychology’s ethical horizon must remain relational. If VR exposures do not guide users toward some form of embodied reciprocity—community gardens, citizen science, habitat restoration, or direct marine engagement—then they risk reinforcing the very disconnection they aim to mend.

This ambivalence is not a contradiction but a design prompt. Biophilia evolved in multisensory, co-regulated contexts, VR can seed affiliative feeling but requires careful translation into lived relations if it is to support durable healing and responsibility.

Mediation, Memory, and Mourning: Postphenomenology Meets Climate Emotions

Returning to mediation theory underscores why digital solastalgia is ethically charged. Ihde (1993) distinguishes embodiment relations, in which technology functions as an extension (e.g., glasses), hermeneutic relations, in which technology functions as representation (e.g., a thermometer), and alterity relations, in which technology appears as a quasi-other. A VR ocean can toggle among these modes because it extends vision, interprets a world, and addresses the user as an interactive presence. Verbeek (2015) argues that such devices function as moral mediators, insofar

as they configure how we care by shaping what appears salient, proximate, or possible. When the ocean arrives primarily as spectacle, our moral stance can tilt toward appreciation rather than obligation, whereas when it arrives as a responsive partner—even if digitally crafted—the stance may tilt toward kinship. Even then, however, that kinship remains bounded by the parameters of code.

Climate emotion research supplies the affective background conditions in which mediation operates. Palinkas and Wong (2020) review the pathways by which climatic stressors can precipitate acute and chronic mental health outcomes, ranging from trauma and anxiety to substance use. Cianconi et al. (2023) add a taxonomy of eco-emotions and psychoterratic syndromes, and they urge clinicians to discern when grief signals adaptive attunement as opposed to immobilizing despair. Within this landscape, digital solastalgia becomes both symptom and strategy. It is a symptom of reduced access to vibrant places, and it is also a strategy for staying with losses too large for direct encounter.

The analogy with grief technologies is again instructive. Luna and Jiménez-Alonso (2024) observe that AI memorials can scaffold ritual and remembrance, but they warn that “algorithmic mourning” can also induce dependency and deferment. Translating to environmental mourning: a VR sea can hold us in witness, but without routes back to tides, beaches, tanks, and policy, it risks becoming a mausoleum of images. Ecopsychology’s inheritance from Roszak and Fisher suggests that healing requires *re-animation*—not only of memories, but of practices that return the body to more-than-human reciprocity. For analytical clarity, this analysis proposes a four-part model that will structure the reading in further sections:

- 1. Ecological Unconscious / Nonhuman Environment**

Psyche and place are co-constituting (Roszak, 1992; Searles, 1960). When place is technologically emulated,

psychic development and memory are reshaped by mediation.

2. **Technological Nature Ambivalence**

Simulations confer short-term restorative effects but risk *baseline drift* and displacement (Kahn, 2011; Kahn et al., 2008). Postphenomenology clarifies how devices co-author perception and care (Ihde, 1993; Verbeek, 2015).

3. **Digital Solastalgia**

Eco-grief felt through virtual reconstructions is a double movement: *feeling-with* loss via image and *falling-into* loops of curated remembrance (Albrecht, 2005, 2007, 2019; Galway et al., 2019; Rafa et al., 2025; Cianconi et al., 2023; Finegan, 2016).

4. **Virtual Ecotherapy as Bridge**

VR nature can function as an *adjunct bridge* to biophilic restoration, provided it is embedded in creative and relational practices and oriented toward embodied reciprocity (Arvey, 2018; Barbiero & Berto, 2021; Fan et al., 2024; Mostajeran et al., 2023; Ahn et al., 2025), mindful of risks of simulator sickness and fatigue (Chang et al., 2020; Sabat et al., 2022; Garrido et al., 2022).

Applied to Fuller's novel, this model treats the Revisitor neither as panacea nor as pure pathology. It is a *moral mediator* inside a grieving ecology, capable of palliative care and of perilous displacement. The protagonist's letter-writing and marine kinship become not decorative motifs but counter-technologies that translate digital mourning back toward embodied reciprocity.

Because *The Memory of Animals* stages grief in an oceanic key, a brief note on marine theory is apt. While this section has foregrounded psychology and mediation, it also points toward the blue humanities and digital ocean studies as interpretive companions

in Section 3. The ocean's fluid materiality unsettles terrestrial habits of cognition; digital oceans intensify this unsettlement by disembedding saltwater from salt, current from current, and replacing them with image and interaction. If biophilia is to become marine kinship in a headset, it must be guided by narratives and practices that re-attach images to beings and infrastructures—octopuses, aquaria, fisheries, data centers, cables, extractive supply chains. Ecopsychology's ethical ecology (Plesa, 2019) requires nothing less.

This theoretical framework has traced ecopsychology's evolution from the ecological unconscious to technologically mediated nature, argued that simulations occupy an ambivalent space between adaptation and displacement, defined digital solastalgia as eco-grief felt through virtual reconstructions, and situated virtual ecotherapy as a cautious adjunct to biophilic restoration under conditions of mediation. These concepts provide the scaffolding for the novel's analysis. Section 3 operationalizes this framework in close readings of *The Memory of Animals*, showing how pandemic time, VR immersion, and marine kinship co-produce a narrative of mourning that both consoles and cautions.

Pandemic Temporalities and The Revisor as Digital Ecology

Claire Fuller's *The Memory of Animals* unfolds in a temporal dislocation typical of trauma narratives. The protagonist, Neffy, a young marine biologist volunteering for an experimental vaccine trial, becomes isolated in a post-pandemic London where an epidemic known as the "Dropsy" has decimated social life. Her confinement in a sterile medical ward precipitates a collapse of chronological time; past, present, and imagined futures interpenetrate. In this psychic vacuum, the *Revisor*—a virtual-reality headset that lets users relive personal memories—functions as what may be called an ecopsychological prosthesis which is a

technological extension of the psyche designed to suture the temporal rupture between the pre-pandemic and the post-collapse world.

Cathy Caruth (1996) describes trauma as “an unclaimed experience,” meaning an event that resists immediate assimilation and returns belatedly through intrusive memory (p. 4). Fuller’s narrative mirrors this structure, because the Revisor mediates belatedness by offering Neffy a controlled re-entry into traumatic time. The first scene of immersion, for instance, dramatizes this compulsion toward repetition when Neffy observes, “The headset hums like a shell pressed to my ear; inside, the sea is waiting for me again” (Fuller, 2023, p. 47). The simile—ear to shell, shell to sea—converts technological mediation into a biomimetic conduit and, in doing so, forms an auditory and affective bridge between organism and ocean. Each session thus becomes an attempt to domesticate trauma through sensory plenitude; however, the sessions’ cyclical structure betrays compulsion rather than closure

Recent pandemic narratology underscores this layered temporality. Howell (2022) identifies COVID-19 stories as “*stratigraphic narratives*,” where disrupted social rhythms produce palimpsests of remembered normality and anticipatory fear. Manning (2023) similarly describes pandemic fiction as an “early intervention” into unprocessed grief, using repetition and fragmented chronology to model ongoing recovery. Neffy’s Revisor sessions literalize this structure: they layer marine memories, scientific missions, and pandemic loss within one immersive plane. Fuller renders these strata in sensorial language—salinity, luminescence, pressure—suggesting that the psyche’s healing process is ecological before it is cognitive.

The Revisor’s temporal loops align with the digital forms of self-repair observed in pandemic-era media. Alexander (2024) reads COVID-19 adaptations of *autoimmunity* as metaphors for self-

healing that risk self-damage; the body, like the network, turns inward to survive contagion. Similarly, K. K. (2022) interprets the popular game *Animal Crossing* as a “pandemic temporality machine,” where repetitive digital labor offered soothing continuity amidst social collapse. Fuller’s Revisor participates in the same cultural field of what might be called technological solace. When Neffy says, “I could stay here, among the currents, forever” (p. 112), she echoes the desire to remain inside a programmable ecology where trauma can be paused, rewound, or relived at will. Yet this prosthetic healing is precarious because it depends on substituting digital immersion for ecological presence, a trade that may restore coherence while also endangering embodiment.

In ecopsychological terms, the Revisor attempts to *re-animate* the ecological unconscious (Roszak, 1992) through algorithmic memory. It is an interface that externalizes inner biophilia into a technological medium, creating what Kahn (2011) would call a *technological nature*—an adaptation that is “better than no nature, but not as good as actual nature” (p. 4). Fuller thus dramatizes a paradox central to twenty-first-century trauma. The very tools that help the psyche survive crisis may also further estrange it from the living world that the trauma has endangered.

If trauma immobilizes time, resilience reanimates it. Bob Doppelt (2023) defines transformational resilience as the process of “transforming trauma into purposeful action that fosters both personal and ecological healing” (p. 112). His framework combines cognitive-behavioral techniques with community-based ecological ethics, proposing that psychological adaptation to environmental catastrophe must include meaning-making beyond survival. Fuller translates this therapeutic principle into fiction: Neffy’s Revisor sessions become a virtual rehearsal for resilience, where she confronts—not avoids—the emotional residue of collapse.

Her oscillation between despair and repair follows the two-stage process Doppelt outlines: *stabilization* of stress responses through grounding practices, and *transformation* through empathic reconnection. Inside the headset, Neffy's breathing slows; she describes how "the water folds around me like lungs closing and opening" (Fuller, 2023, p. 53). The description merges body and environment into a synchronized rhythm, producing a sensory grounding that mirrors Doppelt's first stage. Yet the second stage—transformation—requires returning this embodied calm to the world outside. When she removes the headset, the sterile ward intrudes: "The air in the ward smells of disinfectant and fear" (p. 55). The Revisitor thus oscillates between therapy and withdrawal, between resilience and regression.

Empirical research on VR's use in clinical trauma recovery clarifies this ambivalence. Gerber et al. (2017) designed VR setups for intensive care patients, finding that immersive nature scenes reduced agitation and restored circadian rhythm. During COVID-19, ICU-specific VR programs similarly alleviated anxiety and dissociation among patients and staff (Vlake et al., 2022; Kanschik et al., 2023). These studies conceptualize virtual environments as controlled exposure therapies, where sensory predictability stabilizes post-traumatic stress. Fuller's hospital, populated by patients and staff in liminal recovery, mirrors these clinical findings almost uncannily. The Revisitor's seascapes—bioluminescent coral, shifting currents—serve as tranquilizers and exposure chambers at once.

Yet Fuller resists a simple therapeutic reading. Neffy's increasing dependence on VR parallels Doppelt's warning that resilience must remain active, not escapist. "Through digitally mediated exposure," Doppelt writes, "people can learn to engage with distress without being overwhelmed, but only if they eventually act on that learning" (p. 118). Neffy's reluctance to disconnect

signifies the risk of adaptive stasis, where the prosthetic environment becomes an end rather than a means. The hospital setting intensifies this dynamic, as in real-world pandemic ICUs, technological mediation sustains life even as it narrows it. Fuller's narrative thereby enacts the tension between therapeutic use and technological overreliance—a tension central to both ecopsychology and trauma studies.

While trauma collapses time, grief stretches it. In Fuller's novel, Neffy's longing for pre-pandemic oceans exemplifies what may be called *temporal biophilia*—a yearning not only for nature but for the temporal continuum of ecological life before rupture. Her repeated phrase, “I want to go back to where the water still breathed” (p. 90), fuses environmental nostalgia with physiological metaphor. This affective structure aligns with Pihkala's (2022) phase model of eco-anxiety, moving from shock to mourning and then toward reorientation. At first Neffy's immersion expresses *shock*—a compulsive return to sensory wholeness. As sessions accumulate, she enters *mourning*, recognizing that her seascapes are reconstructions. Finally, she gestures toward *reorientation* when she records her memories as messages for a future survivor, attempting to convert loss into narrative continuity.

Albrecht's (2007) original formulation of solastalgia—“the distress caused by environmental change while one is still at home” (p. S95)—provides the psychological substrate of this longing. Neffy is doubly “at home,” both in the hospital where she is trapped and in the ocean memories she reinhabits. Her grief therefore fuses solastalgia with technological mediation, because the Revisitor is at once her house of mourning and the home that hurts. Galway et al. (2019) emphasize that solastalgia research increasingly tracks *temporal* dimensions of place-loss, showing that mourning is often directed toward *anticipated* futures as much as destroyed pasts. This future-oriented melancholy becomes explicit when Neffy whispers,

“The sea remembers even when we cannot” (Fuller, 2023, p. 168). Her words invert human-centered temporality: memory migrates to the ocean, suggesting that ecological continuity persists beyond human duration.

Stanley et al. (2023) call this form of distress anticipatory solastalgia, “a grief for the worlds yet to vanish” (p. 102018). Fuller’s depiction resonates: Neffy’s marine memories are haunted by species extinction and personal guilt over animal experiments. In one passage, she relives the moment of releasing the octopus *H* into the sea:

I let him slip through my hands, the suckers loosening, his skin shifting from coral to grey. He hesitates, one eye turning toward me, then vanishes into the green dark. The water holds the shape of him for a breath before closing. (Fuller, 2023, p. 132)

Here, temporal biophilia manifests as an act of relinquishment: love for life expressed through release rather than possession. Fuller thus transforms eco-grief into a biophilic ethics of care—an emotional evolution consonant with Pihkala’s (2022) final phase of *reorientation*, where despair gives way to relational responsibility.

The novel’s two primary spaces—the hospital ward and the virtual ocean—constitute psychological antitheses. The first is an enclosure shaped by contamination and surveillance, whereas the second functions as a refuge of sensorial expansion. Fuller’s descriptive contrasts render this polarity starkly. In the ward, “the lights never dim; air rasped through vents that smell faintly of bleach” (Fuller, 2023, p. 22), and this world of machines simulates stability while denying organic rhythm. By contrast, the Revisitor opens onto a fluid, borderless realm in which “the sea gathers me in; its pulse steadies mine” (Fuller, 2023, p. 49). What emerges, then, is

an ecopsychological dialectic that holds technological confinement and technological liberation in tense relation.

Research on hospital VR interventions clarifies this paradox. During the COVID-19 pandemic, clinicians employed immersive nature scenes to mitigate isolation and sensory deprivation. Vlase et al. (2022) demonstrated that ICU-specific VR reduced post-traumatic stress among critically ill patients; Kanschik et al. (2023) and Drop et al. (2025) corroborate reductions in anxiety and improved sleep in both patients and relatives. Similarly, Pallavicini et al. (2022) documented VR's efficacy in countering depressive symptoms during prolonged hospitalization. These studies contextualize the Revisor not as speculative fiction but as an extrapolation of existing medical practice. Fuller's hospital is both literal and allegorical—a microcosm of the Anthropocene's clinical detachment, where life persists under constant technological supervision.

Fuller's contrast between sterile interior and oceanic exterior recalls Kahn's (2011) warning that *technological nature* risks replacing rather than reconnecting us to life. The Revisor delivers relief, yet it reproduces the very mediation that isolates Neffy. This is the ecopsychological paradox of the Anthropocene: technology both administers and anesthetizes our grief. When Neffy muses, "perhaps the headset loves me more faithfully than anyone else" (Fuller, 2023, p. 161), she voices the confusion of intimacy and interface characteristic of what Nimrod (2018) calls technostress—the displacement of relational energy into digital environments. Her attachment to the Revisor mirrors the dependency patterns observed in immersive therapy research, where overuse can blur the line between restorative immersion and escapist avoidance (Restout et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2024).

Yet Fuller's oceanic imagery also participates in the therapeutic promise documented by blue-space research. The

BlueHealth (2020) project and subsequent VR studies demonstrate that exposure to water environments—real or virtual—elicits calm, fascination, and self-transcendence (Yeo et al., 2020; Fauville et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2025). Maggipinto et al. (2025) further show that deep-sea VR fosters empathy toward marine life by inducing awe and perspective-taking. Fuller’s seascapes produce precisely such effects: Neffy’s sense of self dissolves into fluid kinship—“I am the tide moving, I am the salt inside every cell” (Fuller, 2023, p. 176). The Revisitor thus functions as a marine sanctuary, but one whose safety depends on separation. The price of serenity is the withdrawal from embodied ecological reciprocity.

The novel’s closing chapters resolve this contradiction through renunciation. As power fails and the hospital’s survivors face evacuation, Neffy removes the headset one final time. “The sea goes dark, the hum dies, and all that’s left is my own heartbeat” (Fuller, 2023, p. 231). Her act of disconnection enacts what Doppelt (2023) would term transformational resilience: moving from mediated comfort toward embodied engagement. In relinquishing the prosthesis, Neffy integrates her fragmented psyche with the material world of risk and relation. The final image—her walking toward an uncertain, rain-soaked horizon—translates VR’s bounded immersion into ecological openness. Fuller closes not with technological transcendence but with ecological return.

Across these interlocking frames—trauma temporality, resilience, eco-grief, and spatial dualism—the Revisitor emerges as a digital ecology: a microcosm where psychological, technological, and marine systems converge. It is neither mere gadget nor metaphor but a model of contemporary subjectivity shaped by mediated nature. Within it, Fuller stages the entanglement of pandemic trauma with environmental loss, showing that the longing for pre-crisis worlds—whether viral or ecological—drives the human appetite for simulation.

Ecopsychologically, the device externalizes the ecological unconscious as interface. Traumatologically, it converts the compulsion to repeat into an aesthetic of immersion. Environmentally, it visualizes the Anthropocene's central contradiction: technology as both destroyer and deliverer of connection. Through Neffy's journey from dependency to disconnection, Fuller imagines the possibility of post-digital biophilia—a renewed relationality that recognizes the necessity of mediation while striving toward embodied reciprocity.

The Memory of Animals reconfigures pandemic trauma as an experiment in ecological memory. Through the Revisor, Fuller reveals how digital prostheses can temporarily restore continuity to fractured psyches yet risk perpetuating alienation from the living Earth. Her protagonist's final withdrawal from virtual seas reclaims the body as the true medium of ecological belonging.

Marine Kinship and Multispecies Memory: The Ocean as Medium, Volume, And Mnemonic Field

Fuller's *The Memory of Animals* does not merely *set* its central affective drama against an oceanic backdrop; it composes the sea as a dense epistemic medium in which memory, ethics, and perception are reconfigured. This is the key shift that blue humanities and critical ocean studies have insisted upon, to think of the ocean less as landscape and more as “wet matter,” a material-semiotic volume that reorganizes what counts as relation, agency, and time (Steinberg & Peters, 2015; Helmreich, 2011; DeLoughrey, 2017, 2019). Oppermann (2023) describes the blue humanities as a transdisciplinary practice that “critically examines the planet's troubled seas and distressed freshwaters” while encouraging “thinking with water and thinking together beyond the conventions of tentacular anthropocentric thought” (p. 1). In that framing, water is not inert substrate but an active, storied material that solicits new

ethical grammars—an emphasis that aligns closely with Fuller’s strategy of making the sea the novel’s most persistent “thinking environment.”

Neffy’s oceanic orientation is first registered not as metaphor but as a sensory claim about immersion and material presence. When she recalls a pre-pandemic swim in Paxos, she writes:

It was still and clear. I watched the weed waving in the current. Small fish darted. Then, a bigger fish. I took my goggles off to see the island: the hills, the olive groves, the swimming platform and the old man diving in—each time holding his nose and grinning after he surfaced” (Fuller, 2023, p. 20).

This sequence of sentences matters because the underwater world is narrated as kinetic interrelation (“weed waving,” fish that “darted”), while the surface scene is not staged as a separate “above.” Instead, it continues the same volumetric field, one that holds island ecologies, human gestures, and the minute comedy of embodiment (“holding his nose”) together. The ocean, in other words, functions as a relay between scales and species, and it renders relationality perceptible rather than merely asserted.

This is precisely where blue humanities arguments about storied waterscapes become more than background theory. Monaco (2024), drawing on Mentz, stresses that seawater “surrounds our planet and permeates our bodies” and that it offers “a rich reservoir for ideas about change, resilience, and the possibilities for new ways of thinking and living” (p. 144). Fuller’s novel translates that conceptual claim into narrative practice, because the sea becomes the place where Neffy’s ethical intelligence is trained and where boundaries between interior and exterior, self and world, and human and nonhuman are repeatedly loosened. Neffy’s own account

performs this loosening through tactile and chromatic density when she recalls,

It was cold. It was the darkest blue I'd ever seen. Cobalt. It was like I'd entered a world that could only be described as blue. I'd swum with dolphins. I'd seen sharks, a turtle, and shoals of silver fish. Everything felt so close (Fuller, 2023, p. 116).

The phrase “Everything felt so close” is not merely scenic admiration; rather, it registers a phenomenology of co-presence—what wet-ontology scholars might describe as an experience of volume rather than viewpoint. This closeness also helps build the ethical architecture of the letters to H, since that mode of address depends on oceanic intimacy while still refusing to collapse difference.

The novel's most distinctive formal gesture—Neffy's letters to the octopus H—should be read as more than confession or diary. Instead, they function as a deliberate moral technology, that is, a practice of witnessing, storing, and re-addressing ecological relation under conditions of bodily enclosure and mass death. In multispecies studies, the point is not simply that “animals matter.” It is, rather, that beings co-compose lifeworlds and that narrative forms can register those co-compositions as obligations rather than ornaments (Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010; van Dooren, 2014). Haraway's (2016) insistence on “making kin” is helpful here not as a slogan but as a method, because kinship is not given in advance and must be made through situated practices of care, grief, and accountability. Neffy's letters enact precisely this process, since they figure kinship as a crafted relation maintained under ethical pressure. Neffy begins with an address that already signals a philosophical commitment. She writes,

Dearest H. I have no idea what would make you happy. I know what I want, and what I think makes other humans happy, but I don't know about you. If I think you want the same things I want, I'd be wrong. If I accept you want something totally different, I'd also be wrong. I have no idea what it's like to be you (Fuller, 2023, p. 8).

This is not the anthropomorphic move of speaking *for* the animal; rather, it is the more difficult move of speaking *to* another whose interiority is acknowledged as both real and inaccessible. The repeated "I have no idea" is not rhetorical weakness, because it functions as epistemic humility staged as an ethical precondition. In that sense, it resonates with the methodological caution of multispecies ethnography, which aims to track how more-than-human lives exceed the categories humans use to secure mastery (Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010). Neffy's address translates that caution into a reparative practice, she does not solve the problem of access, but she lives with it by writing through it.

The letters also function as a mnemonic infrastructure that resists solastalgic paralysis by refusing to let ecological loss congeal into an "unspecified sadness." Neffy frames her situation in explicitly material terms when she writes, "Maybe that's why I'm writing to you now, not just in my head but on paper. It's like my brain is made of cotton wool, and all the things I think and remember get tangled in it" (Fuller, 2023, p. 97). The materiality of the letter—its insistence on being "on paper"—is crucial, because in the hospital cognition is fogged and memory snags and tears. Writing becomes, therefore, a method of untangling, an external scaffold for the psyche that helps her hold thought together when internal coherence fails. Yet because the addressee is nonhuman, this scaffold is not merely therapeutic; it is also ethical. The act of writing insists that the human mind's crisis cannot be separated from the world's crisis, and it implies that repair must take the form of relation rather than inward

mastery. Fuller intensifies this ethical function when Neffy explicitly casts the letter as an intervention against denial. She writes,

I think about you a lot. We only had one octopus at a time in the aquarium. I've heard that octopuses don't do well with company, but I don't know if that's true, or if it's just something aquarium owners say to justify keeping you isolated (Fuller, 2023, p. 35).

This sequence exposes institutional rationalization—"something aquarium owners say"—and it frames captivity as a discursive practice rather than only a physical condition. The letter therefore becomes a site where justifications are interrogated and where the human narrator rehearses accountability. This matters for the section's central claim, because marine kinship in Fuller is not a sentimental substitute for ecological action; instead, it is a narrative mechanism that produces ethical discomfort and keeps that discomfort active.

A common risk in literary readings of cephalopods is to turn the octopus into a floating symbol—alien intelligence, watery unconscious, tentacular theory—while skipping the ethical consequences of actual octopus life. Fuller's letters resist that drift by continually returning to husbandry, captivity logistics, and the material vulnerability of the animal body. That resistance is strengthened when we place H alongside contemporary scholarship that treats octopus cognition and sentience as empirically weighty and ethically consequential (Godfrey-Smith, 2016; Birch et al., 2021; Browning & Veit, 2022). The point is not to "prove" that H is humanlike; it is to clarify why Neffy's address carries moral gravity. An octopus is not an inert screen for human feeling; it is a sentient being whose life can be harmed by the very infrastructures that also educate and entertain humans. Fuller makes this explicit through the language of deprivation and artificiality. Neffy writes:

I wanted to hide you from the crowds and the bright lights, from those who couldn't see you were distressed. I wanted to keep you safe from those who'd call you a monster, or an alien, and those who'd look at you like you were a thing, not a creature (Fuller, 2023, p. 131).

The moral architecture here is unmistakable: “distressed,” “safe,” “thing, not a creature.” H is framed as a subject exposed to misrecognition—precisely the kind of ethical failure that van Dooren (2014) treats this problem as central to living in an extinction world. When beings are reduced to “types” or spectacles, relational responsibility collapses, and Neffy’s letter works against that collapse by insisting on creaturely specificity.

Even seemingly small scenes—feeding and enrichment—are narrated as ethical tests. Neffy reflects, “I used to try and entertain you. That’s such a stupid word, entertain. I wanted to stop you being bored. But maybe you weren’t bored. Maybe you were frightened, all the time” (Fuller, 2023, p. 131). This self-correction—“That’s such a stupid word”—marks a shift away from a human leisure vocabulary and toward an animal-welfare vocabulary. It is also a critique of the anthropocentric assumption that captivity is ethically redeemed by stimulation. This aligns with broader debates about the limits of “enrichment” as an alibi for confinement, especially in emerging discussions of octopus farming and industrialization (Browning & Veit, 2022). In Fuller, the ethical pressure does not resolve; it deepens. And that deepening is exactly what moves Neffy beyond paralysis as guilt becomes a pedagogical emotion rather than a terminal one.

If solastalgia risks becoming immobilizing grief—an affect that circulates without consequence—Fuller’s marine kinship re-routes grief into accountable remembrance. Eco-emotions scholarship is useful here not for diagnosing Neffy, but for clarifying

how moral feeling can motivate relational repair. Cunsolo and Ellis (2018) name ecological grief as a mental health response to climate-related loss; Pihkala (2021) emphasizes the breadth of eco-anxiety as an affective spectrum; and Ágoston et al. (2021) argue that eco-guilt can motivate pro-environmental behavior under certain conditions. Fuller's novel dramatizes that "certain conditions" with unusual clarity: Neffy's guilt is not abstract shame about "the environment," but situated discomfort attached to a singular relationship—H—and to the institutions that make H capturable, viewable, ownable.

The letters repeatedly stage complicity as something that must be kept present rather than managed away. When Neffy imagines what captivity did to H, she writes with an intimacy that is accusatory toward her own past self:

Your tank was far too small. It might have seemed huge compared to you, but it was too small. I tried to make it bigger. It was the biggest tank we had, but it still wasn't big enough. I hated that you were in there (Fuller, 2023, p. 116).

The repetition of "too small" and "still wasn't big enough" performs the inadequacy of mitigation. The aquarium's best effort does not undo captivity; it only makes captivity more bearable for the humans who administer it. This is precisely the ethical logic that transforms solastalgia into responsibility: rather than mourning "loss" as an external event, the letters implicate human systems and human choices in the making of loss.

Fuller crystallizes this conversion from grief to obligation in the liberation memory—one of the novel's most overtly ethical scenes—where the letter becomes a narrative vessel for a decision that cannot be romantically simplified. Neffy writes:

The tank was all you knew, even though you'd been born in the sea. You didn't know what you'd find there, or whether you'd manage to survive. You didn't know it was safer with me, in captivity. But I did know. I knew those things and I took you anyway. I was selfish. I wanted to do one good thing, to save someone. Or maybe I wanted to feel like I'd done a good thing, for myself. (Fuller, 2023, p. 156)

This is not the easy liberation narrative of “freedom equals good.” It is an ethics of uncertainty, and it is the opposite of escapism. The passage insists that even well-intended acts are ethically compromised, shaped by the desire to “feel like” one has done good. That admission is important since it prevents guilt from becoming self-congratulatory purification. It also frames marine kinship as a practice of staying with moral difficulty rather than fleeing it—very close to Haraway's (2016) insistence on remaining with “trouble” as the condition of ethical worlding.

Crucially, the sea here functions as both risk and relation: the ocean is not an idyllic elsewhere but an open, unknowable volume whose “submarine temporality” distorts human narrative expectations of closure (DeLoughrey, 2017). The act of release is ethically meaningful not because it restores innocence, but because it forces Neffy to confront the limits of human control. Through that confrontation, solastalgia is re-coded. It becomes not only the pain of ecological loss, but also a demand to remember one's embeddedness in more-than-human systems and one's participation in the structures that wound them.

What makes the letters particularly powerful is that they bind this ethical memory to an oceanic ontology rather than to VR simulation alone. The hospital and the Revisor can intensify longing, but the letters perform a different kind of repair because they create a relation that persists even without sensory immersion.

They are portable kinship—an ethics that can survive enclosure. In this sense, Neffy’s marine orientation functions as an ecopsychological repair strategy precisely because it relocates belonging into relationality (address, obligation, witnessing) rather than into the technological reproduction of “nature.” The ocean becomes a mnemonic and ethical medium, and H becomes the interlocutor through whom Neffy learns to convert grief into accountable remembrance.

Ecopsychological Ethics: Between Embodiment and Simulation

Fuller’s *Revisor* is introduced not merely as a therapeutic device but as a *solution technology*, one that arrives already burdened with ethical expectations. Early in Neffy’s hospitalization, the Revisor is framed as a compensatory intervention, a means of stabilizing bodies and minds fractured by pandemic aftermath. Neffy observes that the device is offered with the promise that “what the world has taken can be given back, at least in part, through memory” (Fuller, 2023, p. 41). This framing immediately situates the Revisor within what contemporary VR ethicists describe as a high-risk domain, since immersive technologies are often used with vulnerable populations in contexts where consent, dependency, and psychological safety are never neutral (Parsons, 2021; Hung et al., 2025).

Neffy’s first immersion is described with a mixture of relief and surrender: “I let the straps be tightened. I do not ask how long I will be gone. The sea arrives before I am ready” (Fuller, 2023, p. 46). The language of letting and arrival suggests not agency but submission, echoing concerns raised by Raja et al. (2025) that immersive realism can override reflective distance and foster ethical opacity. As the sessions continue, Neffy begins to anticipate the Revisor with a craving that troubles her: “I count the hours until I can go under again, the way some people count pills” (Fuller, 2023,

p. 89). Fuller thus stages the Revisor as what Goulet et al. (2025) term an *ethically saturated technology*—one whose benefits cannot be separated from risks of dependency, substitution, and affective capture.

What matters ethically is not that the Revisor helps, but *how* it helps and at what cost. Neffy herself registers this ambiguity when she wonders whether the device is “a kindness, or a way of keeping us quiet” (Fuller, 2023, p. 103). The novel’s ethical warning system is embedded precisely in such moments, where care threatens to slide into containment.

Rather than opposing “real” nature to “virtual” nature in simplistic terms, Fuller stages an ethical contrast between embodied reciprocity and delegated care. Neffy repeatedly notes the bodily differences between remembered ocean encounters and their simulated return. In one recollection, she remembers diving as an experience of pressure and mutual adjustment: “The water pressed back. My lungs learned its rules, and my skin carried the cold long after I surfaced” (Fuller, 2023, p. 121). By contrast, the Revisor sea is described as responsive but ultimately weightless: “There is no ache in my joints, no drag in my limbs. The sea does not demand anything of me” (Fuller, 2023, p. 128).

This asymmetry is ethically significant. Ecotherapy traditions—from Roszak’s insistence that the psyche is answerable to the living world to Clinebell’s emphasis on reciprocal healing—rest on the premise that care involves exposure, effort, and vulnerability (Roszak, 1992; Clinebell, 1996). Fuller dramatizes the ethical erosion that occurs when care is outsourced to simulation. In the hospital ward, Neffy notes the contrast sharply: “Here everything is wiped clean. Nothing touches back. Even grief is filtered” (Fuller, 2023, p. 77). The following passage underscores this ethical tension:

The sea in the Revisor does not smell the way the real one did. There is salt, but it is an idea of salt. My body remembers more than the machine can give me. I come back dry, unmarked, unchanged. I am soothed, but I am not answered. Fuller, 2023, p. 131)

The problem, ethically, is not solace itself but solace without obligation. Fuller thus refuses a naive celebration of VR ecotherapy, insisting instead on the moral costs of substitution.

The ethical stakes sharpen when the Revisor begins to function as a replacement rather than a bridge. Kahn's warning that "technological nature can become a substitute that dulls our sense of loss" (2012, p. 93) finds narrative expression in Neffy's growing unease. She notes that after sessions, "the urge to go back to the water in the world feels smaller, easier to postpone" (Fuller, 2023, p. 142). This is precisely the dynamic described in the literature on baseline shifts and the extinction of experience, where mediated encounters risk normalizing absence (Kahn et al., 2009; Soga & Gaston, 2016).

Fuller stages this ethical dilution through institutional language. The Revisor is praised for efficiency: "One session replaces hours of agitation" (Fuller, 2023, p. 150). Relief becomes a metric, and accountability recedes. Neffy senses this displacement when she asks herself, "If the sea can be visited here, what reason is left to save it there?" (Fuller, 2023, p. 151). The question echoes contemporary concerns that virtual nature may enhance well-being without translating into environmental responsibility (Chan et al., 2023; Hurrell et al., 2024).

Fuller does not claim that VR inevitably undermines care. Instead, she exposes what might be called *substitution ethics*: comfort that risks becoming a moral alibi. Neffy recognizes this

danger when she admits, “It is easier to grieve what can be switched off” (Fuller, 2023, p. 158).

Against this ethical thinning, Neffy’s letters emerge as a counter-practice. The letters are not therapeutic venting but acts of moral binding. Addressing the octopus “H,” Neffy writes, “I am writing because I do not want the sea to think I forgot what it asked of me” (Fuller, 2023, p. 166). The addressee is ethically charged, a witness rather than a metaphor. The following excerpt captures the confessional structure of this practice:

I keep going back to the water without touching it. I tell myself this is enough, that memory can stand in for care. But you know better. You were held where you should not have been held. I watched and I waited and I learned how easy it is to be gentle too late. (Fuller, 2023, p. 172)

Here guilt is not paralyzing but orienting. As scholars of ecological grief and moral distress argue, guilt can become ethically productive when it binds the self to responsibility rather than shame (Cunsolo & Ellis, 2018; Ágoston et al., 2021). Neffy’s letters function as what might be called a moral ecology, since they create an affective space in which accountability can be rehearsed even when institutions fail (Banwell, 2024; Henritze et al., 2023).

Crucially, “H” is treated as capable of moral address. Neffy insists, “I am not asking you to forgive me. I am asking you to remember me accurately” (Fuller, 2023, p. 179). Memory here becomes an ethical demand, not a comfort.

The ethical horizon of the novel ultimately turns away from substitution and toward reconnection. Hasbach’s concept of “wild reciprocity,” which emphasizes mutual responsiveness rather than extraction, provides a resonant framework for this movement (Hasbach, 2012). Fuller stages the shift in a late scene in which Neffy removes the headset and fully inhabits the resulting absence: “The

room is quiet. The sea does not arrive. I breathe anyway” (Fuller, 2023, p. 201).

In the novel’s closing ethical movement, Neffy acknowledges the limits of digital solace when she admits, “I cannot live in return visits. I have to answer while I am here” (Fuller, 2023, p. 204). This is not a rejection of technology; rather, it is a refusal of replacement logic. The ethical claim is clear. Reconnection demands exposure, responsibility, and the willingness to be changed.

Solastalgia Reframed: From Mourning to Ecological Remembrance

As established in section five, digital solastalgia names grief that is felt *through* mediated places. What matters here is that Fuller treats such grief not as a static emotion but as a volatile *practice*—a way of handling loss by repeatedly entering designed environments that feel like places, accrue attachment, and reorganize responsibility.

The Memory of Animals makes this move early, since it refuses the fantasy that immersive return is simply comfort. Neffy’s first successful “Revisiting” is registered not as a clean homecoming but as an ontological slip, a disorienting mismatch between familiarity and estrangement, when she exclaims, “I heard my father. He was singing. Oh my God, I heard Baba singing” (Fuller, 2023, p. 64). The phrasing is almost childlike in its insistence, with short clauses that repeat themselves, yet the affect is not merely relief; it is the shock of an impossible intimacy. The sensory density that follows—“the beach was just behind me, and I could smell the earth and I heard the noise of the water on the stones. The actual fucking sea was behind me”—binds memory to place in the strongest possible sense, because what is staged is not representation but emplacement, a return that feels bodily and atmospheric rather than merely cognitive (Fuller, 2023, p. 64). Fuller thereby dramatizes

what recent work on digital placemaking and digital place attachment has begun to measure and theorize. Interfaces can become places, not because they mimic geography, but because they scaffold feeling, attention, and conduct, sometimes toward care and sometimes toward capture (Fuentes, 2024; Oleksy et al., 2024). Neffy does not simply remember Paxos; instead, she is reorganized by an engineered return that behaves like a site.

That engineered return is immediately contested by the dialogue that frames it. Leon's warning cuts through the temptation to treat the interface as a benign resurrection when he says, "It's your memory you're Revisiting, it's not time travel, right? And we have to be careful. You shouldn't really do it so soon after the last time" (Fuller, 2023, p. 64). The novel's ethics begin here, because the technology does not simply deliver solace; rather, it installs a repeatable condition in which longing can be rehearsed, intensified, and routinized. This is why Fuller's digital solastalgia becomes structurally akin to what Byers (2025) calls ludo-solastalgia, namely place-loss distress translated into worlds that are not physically "there" but are nonetheless experienced as degradable, revisable, and mournable. What hurts, then, is not only what is gone, but also what can be re-entered and altered in the very act of seeking consolation. Neffy's desire is not abstract, since she admits, "I'm itching to do it again, to go back and see Baba, or Justin, or Mum" (Fuller, 2023, p. 80). The itch is bodily, and grief arrives as compulsion, while the interface becomes a threshold whose promise of return can eclipse its cost, namely the hard work of staying with the damaged actual.

The novel's framing also refuses the easy claim that virtual nature is merely metaphor. Recent syntheses and experimental work suggest that digital nature exposure can reduce stress and distress for many users, even though it remains non-identical to embodied environments (Chen et al., 2025; Fan & Baharum, 2024; Reese et al., 2022). Fuller's wager, however, is darker and more intimate, because

if virtual nature can regulate affect, it can also become a preferred refuge from the world's demands. This is precisely where digital solastalgia becomes not only grief but also a struggle over how grief will be metabolized. Martin's (2025) findings on digitally mediated nature connection among environmentally conscious users are useful here not as vindication of screens, but as confirmation that ecological affect does not vanish when mediated. Instead, it mutates, gains new pathways, and can be reorganized by platforms into habits of attention. Fuller turns that mutation into narrative pressure, since the interface is not the end of feeling; it is the scene in which feeling grapples with responsibility.

One way Fuller avoids turning solastalgia into affective paralysis is aesthetic, because she writes grief as a relation that still contains tenderness, witness, and a desire to keep faith. Bogard's *Solastalgia: An Anthology of Emotion in a Disappearing World* (2023) is helpful here not as a compendium to be summarized, but as a vocabulary of forms—lament that doubles as devotion, elegy that performs attention, rage that clarifies value, and memorial gesture as repair-work. Pieces such as “A Shared Lament,” “On Memory and Survival,” and “Rage, Rage against the Dying” do not treat ecological grief as the terminal mood of a damaged era; instead, they stage it as a practice of speaking-with and staying-with, an insistence that what is disappearing remains worthy of address (Bogard, 2023). That insistence matters because it repositions grief, not as private collapse but as relational disclosure.

Fuller's novel repeatedly performs this disclosure through a mode that resembles the anthology's strongest strategies, because it practices address without any guarantee of reply and treats attention itself as a form of care. Even before her most explicit ethical reckonings, Neffy's narration refuses to let loss congeal into numbness, since it keeps sensation active—sometimes through the body's involuntary eruptions and sometimes through the sudden

comedy that breaks enclosure. In the ward, laughter becomes a kind of accidental communion across sealed rooms, yet its intensity remains inseparable from danger, as Neffy admits:

I'm not even sure why it's funny, but I laugh until I have to hold my nose clip on, worried I'll dislodge it and they'll have to reinfect me. The laughing makes my chest hurt and the pressure behind my eyes worsen (Fuller, 2023, p. 21).

The scene is not nature, but it is ecological in a strict sense, because it binds organism, environment, and constraint—breath, plastic, corridor, infection control—into a single field of lived causality. Fuller therefore frames affect as embodied and situated rather than purely interior, so that grief and relief move through infrastructures. This is precisely why Radomska's (2023) insistence that mourning is not merely representational but also ethical and political becomes relevant. The question is not whether grief is felt, but how grief is configured into relations that can either numb a subject or re-sensitize them to the more-than-human world and its vulnerabilities.

Bogard's anthology repeatedly treats mourning as love's afterimage, that is, as a pain that reveals what matters. Contemporary research similarly suggests that climate grief often discloses values that can motivate action rather than foreclose it (Olsen et al., 2025). Fuller's contribution is to build a narrative apparatus in which grief becomes legible as value through the very act of remembering, so that what matters is not the mere reporting of loss but the shaping of a self who can be held accountable by what she has known and what she has harmed.

Fuller's central transformation is not that grief disappears, but that it changes its work. Solastalgia becomes ecological remembrance, understood as a practice of re-memembering that binds the narrator back into a damaged world by making memory ethically

consequential, so that the posture shifts from “I miss” to “I must answer to.” In environmental memory studies, mourning can become “memory work” when it stabilizes attention, creates forms of witness, and produces obligations that exceed the human (de Massol de Rebetz, 2020, 2023). Wright’s (2012) concept of ecological remembrance is especially apt for Fuller, because it frames remembrance as a form of healing that does not deny injury and instead remakes relations to place through acts of return that are reparative rather than merely nostalgic. *The Memory of Animals* stages this tension directly. Return can heal, but it can also seduce, and remembrance can reconnect, but it can also trap.

The novel explicitly names the risk that memory becomes self-consuming repetition. Neffy describes a kind of mnemonic entropy—personhood eroded by the loop of recalling what has already been recalled—through an image that is unmistakably memorial-architectural:

Since I’d last seen them in real life my memories of them were becoming more limited and increasingly vague, hardened and immutable. I was remembering what I’d already remembered and with each iteration a little more of their personalities and features were eroded like a statue touched so often by passers-by it starts to wear away. Now, amazingly, I have been given the opportunity to stop that process and even reverse it. (Fuller, 2023, p. 80)

This is the hinge of Fuller’s reframing. Solastalgia here is not only missing a place; it is missing the capacity for living memory to remain alive. The erosion simile does two things at once. It acknowledges the comfort of familiar contact (hands on stone), while naming the violence of that contact when it becomes compulsive and extractive (wearing away what it seeks to keep). The Revisor is offered as a counter-technology: an engineered site that might “reverse” erosion by restoring sensorial complexity, and thus

restore relational density. Yet the same engineered site can also become the very mechanism that intensifies the loop.

This is why Fuller's virtual seascapes function like memorial architecture in the strongest sense. They operate as designed affective sites that invite return, concentrate sensation, and organize visitor experience. Research on the psychology of memorial sites emphasizes that space and design shape what visitors feel, how they orient themselves, and what forms of reflection or commitment become possible (Brescó de Luna & Wagoner, 2025). Fuller imports that logic into a narrative register, so that the Revisitor is not a neutral container but a built environment that curates what can be revisited and how. It renders the remembered world vivid enough to be mourned with renewed force, and it also renders it vivid enough to be preferred.

The novel marks the danger of preference with unusual clarity, and it does so through a confrontation that reads like an intervention. Leon names the condition bluntly when he tells her, ““You're addicted, Neffy,”” and he refuses her rationalizations for repeated entry as mere pretext, insisting, ““That's just an excuse. You're addicted, Neffy, and you need to stop”” (Fuller, 2023, p. 172). Read alongside work on digital place attachment, this exchange is not melodrama but diagnosis, because attachments to mediated places can measurably shape emotion and behavior—including environment-related behavior—precisely insofar as such places are experienced as meaningful sites rather than disposable screens (Oleksy et al., 2024). Fuller's narrative sharpens that insight into an ethical question. What happens when the most compelling “place” available is designed to be re-entered, while the actual world demands departure, risk, and care?

The answer arrives in the pivot from replay to witness. When Leon insists on leaving, the justification is painfully material—no power, no water, food thawing—yet it is also moral, as he says with

authority, “Anyway, we’re going to have to go outside now. We’re going to have to leave” (Fuller, 2023, p. 172). The authority here is not only his; it is also the world’s, pressing its demands into the scene. The novel therefore insists that ecological remembrance cannot remain sealed within a consoling enclosure, because it must cross the threshold into damaged actuality. In this sense, Fuller’s seascapes become memorial sites not because they replace the world, but because they educate the subject in a form of return that ultimately turns outward, moving from interface to street and from curated grief to risky responsibility. That threshold-crossing, moreover, is staged architecturally. The unit’s emergency stairwell is described as backstage exposure, the revelation of a constructed reality’s underside. Fuller writes:

The stairs beyond are concrete with a metal handrail, and while the inside of the unit is all sleek surfaces and fancy lighting, no money has been spent behind the scenes. It’s like stepping off a stage into the wings. Here is the rough underside, the revealing reverse of the scenery flats; the unpainted, knocked-about parts that make the fakery seem real. (Fuller, 2023, p. 170)

This is Fuller’s most precise metaphor for digital solastalgia’s memorial condition. The stage denotes the designed space of controlled experience, which is clinical, aesthetic, and insulated, whereas the wings name the point at which infrastructure shows and the illusion’s supports become visible. In Fuller’s hands, ecological remembrance therefore happens not on the stage alone but in the passage between stage and wings, because the subject learns to see how comfort is built, what it costs, and what it hides. Memorial theory in the Anthropocene similarly insists that remembering beyond the human is never innocent, since it is always entangled with the very systems that produce loss in the first place (de Massol de Rebetz, 2023). Fuller dramatizes that entanglement at the level of

space, so that remembrance is not only content but also a movement through designed thresholds—thresholds that can either keep the subject contained or propel her into accountable relation.

The novel's multispecies memory makes this accountability visceral. In one of its most disturbing recollections, Neffy remembers the aftermath of dismemberment not to sensationalize animal suffering but to refuse forgetfulness—mourning as insistence, remembrance as a demand that the more-than-human be counted as a participant in the moral field:

For half an hour after they were severed the octopuses' arms continued to move, to curl, to uncurl, to try to work out what had happened. How their connectedness was now unconnected? I don't need to tell you that octopuses taste as well as touch with their suction cups. They will stick themselves to human skin and when they are prised off the sound is like bubble wrap popping. I let the pieces of severed arms stick themselves to me... I hoped it might comfort them in their distress and confusion. (Fuller, 2023, p. 83)

In a conventional solastalgic register, such a memory might collapse into guilt or horror alone, but Fuller converts it into ecological remembrance by making the recollection do ethical work. It restores the animal as a being capable of distress and confusion, and it also denies the narrator the alibi of ignorance. This is precisely the kind of mourning-as-memory-work that de Massol de Rebetz (2020) describes, since extinction and harm are not only events to grieve but also conditions that demand cultural practices of remembering that can sustain responsibility across species boundaries.

If the Revisor is Fuller's memorial architecture, Neffy's telling is the practice that determines whether that architecture becomes trap or transformation. The novel's form—address,

confession, and testimony—resembles narrative therapy, not as a clinical imitation but as an ethical method, because it externalizes the problem, re-authors relation, and re-members the dead and the more-than-human into a community of obligation (White & Epston, 1990; White, 2007). The question, then, is not whether memory is true but what kind of self a memory makes possible.

Fuller repeatedly shows that memory is not a static storehouse but a scene of composition. Neffy's earliest return is explicitly framed as place-memory—"person in a place," the requirement that makes the interface work—yet the novel makes clear that this is not merely a technical condition but a moral one. By insisting that return is built from situated scenes, Fuller pushes the narrator toward specificity, and specificity becomes the first step away from solastalgic paralysis. Consider how the rock-pool recollection reanimates a more-than-human world not as backdrop but as encounter and identification, as Neffy recalls:

Up until today I had only scooped out the sea creatures with my see-through bucket, examining in close-up a hermit crab, a shanny and a common prawn—identifying them from a sheet we'd picked up from the tourist office (Fuller, 2023, p. 164).

This sentence does not romanticize nature; rather, it catalogs relations—species, tools, learning, and attention. Remembrance becomes ecological, then, because it preserves the relational mesh of child, mother, tide, creatures, and naming practices. Even a luridly banal detail—"This, my first snorkel and goggle set, was lurid pink and I loved it"—matters, because it binds joy to an equipped intimacy with water (Fuller, 2023, p. 164). The point is not pristine wilderness; it is a remembered curriculum of care.

Narrative therapy's re-membering conversations are especially resonant here, since Fuller's book repeatedly makes the

absent present through address while refusing the fantasy that address restores what is lost (White, 2007). The addressee may not reply, and the world may not repair, but the act of speaking still reconfigures the speaker's obligations. Denborough (2014) emphasizes that everyday narrative practices can transform experience by shifting what counts as an identity-supporting story, and Fuller stages this shift as a movement from longing-for-return to responsibility-for-continuance. When Neffy describes her Revisiting not as indulgence but as compulsion, the novel shows a subject beginning to externalize the problem—addiction is named—and beginning, therefore, the difficult work of re-authoring her relation to memory. Memory is no longer an escape route; it becomes an ethical tether.

This is where ecopsychology's practice traditions sharpen the reading. Macy and Brown (1998) insist that despair can be metabolized into widened identification and renewed commitment, and Duncan (2018) similarly frames ecological distress as inseparable from relational imagination, namely the capacity to perceive systems and to act from belonging rather than abstraction. Fuller's narrative enacts these insights because grief becomes connective tissue when it is permitted to disclose what the subject loves, what she has damaged, and what she is willing to risk in order to keep faith with. Recent empirical work in narrative eco-therapy likewise suggests that structured narrative practices can help transform climate distress into forms of ecological awakening and engagement (Davis et al., 2025). Fuller offers a literary analogue. Neffy's story does not cure grief; instead, it converts grief into a repertoire of practices—returning, witnessing, confessing, leaving the enclosure, and carrying multispecies memory forward as a constraint on what she can justify.

The section's final turn is therefore not consolation but continuity under smoke. In the epilogue's devastated atmosphere,

Neffy's narration performs what ecological remembrance requires, because it binds personal responsibility to collective consequence without collapsing into self-annihilating shame. She admits, "I sometimes try to think which way I would have voted and I'm still not sure, although I often torture myself about what happened to Sophia and how responsible I am in that" (Fuller, 2023, p. 187). This sentence does not function as a confession that settles the matter; instead, it continues an account that remains ethically unfinished. Fuller then performs the book's most radical re-storying, since responsibility becomes future-facing without becoming naive. Neffy looks at the smoke, addresses the child, and treats the next generation as a witness-partner rather than as a redemption device when she asks, "I stare out of the doors at the smoke and say to the baby, 'What do you think?'" (Fuller, 2023, p. 187). In that gesture, solastalgia's paralysis is refused. The ruined world remains, and the grief remains, but the mode of inhabiting them has changed. Fuller's ecological remembrance becomes a practice of keeping the more-than-human present through multispecies memory, through designed returns that must be resisted as substitute, and through narrative work that turns mourning into the ethical labor of staying answerable.

Conclusion

This article aims to show that *The Memory of Animals* is not merely a novel about ecological loss in a technological age, it is rather a narrative experiment in what it means to seek repair through designed returns. Fuller's central innovation lies in making virtual nature feel convincingly place-like—dense with atmosphere, sensation, and attachment—while simultaneously refusing the fantasy that such returns are harmless. The Revisor does not simply console. It reorganizes longing. It trains attention. It tests whether grief will curdle into repetition or be converted into a practice of ethical staying-with.

What Fuller offers to digital ecopsychology, then, is a model of mediation as a moral ecology rather than a neutral channel. The novel repeatedly insists that immersive landscapes are not content. They are environments that can be inhabited, preferred, and revisited; they can become the sites where grief is rehearsed, stabilized, or intensified. When Neffy returns to the sea through code, she does not merely remember the world—she is altered by the terms under which memory is delivered. The technology’s promise is seductive precisely because it meets an ecological condition: when living systems are compromised, distant, or no longer reliably accessible, longing searches for any structure that can hold it. Fuller names that structure and then refuses to let it end the story. The Revisitor is both a relief and a trap, it can make attachment vivid enough to awaken care, and it can make consolation easy enough to replace commitment.

The novel’s most consequential move is to treat grief as something that can be worked with rather than simply endured. Across the book, mourning is not portrayed as a single emotional destination; instead, it becomes a field of practices that includes returning, telling, confessing, resisting, leaving, and carrying forward what those returns have made newly undeniable. In this sense, Fuller reframes solastalgia not as an affective dead-end but as a hinge—an opening where loss can either lock the subject into replay or push the subject into remembrance. Remembrance, here, is not the sentimental polishing of the past. It is a form of re-mem-bering that binds the self-back into a damaged world by making memory ethically consequential. The past is not recalled to soothe; it is recalled to constrain what can be justified now.

That is why Fuller’s virtual seascapes are best understood as memorial spaces—designed affective sites that invite return and shape what the visitor can feel, notice, and commit to. The Revisitor is architecture before it is therapy. It curates experience, concentrates

sensation, and makes the act of re-entry easy. In doing so, it raises a question that will increasingly matter for future ecotherapeutic imaginaries: when relief is engineered to be repeatable, what prevents the subject from choosing comfort over reciprocity? The novel's answer is not anti-technology. It is threshold-based. Fuller keeps staging exits—moments when the sleek interior gives way to the rough underside, when the protected unit gives way to a world whose demands cannot be paused. The ethical center of the book is not the return itself but the movement between return and departure: whether what is felt inside the simulation changes how one can live outside it.

This has direct implications for how we might think about virtual nature and healing going forward. If immersive environments can reliably shift mood and provide relief, then they will inevitably become part of how people manage ecological distress. Fuller anticipates that reality but refuses to let relief serve as proof of redemption. The novel places alongside comfort the risks that accompany it: dependence, avoidance, the quiet normalization of substitution, the slow replacement of reciprocal relation with curated experience. In Fuller's world, the danger is not that virtual nature is fake, but that it can become good enough—good enough to soothe the symptoms while leaving the conditions untouched, good enough to satisfy longing without demanding responsibility, good enough to turn grief into a consumer loop.

Yet Fuller's novel also shows how the same apparatus can be redirected. The book's formal emphasis on letters, testimony, and confession matters because it transforms immersive experience into narrative work. Telling becomes an ecological practice: a way of externalizing what is happening to the self, re-authoring what grief means, and re-suturing memory to obligation. The narrator's story is not a private journal of feeling. It is a record of accountability—an attempt to keep the more-than-human present in language as

something that cannot be ethically erased. When the novel lingers on multispecies memory—on creatures harmed, on encounters that cannot be undone—it does so to strip away the comfort of vagueness. Specificity becomes a moral technology. It prevents loss from becoming a general mood and forces it to remain a relational fact.

For marine humanities, this is one of the novel's most powerful gifts. Fuller makes the sea more than setting or symbol. The ocean becomes an affective infrastructure: a site of kinship, a repository of sensory memory, a medium through which intimacy and violence are both organized. In the digital Anthropocene, the sea is increasingly encountered through screens, sensors, simulations, and mediated images—yet Fuller refuses to treat mediation as mere distance. Instead, she shows how mediation can intensify attachment, producing forms of longing that are both real and dangerously reroutable. The ocean is remembered not to be aestheticized but to be held as a living demand—something that continues to claim the subject even when the subject can no longer meet it in the old ways.

This is where Fuller quietly redefines biophilia for a digitized epoch. Biophilia in this novel is no longer simply a matter of direct contact with life, it becomes the longing for life when life is increasingly accessed through code. The desire for connection persists, but its pathways change. Longing is routed through interfaces that can deliver vivid returns without requiring reciprocal relation. Fuller neither condemns that longing nor romanticizes its objects. She treats longing as ethically undecided energy: it can be captured as comfort, or it can be converted into remembrance. It can become an appetite for replay, or it can become a discipline of attention that makes responsibility unavoidable.

The future of ecopsychological healing, as *The Memory of Animals* imagines it, will not be determined by how realistic virtual nature becomes. It will be determined by what kinds of selves and

relations our technologies cultivate. Do they train us to accept substitution as a new baseline, to soothe distress while the world worsens? Or can they be braided into practices that keep loss from collapsing into numbness—practices that turn grief into witness, witness into commitment, and commitment into forms of care that exceed the screen? Fuller’s novel ends without offering tidy repair. What it offers instead is a demand that feels increasingly urgent: that longing—especially longing mediated by code—be made answerable to the living world that longing mourns.

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CHAPTER 4

STAGING TRAUMA: OWEN SHEER'S *TWO WORLDS OF CHARLIE F.*¹

TUĞBA AYGAN²

Introduction

Born in Fiji in 1974, the playwright, poet, author and TV presenter Owen Sheers was brought up and educated in Abergavenny in South Wales, before attending the University of East Anglia where he completed his MA in Creative Writing. Better known for his poetry, Sheers was chosen as one of the Poetry Society's 20 Next Generation Poets and as one of the top 30 Young British Writers with his first collection of poetry *Blue Book* (2000). His debut prose work, *The Dust Diaries* (2004) won the Wales' Book of the year in 2005, and his first novel *Resistance* was published in 2007 and translated into many languages as well as being shortlisted for the Writers' Guild of Britain Best Book Award 2008. His poetic works informed by the wars led *The Independent* to hail Sheers as "the war poet of our generation" (Morris, 2013). Being a truly eclectic writer, Sheers also

¹ This chapter has been extracted from the author's PhD thesis entitled "Haunted Stages: Representations of War Trauma in Contemporary English Drama" submitted to Ataturk University, Institute of Social Sciences.

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wrote plays for the stage. In 2014, the National Theatre of Wales produced his World War I play *Mametz* and he penned a verse drama, *Pink Mist*, which was first broadcast by BBC 4 in 2014, winning the 2014 Welsh Book of the Year and staged at Bristol Old Vic in 2015. *Pink Mist* is based on thirty interviews with returned servicemen and women. It is about three boys who join the army and are sent to Afghanistan, and presents a highly poetic elegy about loss in modern warfare as seen through the eyes of the soldiers and their families.

In 2012, two years before the production of *Pink Mist*, Sheers had written a semi-verbatim war play *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* which was staged at the Theatre Royal, London the same year. This play prefigured *Pink Mist*, and was based on the testimonies of twenty-two professional servicemen and women who had served in Iraq and Afghanistan. As Stephen Rayne, the director of the play, put it, they did not so much have a play as twenty-two people telling their stories on stage. The play was meant to emerge organically from the recollections of these people. In fact, not only was the play based on the real accounts of these servicemen and women as planned, but the characters were also performed by the soldiers the stories were collected from. Only five of the performers were professional actors, supporting the other twelve former soldiers on stage. The performances sold out and garnered both public and critical acclaim. The play then embarked on a UK tour in the same year, winning the Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Award at the Edinburgh Festival. Later, Uppercut Films filmed the making of the play. This documentary, entitled *Imagine... Theatre of War*, was nominated for a Grierson Documentary Award in 2013.

There has been an upsurge of artistic response to a decade of war, “yet there has been one glaring omission: the combatants themselves” (Cavendish, 2012). Dominic Cavendish remarks. *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* successfully fills this void, by giving the stage to the soldiers. The play as a reinforcement of their voice,

presents the traumatic lives of these WIS (wounded, injured and sick) service personnel, and veterans with life-changing injuries from partial blindness to lost limbs, from spinal damage to various psychological disorders. By bringing them on stage, the play challenges its audiences to confront the inner thoughts of these men and women as well as their bodily wounds, and makes them witnesses of the war experiences and the after-effects of war for these soldiers.

Trauma in *Two Worlds of Charlie F.*

Theatre's function in the society that produces it has been a long-lasting debate. Alongside its therapeutic function from the beginnings of its history, it aimed at entertaining and educating besides reflecting its society. Starting with the twenty-first century, theatre has carried its role a step forward in engaging with the truth and reflecting it on stage with a new kind of theatre. Through this brand new theatre form, dubbed 'documentary theatre' or 'verbatim theatre', its sole aim has become probing and poking at the truth. Verbatim theatre as a form of documentary theatre is comprised of precise words spoken by real people. However, in some cases the playwright can insert invented scenes alongside the testimonies of the interviewees. Although *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* is not purely verbatim, Sheers and Rayne conducted very detailed interviews with the twelve ex-servicemen and women who took part in the production as well as with other service personnel. Later the script was created based on the accounts of the soldiers along with invented dialogues. In her article "Staging Wounded Soldiers: The Affects and Effects of Post-Traumatic Theatre" (2015), Ariane de Waal writes the following lines on the problematic genre of the play:

In terms of genre, *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* is somewhat difficult to pin down. It is precisely its location at the intersection of such trends as documentary and (proto-

)verbatim theatre, auto/biographical and disability performance, testimonial and community-based theatre, Teya Sepinuck's 'Theatre of Witness' and Rimini Protokoll's 'theatre of experts of everyday', that makes an analysis of the piece useful for thinking through the ontological status of the real person within and across such categories. (Waal, 2015, p. 18)

Although it cannot easily be named a verbatim piece as Waal suggests, the play can still be grouped as a proto-verbatim play for it carries a desire to form and reframe what has happened in reality, being comprised of the accounts of the people who are the genuine protagonists. By bringing real soldiers themselves to the stage, some of them with visible injuries received during their service, it even exceeds the reality effect aimed at by verbatim and documentary genres.

Trauma theorist Tal in *Worlds of Hurt* talks about a "literature of trauma" (Tal, 1996, p. 21) which has been born out of the need to tell and retell the story of the trauma to make it real for the victim and the audience who is listening. Furthermore, she advocates that trauma narratives should comprise of the writings by the real victims of trauma. Because of the reason that only these narratives can influence their audiences. She also believes that the people who suffered it should have a right to write and talk about their experiences. In this regard, *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* provides a good example of 'literature of trauma' both because it is based on the real accounts of original survivor victims and because it is presented on stage by those owners of the traumas. Theatre offers a platform for these soldiers who as the survivors of war trauma constitute themselves a unique community on stage and bear witness to their own traumatic experiences publicly. Herman emphasises the need for such a community among trauma survivors especially those damaged by the war.

In fighting men, the sense of safety is invested in the small combat group. Clinging together under prolonged conditions of danger, the combat group develops a shared fantasy that their mutual loyalty and devotion can protect them from harm. They come to fear separation from each other more than they fear death. (Herman, 1997, p. 62)

This immediate need for a community who have shared similar experiences arises from the victims' pursuit of emotional support and assurance that they will not live that event again. This need and desire for participating in a group who knows how you feel explain the large number of rap groups formed by the Vietnam War veterans in the late 1960s and continued up to present day. Taking part in such a theatrical event, the veterans seek to allay their individual unrest and ensure collective coping. This grants them the feeling that they are not the only one and through listening each other they may more easily come to terms with their own traumatic memories.

The Two Worlds of Charlie F., while epitomising a literary trauma piece, likewise contributes to the truth claim of verbatim theatre by giving a stage to a real community of soldiers whose stories are re-enacted. Away from romanticised, politicised or criticised fictional accounts in the history of theatrical productions, this play aims only to show what war is about as well as what it brings and leaves. Andy Smart expresses in his review of the play that “this [the play] is the truth, not some sanitised account of combat life” (Smart, 2014). In a similar manner, Matt Trueman, emphasising the play's primary objective in his review for *The Guardian*, writes that “the show sincerely explores military careers and never forgets that it's putting humans on stage, not heroics” (Trueman, 2014). As Trueman comments on the spot, the wounds, amputated organs, and afflicted psychologies rather than being reflected as badges of courage or patriotism, are exhibited as the true faces and legacies of war and as the agents of suffering that substantially changed the lives

of these service personnel. In this respect, rather than watching glorious acts of some courageous soldiers, the audience witness individuals who strive to come to terms with, and heal, their injuries.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan caused an increase in the number of traumatised subjects as many of the service personnel deployed to those places stayed a long time and returned their homes with injured bodies and psyches. Although it is hardly possible to achieve an authentic congruity between these experiences and their literary representation, by bringing the real actors of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan onto the stage and giving them a voice they had not so far found, *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* is one of the closest attempts in literary and theatrical history to achieve this congruity. The play spans the recruitment of the soldiers and their deployment to frontline Afghanistan, the story of their being wounded and discharged, homecoming and suffering from PTSD. It also embodies trauma symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares and relationship problems, as well as the soldiers' bodily wounds and the painful recovery processes with physiotherapy and psychotherapy. The plotline in tandem with the structure of trauma, is non-linear, disrupted by flashbacks and hallucinations, as well as by various songs and dances choreographed by the soldiers and professional dancers together.

The play begins in medias res with the sound of an IED explosion and the first scene entitled "Waking" opens in a hospital in Birmingham. A nurse is seen trying to help a wounded soldier named Charlie who is lying on a bed, shouting, swearing and obviously suffering deeply from his physical wounds. From his statements it soon becomes clear that he is a British soldier serving in Afghanistan and wounded by an improvised explosive device. As he speaks, it also becomes evident that he is psychologically afflicted as he believes he has been captured by the Taliban and will be poisoned.

Nurse: What's your name?

He stares at her, his breathing becoming rapid.

Charlie: Fuck. You.

Nurse: You're in Birmingham, in hospital –

Charlie: /Fuck you, you Taliban bitch.

Nurse: /Can you remember your name?

Charlie: (Shouting) Help! Help! I'm in here! Here! (Sheers, 2012, p. 9-10)³

When his mother and wife come to visit him, he gets more anxious and tries to soothe them, promising he is going to save them for he thinks they have also been captured. Even they cannot help him calm down and make him believe that he is alright.

Although he really is in Birmingham and taken care of by the British doctors and nurses, due to the gravity of what he has gone through Charlie cannot adapt into his environment, and understand what has happened. Traumatized by the idea of being caught and killed by the Taliban, he keeps swearing and threatening the people around. When he falls to the ground, the audience sees him in uniform with one leg missing. This is not a simulation but an authentic amputated limb, the sight of which at the very beginning of the play, shockingly expresses physical trauma and disturbs the audience. Leaning on a crutch, Charlie stares at the audience and starts to tell them how he felt when an IED went off taking one of his limbs:

Charlie: You know when you fell off your bike? As a kid? Do you remember that pain? The one that you don't feel at first, but then you look down at your hand, your knee and it's all gritty from where you bounced along the pavement. And that's

³ Further citations from the play will be given by page number only.

when it comes on, pulsing and you're like, 'Ow, ow, ow, what the fuck?' (12)

Charlie narrates what he has experienced through a three-page soliloquy, comparing his childhood trauma of falling off a bike and being unable to grasp its painfulness due to the immediate shock, to the feelings he experiences in due course as a result of an exploding IED. As a matter of fact, even though he means to, he cannot give an account of what happened as a whole because of the intensity of what he has gone through. As a consequence, this "crisis of truth", to quote Shoshana Felman, resists language and Charlie, unable to testify to the traumatic horror, repeatedly states not remembering what happened:

Charlie: ... I don't remember waking up.

I don't remember eating breakfast.

I don't remember being given orders, or loading up, or leaving the compound.

I don't remember where we went.

I don't remember walking through an archway, a low archway.

I don't remember the IED going off.

None of that. (12)

One of the basic tenets of trauma theory as propounded by Caruth, and van der Kolk for example, focuses on the amnesic quality of trauma. Neurobiologist van der Kolk proposes that traumatic memories do not have a verbal component and for that reason they cannot be narrated as normal memories (Van der Kolk et al., 2007, p. 287). Caruth, similarly, suggests that the traumatic event is so painful that the mind cannot grasp and process it at the time of happening, and in the immediate aftermath, this makes remembering and narrating the event impossible. Charlie, as an example of this, faces a severe traumatic incident and with the intensity of the

explosion his protective shield, as Freud would put it, is broken, and as a result, he is exposed to immense pain. Therefore, as his consciousness cannot grasp what he has lived, he cannot narrate what has happened. All other characters, in the same way, when it comes to the moment of their catastrophic wounding, fall silent and state not remembering what happened back then.

Even before the soldiers begin to testify and narrate their traumatic stories, the play itself presents an embodiment of a trauma. Because before speech comes the sight; Charlie is seen on the stage and the audience first of all realises that he has lost his limb. This moment tells a lot more than Charlie can express. Caruth, draws an analogy of trauma as the story of “a wound that cries out” (Caruth, 1996, p. 4). Amputated bodies on the stage, and likewise, other visible injuries become that crying wound and express more about the performers and their traumas than their words can. That is to say, they materialise the trauma that cannot be verbalised by means of language. This evinces the potential of theatre in dealing with issues related to trauma; it is a literary mode that does not solely depend spoken language but rather rests on several layers of representation.

Later on, however, through the psychologist’s enquiry, telling their story of being wounded, all of the soldiers recount their traumatic encounter in a linear narrative.

Psychologist: Do you want to talk about your ‘when’, Charlie?

...

Charlie: Sure. I was taking part in an op...

Daniel: I was commanding a company...

John: I was on top cover ...

Frank: I was against the wall

... A sudden simultaneous moment of contact. The sound of explosion and gunfire. In slow motion Frank is hit by an RPG.

John is blown from his vehicle. Roger's Snatch turns over. Chris, Daniel, Charlie and Leroy are hit by IEDs. ...

Daniel: I was blown twenty metres...

Frank: I heard the rocket coming in...

...

Daniel: The shrapnel went through the back of my brain...

Frank: It shattered my cheek bone, pierced my eye...

...

John: And there was silence...(45-46)

Even though Richard McNally denies preclusion of the memories in the case of a trauma event, asserting that, as trauma does not block narrative memory, the victims can perfectly describe what has happened (McNally, 2005, p. 180), traumatic amnesia lies at the heart of trauma in Caruth and her followers' theories. In *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*, despite the fact that all of the soldiers deny remembering what happened after they were wounded, they all seem perfectly aware of the time span until the trauma event happened. Stuart Fisher while specifying the limits of verbatim theatre points out the nature of "truths such as testimonial or traumatic truth that fail to be disclosed by a literal and factual account of 'what happened'" (Stuart Fisher, 2011, p. 113). The fact that Sheers includes these specific details about what happened when the trauma event occurred, while obstructing the memory following the trauma event, seems discursive when the meditative, incomprehensible and incommunicative nature of the trauma is taken into account. From the soldiers' stories, it is understood that they remember all of it, but naturally not the part where they most probably passed out from the enormity of the pain. It suggests the soldiers' conscious access to the traumatic memory and narrative authority over it. However, even though they seem to be contradicting the amnesiac quality of trauma, these descriptions may be a dramatic mediation created by Sheers' intervention, because even if some may happen to recall the moment

of their wounding, it is not logical to expect all of the veterans to remember that moment. As previously noted, the play is not completely a verbatim piece; therefore, privileging the aim of informing the audience, Sheers interferes and provides a complete account of the soldiers' trauma.

In virtue of being soldiers and serving in real life, it is obvious that all the soldiers have experienced PTSD. Therefore it has a crucial place in Sheers' play. In the course of the play it is very obvious that all of the characters who have formerly served in Iraq or Afghanistan have either bodily or psychological wounds and that they suffer from serious PTSD. Although bodily wounds may heal in time, such healing does not easily apply to psychological wounds and that is why trauma occupies a greater place in the soldiers' lives and in the play. Rather than talking about the physical pains, each of them talks about the effects of PTSD. One of the soldiers, Daniel, in a scene entitled 'Briefing 2' gives a chronology of the painstaking disorder that all other soldiers have been diagnosed with, referring to the various names used to describe PTSD throughout its history.

Daniel: Nostalgia / Melancholia

Wind contusions. / Soldier's heart.

Abreaction. / Effort syndrome.

NYDM (not yet diagnosed - mental). / NYDN (not yet diagnosed – nervous).

Exhaustion. / Battle exhaustion.

Combat exhaustion. / Shell shock.

Neurasthenia. / Traumatic neurosis.

Psycho neurosis. / Fear neurosis

Battle neurosis. / Lack of moral fibre.

Old sergeant syndrome. / War syndrome.

Combat fatigue. / Acute stress disorder.

Acute stress reaction. / Combat stress reaction.

Post-combat disorder. / Post-war disorder.

Just as the stories are told and enacted, the diagnosis is also made by the soldiers themselves. Even though their visible wounds and amputations are acknowledged by the others, the invisible effects of war cannot be. By including a history of PTSD, Sheers draws attention to the prevalence of the disease which has been long ignored by society, the military and medicine.

Considering that response to the trauma occurs in the form of belated repetitive intrusive phenomena, (Caruth, 1996, p. 11) the impact of a trauma event lies precisely in its belatedness. All of the soldiers in *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* are haunted by these intrusive phenomena after coming back home, because they cannot differentiate the past from present and live in a durational rather than a chronological time. Consequently, they go on to live in the past through compulsive shifts back in time and space. The reliving of the traumatic events back in the war zone through flashbacks are so central to their lives and the play that the second scene of the second act is even entitled 'Flashback'. Positioned as the first scene of the second act, the previous scene 'Physio' opens in a physiotherapy room where soldiers, who have had limbs amputated or lost their physical abilities, are doing exercises with their physiotherapist accompanied by classical music. While Charlie explains how he and the others ended up in that physio room, the scene is blasted with a massive explosion and in the second scene the setting turns into a war zone in Afghanistan. Just like the traumatic memories, the scene erupts out of a sudden shattering of the peaceful and comfortable present. All of the soldiers and the physiotherapists collapse representing the Afghan civilians who are accidentally killed by the British soldiers in diegesis. The three British soldiers who have fired on the civilians enter the stage, looking panicked with the shock of their mistake. The scene functions as a symptomatic acting out of

these besetting moments. Through this scene, the soldiers return back to the trauma moment and relieve these events.

The 'Flashback' scene is particularly significant in exemplifying the theatrical nature of trauma. Just as a theatrical piece stages an incident from the past with numerous rehearsals and productions, traumatic events are likewise re-enacted again and again through compulsive repetitions. By means of theatre's potential to re-enact, the symptomatic returns of a traumatic event can be successfully exhibited in the play. Theatrical effects such as lighting, sound and imagery enable the staging of the symptoms, and easily activate the audience's imagination. Therefore, not only the soldiers but also the audience, go back and witness the trauma events.

In the scene following the 'Flashback', the motionless bodies on the floor get up and start to repeat a sequence of movements of discomfort, saying,

Women: It's not re-living it. It's living it. You're in it. You're there, doing it.

All: Worse at night, always worse at night. Worse at night, always worse at night.

Men: Scared. Scared to close my eyes. Scared to put my head on the pillow.

Scared. Scared to close my eyes. Scared to put my head on the pillow.

All: It's not re-living it. It's living it. You're in it. You're there, doing it. Worse at night, always worse at night. Worse at night, always worse at night.

Entitled 'Sleep', this scene becomes another symptomatic acting out of trauma. The scene gives a painful account of the traumatic haunting in the soldiers' lives and, just like repetitive intrusions of

the trauma event, these lines are compulsively repeated throughout this scene. Between these repetitive lines, all of the characters and their families recount how their lives have been ruined by sleepless nights, nightmares and images flicking through their minds. They see dead bodies, bodies of children in the streams and see themselves repeatedly blown up by an IED. The victims are exposed randomly and unexpectedly to these images and this prevents them from re-engaging in normal life.

Although during a traumatic incident, the victim's mind is occupied only with survival, the physical escape never suffices, because, as Caruth maintains, the victim who succeeds in surviving the traumatic event, "wakes up in another fright" (Caruth, 1996, p. 65). No matter how far the victim tries to escape, the memories follow. Charlie comments on how the physical distances are getting ever closer thanks to the technology. He says that it now takes only twelve hours to get wounded soldiers back home from Afghanistan to the UK. However, the psychological distance and emotional return are much more complicated.

Charlie: But in here-

He taps his head.

Even quicker than that. Pretty much insta-fucking-taneous. Blink-of-an-eye kinda stuff. With a few weeks' high-definition hallucinations thrown in for free.

The only problem is that when you come back that quick not all of you comes back at once. (13)

Even though they can make it home physically, as Charlie informs us, getting the soldiers' minds off what has happened on the frontline becomes more difficult. Traumatic memories cannot be left behind despite the long distance between where they were suffered and where the soldiers are now, and even despite their conscious attempts to escape from them. These traumatic memories, similar to a material

wound, stick to them and do not easily heal. They stay buried in the minds of the soldiers, ready to surface and re-traumatise them at any moment.

Trauma highlights several forms of intrusion involving continual recurrences of the past events as indications of an indelible imprint of trauma that are exemplified by soldiers' various forms of acting out. Another symptom is manifested with the cases of 'hyperarousal'. Herman describes this symptom when he writes that, after a trauma event, "the human system of self-preservation seems to go onto permanent alert, as if the danger might return at any moment." (Herman, 1997, p. 35). In *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*, characters are vigilant and ready for this danger. Their complaints about their inability to fall asleep are obvious manifestations of hyperarousal. The lines repeatedly uttered by all of the characters on the stage in scene three like quoted above, describe their hyper-alertness in the face of the threat of revisiting the trauma, causing extreme anxiety and sleeplessness.

Trauma does not only affect the soldiers' lives. After being discharged, they withdraw themselves from society. One of the veterans, Roger, says he cannot even see his kids, (57) Charlie yells at his partner while she is trying to help him, and almost all of them end up with an isolated life far from any form of social engagement. They also become quite aggressive and direct their anger either at themselves or at those around them. Leroy, describing, his pain states: "It won't go away. It makes me want to smash something. I can't do anything to stop it. Like nails under the skin" (56). His lines also stand as proof of his frustration and how helpless he feels, not being able to do anything about it.

Unfortunately, the lives of the soldiers suffering from post-traumatic stress are not only perturbed by the acting out. The victims disturbed by the recurrent and distressing recollections may seek

ways to escape from them to ease their pain. Commonly, they may start to take painkillers and become addicted to them or take alcohol. In the play some of the veterans also succumb to excessive drinking and drug use in their attempts to ease their pain: some in order to fall asleep easily and some to avoid hallucinations or flashbacks. Most of the performers of the play in real life too confess to living addicted to drugs. Stephen Rayne also asserts that, in real life, a “lot of them are taking a lot of medication a lot of the time.” (Cavendish, 2012). Although they do not provide a comprehensive treatment, drugs numb their feelings and hinder them from reliving the symptoms. In the ‘Common Room’ scene, when the soldiers are handed their medications, they sing ‘The Meds Round’.

All: (sing) Codeine, Tramadol, Fentanyl, Oramorph, Paracetamol, MST, Amitriptyline, Diazepam, Mirtazapine, Citalopram, Ranitidine, Omeprazole, Lactulose, Butran, Ibuprofen, Venlafaxine. Co-codamol. (66)

The song, comprising of the names of various drugs, highlights the painful healing process of the veterans that obliges them to take a large amount of medication. Most of them are used to relieve bodily pain and some somatic disorders that show up as a result of their psychological disorders.

Herman points out certain kinds of somatisation such as headaches, gastrointestinal disturbances and various other unexplained bodily pains that can arise in cases of trauma (Herman, 1997, p. 124). Through a therapy meeting between Charlie and his psychoanalyst the physical symptoms are clearly manifested and listed as the following,

Psychologist: ...Severe allergic reactions: disorientation; excessive sweating; fainting; fast or irregular heartbeat; fever; hallucinations; loss of coordination; mental or mood changes,

agitation, depression, red, swollen, blistered or peeling skin, and... seizures.

Charlie: Severe nausea? Vomiting; diarrhoea; headaches; suicidal thoughts – cos I need more of those, right? – Loss of appetite; tiredness; weakness; pale shit and dark piss. (66)

The cumulative effects of trauma manifest in physical form. The medications and psychosomatic symptoms listed by the soldiers unveil the reality of the soldiers' medical record that is not only specified with a visible injury but a psychological unrest. Unable to express their psychological pain, they suffer from these physical somatisations, and live addicted to drugs. In addition to their bodily wounds that attest to their physical trauma, psychosomatic symptoms inform the audience about the soldiers' psychological trauma that cannot be expressed through language.

It is widely accepted that a trauma event after its occurrence disrupts the sense of self and creates new identities for the victims of these events. Almost all of the characters have problems with other people, especially with their partners or mothers as it has already been mentioned. This inability to connect and communicate happens as the survivor's understanding of the self is ruined in the first place following the trauma. Podell and Laub assert that the traumatised subjects fail to "preserve an emphatic tie" (Laub and Podell, 1995, p. 992) with themselves. Daniel, at the beginning of scene seven of the first act, narrates how and when this change took place:

Daniel: How I think of it is, I've got my old brain, and my new brain. My old brain was the one that evolved for the first thirty-eight years of my life. It was me. My new brain, that's the one I was given when I was blown up. I mean, in an instant I

became a different person ... I don't like the new me. I don't always recognize myself. (70-71)

For Daniel, as the title of the play suggests, war means a second genesis. He goes into the army as one person and comes out as somebody else, because the war annihilates what self the soldiers have constructed so far and creates a desperately different one. They start to feel, live and see the world differently. Similarly, when Chris talks to the psychologist, he tells him that his wife says that "The Chris that went away hasn't come back." (65) John, likewise, admits disparity within his personality saying "It's like being two people" (70). At the beginning of the last scene when Charlie recounts the grievous process of being discharged, he says "one of the last things you hand over is your ID. Your identity" (78). Although he is speaking of the military identification card that he returns when he is discharged, it also metaphorically refers to their identity which they leave in the army. When they finish their service, they start another life, new but moulded by their experiences, and with a new identity that they acquired from what they have gone through. "Because we don't live in two worlds, do we? We live in one" (79) Charlie asserts. It is quite obvious that the problem they have is about choosing which world they want to live.

The solution for living in a world is not as easy as simply choosing a life, though. Notwithstanding their zeal for getting rid of the traces and reminiscences of the past, the legacies of war refuse to go away, obliging the soldiers to oscillate between two worlds. No matter how problematic it sounds and proves, narrating the trauma event and hearing how the victim feels have been one of the indispensable elements in the process of healing. Testimonial narratives, in this sense, shift position from victim to witness and, in the theatre context, all the servicemen and women in *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* experience what they failed to experience in the first

place by bearing witness to what has happened and at the same time by testifying it. This act of testifying and narrating the traumatic story, of course, makes the existence of an empathetic listener crucial. Only through this way can the survivor get away with acting out the trauma in various forms, and take a critical distance from what has happened. When this distance can be achieved, the survivor can work through the trauma. In theatre and performance arts the spectator is positioned as the listener. As theatre can address a wide audience, the role of dramatic productions in providing this essential listener and helping to work through the trauma is undeniable. In validating trauma and recovering from it, de Waal writes that

The implied spectatorial position is thus one that affirms the soldiers' status as victims and puts them 'safely beyond blame'. This is the basic premise of the performative contract for the more important interpellative invitation to be realised, namely, an apprehension of the soldiers-performers' recovery process. (Waal, 2017, p. 147)

To know that there are people to listen to their pain and understand them, the soldiers acknowledge that they are not alone. This mutual contract between the soldiers and the audience validates the soldiers' victimisation, and giving soldiers the chance to face this reality contributes to their recovery.

Bearing witness to the soldiers' stories on stage, the members of the audience also become the secondary witnesses and sharers of the events. Similarly, dealing with the paradigm of witnessing in theatre, Teya Sepunick defines the purpose of this new form by stating that

The purpose of this form of theatre is to give voice to those who have been marginalised, forgotten, or are invisible in the larger society, and to invite audiences to bear witness to issues

of suffering, redemption, and social justice. (Sepinuck, 2013, p. 14)

Sepinuck's work is based on the premise of "finding medicine in stories", which also comprises the subtitle of her book. In *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* the soldiers who have been neglected by society and could not make their voices heard, find the cure in sharing their stories and pain with an audience. The private, individual trauma experience, of which the service personnel themselves are the only witnesses, is translated into a collective realm, through a public retelling and positioning of the listeners as the witnesses. The proximity between the audience and the performers, and the sight of real, injured bodies on stage enable an immediacy, and the authenticity of what they see on stage encourages a communal bearing of witness. As a consequence, this mutual understanding and feeling of empathy enable healing for the victims.

Although theatrical productions have generally lost their sole, original, cathartic role, some trauma narratives and theatrical productions continue to provide a context for it. Aristotle defines the function of theatre as a purgation of the feelings aroused in the audience. In trauma narratives produced by the survivor victims, however, the performance can also enable catharsis for victims burdened with the weight of trauma. Tal, in her work while advocating 'a literature of trauma' by real victims, says "such writing serves as both a validation and cathartic vehicle for the traumatised writer" (Tal, 1996, p. 137). Similarly, the original idea of writing such a play consisting of authentic materials and staging it with real soldiers came from executive producer Alice Driver who believes that theatre can empower the individual and boost their confidence, self-esteem and give voice to the wounded, injured and sick service personnel and veterans of the armed forces. As initially desired, feeling of catharsis and healing have become the most striking outcomes of *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* Most of the soldiers

taking part in the project evaluate it as a life- changing experience. One of the soldiers, who was suffering PTSD, for example, was a drug and alcohol addict but, after being a part of this society and sharing his problems with people who felt the same, was cured of his addictions and started to feel more hopeful about the future. Egendorf and Lifton, emphasising the importance of a reclamation of emotions while overcoming the trauma, write that impressions from their research show that

a significant minority of Vietnam veterans have had moments of enlightenment, conversions, and other crucial points at which they turned traumatic experiences into resources of renewal. . . Most memoirs and novels deal with the war experience or with unsettling, if not traumatic, homecomings. A few accounts, however, focus on the struggles of healing, demonstrating that some portion of the veterans population knows what it means to turn suffering to joy. (Tal, 1996, p. 137)

During the performances, by sharing their experiences, the soldiers also succeed in bringing together fragments of their shattered self, which occurred at the time of the traumatic event, and become whole again. In an interview, one of the cast members, veteran Cassidy Little who plays Charlie, asserts:

This show gave me back me. You have to understand that when a person goes through this kind of trauma, they have a lot taken from them. Future goals, aspirations, confidence and much more. Your ego is slashed right down to its bare bones. Your employment endeavours are taken, your physical appearance is altered, and with a brain injury, even the way you think and react changes. Throw in some very high-powered drugs and you have a perfect combination for confusion and hopeless

recovery. So, we needed something to allow us to subconsciously repair that. This show was it. (Wheeler, 2014)

With the rise of trauma paradigm in many fields of art and literature, talking about traumatic experience as a way of healing has gained importance. As Thompson argues, theatre has also become one of the fertile sites for offering liberation from suffering by expressing it:

Within performance studies in general and in applied theatre in particular, the assumptions emanating from the popularity of the *trauma diagnosis* have led to the prescription of ‘telling one’s story’ as the preferred method and necessary precondition for ‘relief’, ‘liberation’ or ‘healing’. (Thompson, 2006, p. 45 emphasis in original)

According to Thompson, creating a narrative of the pain allows it to be healed while silence is a dangerous retreat. Caruth writing about the traumatic paradox asserts that trauma is not only an experience but a failure to experience, hence it can only be worked through by grasping the reality of this experience. Performing soldiers in the play bring their fragmented parts together by telling their stories and re-enacting them on stage, and this has changed the way they have felt about themselves, what they have lived through and how they are going to live. In this way, the performance of the play gives them liberation and a healing of their traumatic burdens.

Even though the audience witnesses real soldiers and real stories in *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*, the connection between them is not necessarily real. What it means is that the soldiers do not perform their own stories with their identities, but an edited version of them. The play has been drawn from the personal biographies and testimonies of the soldiers; however, all the character names and the stories in the play have been imagined by Sheers. Even though this seems to disrupt the truth claim on which verbatim theatre hinges, the distance enabled by incorporating fictional identities and slightly

distorting the real stories can enable a healthy working through for the soldiers. As psychoanalysts van der Kolk and van der Hart suggest, by slightly distorting the traumatic memory and “imagining alternative scenarios, many patients are able to soften the intrusive power of the original, unmitigated horror” (Van der Kolk and van der Hart, 1995, p. 178). While problematizing the verbalisation of trauma, Caruth, similarly, also suggests to “tell ‘a slightly different story’ to different people.” (Caruth, 1995, p. 153). The victims, therefore, while narrating the unmitigated catastrophe can tend towards distortion in order not to face the enormity of the event and be re-traumatised. According to Caroline Wake, performing a real trauma event might carry a ‘risk of repetition’ for the victims, and therefore, she suggests, it might be more ethical to resort to some distortions in order to eliminate this possibility (Trezise and Wake, 2013, p. 46).

In the play, when they perform what they have experienced as somebody else’s story, the soldiers, thanks to these emotional and critical distances, can get away from the feelings of a victim and distance themselves from the trauma event. Daniel Shaw, for example, who lost his both legs during an IED explosion in Afghanistan as he went to the aid of a colleague, plays Leroy Jenkins and rather than speaking for himself speaks as Leroy on the stage. Even though the stories of Shaw and Jenkins are similar, the narrative frame hinders emotional identification to some extent. This, in turn, as Wald points out, “allows for a gradual liberation from the repetition compulsion through the very mechanism of repeating, albeit repeating in a slightly different form.” (Wald, 2007, p. 106) Shaw repeats his story through that of Leroy Jenkins, and this way works through his own trauma.

Specific to the holocaust, literary representations of the trauma and suffering of the victims have been subject of many literary and ethical speculations. Including amputated bodies on the

stage in *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.* can also run the risk of suggesting an ambivalent aestheticisation of the pain, suffering and vulnerability of the soldiers, because the audience is invited to witness the weakest moments, the imperfect bodies of the soldiers, and even to access the most private problems they suffer from. Sheers, however, negates this perception by indicating that the soldiers' bodily imperfections do not prevent them from living. The soldiers talk freely about their amputations; they even make fun of them.

Leroy: How come your stump's so fucking Gucci?

Charlie: Gucci? What's so fucking Gucci about my stump?

Leroy: The scar. Yours is well neat. Mine is like a fucking arse. ... Look, it's got bum cheeks and everything I can fart out of this fucker. (60)

Charlie carries a personalised number plate for his wheelchair which reads "N0 LEG 14." (65) In the meantime, Chris makes some phone calls to find out whether anybody has found his leg and his friends tease him for acting like Cinderella. The scene is full of black humour as a strategy to recuperate and come to terms with their bodies. Sheers also asks his audience to accept them as they are instead of feeling pity or treating them as disabled bodies. On the character of the play, Little comments,

This isn't a freak show, this isn't 'Let's clap for them because they got hurt doing war-y, war-y stuff.' The audience is coming away a little more informed about what a soldier goes through. (Wheeler, 2004)

Rather than presenting the soldiers as disabled bodies, the play highlights what they can do and what they need from society. What they need is acceptance and understanding before pity. Providing a theatrical frame, the dance scene that the soldiers perform with

professional dancers transforms them into resilient bodies and proves that physical impediments are not obstacles.

The Two Worlds of Charlie F. has potentially persuasive effects as it is based on contemporary social realities and performed by real trauma survivors. However, putting aside its authenticity and therapeutic framework for the British soldiers, what seems problematic in the play is the stance it takes in disregarding the trauma for the Afghan people. With the exception of Afghan civilians killed in the 'Flashback' scene, they or their trauma do not find any representation, although they are the most distinct victims of the war. Contradicting the truth claim that underpins this play, the reality of those people living there seems to be comprehensively ignored. Writing of this absence, Waal, quoting Butler, says "By providing no names, faces, or (hi)stories to the Other, public discourse renders both their lives and deaths unreal, unmarkable, making it impossible for 'us' to grieve for them." (De Waal, 2015, p. 23). Contrary to what Sheers claims, excluding the reality of the Afghan population and inadequately reflecting the effects of war on them, therefore, the play runs the risk of being partial, and misinforming its audience.

Conclusion

While emphasising the function of trauma tragedy, Duggan claims "Rather than looking back at a historical moment of trauma, trauma-tragedy is attempting to bridge or reduce the gap between the historical moment, its witness and (that) experience" (Duggan, 2015, p. 57). *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*, by bringing the experience of trauma with the help of its victims onto the stage, bridges the gap between the victims' traumatic past and present. In doing so, it invites the audience as well as the performers to a mutual witnessing. In terms of the audiences, a successful emotional identification becomes a successful outcome of the performance, as they bear

witness to the real testimonies of the real actors of war. However, another criticism that can be addressed in the play is the absence of any overall critical distance even as it encourages an emotional identification. Although the play is ostensibly about war on terror and its destructive effects on the soldiers, there are no references to the causes and the general outcomes of the war. Lacking such an important aspect, it fails to connect the traumatic event and the results. On the contrary, it even runs the risk of strengthening these phenomena. Although Sheers states “the play is only about what war is about”, in the final scene Charlie’s speech related to the ‘regiment of the wounded’ enforces the continuity of the military values, glorifying its members and victories.

Sheers’ play avoids criticism, and fails to heal or prevent trauma in the long run. Nevertheless, in the scope of soldiers’ personal experience of trauma, the play takes up the challenge of articulating the failed experience of trauma and successfully translates it into a collective realm through a public retelling and positioning the audiences as witnesses to the trauma which cannot be the soldiers’ alone. As Caruth posits trauma “is never simply one’s own” and “we are implicated in each other’s trauma” (Caruth, 1996, p. 24). By bearing witness to their trauma, the audiences also accept them as their own and take part in the process of working through.

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1940’LI YILLARIN BAZI AMERİKAN ve TÜRK ROMANLARINDA KADIN, EĞİTİM, SOSYAL YAŞAM*

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Giriş/Introduction

Amerika Birleşik Devletleri’nin yeni kurulan bir ülke olmanın acemiliklerinden kurtulduğu, kölelik ve iç savaş gibi büyük meseleleri geride bıraktığı ve kendi mitini yazmaya başlayıp aynı zamanda dünyada bir süper güç olduğu 20’inci yüzyılın ilk yarısı hiç şüphesiz hesapta olmayan bazı büyük olayların yaşanmasının önüne geçememiştir. Bu çağın ilk yarısına sığan iki büyük dünya savaşı ile birlikte Amerika Birleşik Devletleri kendi bünyesinde Büyük Buhran diye anılan ciddi bir kriz dönemini ve bunun gibi yerel birçok inişli çıkışlı süreci geçirmiştir. Ekonomi piyasalarının çöktüğü, sosyalizmin dünyada alan kazanmaya çalıştığı bir dönemde ABD’nin de bundan pay aldığı bu süreçte

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ülke hem ekonomik hem politik anlamda ciddi bir dönüşüm içinde yer almıştır. Buna rağmen ülkedeki genel durum Charles Dickens'ın bir dönemlerin İngiltere'sini tanımlayan bir roman giriş cümlesinden farksız değildir: “Zamanların en iyisiydi, zamanların en kötüsüydü”. (*İki Şehrin Hikâyesi*, 1859). ABD büyük bir buhran ve sıkıntılar ile uğraşsa da ülkenin kültür, sanat ve edebiyat anlamında kendi mitini ve kendi kültürünü oluşturma hatta dünyaya etki etme süreci ise aralıksız sürmüştür. Bu anlamda bu zaman aralığına Harlem Rönesansı, Yitik Kuşak Dönemi, Jazz Çağı gibi küçük ama etkili dönemler, hatta akımlar girmiş ve ülkedeki yazına etki etmiştir. Savaşlar ve çöküşler gölgesinde edebiyat alanında önemli eserler verilmiştir. Öte yandan Türkiye’de durum ABD’de olduğundan biraz daha farklıdır. Amerika’nın içinde bulunduğu ya da kıyısında yer aldığı dünya savaşları aynı şekilde Türkiye’nin de ortak sorunlarından birisi iken Türkiye aynı zamanda yeni ve genç bir Cumhuriyet olması hasebiyle radikal bir geçiş süreci yaşar. Bu süreçte sanat ve edebiyat da önemli bir rol üstlenmiştir. “Cumhuriyet Türkiye’inde roman sanatı edebiyatın kendi dinamiklerine bırakılamayacak kadar ciddiye alınmış, siyasî düzeydeki bilgi edebiyata tahvil edilmiş ve edebî alanı dışarıdan gelip yazarlara, yayıncılara, eleştirmenlere ve okuyuculara ‘yol gösteren’ yeni otoriteler istila etmiştir.” (Türkeş, 845). Güçlü bir Osmanlı dönemi ve bunu besleyen kültür, sanat ve edebiyat sürecinden modernleşen bir Türkiye’ye geçiş yapan ülkede yeni dönemin geçişi Halide Edip Adivar, Muazzez Tahsin, Kerime Nadir, Samiha Ayverdi gibi yazarların eserlerine yansımıştır. Özellikle kadın yazarların da etkili olduğu ve önem arz ettiği bu dönemde Türkiye yüzünü sadece fiziki anlamda değil kaleme alınan eserlerle de iyice batıya dönmeye başlamıştır. Söz konusu eserler ve kurgular, bu anlamda eserlerin üstlendiği rolü çok net bir şekilde yansıtırken Türkiye’de modernleşmeye geçiş sürecinde kadının sosyal hayattaki rolüne dair de önemli tespitler sunar. Yenileşen düzende kadın kimliği ile eğitim, sosyal yaşayış

arasındaki ilişki söz konusu romanlardan hareketle yorumlanmaya uygundur. Hem Amerikan edebiyatında hem de Türk edebiyatında 1940'lı yıllara ait romanların bu açıdan okunmaya elverişli olduğu görülmektedir. Bu çalışmada söz konusu eserlerden seçilen örneklerden hareketle kadın, eğitim, sosyal yaşam ilişkileri üzerinde durulacaktır.

“Sosyal Yaşamda Kadın”ı Romanlardan Okumak

Cumhuriyet dönemi Türk edebiyatında kadının eğitimi ve sosyal yaşamdaki rolünü eserlerine en iyi yansıtan isimlerden birisi Halide Edip Adıvar olmuştur. Adıvar özellikle *Sonsuz Panayır* adlı eserinde bir genç kıızı konu alır. Onun şehir yaşamına dahlini konu edinir ve bu karakterden hareketle kadının sosyal yaşamdaki yerini, değişimini detayları ile sunar. Bu roman, sadece bir yaşam öyküsü değil aynı zamanda dönemin toplumsal yapısını ve sosyolojisini net bir şekilde gözler önüne sunan, “kadın” merkezli bir eserdir. Nitekim “Bu sosyal romanda şahıs kadrosu çok kalabalık olmakla beraber, aslında hikâyenin kendi çevresinden, fakir şartlarından kurtulup, yüksek sınıfa geçmek, iyi şartlar altında yaşamak isteyen haris bir genç kızın; Ayşe’nin etrafında döndüğü söylenilebilir.” (Enginün, 2007: 284)

Sonsuz Panayır’da kadının eğitimi ve sosyal yaşamdaki yeri adeta bir roman eliyle sahne sahne ve aşama aşama resmedilmektedir. Roman, Türkiye'nin yakın tarihine odaklanarak kadınların eğitim ve toplumsal statüdeki değişimlerini ele almaktadır. Adıvar, eserinde son dönem Osmanlı toplumunda kadının eğitimi ve sosyal yaşamdaki yerine dair bir ışık tutarken aynı zamanda çağdaşlaşma sürecindeki Türkiye'nin kadınlar için yarattığı fırsatları ve zorlukları ele alarak kadının eğitim ve sosyal statüdeki değişimini yansıtmaktadır. Eser, karakterlerden biri olan Ayşe Balkar’ın hikâyesi üzerinden kadının eğitim sürecini ele alır. Ayşe, genç bir kadın olarak eğitim alma arzusuyla yanıp tutuşan ve

kadının toplumsal konumunu deęiřtirmek iin mcadele eden bir karakterdir. Roman boyunca, Balkar'ın eęitim arayıřı ve eęitimle birlikte kazandıęı zgven ve bilgi, kadının toplum iindeki yerine dair nemli bir deęiřimi temsil eder. Adivar, eserinde kadının eęitiminin sadece bireysel dzeyde deęil, toplumsal dnřmlere de katkı saęladıęını vurgular. Balkar'ın eęitimi, sadece kiřisel geliřimi iin deęil, aynı zamanda toplumun genel eęitim seviyesini ykseltme amacını tařır. Eserde kadının eęitimi, toplumsal dnřmn bir parası olarak grlr ve kadının kendisini gerekleřtirebilmesi iin temel bir adım olarak deęerlendirilir.

Sonsuz Panayır, aynı zamanda kadının sosyal yařamdaki yerine de ıřık tutar. Eserde, Ayře Balkar gibi gl karakterler, sadece ev iřleriyle sınırlı tutulan kadın roln reddeder ve daha aktif bir sosyal hayat srdrme hakkını talep eder. Roman, kadının kamu alanına katılımını ve toplumsal rollerde yer almasını savunur. Bu yolla, Halide Edip Adivar, kadının toplumun her alanında var olma hakkını ve potansiyelini vurgular. Kadının eęitimi, onun zgvenini artırır ve kendini ifade etme becerilerini geliřtirirken aynı zamanda toplumda daha aktif ve etkili bir rol oynamasını saęlar. Roman, kadının eęitimi ve sosyal yařamdaki yerinin birbirini tamamlayan unsurlar olduęunu gsterir. Adivar'ın romanı, kadının eęitimi ve sosyal yařamdaki yerine dair kapsamlı bir deęerlendirme sunar. Eserde kadının eęitimi, bireysel ve toplumsal dzeyde dnřm saęlayan bir sre olarak tasvir edilir. Ayře Balkar gibi karakterler aracılıęıyla kadınların eęitim ve toplumsal statlerini deęiřtirme mcadelesi ve toplumda daha etkili bir rol oynamaları gerektięi vurgulanır. Fakat tm bunlara raęmen izilen fotoęraf bazı olumsuzlukları ve geiř srecinin getirdięi aksaklıkları da ortaya koyar. Kitabın bařkarakteri Ayře Balkar, geleneksel bir ailede yetiřmiř, geleneksel bir yařam srerken bir eęitim alarak stat olarak anne-babasından ok daha farklı bir noktada yer bulmaya bařlamıřtır. İlk zamanlar gl bir gnl

bağına sahip olduğu ailesi ile zaman içerisinde bu bağ zayıflamaya başlar. Nitekim o, “hislerine mağlup olacak cinsten değildi, onun bir gayesi vardı. Mutlak, mutlak mensup olduğu fukara memur sınıfından kurtulmak, para kazanmak, bilhassa şöhret sahibi olmak istiyordu. Bu gayeye erişebilmek için, değil anasının babasının, kâinatın suyunu sıkmaktan çekinmiyecek kadar kudretli bir iradeye sahip olduğuna kanıdı.” (Adıvar, 1946: 9) İstanbul’un modern semtlerinde, sosyetenin önemli isimlerinin çocuklarına ders verdikçe, onlar arasında yer aldıkça bambaşka bir kız çocuğu haline gelir. Eğitilmiş olma hâli ona bu aileler arasında statü kazandırırken bir taraftan da onun bir türlü bu kesim arasında kabul görmemesine neden olur.

Fakir bir ailenin, çalışkan ve hırslı kızı Ayşe, sosyete diye tanımlanabilecek bir camiaya geçiş yolunda Ali Bey gibi önemli bir edebiyat öğretmeninden tecrübeler edinir. Ali Bey, İstanbul’un sosyetesinde yer almak isteyen Ayşe Balkar’ın hem eğitimine katkı sunar hem de bu sosyeteye dâhil olmasına kapı aralayacak insanlarla tanışmasına katkı sunar. Ali Bey’in yanında eğitim alan, farklı bir dünya ile tanışan Ayşe, önce iş hayatına atılır sonra pavyon ve benzeri modern eğlence alanlarını görür. Yeni Türkiye’nin modern yaşam alanları olan apartman dairelerindeki modern ailelerin yaşamına şahitlik eden Ayşe, daha sonra kendisi de bu modern dünyanın yaşam alanında kendisini bulur. Bir izdivaca kadar uzanan süreçte kadının sosyal yaşamdaki yerine dair çok derin tahliller sunan eserde bu yönüyle yoğunluklu olarak sosyal meselelerin belirleyici olduğu söylenebilir. Eser, 1940’lı yıllarda ülkenin sosyal görünümünü aksettirmektedir.

Halide Edip’in kadının sosyal yaşamdaki yeri, İstanbul’daki eğlence mekânları, şaşaalı hayatı ABD’deki Jazz Age dönemi romanlarını anımsatan türdedir. Yine aynı döneme tekabül eden bu süre zarfında ABD’de ise F. S. Fitzgerald’ın, *Muhteşem Gatsby* adlı

eserinde, benzer şaşaalı dönemler sunduğu görülür. Aynı dönemde ABD’de kadın sosyal yaşamda Türkiye’den çok daha önceden yer almaya başlamışken eğitimde de yine Türkiye’deki çağdaşlarından önde ilerlemektedir. Aynı dönemin ABD’deki muadillerinde kadının eğitim alma, sosyal yaşamda var olma konusundaki mücadelesi başa baş ilerlemez. Çünkü kadın bu statülere aşağı yukarı erişmiştir ve bunun dışında konuların irdelendiği görülür. Bir değişim olduğu söz konusudur ve bu değişim yeni bir kadın tipinin ortaya çıkışı şeklinde esere yansıtılmıştır. Daisy karakteri başta olmak üzere eserde sunulan yeni Amerikalı kadın tiplemesindeki değişim 1920’lerin yeni kadın tiplemesidir:

“Eski geleneklerin savunucuları için belki de en endişe verici olan şey, kadınların davranışlarının değişmeye başlamasıydı. Artık kadınlar, genellikle erkeklerin eşliğinde ve refakatçileri olmadan sigara içip içki içiyorlardı, hatta dönemin yeni dansları bile vahşi ve cinsel görünüyordu. Başka bir deyişle, sosyal değişim dönemlerinde sıklıkla gördüğümüz gibi, 1920’lerde “Yeni Kadın” ortaya çıktı.” (Bode, 1990)

Kadının farklı yönleriyle irdelendiği eserlerden bir diğeri de Ernest Hemingway’in *Çanlar Kimin İçin Çalıyor* eseridir. Bu eser bir savaş anlatısı olmasına rağmen kadın önemli bir detaydır. Savaş dönemi olmasına rağmen kadın, yaşamın orta yerinde yer alır. *Çanlar Kimin İçin Çalıyor*, savaşın korkunç gerçekleriyle yüzleşirken, aynı zamanda eğitimin ve kadının toplumdaki rolünün önemine de vurgu yapan, birçok farklı yönüyle ele alınabilecek bir eserdir. Romanın başkarakter Robert Jordan, İspanya İç Savaşı sırasında Cumhuriyetçi direnişçilere yardım etmek için görevlendirilen bir Amerikalı İspanyolca uzmandır. Hemingway, Jordan’ın gözünden olayları anlatarak, okuyucuya eğitimin ve kadının sosyal yaşamdaki yerinin nasıl bir rol oynadığını gösterir

aslında. Savaş öncelikli olsa da arka planda birçok konu vardır. Bunlardan birisi de şüphesiz eğitimidir. Kadının eğitim hayatı incelemese de eğitim, roman boyunca hem bireysel hem de toplumsal düzeyde önemli bir tema olarak belirir. Jordan, dilbilimci olarak eğitilmiş bir karakterdir ve dilbilim alanında uzmandır. Kendi disiplini ve bilgi birikimi sayesinde, İspanyol direnişçileriyle etkili bir şekilde iletişim kurabilmektedir. Eğitimin sağladığı beceriler, Jordan'ın savaşın içindeki rolünü ve etkisini artırır. Aynı zamanda, eğitimin insanların düşüncelerini ve bakış açılarını geliştirerek onları savaşın acımasızlığına karşı daha bilinçli hale getirdiği de anlatılır. Eserdeki dikkat çeken hususlardan biri tıpkı *Muhteşem Gatsby*'de olduğu gibi yeni bir kadın profilinin ön plana çıkarılmasıdır:

“Hemingway'in bu önemli tarihsel dönemde İspanya'daki cinsiyet ilişkilerinde meydana gelen bu önemli değişiklikleri kadın karakterlerine kasıtlı olarak nasıl yansıtmış olabileceğini dikkate almamıştır. Aslında, hem Pilar hem de Maria karakterlerinde, Hemingway'in “İspanya'nın Yeni Kadını”na feminist bir saygı duruşu olarak değerlendirilebilecek unsurlar bulunmaktadır.” (Guill, 2011: 9)

Öte yandan roman, kadının sosyal yaşamdaki yerine değinmesi ve bunu detayları ile irdelemesi yönüyle dönemsel bir okumaya ciddi katkı sunar. İspanya İç Savaşı döneminde, kadınlar savaşın içinde önemli roller üstlenirken toplumda da daha aktif bir şekilde yer almaya başlarlar. Kadın karakterler, erkeklerle birlikte direniş hareketinde yer alır ve savaşın etkileriyle mücadele ederler. Jordan'ın sevgilisi olan María, savaşın etkisiyle güçlenen bir karakterdir ve özgürlük için mücadele ederken kadının toplumdaki rolünü yeniden tanımlar. Roman, María gibi kadın karakterlerin eğitim ve özgürlük arayışında önemli aktörler olduğunu göstererek

kadının toplumdaki yerinin nasıl deęiřtięini ve glendięini iřaret eder. Eęitim ve kadının sosyal yařamdaki yeri arasındaki iliřki, romanın ilerleyen blmlerinde daha da aıklıęa kavuřur. Jordan, savařın acımasız gereklerini ve ideolojik atıřmaları gzlemledike, eęitimin insanları bilinlendirmede ve insanlık deęerlerini korumada ne kadar nemli olduęunu anlar. Aynı řekilde, kadın karakterlerin direniř hareketine katılımı ve toplumda etkin bir rol stlenmeleri, kadının sosyal yařamdaki yerinin glenmesi ve eřitlik mcadelesindeki rolnn altını izer. Eęitimli olup olmaksızın Mara ile mthiř bir iliřki kuran bařkahraman Jordan'ın bu iliřkisinin dıřında aynı zamanda kadının anaerkil rolne vurgu yapan blmler de vardır. Romanda bir etenin devrim mcadelesi anlatılır. Birka gnlk bir zaman diliminin anlatıldıęı eserde etenin bir kpr patlatma hazırlıęı srecinin detayları paylařılır.

Roman kiřilerinden Pilar, kadının toplumdaki yerine dair tahlile imkn tanıyan bir karakter olarak dikkat eker. Saldırı hazırlıęında olan erkek grubun arka plandaki srecini yrten, talimatlar veren bir isim olan Pilar, aynı zamanda kısa zaman dilimindeki yařam kořullarını hatta kiřisel iliřkileri de dzenleyen kiřidir. Bařkahraman Robert ve Mara'nın gnl iliřkisinin de arabulucusu olan Pilar, ikili arasında derin bir muhabbet kurulmasını saęlar ve iki ismi birbirine emanet eder. Robert ve Mara birbirine hayranlık duyar. Savař hazırlıęı ierisinde iki kadının erkekler ve sosyal yařam noktasındaki belirginlikleri iyice artarken romanın sonunda Robert'i geride bırakıp yoluna devam etmek zorunda kalan bir řık kadın Mara imajı ortaya ıkar. Pilar ise savař gibi sert bir dnemde ise anaerkilin, kadının sznn gcnn ne ıktıęı bir eser olarak belirir.

Tıpkı Hemingway gibi yirminci yzyılın ilk yarısında savař temalı eserler sıędıran nemli isimlerden birisi de John

Steinbeck'tir. Steinbeck, *Ay Batarken* adlı eserinde küçük bir kasabadaki bir işgal hazırlığı ve savaş senaryosunu anlatırken arka planda ise o kasabanın sakinlerinin durumunu ve sosyal yaşamını okuyucu ile paylaşır. Eserin satır aralarındaki kadın imajı *Çanlar Kimin İçin Çalıyor* adlı eserindeki gibi yoğun olmasa da yine anlatının önemli bölümlerinde kendisini gösterir. Fakat Hemingway'in eserinde olduğu gibi kadının eğitim alanındaki yeri neredeyse hiç gösterilmez. Aksine kadının savaş dönemindeki kritik rolü, bir saldırı öncesinde kasabanın savaşa hazırlığında kadınların yürüttüğü gizli görevlere değinilir. Kadın ayrıştırılan ve oyun dışı bırakılan değil, savaşın ve hayatın merkezinde yer alan figürdür. Eser bir yönüyle kadınların da dahil edildiği bir direniş anlatısıdır:

“Bu eser, demokrasinin dayanıklılığını öven bir tür kutlamadır. Steinbeck, savaşın aptallığını, totaliter rejimin kendi kendini yok eden boşluğunu ve hem zulmedenler hem de zulüm görenler olmak üzere erkek ve kadınların yaşadığı ıstırap ve hayal kırıklığını ortaya koyar. Burada, özgür insanların Sokratesçi idealini savunur ve Gandi'nin pasif direnişinin etkinliğini öne sürer.” (Prabha, 2022: 46)

ABD'de özellikle savaş dönemindeki seyir bu şekilde ilerlerken Türk romanlarında ise savaştan ziyade sosyal yaşam ve şehirleşme ağırlıklı bir gidişat söz konusudur. İkinci Dünya Savaşı'na girmeyen fakat dolaylı olarak bu savaşın tahribatına maruz kalan Türkiye'de romancılar eliyle ise bir geçiş dönemi oluşturulmaya çalışılır. Bu geçiş dönemindeki önemli isimlerden birisi de Muazzez Tahsin'dir. O da eserlerinde kadının toplumsal yeri konusunda önemli verileri okuyucu ile paylaşan günümüzde ise dönemi okuma konusunda ciddi bir hafıza oluşturan bir yazar olarak çalışmaya konu edilmiştir. Çalışmada öncelenen eserlerden birisi olan Tahsin'in *Küçük Hanımefendi* adlı romanı, kadının

eđitimi ve sosyal yařamdaki yerini ele alma noktasında klt sayılabilecek eserlerden birisi olarak kategorize edilebilir. Roman, dnemin toplumunda kadının maruz kaldıđı sınırlamalara ve toplumdaki deđiřimlere odaklanarak bir kadının kendini gerekleřtirmesi ve toplumda yerini bulması iin verdiđi mcadeleyi anlatır. Kadının eđitimi ve sosyal yařamdaki yerini anlatan bu eserde, romanın bařkarakteri olan Neriman'ın eđitim sreci ve toplum iindeki yerine dair nemli detaylara yer verilir: "Neriman cahil bir insan deđildi. On altı yařına kadar bir Fransız mrebbiyenin elinde bymř, orta derecede tahsili yapmıř ve Almancayı da piyano ile birlikte husus bir hocadan đrenmiřti." (Berkand, 1945: 75) Buna gre Neriman, her ne kadar ilk genlik yıllarında belli bir eđitim almıřsa da bu onun kendi kimliđini kurmasına yetmeyecektir. Erkek egemen toplumda gl bir karakter olarak ne ıkabilmesi iin Avrupa'da bulunarak modern bir yařayıřı tecrbe etmesi ve hem řeklen, hem de fikren kendini ispatlaması gerekecektir.

Neriman'ın eđitim sreci, ailesinin onun yeteneklerini ve potansiyelini fark etmesiyle bařlar. Babası, onun sadece ev iřleriyle ya da evlilikle sınırlı kalmaması gerektiđini dřnerek, ona zel bir đretmen tutar. Bu đretmen sayesinde evrensel deđerlerin yanı sıra edebiyat, bilim, mzik ve sanat gibi alanlarda da kendini geliřtirme frsatı bulur. Ancak bu eđitime toplumun bakıř aısı sorgulayıcıdır. Bazıları onu takdir ederken, ođu insan onun eđitim almasını gereksiz ve hatta ahlaki aıdan uygunsuz bulur. Bu durum, Neriman'ın kararlılıđını daha da pekiřtirir ve eđitimine olan inancını sarsılmaz bir řekilde devam ettirir. Onun aldıđu eđitim, sadece akademik bilgileri đrenmekle sınırlı kalmaz. đretmeni ona aynı zamanda kadının zgvenini kazanması, kendini ifade etmesi ve dřncelerini savunabilmesi iin gereken araları da sunar. Bu sayede Neriman, toplum iinde kendine bir yer edinmenin yanı sıra, kendi deđerlerini ve dřncelerini ifade

edebileceği bir alan bulur. Onun sosyal yaşamdaki yeri de yine eğitim süreciyle paralel olarak şekillenir. Eğitim sayesinde kazandığı bilgi ve becerileri, toplumun sınırlayıcı normlarına meydan okuyarak kullanır. O, sadece bir ev hanımı ya da anne olarak değil, aynı zamanda bir entelektüel ve sosyal aktivist olarak da tanınır. Kadının toplumda sadece ev işleriyle sınırlı tutulmasını eleştirir ve kadınların eşit haklara sahip olması için mücadele eder. Onun eğitimi ve toplumdaki yerine dair hikâyesi, kadının potansiyelinin ve özgürlüğünün sınırları zorlama konusundaki kararlılığını anlatır. Gösterdiği çabalar, kadının sadece evin içinde değil, toplumun her alanında var olma ve etkili olma hakkını savunur. Bu, esasen Osmanlı toplumunda kadının eğitimi ve sosyal yaşamdaki yerinin Cumhuriyet döneminde dönüşmesinin işaretlerini verir. Bu dönüşüm, roman kişisi Neriman'ın fiziksel değişimiyle de sembolize edilir. Öyle ki; “Genç kızın fiziksel değişimi, ileri bir toplum düzenini hedefleyen Cumhuriyet'in fiziksel görüntü seviyesi olarak arzuladığı fiziki ideali yakaladığının göstergesidir. Çünkü romanın merkezindeki etkin kadın öznesi, güzelliğindeki olağanüstü değişimi ile Batılı görünüme sahip bir kadın olmayı başaran bir figürdür.” (Çakmakçı, 2012: 501-502).

Dönemin kadına değinen bir diğer eseri Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar'ın *Gönül Bir Yel Değirmenidir Sevda Öğütür* başlıklı romanıdır. Kitap kadın figürünün yanında cinselliğin, ikili ilişkilerin, aldatmanın da kapsama alındığı bir eser olarak dikkat çeker. Eser bahse konu kadın erkek ilişkisinin yanında felsefe, bilim ve sanat sohbetlerinin yoğunlukta olduğu bir roman olarak öne çıkarken kadının da bu entelektüel sohbetlerde yer alabilen bir figür olduğunu göstermesi yönüyle de değinilmeyi gerektiren bir eserdir. Ayrıca romanda evli bireylerin serbest, gayrimeşru ilişkiler içerisinde verilmesi kadını da kapsar. Bu bağlamda denilebilir ki yazarın insanı ahlâksızlığa eğilimli bir varlık olarak yorumlaması

kurguda belirleyicidir. Gürpınar, bir başka eseri olan *Dünyanın Mihveri Kadın mı, Para mı?* romanında yine benzer problemler üzerine bir kurgu inşa etmiştir. Yazarın insana negatif bakışı ve toplumsal düzene dair sorgulayışları, bu eserin kurgusunda da yer tutar. Kadın olgusu açısından bakıldığında bu romanların ortak tarafı, yazarın insan doğasına dair olumsuz bakışını yansıtırken kadınları da bu düzen içerisinde değerlendirmesidir. Bilhassa bu romanda bazı kadın figürleri, muhafazakâr toplum yapısına rağmen tıpkı erkekler gibi gayrimeşru cinsel yaşayış içerisinde verilir. Yalnız yazar bunu bir itham olarak kurguya taşımaz. Moderniteden bağımsız olarak sosyal yaşamın doğasına ve insan tabiatının bozukluğuna; aldatmaya meyilli olmasına bağlar. “Evleneli sekiz seneye bastı. Oğlan kız iki çocuğum oldu. İkisi de ihtiyardan değildir. Ne ağır itiraf.. İkisi de başka babalardandır.” (Gürpınar, 1948: 48) sözleriyle suçunu ve günahını itiraf eden roman kişisi Semahat, bu duruma iyi bir örnek oluşturur. Ancak onun da bir pişmanlıktan ziyade tabiat kanunları ve sosyal düzendeki çarpıklık çerçevesinde bir savunma geliştirdiği söylenebilir.

Kerime Nadir’in *Gelinlik Kız* adlı eseri ise hem dönemsel anlamda hem de yazım türü noktasında değinilmesi ve ele alınması gereken ciddi eserlerden birisi olarak dikkat çeker. Türkiye’nin yirminci yüzyıl edebiyatındaki ilk feminist romanlardan biri kabul edilen *Gelinlik Kız*’da kadına ve kadının sosyal yaşamdaki yerine çokça atıf yapılmaktadır. Romanın başkışisi Feyza’dan hareketle, kadının toplumda varlığını kanıtlamak için kimseye ihtiyaç duymadığı vurgusu ön plana çıkarılmaktadır.

Gelinlik Kız, aşk, hayal, evlilik, mücadele ve başarı üzerine yazılmış bir romandır. Roman, Kerime Nadir’in realist ve eleştirel üslubuyla yazılmıştır. Roman, dönemin toplumsal sorunlarını ve kadın sorunlarını ele almaktadır. *Gelinlik Kız* romanı, dönemin kadın sorunlarına ve bu sorunlara karşı mücadeleye dikkat çeker.

Roman, kadının eğitiminin ve kadının toplumsal yaşamdaki yerinin önemini vurgular.

Gelinlik Kız romanı, genel mananda kadının eğitimi ve kadının toplumsal yaşamdaki yeri bağlamında incelendiğinde, dönemin kadın sorunlarına ve bu sorunlara karşı mücadeleye dikkat çeker. *Gelinlik Kız*, Kerime Nadir'in 1942 yılında yazdığı bir romandır. Roman, İstanbul'un kenar mahallelerinde yaşayan bir genç kızın hayallerini anlatmaktadır. Romanın kahramanı Feyza, yoksul bir ailenin kızıdır. Babasını küçük yaşta kaybetmiş, üvey babası tarafından büyütülmüştür. Feyza, güzel ve yetenekli bir kızıdır. Resim yapmaktan hoşlanır ve resimleri pek çok kişi tarafından beğenilmektedir. Fakat üvey babası, onun resim yapmasına izin vermez. Feyza'nın sadece ev işi yapmasını ve bir gün evlenmesini ister. Feyza, üvey babasının baskılarına rağmen resim yapmayı bırakmaz. Resim yapmaktan zevk alır ve resimlerinin ona bir şeyler kazandırabileceğini düşünür. Feyza, bir gün, zengin bir ailenin oğluyla tanışır. Genç adam, Feyza'ya âşık olur ve onunla evlenmek ister. Feyza, bu teklifi kabul eder ve evlenir. Ancak, evliliği kısa sürer. Kocas, Feyza'ya kötü davranır ve onu terk eder. Feyza, kocasından ayrıldıktan sonra, yalnız kalır. Ancak, o pes etmez. Kendi ayakları üzerinde durmayı öğrenir ve bir ressam olarak kariyer yapar. Denebilir ki “Feyza resim yapmayı evliliğe tercih eder, ancak bu tercihi belirleyen daha çok ideal eşi bulamamış olmasıdır.” (Yakın, 1999: 92). Feyza'nın ideal eş ve evliliğe erişememesi, onu kendi durumundan hareketle bazı sosyal meseleler hakkında düşünmeye sevk eder. Bu noktada, erkek egemen sosyal düzende evliliğin kadın için adeta kölelik şeklinde yorumlandığı fark edilir. Feyza'nın evlilik arefesinde birtakım tereddütlere kapılması ve genç kızlığın hürriyetini yeterince yaşayamadığını düşünerek içlenmesi, bu açıdan değerlendirilebilir:

“Feyza, bütün bir gençlik çağının, rengârenk rüyalarla dolu, hür ve kayıtsız devresini, yarından itibaren müebbeden arkada bırakıp yepyeni bir âleme; kaygu, itaat ve fütür yüklü bir âleme intikal edeceğini acı acı düşünüyor; şu son saatlerin her bir dakikasını doyasıya yaşamak, bir daha dönemiyeceği bu âlemin zevkine kanmak istiyordu. Şimdiye kadar nasıl olmuştu da bu âzadeser günlerin kıymetini bilmemişti? Evet!... Bir genç kız olarak yaşamak!... Bu ne güzel, ne tatlı şeydi!... Yabancı bir erkeğin ismini taşımayı başlıyacağı ândan itibaren bu sıfatı, ömrünün iki devresi arasında yükselecek kalın duvarın arkasında bırakacak ve ona bir daha hiç, amma hiç sahip olmayacaktı!... İşte bir genç kız için ‘saadet’ ismi verilen yapıyı kurmak kaygusu uğrunda feda edilen kıymetler!... Bunları teferruatıyla düşünmek bile onun için bir azap teşkil etmekteydi.” (Kerime Nadir, 1943: 247-248)

Feyza'nın hikâyesi, kadının eğitiminin ve kadının toplumsal yaşamdaki yerinin önemini vurgular. Feyza, üvey babasının baskılarına rağmen resim yapmayı bırakmamış ve resim yaparak kendi ayakları üzerinde durmayı öğrenmiştir. Feyza, sonunda, hayallerini gerçekleştirir ve mutlu bir hayat yaşar. *Gelinlik Kız* adlı romanın başkahramanı kadın karakter noktasında önemli bir inceleme konusu olabilir. Zira, Feyza modernleşen Türkiye’de geleneksellikten ve klasik kadın karakterden kopuşun örneklerinden birisidir. Görücü usulü evlilik kurumuna karşı koyuşu ele alınan Feyza üzerinden yapılan okumalarda da kadının toplum içindeki durumu net bir şekilde görülebilmektedir. Konuyla ilgili çalışmalarda da bu durum sıkça değinilmiştir. Nadir’in bu romanı farklı dönemlerden isimlerle de karşılaştırılmış olup yirminci yüzyıldaki değişimi ortaya koyması noktasından da ele

alınmıştır. Cumhuriyetle birlikte Türk kadının yerini ve batılılaşma hareketlerinin etkisini bu romandan yola çıkarak inceleyen çalışmada, romanın “kadın erkek ilişkileri, evlilik kurumu, görücü usulü, gelenekler ve modernlik arasındaki farklar”ı eleştirel bir gözle irdelediği belirtilir (Depci, 2022: 101). Öte yandan romanda sınıfsal farklılıklara da değinildiği net bir şekilde görünür olmakla birlikte evlilik kurum ve görücü usulü evlilik üzerinden bir eleştiri konusu şeklinde sunulmuştur. Feyza’nın hayal kırıklıkları ile sonuçlanan evlilik deneyimleri, kadının toplumda kendine ait bir özgürlük inşa etmesinin zorunlu olduğu şeklinde ortaya konur.

1940’lı yılların Amerikan edebiyatında, kadının belirgin bir figür olduğu romanlardan başka Jack Kerouac ve William S. Burroughs’un *Ve Hipopotamlar Tanklarında Haşlandılar* adlı eseri de ele alınabilir. Bu roman, dönemin özelliklerini yansıtan karaktere sahiptir ve yazarların hayatlarından alınmış gerçek olaylara dayanan ortak bir çalışmadır. Eserin “Beat Kuşağı” gibi Amerikan Edebiyatı’ndaki önemli bir kuşakla bağlantılı olduğunu da unutmamak gerekir. Nitekim romanda Beat Kuşağı’nın arkadaşlık, isyan ve hayal kırıklığı temaları işlenmektedir. Roman, kadının toplumdaki yerine açıkça odaklanmamakla birlikte, mevcut kadın karakterlerle ilgili olarak incelenebilecek dönemin toplumsal tutumlarını yansıtmaktadır.

Romanda kadın karakterler ikincil roller oynar ve genellikle erkek karakterlerle ilişkili olarak tasvir edilir. Erkek kahramanların merceğinden görülürler ve aşk temaları çerçevesinde işlenirler, arzu nesneleri olarak konumlanırlar. Bu, kadınların anlatıya genellikle erkek odaklı yardımcı karakterler veya aksesuarlar olarak yerleştirildiği; Beat Kuşağı toplumunda yaygın olan ataerkil bakış açısını yansıtır. Romandaki kadın tasviri, dönemin geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini ve klişelerini pekiştirir. Sınırlı aracılık veya bağımsız hikayelerle erkek arzusunun nesneleri olarak tasvir

edilirler. Bu, o dönemde kadınlara uygulanan toplumsal beklentiler ve kısıtlamalarla uyumlu bir tablodur. Dolayısıyla bu romanın, ait olduğu zamanın ve yazıldığı kültürel bağlamın bir ürünü olduğunu not etmek önemlidir. *Ve Hipopotamlar Tanklarında Haşlandılar*, sınırlı sayıda kadın tasvirine rağmen kültürel normlarda bir değişim ve feminist hareketin başlangıcı ile döneme damgasını vuran Beat Kuşağı'nın daha geniş toplumsal bağlamını yansıtmaları bakımından çok önemlidir:

“Hikâyedeki kadınlar savunmanın kilit tanıkları olarak gösterilmek istenmişti. Bu heteroseksüel ilişkiler, ilk Beats neslini eşcinsellik suçlamasından koruyordu. Gerçek Carr soruşturmasında, Celine Young Carr'ın heteroseksüel olduğunu ifade etti ve cinsel ilişkilerini kanıt olarak sundu. Ancak Hippos'ta kadın karakterler, erkekler kulübünde dışlanmış olduklarının farkındadır ve bir şekilde paravan olarak kullanıldıklarını anlarlar.”
(Birmingham, 2008)

Roman, o dönemde kadınlara karşı hâkim olan tutumları yansıtır ve Beat Kuşağı içindeki kadınların rolleri ve deneyimlerinin daha incelikli bir şekilde incelenmesi gereğini vurgular. Sonuç olarak *Ve Hipopotamlar Tanklarında Haşlandılar*, öncelikle erkek karakterlere ve onların deneyimlerine odaklanan bir romandır ve kadının toplumdaki yerine dair sınırlı bir fikir verir. Roman, kadınları ikincil karakterler olarak tasvir eden ve geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini pekiştiren Beat Kuşağı döneminin normlarını aksettirir. O dönemde kadının toplumdaki yeri hakkında daha derin bilgiler edinmek için ek kaynaklar ve bakış açıları keşfetmek gerekli olacaktır.

Saul Bellow'un kaleme aldığı *Boşlukta Sallanan Adam* da bu çalışma kapsamında, dönemsel olarak okunan eserler arasında anılabilir. Yine savaş temalı olan bir eser olan *Boşlukta Sallanan*

Adam'da başrol bir erkek karakter olmasına rağmen kadın karakterin satır arasına yansıyan durumu da dikkate değer fikirler verebilir. Söz konusu eser, yabancılaşma, kaygı ve anlamsızlık gibi varoluşçu temaları işleyen bir romandır. Romanın kahramanı Joseph, İkinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında askere alınmayı bekleyen genç bir adamdır. Zamanını belirsizlik içinde, herhangi bir gerçek amaç ya da yön olmaksızın hayatın içinde sürüklenerek geçirir. Bir savaş ve bunalım anlatısı olan *Boşlukta Sallanan Adam*'ın işlediği temalardan biri de kadınların toplumdaki rolüdür. Joseph, sürekli olarak toplumun kadınlardan beklentilerini sorgular. Kadınların öncelikle ev kadını ve anne olması gerektiği fikrine özellikle eleştirel yaklaşır. Kadınların eğitim, kariyer ve diğer ilgi alanlarını takip etmek için erkeklerle aynı fırsatlara sahip olması gerektiğine inanır. Romandaki karakterlerden biri olan Clara, toplumdaki yerini bulmak için mücadele eden bir kadındır. Yetenekli bir sanatçıdır, ancak yeteneklerinin ciddiye alınmadığını hissetmektedir. Ayrıca, istemediği halde kendisinden ev kadını ve anne olmasının beklenmesi de onu hayal kırıklığına uğratmaktadır. Bellow, Clara karakteri aracılığıyla, kadınların hala geleneksel cinsiyet rollerine uymalarını bekleyen bir toplumda karşılaştıkları zorlukları tartışmaya açar. Ayrıca kadınların eğitimle ve kendi beklentilerinin peşinden giderek nasıl güçlenebileceklerini de gösterir.

Boşlukta Sallanan Adam, tüm bunlarla beraber kadınların toplumdaki rolüne dair benzersiz bir bakış açısı sunan karmaşık ve düşündürücü bir roman olarak vurgulanabilir. Romanın içgörülerini bugün de geçerliliğini korumakta ve toplumun kadınlardan geleneksel beklentilerine meydan okumaya devam etmektedir. Sadece belli başlı kısımları dikkate alındığında bile Bellow'un kadınların toplumdaki ve eğitimdeki rolüne ilişkin görüşlerini gösteren bir roman olduğu kabul edilebilir. Eserdeki göndermelerden hareketle, Bellow'un, kadınların toplumdaki ve eğitimdeki rolünü nasıl irdelediğine kanaat getirilebilir. Aynı

zamanda kadının yaşam içindeki ve kamusal alandaki yerini görmek de mümkündür:

“*Dangling Man*’de kadın figürü, özellikle Iva, anlatıcının varoluşsal askıda kalmışlığını hem görünür kılan hem de ona sınır çizen bir karşıtlık olarak işlev görür. Eleştirmenler, Iva’nın gündelik pratiklere, ev içi düzen ve sorumluluğa yönelmiş tutumunun, Joseph’in soyut düşünceye ve iç monoloğa gömülü bireyci krizini dengelediğini vurgular. Bu bağlamda kadın karakter, pasif bir arka plan olmaktan ziyade, modern erkek öznenin etik ve toplumsal bağlardan kaçışını ifşa eden bir ayna görevi üstlenir; Bellow’un erken döneminde kadın, kamusal aklın ve sürekliliğin taşıyıcısı olarak, erkek öznenin kendine kapanan entelektüel yalnızlığına eleştirel bir karşı-pozisyon sunar.” (Pinsker, 1979)

Çalışmaya konu edilen ve ABD’li yazarlar tarafından kaleme alınan bir diğer eser ise Willa Cather tarafından kaleme alınan *Sapphira and The Slave Girl* adlı dönem romanıdır. 1940 yılında yayınlanan roman, yukarıda incelenen diğer eserlerin aksine işin kölelik tarafında vurgu yapan bir eser olarak diğer örneklerden ayrılmaktadır. Roman, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri’ndeki kölelik bağlamında eğitim temalarını ve kadının toplumdaki yerini araştırır. Romanın temel odak noktası kölelik kurumu ve bunun bireyler üzerindeki etkisi olsa da kitapta tasvir edilen toplumdaki eğitimin ve kadının rolü de incelemeye konu edilebilecek noktalardan birisidir. *Sapphira and The Slave Girl*’de eğitim kadınların, özellikle de kölelerin yaşamlarında sınırlı bir rol oynar. Roman, köleleştirilmiş bireylerin örgün eğitime erişiminin engellendiği ve bir kontrol ve baskı aracı olarak cehalet içinde tutulduğu bir toplumu tasvir eder. Özellikle köle kadınlar, ırkları ve cinsiyetleri nedeniyle iki kez marjinalleştirilmekte ve eğitim

fırsatlarında daha da büyük kısıtlamalar yaşamaktadır. Bununla birlikte roman, eğitimin kadınlar için dönüştürücü gücüne de dikkat çeker. Kahraman Nancy, kendi kararlılığı ve sempatik beyaz bir kadın olan Sapphira'nın yardımıyla okuryazar olan bir köledir. Nancy'nin okuryazarlık kazanması, ona, baskı karşısında kendi kimliğini ve sesini geliştirmesine izin vererek onun için yeni bilgi ve öz farkındalık dünyalarının kapılarını açar. *Sapphira and The Slave Girl* o dönemde kadınların karşılaştığı sınırlı temsiliyete ve toplumsal kısıtlamalara ışık tutar. Roman, özellikle evlilik ve aile bağlamında kadınlara yüklenen toplumsal beklentileri ve bu beklentilerin kadınların özerkliklerine, kişisel tatminlerine dayattığı kısıtlamaları anlatır. Sapphira karakteri, evli bir kadının toplumdaki geleneksel rolünü, toplumsal normlara ve beklentilere bağlı olarak temsil eder. Bununla birlikte roman, bu toplumsal normlara meydan okuyan kadınlara da kısa bir bakış sunar. Nancy'nin okuryazarlık ve kendini keşfetme yolculuğu, kadınların sistemik baskı karşısında bile dayanıklılığının ve failliğinin bir kanıtıdır. Ek olarak, bir Quaker kadını olan Rachel Blake karakteri, kadınların rollerine dair daha ilerici bir görüşü temsil eder ve kölelik kurumuna aktif bir şekilde meydan okur. Daha eserin başında bir meydan okuma söz konusudur ki “Nancy'nin geleceğini düzenleme hakkım olmalı.” (Cather, 1940: 1) sözüyle doğrudan anlatının başında sunulur. Bu cümle, Sapphira'nın Nancy üzerinde tam kontrol sahibi olma isteğini dile getirdiği ilk sahnelerden biridir ve bu istem, romanın tüm dinamliğini şekillendiren kadının (Sapphira'nın) 'sahiplik' ve 'söz hakkı' iddiasını ortaya koyar. Bu ifade, eserin ilerleyen bölümlerinde Rachel Blake'in (Sapphira'nın kızı), Nancy'yi kölelikten kurtarma çabasıyla doğrudan çatışmasına yol açar.

Genel olarak, *Sapphira and The Slave Girl*, o dönemde kadınlara, özellikle de köleleştirilmiş kadınlara uygulanan sınırlı eğitim fırsatlarının ve toplumsal kısıtlamaların altını çizer. Roman,

kadınlar için eğitimin dönüştürücü gücünü araştırır, kişinin kimliğini savunmasında ve baskıcı sistemlere meydan okumasında okuryazarlık ve bilginin önemini vurgular. Ayrıca, Nancy ve Rachel Blake gibi bazı kadınların, baskıcı bir ortamda bir umut ışığı ve eylemlilik sunarak, toplumsal beklentilerde gezinme ve bunlara meydan okuma yollarını da gösterir. Roman, öncelikle kölelik kurumuna odaklanırken kadınların, özellikle de köleleştirilmiş kadınların karşılaştığı sınırlı eğitim fırsatlarına ve toplumsal kısıtlamalara dair içgörüler sağlar. Denebilir ki bu roman, okuruna kadınları güçlendirmede eğitimin önemini ve baskı karşısında direniş ve dayanıklılık potansiyelini hatırlatmaktadır.

Sonuç

20. yüzyılın ilk yarısında yayımlanan Türk ve Amerikan romanlarında kadının eğitimi ve sosyal yaşamdaki konumu geniş bir yer tutmaktadır. Bu çalışmada üzerinde durulan romanlardan hareketle söz konusu meseleler irdelenmeye çalışılmıştır. Tüm dünyada etkili olan bir değişim ve dönüşüm döneminde Türkiye’de ve Amerika’da yayınlanan eserlerde kadının eğitim durumu, eğitime katılım hali ve bunun romanlara yansımaları ile sosyal yaşamdaki yeri detayları ile okunmaya çalışılmıştır. Yirminci yüzyılın ilk yarısında “Büyük Buhran”a şahitlik etmiş Ernest Hemingway’den Türkiye’nin modernleşme sürecinde önemli eserler veren Halide Edip Adıvar’a, yine savaş dönemlerinin önemli ismi olan John Steinbeck’in gazetecilik arka planı ile eserlerinden Muazzez Tahsin’in döneme ışık tutan eserlerine kadar birçok eser ve yazar söz konusu meseleler açısından zenginlik taşımaktadır.

Sadece kadınların yazmış olduğu eserler ya da kadınların konu edilmesi gibi hususlarla sınırlı kalmayıp kadının toplumdaki yerini, kurgusal eserler üzerinden analiz etmeyi hedefleyen çalışmada merkeze alınan eserlerin bu anlamda önemli bir yorum

fırsatı sunduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Yirminci yüzyılın ilk yarısı ve özellikle de 1940'lı yıllarda yazılan aynı dönemin iki farklı ülke romanlarında benzerliklerin de olduğu gerçeğinden hareketli şunu söylemek mümkündür. Türkiye'de bir modernleşme sürecine geçiş arayışı varken Amerika'da ise modern bir ülkenin 'farklı' kadınları üzerinden bir anlatım geleneği oluşturulmuştur. Türkiye'de yayımlanan romanlarda genelde Anadolu'dan İstanbul'a uzanan hikâyeler ya da gelenekten modernliğe geçişin hikâyesi, aşk ilişkileri yoğunlukta kalırken ABD'deki romanlarda ise dönemin alt türlerinin yoğunlukta olduğu bir çeşitlilik mümkündür. Amerika'da kölelik ve benzeri konular gündemden düşmese de savaş olgusu, romanların ekseriyetinde bir arka plan oluşturmaktadır. Savaşın ve erkeğin yoğunlukta olduğu romanlarda buna rağmen kadınlara dair portreler ve tasvirler de oldukça fazladır. Fakat Türkiye'deki romanlarda kadın hikâyelerinin daha yoğunluklu olduğunu görmek mümkündür. Yeni bir arayış içinde olan Türk kadınının daha büyük bir heyecan yarattığı, okur kitlesinin kadının aşk ve kendini gerçekleştirme anlatılarını takip ettiği, Cumhuriyet dönemi kadınlarının ve Batı usulü yaşamdaki kadın figürünün büyük kitlelere ulaştığı dönemlerde yazılan eserler bu yönüyle Türkiye'deki kadın imgesinin değişim ve dönüşümünü aktarmada sürece ışık tutmuştur. Kadınların bir önceki yüzyıla göre nasıl bir değişim geçirdiğini aktaran romanlar zaman zaman da geleneğe karşı duruş sergileyerek eski kalıpları eleştirmeyi görev edinmişlerdir. Türkiye'de durum böyle iken ABD'de de kadınların bir alan kazanma ve toplum içinde var olma mücadelesi verdiği görülmektedir. Willa Cather, Ernest Hemingway gibi yazarların eserleri ile ilgili tahlil ve inceleme bunun net göstergelerinden birisi olarak dikkat çeker.

Daha çok kadının eğitim hayatı ve kadının toplumsal yaşamdaki yerine odaklanan bu yazıda 1940'lı yıllardan örnekler sunularak iki ülke romanlarının ortaklıkları ve farklılıkları ortaya

konulmaya alıřılmıştır. ABD’de byk bir sosyal krizden ıkıř yolu arayan kadınlar, siyasi dnřm srecindeki kadınlar, savař dnemindeki kadınların yoęunlukta olduęu anlatılar incelenirken Trkiye’de ise kadının modernleřme srecindeki mcadelesi baęlamında bazı kanaatlere ve tespitlere ulařılmıştır. Trk edebiyatından rneklerin kadına dair daha kapsamlı ıkarımlar yapma řansı verdięi grřne ulařılmıştır. Ayrıca yirminci yzyılın ilk blmnde kaleme alınan eserlerin, kadının toplumdaki yerini tarihsel kayıtlar hesap edilebilecek řekilde detayları ile sunduęu da grlmřtr.

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CHAPTER 6

JAPON KISA ŞİİRİ SENRYŪLARDA GÖRÜLEN “YAŞLILIK” KAVRAMINA MİZAHİ BİR BAKIŞ¹

Güliz DOĞAN²

Giriş

Yaşlılık, insan hayatında çocukluk, gençlik, yetişkinlik dönemlerinden sonra yer alan önemli bir dönemdir. Yaş alma ile insan yaşamında çeşitli fizyolojik ve psikolojik değişimler görülmektedir. Bu değişimler, çeşitli edebi türlere de konu olmaktadır.

Bu çalışmada Japon kısa mizahi şiir türü olan senryūlarda “yaşlılık” kavramı ele alınacaktır. Japonya’da ilk olarak 2001 yılında Ulusal Ücretli Yaşlı Bakımevi Kuruluşu (全国有料老人ホーム協会 /Zenkoku Yūryō Rōjin Hōmu Kyōkai) tarafından düzenlenen ve günümüzde de halen devam eden シルバー川柳 (shirubā senryū)³ adlı kısa şiir yarışması bulunmaktadır. Bu yarışma, konu olarak

¹ Bu çalışma 18. Uluslararası Dil, Edebiyat ve Kültür Araştırmaları Kongresi, Ankara, Türkiye, 8 - 11 Ekim 2024’te sunulan bildirinin genişletilmiş halidir.

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³ 2025 yılında 25.’si düzenlenmiştir.

yaşlılık ve yaşlılık döneminde karşılaşılan zorlukları içermekte olup Japonya'dan her yaş ve kesimden kişinin başvurusuna açıktır.

Şiir yarışmasının adını oluşturan シルバー (shirubā) sözcüğü, 実用国語辞典(Jitsuyō kokugo jiten)'de “1.Gümüş, 2. Gümüş rengi, 3. Gümüş ürün, 4. Yaşlı olma anlamına gelmektedir.” şeklinde tanımlanmaktadır. Türkçe'de “yaşlılık” sözcüğü Türk Dil Kurumu⁴ (TDK) Sözlüğünde, “Yaşlı olma durumu; ihtiyarlık:” şeklinde tanımlanmaktadır. Yaşlanma ile birlikte fiziksel olarak güçsüzleşme, kulağın ağır işitmeye başlaması, gözün iyi görmemesi, yürümede zorlanma, baston vb. kullanılması, unutkanlık, bunama vb. değişiklikler görülmektedir. Belirtilen bu özellikler, şiirlerde konu olarak yer almaktadır.

Çalışmaya konu olan Japon kısa şiir türü senryū ilk olarak Karai Senryū (柄井川柳)⁵ tarafından 18. yy'ın sonlarına doğru ortaya çıkmış olup, 5-7-5'li toplamda 17 heceden oluşan mizah ve hiciv unsurları içermektedir. Japon kısa şiiri denildiğinde tüm dünyada yaygın olarak bilinen tür haiku (俳句)'dur. Haiku ile aynı hece sayısına sahip olan senryū şiir (川柳) türü Japonya'da günümüzde de popülerliğini sürdürmektedir. Ancak, tüm dünyada bilinen haiku'nun gölgesinde kaldığını söylemek mümkündür. Haiku şiiri ve senryū şiiri hece sayısı bakımından ortaklık göstermektedir. Her iki şiir türü de 5-7-5'li olmak üzere 17 hece ölçüsü ile yazılmaktadır. Ancak, konu bakımından ayrılmaktadır. Haiku şiiri “doğa” yı konu olarak ele alırken, senryū şiiri “insan” ı ele almaktadır. Bōjō vd. (2016)'da “Senryū şiirinin malzemesi etrafınızda var olan her şeydir. İnsan ile başlayan her şey eserlerin malzemesidir. Kısacası, ev, iş, siyaset, öğrenilen şey, aşk, (ders)

⁴ <https://sozluk.gov.tr/> (E. T. 10.12.2025).

⁵ Asıl adı 柄井八衛門 olup, 1718- 1790 yılları arasında yaşayan şiir jürisi ve şairdir.

alıřma vb. etrafımızda bulunan her řey malzemedir. (s.79)” řeklinde ifade edilmektedir.

Haiku řiirinde hece sayısını tamamlamak iin や,けり,かな gibi kesme szck (切字) kullanımı grlmektedir. Ayrıca mutlaka mevsim szcė 季語 (kigo) bulunma zorunluluėu vardır. Senry řiirinde de mevsim szckleri kullanılabilir. ancak zorunlu deėildir. Haiku yazı dili (文語) ile , senry ise konuřma dili (口語) ile yazılmaktadır.

Japon mizahi řiiri senry ile ilgili olarak yapılan ok sayıda alıřma bulunmaktadır. Bu alıřmalara bakıldığında Ito’nun farklı senry trlerindeki szck ve ierik analizlerinin olduėu gze arpmaktadır. Ito ve Shiro (2014)’de yařlılık konusunu ele alan シルバー川柳 (shirubā senry) řiir yařıřması eserlerini analiz etmiřtir. alıřmasında 2014 yılına kadar olan řiirleri derleyerek, yařlılık ile ilgili algıyı ortaya koymuřtur.

Bu alıřma, 2002-2025 yılları arasındaki eserleri ele alması bakımından yukarıda verilen Ito ve Shiro’nun alıřmasından farklılık gstermektedir. Eserlerin Japonca orijinal hali ve Trke evirilerinin yer alması bakımından literatre katkı saėlayacaėı dřnlmektedir.

Ayrıca Ito (2016)’da Cenaze Treni (お葬式川柳) ile ilgili řiir yařıřması eserlerini ve Ito (2019)’da ise Evsizlerin yařamı ile ilgili olan (ホームレス川柳) řiir yařıřması eserlerini analiz etmiřtir.

Trkiye’de senry řiiri ile ilgili olarak Doėan’ın alıřmaları tespit edilmiřtir. Doėan (2022)’de Koronavirs algısının senry řiirlerindeki yansıması ve Japonya’daki etkilerini ele almıřtır. Ayrıca Doėan (2025)’in Japon kısa řiiri olan senryları mizah kuramlarından stnlk kuramı aısından analiz ettiėi alıřması bulunmaktadır.

Yöntem

Bu çalışmada, 2001- 2025 yılı arasında yayınlanan “Yaşlılık senryū” (シルバー川柳 /Shirubā senryū)⁶ en iyi eserler derlemi üzerinden “yaşlılık” kavramının mizahi olarak nasıl ele alındığının ortaya konulması amaçlanmaktadır. Seçilen 70 (yetmiş) eser, metin madenciliği (text mining) yöntemi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Japonca eserlerin analizi için Japon Koichi Higuchi⁷ tarafından oluşturulan KH Coder adlı metin madenciliği programı kullanılmıştır.

Eserler ve Analizleri

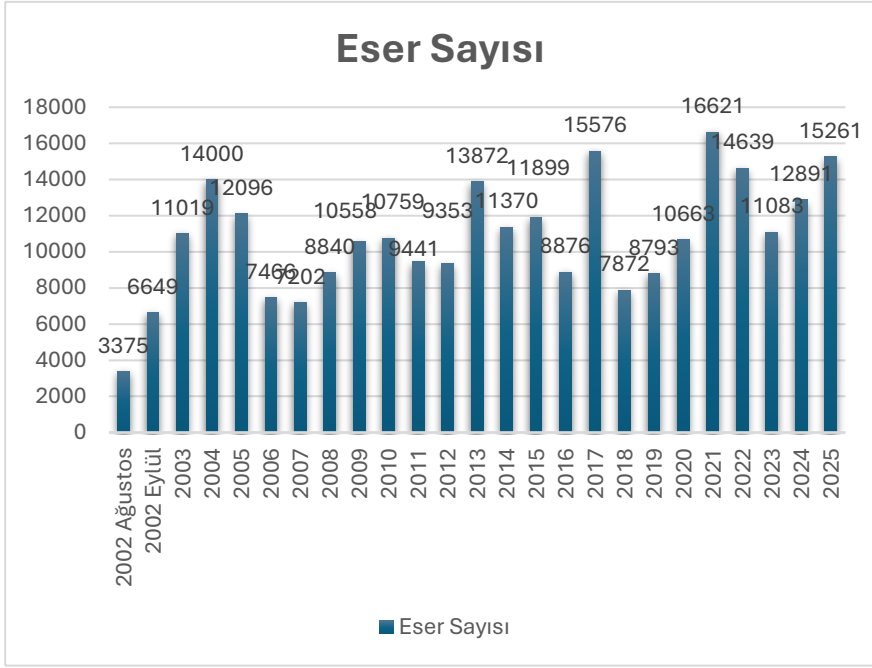
Çalışmada ele alınan Yaşlılık senryū (シルバー川柳) şiir yarışmasının yıllara göre başvuru eser sayıları aşağıda yer almaktadır. Yarışma ilk olarak 2001 yılında başlamıştır. Eserlerin ilan edilmesi ise 2002 yılında Ağustos ve Eylül dönemlerindedir. İlk yıl başvuruda bulunan eser sayısı 3375’tir. Yarışma yıllarına bakıldığında 16.621 eser başvurusu ile 2021 yılında en yüksek katılımın olduğu görülmektedir. Son dönem başvuru sayısına bakıldığında (2025) ise, 15.261 eser sayısı ile oldukça yüksek başvurunun olduğu görülmektedir. Her sene yüksek katılımın olmasına rağmen, jüri tarafından resmî web sayfasında⁸ en iyi 20 eser ilan edilmektedir.

⁶ <https://user.yurokyo.or.jp/senryu/winning> (E. T. 10.12.2025).

⁷ 樋口耕一.

⁸ <https://user.yurokyo.or.jp/senryu/winning> (E. T. 12.10.2025).

Tablo 1. Yıllara göre başvuru eser sayısı



Analiz sonucunda en sık kullanılan 10 sözcük ve eserlerde geçme sıklıkları tespit edilmiştir. Bu sözcükler; hanım (妻) 10 , söylemek (言う) 7 , doktor (医者) 5 , öbür dünya (あの世) 4 , vasiyet (遺言) 3 kez, hastalık (持病) 3 , unutmak (忘れる) 3 , ilaç (薬) 3 , sınıf (クラス) 3 , ölmek (死ぬ) 2 yerde geçtiği görülmektedir.

- 次の世も一緒と言えば妻 NO (Yamaguchi,67,Erkek⁹)

Sıradaki dünyada da birlikteyiz dersem hanım “HAYIR”

- よく喋る 家電と妻に 囲まれる (江戸川散歩)

Çok konuşan, ev aletleri ve hanımla çevriliyim

Japonya’da fonksiyonlarını sesli olarak (yemek hazır, su kaynadı vb.) şekilde bildiren teknolojiye sahip ev aletleri oldukça yaygındır. Bu eserde şairin, ev aletleri ve hanımının çok konuşmasından şikayetçi olduğu anlaşılmaktadır.

- 寒くない やさしい妻が 猫に聞く (大高正和)

“Üşümüyor musun?” diye nazik hanım kediye sorar

- 検査あと妻のやさしさ気にかかり (細野 理)

Muayene sonrası hanımın nazikliği endişelendiriyor

- 妻の愚痴お茶と一緒に軽く のむ (江里口幸生)¹⁰

Hanımın şikayetini çayla birlikte yavaşça yutuyorum

Yukarıda yer alan eserlerde hanımın katı ve nazik olmayan tutumu ironik olarak dile getirilmektedir. Hanım, kocasına değil de kediye üşüyüp üşümediğini sormaktadır. Normalde nazik olmayan hanımın kocasının muayene olmasından sonra değişen davranışı endişe yaratmaktadır. Kocasının, hanımının şikayetlerini çay ile birlikte yutması yani tepki vermeden kabullenmesi ifade edilmektedir.

- 遺言書「すべて妻に」と妻の文字(りく・そら・ばあば) Vasiyet, 'Her şey hanıma' diye hanımın yazısı

⁹ Şaire ait şehir, yaş ve cinsiyet bilgileri yer almaktadır.

¹⁰ Takma ad (mahlas).

Vasiyeti normal koşulda kocanın yazması beklenirken, eserde hanımın kendi el yazısıyla bütün mal varlığını kendisi almak istemektedir. Aşağıda torun ile ilgili eserler yer almaktadır. Şair, torunun gözünde çok yaşlı bulunmaktadır. Bu durum, dinzorları görüp görmediğini sormasından anlaşılmaktadır. Ayrıca, 御先祖様 (gosenzosama) sözcüğü, kendi kan bağından olan eski ataları ifade eden bir sözcüktür. Torunu da oldukça yaşlı gördüğü için ata (cet) olup olmadığını sorgulaması esprili bir şekilde dile getirilmektedir.

- 俺を見て 御先祖様と 孫が言う (五十嵐豊)

Bana bakınca, atamız mısın diye torun söyler

- その昔恐竜見たかと問う曾孫 (岡崎万紀子)

Eski zamanda dinzor gördün mü diye soran torunun çocuğu

Hastalık ile ilgili eserler

Bu kısımda yer alan eserler, yaşlılık ile ortaya çıkan hastalık, doktor ve ilaç ile ilgilidir. Aşağıdaki eserde yaşlı kişi, öğlen uyumasına rağmen doktora gidip gece uyuyamamasından şikâyet etmektedir.

- 昼寝して「夜眠れぬ」と医者に言い (Osaka, 57, Erkek)

Öğlen kestirip, “Gece uyuyamıyorum” diye doktora söyleme

- 医者よりも様子良く聞く見舞い客 (Ibaraki, 80, Kadın)

Doktordan bile daha çok halimi soran ziyaretçiler

Hasta ziyaretine gelen kişiler eleştirilmektedir. Yaşlı kişi hastalandığında evine ziyarete gelen kişilerin doktordan bile daha çok soru sorduğu ve meraklı oldukları eleştirilmektedir. Ayrıca doktorun da fazla soru sormadığı için fazla ilgilenmediği de anlaşılmaktadır.

- 飲め飲めと差し出されるのは薬だけ

İç iç diye, uzatılan şey sadece ilaç (Aichi, 19, Kadın)

- 飲み代が酒から薬にかわる年 (岡武 祐史)

İçki masrafının, alkolden ilaca dönüştüğü yaş

- デザートは昔ケーキで今くすり (和田 優子)

Tatlı olarak, önceden pastaydı şimdi ilaç

- 老いるとはふえる薬と減る記憶 (黄昏迫子)

Yaşlanmak demek, artan ilaçlar ve azalan hafıza

Yukarıda yer alan eserlerde yaşlılık ile birlikte önceki alışkanlıkların değiştiği görülmektedir. Önceleri içmesi için uzatılan şeyin içki olmasına karşın şimdi onun yerini ilacın aldığı belirtilmektedir. Önceden tatlı olarak pasta yenmesine karşın şimdi yemek sonrasında ilaç içilmektedir. Ayrıca yaşlanmak, ilaçların artması ve hafızanın azalması şeklinde ifade edilmektedir.

- 「もう止めた」検査ばかりで病気増え (かつ子)

'Artık bıraktım' sürekli tahlille hastalık artıyor

- クラス会それぞれ持病の専門医 (荒木 貞一)

Sınıf buluşması, herkes hastalığının uzman doktoru

- 持病には医者顔負けの知識あり (玉井 一郎)

Hastalığım hakkında, doktoru aratmayacak bilgim var

- 自己紹介 名前、出身 趣味、持病 (ナッケウ)

Kendini tanıtmak: Ad, memleket, hastalıklarım

- 病歴はなしで話の輪を外れ (中淵 史生)

Hastalık geçmişim yok diye, sohbet halkasından çıkıyorum

- 無病では話題に困る老人会 (井上 栄二)

Hastalık olmayınca, konuşacak şey bulunmuyor yaşlılar buluşması

Yukarıdaki eserlerde hastalığı olan kişilerin yaşlılar buluşmasında konuşabilecek konuları olması bakımından şanslı olarak görülmektedir. Herkesin kendi hastalığı hakkında adeta uzman bir doktor kadar bilgiye sahip oldukları ifade edilmektedir. Ayrıca bu toplanmalardaki kendini tanıtma adı, memleketi ve sonrasında hastalığı söyleme şeklindedir.

- いびきより静かな方が気にかかり (田中多美子)

Horlamadan çok, sessizlik endişelendiriyor

- 医者と妻急にやさしくなる不安 (竹重 満夫)

Doktor ve hanımın birden nazikleşmesi tedirginliği

- 誕生日ローソク吹いて立ちくらみ (今津 茂)

Doğum günü, mum üflerken baş dönmesi

- 三時間待つて病名「加齢です」 (大原志津子)

Üç saat bekleyip, hastalık adı: 'Yaşlılık'

- 「やめとくれ」ただの寝坊で脈とられ(くずれ荘の管理人)

'Bırakın artık' sadece fazla uyuyunca nabız ölçmeyi

- 痛いのは こことあそこと あら全部 (けんちゃん)

Ağrıyan yer: burası ve şurası aaa hepsi

Gençken rahatsız eden horlama sesi bile yaşlılıkta güven vermektedir. Sessiz olduğu zaman endişelenilmektedir. Aynı şekilde fazla uyuyan yaşlı kişinin öldüğünün düşünülmesi de şiirde

ele alınmaktadır. Uzun süre tahlil sonucu beklenmesine rağmen hastalığın sadece yaşlılık olması mizahi olarak dile getirilmektedir.

- 暑いのでリモコン入れるとテレビつく (佐々木郁子) Sıcak olduğundan, kumandaya basınca televizyon açılır

Yaşlı olan kişinin kumandayı karıştırması, klimayı açmak isterken televizyonun açılması şeklinde eserde yer almaktadır.

Unutkanlık ile ilgili Eserler

Unutkanlık, yaşlılık döneminde sıkça karşılaşılan bir durumdur. Yaşlanınca daha da belirgin hale gelmektedir. Gözlük takılı olmasına rağmen, gözlüğün yerini sorma, not aldığı defterin yerini unutmamak için not almanın gerekmesi gibi durumlar ile ilgilidir.

- 眼鏡かけ眼鏡はどこだと妻に訊き (Fukuoka, 86, Erkek)

Gözlük takılı, “Gözlüğüm nerede?” diye hanıma sorma

- メモ帳のしまい場所にもメモが要る (宮川 孝志)

Not defterinin konulduğu yer için bile not gerekiyor

- パスワード みんな違って みんなダメ

Şifreler, hepsi farklı hepsi yanlış (ふでりんどう)

- どこ行った 暗証番号 書いた紙 (スカイ)

Nereye gitti? Şifreleri yazdığım kâğıt

- 物忘れ昔からだ と負け惜しみ (井上 栄二)

Unutkanlık eskiden beri vardı diye kendini avutma

- 万歩計半分以上探しもの (工藤 光司)

Adımsayarın yarıdan fazlası bir şeyler aramayla

Şifreyi hatırlayamama özellikle de girilen şifrelerin hepsinin yanlış olması, şifre yazılan kâğıdın kaybolması şeklinde eserlerde yer almaktadır.

- こんにちは思い出せずにさようなら (山本 芳子)

Merhaba, hatırlayamadan hoşça kal

Yukarıdaki eserde uzun süredir görüşilemeyen arkadaş ile karşılaşıldığında samimi bir şekilde merhaba diyerek konuşulmasına rağmen, adını hatırlayamadan vedalaşılması ile ilgilidir.

- 食べたこと忘れぬように持つ楊枝 (田村 靖彦)

Yediğimi unutmayayım diye tuttuğum kürdan

- うまかった何を食べたか忘れたが (アリス)

Lezzetliydi, ne yediğimi unuttum ama

Yemek yediğini unutmamak için elinde kürdan tutma, lezzetli bir şey yediğini bilmesine rağmen ne yediğini unutması da eserlerde konu olarak yer almaktadır.

- 紙とペン探してる間に句を忘れ (山本 隆荘)

Kâğıt ve kalem ararken dizeyi unutmak

- 寝て練った良い句だったが朝忘れ (久保 静雄)

Yatarken düşündüm, iyi mısraydı ama sabah unuttum

Senryū şiiri yazmak için kalem ve kâğıt ararken şiirin unutulması veya gece düşündüğü şiiri sabah hatırlayamaması da unutkanlık örneklerindendir.

Uzun yaşam ile ilgili Eserler

Aşağıda yer alan eserler uzun yaşamı mizahi olarak ele alan eserlerdir. Her sene artık bittim diye söyleyen kişinin, 10 yıldır

sağlıklı bir şekilde yaşam sürmesi ifade edilmektedir. Ayrıca, oldukça yaşlı olarak görülen kişiye yaşı sorulduğunda şairin kendisinden küçük olduğunu öğrenmesi eserdeki ironiyi oluşturmaktadır.

- 「もうダメだ」 言って 10 年 元気です (鈴木陽菜)

'Artık bittim' diyeli on yıl oldu, sağlıklıyım.

- 長老に年を聞いたら俺の下 (Kanagawa, 66, Erkek)

Çok yaşlıya, yaşını sorduğumda benden küçükmüş

- 九十を過ぎても気にする中国産 (小川 喜洋)

90 yaşını geçsem bile umursarım Çin malı

Yukarıdaki eser, Japonya'da Çin'den gelen bazı yiyecek ürünlerinin insan sağlığını tehlikeye atması ile ilgilidir. 90 yaşını geçmesine karşın hala sağlığına dikkat ettiği görülmektedir.

- 辞世の句なかなか出来ぬと長生きし (北川 賢二)

Ölüm şiiri bir türlü yazamadım diye uzun yaşıyorum

Japon kültüründe 辞世 (jisei) adı verilen genellikle samuraylar tarafından yazılan ölüm şiir türü bulunmaktadır. Yukarıdaki eserde de ölmeden hemen önce yazılan ölüm şiirini yazmadığı için uzun yaşadığı ifade edilmektedir.

Ölüm ile ilgili eserler

Bu kısımda yer alan eserler ölüm ile ilgilidir. Aniden ölmek isteyen kişinin hala doktora gitmesi ironi olarak yer almaktadır. Hayatta iken kıymeti bilinemeyen kişilerin öldükten sonra övülmesi konusuna da değinilmiştir.

- ポックリと逝きたいくせに医者通い (堀江 正一)

Aniden ölmek istesem de doktora gidiyorum

- 俺だって死ねば弔辞で褒められる (山口 義雄)

Ben bile ölünce, başsağlığında övülürüm

Japonya'da yeni yıl kartı gönderme geleneği bulunmaktadır. Aşağıdaki eserde de yaşlı kimsenin yazmak istememesine rağmen, kendisini yeni yıl kartı göndermek zorunda hissetmektedir. Bunun sebebi olarak, göndermediğinde ölüm söylentisinin çıkacağını düşünmesidir.

- 年賀状出さずにいたら死亡説 (角森 玲子)

Yeni yıl kartı göndermeyince, ölüm söylentisi

- アルバムに遺影用との付箋あり (鈴木 富士夫)

Albümde 'cenaze töreni için' diye, ayraç var

Yukarıda yer alan eser yaşlı kişinin, öldükten sonra cenaze töreni için sevdiği bir fotoğrafa ayraç koyarak yakınlarına bildirmesi ile ilgilidir. Yakınlarının yaşlı kişinin istemediği bir fotoğrafı kullanmamaları için bir hazırlık niteliğindedir.

- 遺言を書いた安堵で長生きし (富澤 舜)

Vasiyet yazmanın rahatlığıyla uzun yaşama

- いつ死ぬか分かれば貯金使うのに (遙)

Ne zaman öleceğimi bilsem, birikimimi harcayacağım ama

- 「ご主人は?」「お盆に帰る」と詐欺に言い(川野 竹子)

'Kocanız?' 'Obon'da dönecek' diye dolandırıcıya söyleme

Obon festivali, temmuz ve ağustos aylarına denk gelen Japonya'da ölen ruhların dünyayı ziyarete geldiğine inanılan bir Budist bayramıdır. Eserde dolandırmak için arayan kişinin, kocasının nerede olduğunu sormasına cevap olarak, karısının

Obon'da dönecek demesi esprili olarak kocasının öldüğünü ifade etmektedir.

Öbür dünya ile ilgili Eserler

Aşağıda yer alan eserler öbür dünya ile ilgilidir.

- 耳遠くあの世のお呼び聴こえない (Niigata, 81, Erkek) Kulağım ağır işitir, öteki dünyadan çağırıyor duyamıyorum

- わたしの手ひっぱらないであの世から

Benim elimi çekiştirme öteki dünyadan (Fukuoka,71, Kadın)

- あの世ではお友達よと妻が言い (藤本 明久)

Öteki dünyada arkadaşız diye hanım söyledi

- 来世も一緒になろうと犬に言い (延沢 好子)

Öteki dünyada bile birlikte olacağız diye köpeğime dedim

- 旅行好き行ってないのは冥土だけ (Tokyo, 51, Kadın)

Seyahati severim, gitmediğim yer sadece öteki dünya

- 年賀状書かねばあの世とうわさされ (Tokyo, 48, Kadın)

Yeni yıl kartı, yazmazsam öteki dünyada diye dedikodu çıkar

Japonya'da yeni yıl kartı gönderme geleneği günümüzde de devam etmektedir. Yakınlarına ve arkadaşlarına yeni yıl kartı göndermeyen kişinin öldüğü düşünülmektedir.

Yaşlılık ile ilgili Eserler

Bu kısımdaki eserler yaşlanınca karşılaşılan zorluklar ile ilgilidir. Zamana ayak uydurulamaması, baston kullanmak istenmemesine rağmen ihtiyaç duyduğu için şemsiyeyi kullanması gibi örnekler yer almaktadır.

- 流行語覚えたころはすたってる (Shizuoka, 70, Kadın)

Popüler sözcük, tam öğrendiğim zaman modası geçer

- 見栄張って杖は要らぬと傘を持ち (澤 幸子)

Gurur yapıp, baston gerekmez diye şemsiye taşıyorum

- デパートで買い物よりも椅子探し (渡辺 一雄)

Mağazada, alışverişten çok sandalye arama

- 万歩計歩数のびるが距離のびず (田中 博美)

Adım sayacı, sayı artar ama mesafe artmaz

Aşağıdaki eserde yaşlı kişinin dolandırılma ihtimalinin olması sebebiyle yanına kartını, telefonunu almaması ve zarara uğramaması ifade edilmektedir.

- カードナシ。ケータイもナシ。被害ナシ

Kart yok. Telefon yok. Zarar da yok. (河田せき子)

- 年寄りに渡る世間は毘ばかり (松尾 軍治)

Yaşlılığa uzanan dünya tuzaklarla dolu

- 老後にと残した夢も夢のまま (永松)

Yaşlılık için bırakılan hayaller de hayal kaldı

- 聞き取れず隣にならって空笑い (北川 山三)

Duymayınca, yanımdakini taklit edip sahte bir gülüş

- 名を呼ばれ誰も立たなきやたぶんオレ(ジョンけけ)

İsim okunur, kimse kalkmazsa muhtemelen benim

- お辞儀して共によろけるクラス会 (石岡 和子)

Selam verirken hep birlikte sendeleyeyen sınıf buluşması

- 「アーンして」 むかしラブラブいま介護 (山口 松雄)

“Aaa yap” önceden aşk ile, şimdi yaşlı bakımı

Yaşlılıkta duymayınca etrafına belli etmemek için yanındakilere uyarak sahte gülümseme ve önceleri romantik olarak yemek yerken eşinin ağzını açmasını istemesi, sonraları yaşlı bakımına dönüşmektedir. Yıllar sonra sınıf arkadaşlarıyla buluşunca Japonların eğilerek selamlamaları sırasında hep birlikte sendelemeleri de mizahi olarak ifade edilmektedir.

- 味のある字とほめられた手の震え (大沢 紀恵)

Estetik bir yazı diye övüldüm elimin titremesi

Yaşlı kişi eli titreyerek yazı yazmasına karşın, yazısı estetik olarak görülmektedir.

- 中身より字の大きさに選ぶ本 (西村 嘉浩)

İçeriğinden çok harflerin büyüklüğüne göre seçtiğim kitap

- 資産家は最期に親戚ドッと増え (Saitama, 62, Erkek)

Zengin biri, son zamanlarında akrabalar bir anda artar

- ポイントは使っていいぞと 遺言に (原信彦)

Puanları kullanabilirsiniz diye, vasiyetime

Eserde son zamanlarını yaşayan zengin kişinin akrabalarının bir anda artması ve mirasından yararlanma umudu ele alınmaktadır. Günlük hayatta biriktirilen puanları kullanan kişi, öldükten sonra da yakınlarına vasiyetinde bu durumu yazacağını belirtmektedir.

SONUÇ

Bu çalışmada ele alınan şiirlerin, yaşlanma, günlük yaşam, sağlık sorunları ve bireysel mizah konularını bir araya getirerek okuyucuya hem düşündürücü hem de gülümseten bir bakış açısı sunduğu görülmektedir. Eserler, “aile, hastalık, ölüm, öbür dünya, uzun yaşam, yaşlılık, unutkanlık başlıkları altında analiz edilmiştir.

Yaşlılıkla birlikte ev- hastane arasındaki yaşam, artan hastalıklar, duyma, görme sorunlarının yaşanması, artan ilaç kullanımı, azalan hafıza, unutkanlık vb. yaşamın rutin sıkıntılarının eserlere yansıtıldığı görülmektedir. Bu unsurlar, yaşlanmanın somut ve soyut etkilerini mizahi bir dille ortaya koyarken, bireyin günlük yaşamındaki herkes tarafından empati kurulabilen durumlar olarak dile getirilmektedir.

Aile bireyleri ile ilgili olan eserlerde hanımın katı ve nazik olmayan tutumları dikkat çekerken, öbür dünyada kocası ile birlikte olmak istememesi de ifade edilmektedir. Torun ile ilgili olan eserlerde ise şair torunu tarafından oldukça yaşlı olarak algılanmaktadır.

Sonuç olarak, bu şiirler yalnızca bireysel deneyimleri değil, aynı zamanda evrensel yaşlanma deneyimini de yansıtmaktadır. Mizah ve ironinin kullanımı, okuyucuya hem eğlenceli hem de düşündürücü bir deneyim sunmakta olup; yaşlılık kavramı günlük yaşam temaları ile toplumsal ve bireysel gözlemler üzerinden aktarıldıkları tespit edilmiştir.

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CHAPTER 7

WHEN THE OBJECT LOOKS BACK: REFRAMING THE DIVISION OF SUBJECT/OBJECT STATUS IN DAPHNE DU MAURIER'S *THE BIRDS*

ZEYNEP SUDE GÜLERYÜZ¹
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Introduction

Among the broad collection of literary works, a few hauntingly true-to-life short stories demonstrate the ability to evoke a sense of trepidation with the same level of intensity and eeriness as

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the American novelist Daphne du Maurier's (1963) *The Birds*. The story takes place in a quiet rural corner of post-war England, where people live relatively in isolation. It depicts the abrupt and inexplicable shift in nature's order and how it unleashes destruction upon humanity without any scientific cause or supernatural motive behind it, when the ordinary birds of all kinds become hostile, ultimately agents of death, and cause civilization to unravel and revert to a rather primitive stage (Woods, 2005; Hantke, 2010). This lack of clarity in the narrative creates a more unsettling, abstract atmosphere, making it open to different interpretations (Todorov, 1975, pp. 31–33; Botting, 1996, pp. 2–4). Such narrative indeterminacy has frequently been associated with philosophical and existential readings of catastrophe and apocalypse in modern literature (Camus, 1955, pp. 21–23; Sartre, 1966, pp. 38–41).

In existentialist philosophy, specifically as developed by French writer and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, the meaning of life is deeply explored, and studies conducted on this subject offer an engaging lens in interpreting this shift and collapse of meaning in the story (Flynn, 2006, pp. 45–48). Sartre (1966) draws a rigid distinction between subject and object in his philosophical treatise, *Being and Nothingness* (pp. 27–34). Sartre divides entities into two categories: being-in-itself and being-for-itself (Sartre, 1966, pp. 27–29). The former, he explains, are non-conscious existences such as animals and inanimate objects, which lack freedom of choice (Sartre, 1966, p. 29; Burgat, 2015). Although Sartre does not explicitly theorize animals in depth, his ontological framework implicitly excludes nonhuman animals from subjectivity, a position widely critiqued in contemporary animal studies (Wolfe, 2010; Calarco, 2008). However, in Sartre's view, the latter consists solely of humans because they have free will and the ability to define themselves by making choices (Sartre, 1966, pp. 51–55; Sartre, 1967). Nevertheless, this ontological hierarchy is undermined in *The Birds*

as the birds begin to change their status in the “natural order” and attack with strategy, coordination, and, evidently, intention. By way of this, they become agents of action; here, subjects, rather than mere objects and scenery.

This study focuses on how du Maurier’s birds transform the existential sense, shifting from being-in-itself to being-for-itself (Sartre, 1966; Derrida, 2008; Braidotti, 2013). The sudden transformation dramatizes core existentialist concepts, such as freedom, absurdity, and the meaning of humanity. Here, functions are an existential reversal in which, ironically, humans are deprived of their freedom and agency, and birds gain authority, liberty, and a force of absurdity.

The Birds as Being-in-Itself

In his treatise, Sartre divides reality into two modes of being: conscious and non-conscious entities (Sartre, 1966, pp. 27–29). For non-conscious beings, he uses the term being-in-itself, as they lack the ability for self-awareness and the ability to change; they are merely rigid and inert objects (Sartre, 1966, p. 29). He claims that “Being cannot be causa sui in the manner of consciousness. Being is itself.” (Sartre, 1966, p. 27). Being-in-itself is devoid of self-awareness regarding its existence; it lacks transcendence and capacity for transformation, and it simply exists. (Sartre, 1966, pp. 28–30). Sartre describes being-in-itself as inanimate objects such as an inkwell, a package of tobacco, or a lamp (Sartre, 1966, pp. 30–31). They are “Uncreated, without reason for being, without any connection with another being, being-in-itself is de trop for eternity.” (Sartre, 1966, p. 29). As pertains to the latter, Sartre describes conscious modes of beings as being-for-itself, and this category belongs entirely to humans (Sartre, 1966, pp. 51–55). They have full self-awareness, they do not have a fixed essence as the former do, and they have the capacity for transcendence (Sartre, 1966, pp. 52–56). Although it is not openly claimed by Sartre, animals are

considered as being-in-itself. Being-for-itself is absolutely human, a position that has been widely inferred and critically discussed by later commentators (Burgat, 2015, pp. 174–176; Wolfe, 2010, pp. 66–69).

The birds at the beginning of the story are described as neutral and like regular birds. The narrator describes how the birds behaved before the wind changed: “In the spring the birds flew inland, purposeful, intent; they knew where they were bound; the rhythm and ritual of their life brooked no delay.” (du Maurier, 1963, p. 7). When we focus on the description with a Sartrean lens, we may see that the purpose and intent of the birds are only animal instincts, rather than reflective or self-conscious agency (Sartre, 1966, pp. 29–30). The birds are being-in-itself; they are only a part of the scenery the protagonist likes to watch (Sartre, 1966, pp. 30–31). The birds at the story’s start are ambient sounds people hear in the background, mere objects in nature which function as “normal,” predictable, and biological animals (du Maurier, 1963, pp. 6–8). They do not carry any meaning to human consciousness except as a landscape or resources, a perception consistent with anthropocentric ontologies that position animals as passive elements of the human world (Wolfe, 2010, pp. 1–3; Agamben, 2004, pp. 33–38).

The Transformation of Birds and the Emergence of Autonomy

As the story unfolds, the protagonist Nat Hocken realizes unusual occurrences in his environment; “There were many more than usual; Nat was sure of this. Always, in autumn, they followed the plough, but not in great flocks like these, not with such clamour.” (du Maurier, 1963, p. 8). As demonstrated in the quotation, a distinct transformation occurred in the birds and their behavioral tendencies, marking a significant deviation from their previous status in human perception (du Maurier, 1963, pp. 7–9). This departure from how they were formerly understood is the harbinger of the birds’

transformation from being-in-itself to being-for-itself (Sartre, 1966, pp. 27–30).

Sartre does not classify animals into any mode of being openly; however, it for certain that he does not consider them as conscious beings as humans (Sartre, 1966, pp. 29–31). This anthropocentric view of animal consciousness has been the subject of critique by later thinkers such as Alice Crary and Jacques Derrida (Crary, 2016, pp. 76–80; Derrida, 2008, pp. 6–9). Specifically, in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida (2008) argues that animals are not objects of human use but subjects that possess consciousness (pp. 7–11). He supports this idea by challenging the idea of animals being incapable of subjectivity or response by saying that “The said question of the said animal in its entirety comes down to knowing not whether the animal speaks but whether one can know what responding means. Furthermore, how to distinguish a response from a reaction.” (Derrida, 2008, p. 8). This deeper level of subjectivity in animals corresponds effectively with the events depicted in *The Birds*, and it is a crucial point in comprehending the behavioral patterns of the birds (Derrida, 2008, pp. 8–11).

In du Maurier’s story, the attacks escalate quickly; however, whether they are intentional or driven by fear, pure instinct remains unknown until the third attack, which occurred in the children’s room (du Maurier, 1963, pp. 10–12). It is understood that the birds attacked them over and over again with an intention and purpose, although that is still unknown. The little girl talks with her dad and says, “They tried to peck us,” and continues, “They went for Johnny’s eyes.” (du Maurier, 1963, p. 12). This aggression that birds show towards humans is intentional, and it mirrors the shift from being-in-itself to being-for-itself (Sartre, 1966, pp. 51–55). Their behavioral patterns defy instinct and incidental nature; they ceased to be just birds (Derrida, 2008, pp. 9–12). Their assaults towards humans are coordinated and strategic, their actions are in unison, and

they resemble an organized military unit (du Maurier, 1963, pp. 11–14; Wolfe, 2010, pp. 66–69).

These tactical behaviors in the birds' assaults appear to be purposive actions; the birds are now making choices that mark their emergence as agents (Sartre, 1966, pp. 52–56; Derrida, 2008, pp. 10–13). Townspeople's objectification of the birds is no longer the case, as the animals suddenly encroach upon consciousness as subjects, and humans are slowly stripped of their freedom and trespass into the being-in-itself mode of being, given that they cease to possess their agency up to and including their hope as well as their freedom (Sartre, 1966, pp. 58–60; Wolfe, 2010, pp. 1–3). For this reason, it would not be wrong to state that Sartre's rigid dissection of subject and object status is not only destabilized, but also engages in a role reversal (Sartre, 1966, pp. 255–259; Derrida, 2008, pp. 11–13).

Avian Agency and Humans in Response

This thrilling story by Daphne du Maurier challenges the traditional philosophical notion that animals around us are mere instinctual beings who lack voice, awareness, and willfulness (Wolfe, 2010, pp. 1–3; Burgat, 2015, pp. 172–174). Alternatively, the portrayal of the birds in the story is presented as animals capable of expression, and they appear to have self-awareness and assessment abilities (Derrida, 2008, pp. 7–11). This issue is a concern in Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, as he critiques that the question should not be whether animals can speak to have a voice, or not, but whether they can respond (Derrida, 2008, pp. 6–8). For Derrida, it is also important not to conflate response with reaction (Derrida, 2008, pp. 8–9).

Understanding this distinction is critical due to the fact that birds are depicted as intelligent creatures who are attentive, purposeful, and coordinated, not animals exhibiting defiant conduct driven by instincts or blind reflex (Derrida, 2008, pp. 9–12). Instead

of conveying their actions in chaos, the birds express themselves through their silence, demeanor, movement, and coordination (Crary, 2016, pp. 77–79). In the story, Nat notices behavioral patterns that reveal their deliberate agency, such as waiting for tides and timing their attacks (du Maurier, 1963, pp. 16–18). It should also be noted that the birds give the impression that they are aware of humans' and their house's weak points, and repeatedly test their defenses (du Maurier, 1963, pp. 18–20). These actions are not just a meaningless aggressive reaction, as Derrida might put it, but a "response"—a mode of nonverbal communication (Derrida, 2008, pp. 8–11).

Alice Crary is one of the other critics who advocate for animals having consciousness. In her book *Inside the Ethics*, she states that "...individual animals exhibit the same sort of natural expressive variability that human beings do." (Crary, 2016, p. 78). The avian characters in this story manifest this expressive dimension and variability by adjusting and adapting their tactics and emotional complexity (Crary, 2016, pp. 78–80). Although they are silent, they are not inexpressive (Crary, 2016, pp. 79–81). They use their stillness as a form of expression, unsettling humans by depriving them of the analytical monopoly they typically hold (Derrida, 2008, pp. 11–12). The birds do not exhibit mindless, meaningless actions but rather active presences that destabilize human authority over interpretation and subjectivity (Wolfe, 2010, pp. 66–69).

This disturbance in the "balance" and "reality" can be seen most viscerally in Derrida's proposition, which he calls the animal gaze. He describes this term as "And from the vantage of this being-there-before-me it can allow itself to be looked at, no doubt, but also . . . it can look at me. It has its point of view regarding me." (Derrida, 2008, p. 11). When a person is at the end point of a nonhuman Other's gaze, their vulnerability is revealed, and their presumed superiority is faltered (Derrida, 2008, pp. 11–13). Derrida notes that

the animal gaze's neutralizing power is undoubtedly not passive; it is judgmental, perceptive, and morally unsettling (Derrida, 2008, pp. 12–14). A similar gaze is represented in *The Birds*: “He went to the end of his small garden. The birds did not move. They went on watching him.” (du Maurier, 1963, p. 38). It suggests that birds watch but do not speak; their gaze and stillness have power over Nat, which agitates him.

In *The Birds*, how the birds act against humans not only forces townspeople into shifting from being-for-itself to being-in-itself, but they push them into a condition Sartre names as being-for-others (Sartre, 1966, pp. 255–259). Sartre elucidates how a human's inner sense of identity is altered when they notice someone is watching them (Sartre, 1966, pp. 257–260). This look, converts them from subjects into objects (Sartre, 1966, pp. 258–260). In the story, the birds are the ones which objectifies the human; they become the gaze. When the protagonist becomes aware that he is being watched, his actions are likewise constrained (du Maurier, 1963, pp. 37–39). He does not have the freedom to act freely after that realization, and his choices take shape from dread, exposure, and obscurity (Sartre, 1966, pp. 260–263). Sovereignty of subjectivity is no longer his, and he is cornered by an animal—by a nonhuman Other (Derrida, 2008, pp. 12–14). The ontological hierarchy Sartre constructed is now radically reversed.

From Being-for-Itself to Facticity without Transcendence

In Sartrean existentialism, humans are classified as being-for-itself, meaning they are self-aware and capable of transcendence. Thus, they can freely change their situation they are in at any moment by making choices and reflecting (Sartre, 1966, pp. 51–55). In contrast, in *The Birds*, feathered attacks obliged humans to leave their transcendence behind and brought them face to face with their facticity (Sartre, 1966, pp. 58–60). Sartre defines this term as every concrete detail given to a person and facts that cannot be changed

about them (Sartre, 1966, pp. 82–85). According to Sartre, facticity is part of human life and cannot be left out of human existence; however, it should be grouped with transcendence for the utmost freedom (Sartre, 1966, pp. 85–87). Yet, in the story, Nat's actions metamorphose into reactions: "He was thinking of the gulls... He went upstairs and worked there the rest of the morning, boarding the windows of the bedroom, filling up the chimney bases." (du Maurier, 1963, p. 18). He goes from one room to another, reinforcing windows and doors, not out of reflective agency but out of primal fear (du Maurier, 1963, pp. 17–19). His choices are not self-imposed; they are conveyed out of necessity (Sartre, 1966, pp. 86–88). As the avian threat grows, Nat cannot position himself for the future; he falls back on his raw, most basic instincts: survival (du Maurier, 1963, pp. 18–20).

Sartre cautions that "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself" (Sartre, 1967, p. 15), but in this situation, Nat is incapable of "making" or performing and task (Sartre, 1966, pp. 90–92). He is backed into a corner by the birds, and he must react accordingly (du Maurier, 1963, pp. 18–21). His freedom, which once characterized his humanity, no longer holds any significance in this new world dominated by nonhuman beings (Sartre, 1966, pp. 92–94). Nat's existence becomes a routine of defense and retreat, entirely dependent on external dynamics (du Maurier, 1963, pp. 19–22). With this revision, *The Birds* illustrates an influential existential crisis: the world Nat is accustomed to is now in an unrecognizable condition, and nonhumans (the birds) are in power; he ceases to possess his capacity for transcendence and is now enslaved in his restricted, dreadful facticity (Sartre, 1966, pp. 94–97; Wolfe, 2010, pp. 66–69).

The Ontological Reversal of the Birds and Human Ethical Failure

In *The Birds*, du Maurier stages a striking ontological reversal: the birds cease to exist as passive elements of the natural world and instead begin to act with autonomy and intent. What initially appears as mere instinctual behavior gradually takes on the characteristics of agency, echoing Sartre's distinction between *being-in-itself* and *being-for-itself* (Sartre, 1966, pp. 27–31). Within conventional human understanding, animals are generally perceived as fixed and instinct-bound beings, lacking reflection, freedom, and self-awareness—traits traditionally used to define human existence (Sartre, 1966, pp. 51–55; Wolfe, 2010, pp. 1–3). However, du Maurier's birds distort this split. Their actions are based on observation, coordination, and reason, not on instinctive and visionless senses. Each of their movement is a response to human defenses. Derrida's concept of the animal gaze, which unsettles human self-certainty, is reflected in this intentionality and in their gesture of “watching”, an act that proposes a form of subjectivity as if the birds themselves held a gaze (Derrida, 2008, pp. 11–13). Therefore, it can be said that the existential status which Sartre did not forestall for animals is claimed in the story; birds emerge as subjects now who are adept at agency, judgment, and imposing their presence (Sartre, 1966, pp. 29–31; Derrida, 2008, pp. 12–14).

This reversal reveals a significant ethical collapse in the human subjects (Burgat, 2015, pp. 173–176). Irrespective of how extensively birds are presented as agents, human characters continue to position them as passive objects and to refute their advancing objectivity (Wolfe, 2010, pp. 66–69). Florence Burgat articulates this absence of recognition and ethical irresponsibility: “...the ethics of compassion that, intrinsically, is inscribed in the perspective of an infinite responsibility toward sentient beings in general.” (Burgat, 2015, pp. 172–189). This moral blindness echoes as a grim parable in du Maurier's story (du Maurier, 1963, pp. 35–39). The birds possess a mute yet potent gaze that persists in recognition by

responding to human beings as aware and acting subjects (Derrida, 2008, pp. 11–14). However, this demand directed to humans is reciprocated with fear and violence, falling short of their responsibility (Burgat, 2015, pp. 176–178). The ontological agency of the birds perturbs human self-awareness by rejecting the role as a passive part of a landscape—a backdrop to human freedom (Sartre, 1966, pp. 255–259). Instead, humans are compelled to confront their vulnerability as being-for-others; they are now objectified and exposed to threat (Sartre, 1966, pp. 257–260). Hence, *The Birds* exposes the philosophical ramifications of the denial of the evolving boundaries of subjectivity and the ethical obligations that accompany such acknowledgement (Derrida, 2008, pp. 13–15; Burgat, 2015, pp. 178–181).

Conclusion

The Birds by Daphne du Maurier offers more than just an apocalyptic horror tale about nature becoming hostile to men. It bears a rather philosophical challenge, a radical one at that, towards deep-rooted ontological and moral molds about animals, the domain of control and agency, and the limits of subjectivity. The story deconstructs Sartre's existentialist categorization of *being-in-itself* and *being-for-itself* by assigning the birds a strategic behavioral pattern, a coordination of time, and a watchful, unnerving manifestation. By usurping human subjectivity, the birds strip human beings of transcendence and reduce them to a condition of oppressive facticity. This shift forces us to focus on what Sartre could not anticipate: the animals are not mere inert objects perceived by humans as part of the background, but conscious agents who can shift humans' ontological status.

What makes this story dreadful is not the continuous and intelligent bird assaults, but the reality it uncovers: human exceptionalism is not perpetual or stable, but rather fragile, and turning a blind eye to the potential subjectivity of nonhuman others

has consequences. *The Birds* obliges the audience to reevaluate the meanings of subjectivity, recognition, and responsibility, not only towards human beings but also towards all sentient beings.

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