Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları
Modern Turkish Literature Researches
YTEA 2025; 17/33 135-152 • DOI: 10.26517/ytea.592 • Research Article

FEMINIST ECOGOTHIC BODIES IN FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN AND ZAMANSIZ

FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN VE ZAMANSIZ'DA FEMİNİST EKOGOTHİK BEDENLER

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Geliş Tarihi/Submitted: 05.04.2025

Kabul Tarihi/Accepted: 12.05.2025

Kaynak Gösterim / Citation: Aldemir, Nimetullah (2025). "Feminist Ecogothic Bodies in *Fire on the Mountain* and *Zamansız*", Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları. 17/33, 135-152.

http://dx.doi.org/10.26517/ytea.592

Abstract

This study examines representations of the abject and grotesque female body entangled with more-than-human worlds in contemporary women's literature. Such representations challenge and seek to dismantle the patriarchal system that portrays female sexuality and the female body as excessive, repressed, and devoid of agency. The study builds its theoretical framework on Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection and Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque body, proposing an ecogothic, materialist feminist, and ecocritical perspective to explore the interaction between nature, gender, and intersecting systems of oppression. The study analyzes *Fire on the Mountain* by Anita Desai and *Zamansız* by Latife Tekin, as works that portray the abject and grotesque female body—marked by race, class, and gender—as a site of resistance against patriarchal domination over both nature and women. The analysis explores how the concepts of grotesque and abjection—associated by the patriarchal order with the non-normative female body—are defined through ideas about what is considered natural. It argues that the texts under examination present the abject female body, which transgresses boundaries and overturns hierarchies, as a carnivalesque form of rebellion that enables a redefinition of humanity and femininity from a non-anthropocentric perspective.

Keywords: Ecogothic, Grotesque, Abjection, Posthumanism, Spectrality.

Öz

Bu çalışma, çağdaş kadın edebiyatında insandan ibaret olmayan dünyalarla iç içe geçmiş abject ve grotesk kadın bedeni temsillerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu temsiller, kadın cinselliğini ve kadın bedenini aşırı, bastırılmış ve eyleyicilikten yoksun olarak kurgulayan ataerkil sistemi sorgulamakta ve onu yıkmayı hedeflemektedir. Çalışma, kuramsal çerçevesini Julia Kristeva'nın abjection kuramı ile Mikhail Bakhtin'in grotesk beden kavramı üzerine inşa etmekte; doğa, toplumsal cinsiyet ve kesişen baskı sistemleri arasındaki etkileşimi incelemek amacıyla ekogotik, feminist ekoeleştirel bir perspektif önermektedir.Bu bağlamda çalışma, Anita Desai'nin *Fire on the Mountain* ve Latife Tekin'in *Zamansız* adlı eserlerini incelemekte; ırk, sınıf ve cinsiyetle işaretlenmiş abject ve grotesk kadın bedenini doğa ve kadınlar üzerindeki eril tahakküme karşı bir direniş alanı olarak ele almaktadır. Grotesk ve iğrençlik kavramlarının, ataerkil düzen tarafından norm dışı kadın bedeniyle ilişkilendirilme biçimlerini ve bu kavramların "doğal" kabul edilen şeyler üzerinden nasıl tanımlandığını sorgulamaktadır. Çalışma, incelenen metinlerin sınırları ihlal eden ve hiyerarşileri altüst eden abject kadın bedenini, insan-merkezli olmayan bir bakış açısından insanlık ve kadınlık tanımlarını yeniden düşünmeye imkân veren karnavalesk bir başkaldırı biçimi olarak sunduğunu öne sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ekogotik, Grotesk, İğrençlik, Posthümanizm, Spektralite.

Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları • Sayı: 33 • 2025 • ISSN: 2548-0472

Introduction

Amid escalating ecological crises of the Anthropocene, scholarly inquiry has increasingly turned toward the relationship between human and nonhuman ecologies. Within this intellectual and environmental climate, the *ecogothic* emerged as a compelling critical framework that interrogate the affective, ontological, and aesthetic dimensions of environmental anxiety. Smith and Hughes define the ecogothic as an exploration of "the gothic through theories of ecocriticism" (1), recasted the natural world not as an idyllic refuge but as a locus of horror, abjection, and alterity. Rather than endorsing the harmony of pastoralism typical of Romantic or Transcendentalist traditions, the ecogothic invites a movement "beyond the benign shores of Walden Pond" (Keetley and Sivils 16), directing attention toward nature's grotesque, uncanny, and often monstrous dimensions. Although the ecogothic has been variously employed as a genre and critical apparatus, its most conceptualization treats it as a theoretical lens. Smith and Hughes propose that gothic literature, when viewed ecocritically, reveals cultural anxieties about the environment and the human subject's fragile ontological position within it (2). Estok extends this argument by foregrounding the concept of *ecophobia*, which he defines as "an irrational and groundless hatred of the natural world" (208), identified as an affective structure in both cultural and literary texts. Hillard asserts that the gothic offers an ideal mode for examining ecophobic anxieties (6). Similarly, Del Principe adopts an ecogothic approach to reframe the monstrous body in gothic literature as a site of species instability and nonhuman entanglement (94). For Keetley and Sivils (13-14), the ecogothic functions not as a strict genre but as a pervasive literary mode operative even in texts that are not overtly gothic, allowing scholars to trace ecological themes through gothic tropes. Parker (9), for example, explore how forests functions as ecophobic spaces in Western literature, aligning herself with Keetley and Sivils in treating the ecogothic as an analytical framework rather than a discrete genre.

While the ecogothic has gained prominence only recently, its thematic concerns can be traced back to nineteenth-century of Romantic gothic literature. Canonical texts such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* critique Enlightenment dualisms by unsettling the boundary between the human and the nonhuman. In a similar vein, Del Principe examines Count Dracula's dietary abstention from animal flesh to critique carnivorism as a boundary-marking practice that constructs species identity (94). Halberstam further explores the gothic body as a site where anxieties about race, gender, sexuality, and species difference converge, positioning monstrosity as a cultural response to alterity and ecological otherness (334). This study builds upon these theoretical foundations by offering a feminist ecogothic reading of two works: Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain* and Latife Tekin's *Zamansız*.

Through an interdisciplinary methodology that synthesizes feminist theory, psychoanalytic theory, and gothic studies, this research explores how both novels utilizes grotesque corporeality, metamorphosis, and abjection to critique structures of patriarchal and anthropocentric domination. In both texts, the metamorphosing female body functions as a central site for disrupting essentialist conceptions of femininity, humanity, and species hierarchy. F*ire on the* M*ountain* invoke the figure of the *churail* to critique colonial ideologies of purity, civility, and female containment. The novel's gothic elements are mobilized to expose the ecological and gendered violence perpetuated by colonial reordering of the Indian landscape. Vampirism become a feminist and ecological counter-narrative that challenges patriarchal efforts to sanitize and dominate both nature and female bodies. Tekin's *Zamansız*, on the other hand, narrate the posthumous metamorphosis of a couple into nonhuman forms following a car accident. Through poetic prose and nonlinear temporality, Tekin constructs a vision of posthuman intimacy and ecological entanglement that destabilizes anthropocentric conceptions of subjectivity, temporality, and desire. Her narrative style draws upon Kristeva's concept of the *semiotic chora*, invoking pre-verbal rhythms associated with the maternal body to challenge the symbolic order that underpins phallocentric logic.

In both works, metamorphosis is situated as an embodied, gendered, and ecological process. These transformations resonate with Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque body as "a body in the act of becoming" (317). The grotesque female bodies are excessive, porous, and unstable. Such representations challenge normative discourses of bodily coherence, sexual propriety, and ecological mastery. They also align with Kristeva's notion of abjection, wherein that which is expelled in the formation of the subject returns to haunt the boundaries of identity and culture. These bodies, situated at the interstices of self and other, species and subject, evoke both horror and fascination. This study argue that the grotesque and abject female body, particularly in states of metamorphosis, function as a site of ecological and feminist resistance. By foregrounding monstrosity, abjection, and interspecies intimacy, authors interrogates the ontological and epistemological foundations of the human. Their works imagines alternative modes of becoming that reject hierarchical dualisms and embrace fluid, relational, and posthuman forms of subjectivity. In doing so, they advance a feminist ecogothic aesthetic that reconfigure the female body not as a site of horror to be disciplined, but as a locus of transformation, agency, and ecological connectedness.

F*ire on the* Mountain

Set in post-independence India, Anita Desai's F*ire on the* M*ountain* portray the voluntary seclusion of Nanda Kaul, an elderly widow who retreated to the colonial hill station of Kasauli in an effort to escape the familial obligations. Located

Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları • Sayı: 33 • 2025 • ISSN: 2548-0472

in the foothills south of Shimla and historically linked to British colonial rule, Kasauli becomes for Nanda Kaul a space of anticipated solitude and withdrawal from human contact. Her only companion in this isolation is the old servant Ram Lal. As the narrator states, "Whatever else came, or happened here, would be an unwelcome intrusion and distraction" (Desai 3). This withdrawal follows a life of patriarchal confinement in Punjab, where Nanda Kaul, the widow of an Anglicized Vice-Chancellor, had endures domestic responsibilities amidst a colonial household teeming with servants and hierarchical ritual. However, the ascetic routine she constructs is abruptly disrupted by a letter from her daughter Asha, who informs her that her great-granddaughter Raka will spend the summer with them. This minor domestic development becomes the narrative's point of rupture, unsettling the fragile structures of isolation and prompting an ecological and psychological reconfiguration of space, body, and memory.

The *churail* legend which is a folkloric figure is endowed with grotesque bodily features—backward feet, disfigured face, long black hair—that mark her as both nonhuman and socially transgressive. Within the context of Desai's narrative, the *churail* operate as a metaphor for the unspoken traumas and spectral hauntings borne by women like Nanda Kaul, who has internalized decades of patriarchal subjugation and emotional repression. The gendered violence of colonial patriarchy, the systematic erasure of women's voices, and the ecological devastations wrought by empire coalesce in the *churail* as a figure of both suffering and resistance. Drawing upon Kristeva's notion of abjection, the novel delineate how the female body becomes a site of contamination and social anxiety: a body that must be expelled, silenced, or rendered invisible to preserve normative structures. In Desai's eco-gothic rendering of colonial history, the landscape itself become imbued with a spectral presence, echoing the unspeakable traumas of both women and animals subjected to imperial violence. By reanimating these silences through hauntological tropes, Desai reframes the colonial narrative not only as a history of human domination, but also as a multispecies ecology of suffering. Thus, Desai's depiction of Raka suggest a posthuman sensibility that challenge anthropocentric hierarchies. Raka's affinity with insects, reptiles, and decaying flora render her a liminal figure straddling the human and nonhuman. Her grotesque transformation mirrors the *churail's* metamorphosis and reinforce the novel's alignment with ecophobic anxieties. These anxieties, as Estok, are predicated on the cultural fear of nature's agency, which in colonial discourse is often racialized, gendered, and rendered grotesque (99).

Desai's novel thus participates in a critique of colonial modernity by mapping ecophobia, defined by Estok (99) as "irrational fear or contempt of the natural world"—onto both female bodies and nonhuman others. The imperial project's

efforts to controlling and sanitizing the colonial environment parallel its attempt to discipline and domesticate women's bodies. In this configuration, bodily metamorphosis become an index of resistance and return, defying colonial logic and reactivating suppressed histories. Through these figures, Desai constructs a non-anthropocentric historical imaginary that decenters human subjectivity and reposition the female and the nonhuman as co-agents in the narration of postcolonial trauma. The grotesque, haunted body of the woman and the contaminated landscape become interdependent registers of violence, memory, and potential transformation. In doing so, F*ire on the* M*ountain* not only critique colonial and patriarchal structures but also interrogating the boundaries of the human, articulating a relational ethics rooted in vulnerability and spectral interconnection.

The figure of the *churail* in Indian folklore embody an extreme form of abjection, situated at the interstices of death, gendered pollution, and spectral resistance. Traditionally believed to arise from women who died during menstruation, childbirth, confinement, or as a result of sexual violence, *churails* are animate corpses who haunt the liminal zones between life and death (Crooke 454). Desai refers to these spectral entities within the ravines adjacent to the Pasteur Institute, a space associated with colonial scientific experimentation on animals (4). Functioning as corporeal reminders of death and defilement, *churails* are linked to both Hindu mythological figures and posthuman animality. They shared grotesque characteristics with the goddess Kali and are depicted as lbeings positioned outside the confines of normative Hindu society (Kinsley 82). Kali's shrines signifies her alignment with impurity, liminality, and marginality. Like Kali, *churails* are commonly associate with the C*hûhra* or "sweeper caste," a Dalit group subjected to occupational discrimination through their labor in waste management and manual scavenging (Ahmad and Shah 461).

Kali's disheveled hair accentuate her deviation from patriarchal norms that bind women to systems of purity, especially during menstruation (Kinsley 70–84). The cultural taboo against menstruating women produce a recurring narrative of contamination. Women who died while menstruating are particularly feared as potential *churails*, their impurity believed to transform into supernatural vengeance (Crooke 454). The physical description of *churails* in folk tradition further mark them as grotesque and nonhuman. They are often portrayed with sagging breasts, black tongues, coarse features, claw-like fingers, and backward-turned feet (Bane 47). Like Kali, they consume blood and dance upon battlefields, deriving strength from abjection and death. this grotesque embodiment is echoed in Ram Lal's account of *churails*: "They live off the corpses the Institute doctors throw down… Dressed in black… their red eyes glow like coals. And their feet are turned backwards" (77). This vision blurred the boundaries between the female corpse, the animal carcass, and

Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları • Sayı: 33 • 2025 • ISSN: 2548-0472

the monstrous feminine.

The *churail* becomes a figure through which Desai connects the colonial subjugation of Indian women to the systemic torture of nonhuman animals in colonial laboratories. Both are bodies markes for scientific or social exploitation, and both are rendered abject through colonial discourse. Churails feeds on the remains of rabbits, dogs, and guinea pigs discarded by colonial scientists after vivisection and vaccine testing. These same animals, when consumed by jackals and other carrion creatures, transmit rabies, a disease imagined as the return of the colonial repressed in viral form (Güven 392). In this formulation, Desai constructs an eco-gothic chain of contamination, in which animals, female ghosts, and disease converges to haunting the colonial landscape with reminders of imperial violence. The alignment between *churails* and nonhuman creatures such as jackals further underscore the novel's posthuman critique. The ravine near the Pasteur Institute, which functions as a dump site for dead animals, evoke the cremation grounds of mythological lore. Desai situated this space as one of grotesque transformation and ecological disruption: "rabbits secreting fear in cages packed with coiled snakes" (49). This toxic intermingling of species, fluids, and fear illustrate the colonial fantasy of domination over nature and its inevitable failure.

The Pasteur Institute in colonial India was central to the production of anti-rabies vaccines. Laboratory animals, including thousands of rabbits annually, were subject of horrific experimentation: inoculated with infected cerebrospinal fluids, restrained in wired cages, and often mutilated or killed upon infection (Güven 395). Such practices exemplifies the colonial ambition of sanitizing and controlling "contagious" nature, imposed on Indian female bodies through violent funerary practices aimed at preventing their return as churails. This gendered biopolitical logic extends to the construction of Indian femininity as inherently contaminating, a belief that fed imperial anxieties about sexual danger and racial degeneration.

The novel constructs the Pasteur Institute at Kasauli as a central ecogothic landscape. The Institute operate not merely as a site of scientific research, but as a metaphor for material destruction and symbolic contamination inflicted upon the Indian landscape by colonial modernity. Narrated through the eyes of Ram Lal, Nanda Kaul's cook, the ravine adjoining the Institute is depicted as a gothic locale teem with nonhuman life forms that disturbs the rational boundaries of the living. Upon her arrival in Kasauli, Raka begins her exploration of the region and observes what she assumes to be a factory: "enormous concrete walls" surrounded by "servants' quarters, tin sheds and cook-houses" (41–42). Ram Lal inform her that the structure is the Pasteur Institute, which to Raka resemble "a square dragon, boxed, bricked and stoked," exuding smoke through "sharp chimneys" and expelling waste through chutes (42). He warns

Raka to stay away, reveals that the Institute disposes of animal remains into the ravine (44). The area is haunted not only by the spectral residue of colonial science but by jackals and mythic churails, spectral women from Hindu folklore associated with impurity, and revenge. These figures evoke the violences enacted upon both human and nonhuman subjects under colonial rule.

Desai's use of polysyndeton emphasized the overwhelming physicality of colonial waste, while her shift to asyndeton destabilize syntactic structure, creating an atmosphere of chaos and aggression reflective of the ecological and psychic trauma left in the wake of imperialism. The spectral jackals, maddened by feasting on infected bones, bite other dogs in a grotesque chain of infection. In this depiction, contamination become a signifier of the lingering presence of colonial violence and its continued intrusion into the postcolonial present. Also, the novel is a critique of colonial constructions of Indian female corporeality. British medical and moral discourses historically cast Indian women as hypersexual, impure, and disease-bearing, reflects larger anxieties about miscegenation and imperial contamination (Güven 395). Desai subverts these tropes through the figure of the churail, who embodies abjection not as victimhood but as forms of resistance. These spectral women haunt the ravine, their presence disrupting colonial binaries of purity/impurity, human/animal, and life/death.

The Pasteur Institute becomes the source of contagion itself. Inverting the colonial civilizing mission, Desai presents the Institute as a failure of modernist project, where the boundaries between the rational and the irrational collapses. The novel activates ecophobic anxieties, as defined by Estok, by staging the breakdown of the division between culture and nature (6). As Raka witnesses a masquerade ball at the Kasauli Club, she takes the grotesque images: a woman with "a bucket on her head" laughing in "bubbles of blood," a "brown animal" with eyes like "white snakes," and a headless figure holding its own head (Desai 69–71). These surreallistic visions catalyzes her memories of domestic violence inflicted on her mother, Tara, by her abusive father. The novel denies Tara a narrative voice, portraying her silence not as passivity but as part of a larger commentary on how violence silence women. Her unspoken trauma is instead transmitted through the spectral figures of churails, who are embodiment of a counter-narrative of feminine rage and justice.

The story of the Kasauli pastor, who suspects his wife of poisoning him and sleeps with one eye open until he goes blind, further the theme of haunted domesticity (7). When Raka hears a jackal's cry from the ravine, the boundary between her mother's suffering and the nonhuman world collapses. The jackal's weeping become a vessel for maternal pain, and the ravine itself transform into a liminal space where personal and colonial histories intersect and bleed into one another. Raka is a liminal subject aligned with the nonhuman. She

Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları • Sayı: 33 • 2025 • ISSN: 2548-0472

is described in animalistic terms: "a newly caged, newly tamed wild one" who moves on "silent, investigating pads" (41), and quenches her thirst by "licking a windowpane" (42). Her dietary habits and instinctual behavior marks her as a being in sync with the wild. The implication that she may be vegetarian, juxtaposed with Ram Lal's nostalgic recollection of meat-centric colonial feasts, reinforce the contrast between colonial masculinity and indigenous femininity. The Kasauli Club, described as a colonial institution of elite sociability, embodies racial and spatial segregation. Established in the late 19th century, it excludes Indians while cultivating a nostalgic simulacrum of English rural life (Kennedy 6). Ram Lal reminiscent about "whole sheep roasted on a spit," contrasting the club's past with its diminished present (66–67). This nostalgia highlights the performative masculinity and power politics of colonial gastronomy, aligning meat with dominance and civilization.

Zamansız

Latife Tekin's *Zamansız* (T*imeless*), published in 2022 is a literary meditation on metamorphosis, environmental disruption, and posthuman subjectivity. The novel is composed in richly poetic language and centering thematically on death, love, and mourning. The novel begins with a fable-like love story between an electric eel and a weasel, described as "animals of the same watersource" (Tekin 31). The text later revealed that these nonhuman protagonists were formerly human: a man and a woman who, following a car accident, were ejected into a lake and metamorphosed: "It appears that we transformed after flying out of the window and plunged into the water; I have become a sharp-eared, obsessive Weasel and you a dreamy Eel longing for distant bays" (15). This interspecies metamorphosis unsettles the anthropocentric narrative tradition and allows for the emergence of a nonhuman perspective from which the story unfolds. In Gelincik's dream, Yılanbalığı declares, "I am an underwater creature, I only have a hum, no voice" (64), articulating a form of expression rooted not in speech but in bodily resonance and affective vibration. The lake ecosystem, which they now inhabit, functions symbolically as a semiotic chora; Julia Kristeva's concept of a pre-linguistic, maternal space of pulsation and rhythm. In this liminal space, human and nonhuman experiences dissolve into one another, foregrounding an affective mode of ecological co-being.

The narrative temporalities further destabilize anthropocentric assumptions. Yılanbalığı claims, "I am as old as sleep" (19), invoking a time scale beyond the human. This deep, geological temporality invites readers to consider existence through the longue durée of nonhuman life, decentering the human as the sole temporal agent. The author invests nonhuman, and even inanimate, entities with agency: herons descend the mountain for ritual gatherings (25), Delikli Island rhythmically sinks and resurfaces "to catch its breath" (25), insects puncture the earth's surface in pursuit of air, and birds and frogs emit a cacophonous

chorus. Such moments render the landscape sentient and animate, enacting a form of animistic posthumanism wherein nature speaks, breathes, and desires. Desire itself becomes a multispecies phenomenon. A moss hedgehog and a red fox, mourning their lost companions, attempt to seduce the weasel in an effort to lose themselves in sensual pleasure. A jaybird counsels Gelincik to chew cypress resin in order to forget Yılanbalığı (66). These interspecies interactions blur the lines between instinct, memory, and eros, gesture toward a affectively entangled multispecies ecology. Tekin thereby uncovers submerged emotional histories belonging to the nonhuman world, proposing a mode of ecological attunement lost to anthropocentric modernity.

A pivotal narrative thread involves a woman in a white dress who, after a quarrel with her lover, casts a blue bag filled with relics of love into the lake. Gelincik believes storytelling is necessary to comprehend the origins and trajectory of her and Yılanbalığı's transformation. She seeks to narrativize the uncanny and domesticate the unfamiliar through discursive mastery. In contrast, Yılanbalığı is drawn compulsively to the bag and to the unknown, suggesting that embracing the nonhuman requires surrendering the impulse to control or rationalize experience. He yearns to "discover the soul of the lake, to understand why to be here... a chance to learn, transformed into animals" (35). His longing evokes the mythic resonance of Pandora's box. Language, in this context, proves limited. The symbolic register of human discourse fails to capture the atmospheric and affective density of the lake and marshland, which function as semiotic zones beyond rational articulation. The landscape becomes a site of memory, mourning, and metamorphosis. The ecological narrative is also informed by socio-political critique, particularly of environmental degradation caused by mining ventures in northwestern. Through lush natural imagery and multispecies storytelling, the story cultivates ecological sensitivity and ethical reflection. It resists the logic of capitalist extraction by emphasizing the intrinsic value and wisdom of nonhuman beings. The novel's evocation of nonhuman time and interspecies desire becomes a form of resistance to the commodification of nature and the silencing of ecological voices.

Metamorphosis is presented not as a romantic return to nature, but as a form of devouring. The human self is metaphorically consumed by the natural world, only to be reconstituted as a nonhuman animal capable of witnessing the ecological devastation wrought by capitalist extraction and overconsumption. In this context, cannibalism becomes a symbolic mode through which the novel addresses ecological mourning—not merely the loss of life but the anticipatory grief for a future that is already marked by extinction and ruination. Tekin's narrative foregrounds the impossibility of closure in ecological grief, which, unlike human mourning, does not follow a teleological arc. Rather, it is ongoing, layered, and planetary in scale. *Zamansız* destabilizes anthropocentric

Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları • Sayı: 33 • 2025 • ISSN: 2548-0472

frameworks of emotional sensibility by proposing nonhuman modes of grief, expressed through situated ecological knowledge and altered temporalities. Gelincik begins to keep journals to cope with abandonment following the eel's disappearance. On the second day of mourning, Gelincik travels to the Seaside Restaurant in search of the Woman in the White Dress, whom it suspects of luring Yılanbalığı away. Hidden behind a hibiscus bush, Gelincik overhears the woman telling a waiter that she does not recall throwing her bag into the lake or fainting. This amnesia, juxtaposed with Gelincik's obsessive remembering, emphasizes the asymmetry between human and nonhuman perceptions of loss.

Earlier in the novel, the Woman in the White Dress is portrayed in the throes of a breakdown, repeating deliriously, "They cut down the eucalyptus trees! I'm thirsty, give me water" (26). Her grief over romantic loss is entangled with ecological violence. The felling of eucalyptus trees operates as a synecdoche for environmental degradation and the disorientation it inflicts upon human psyches. In a poetic reflection, the narrative asks: "then who are those being scattered by the light reflected from the lake to the sky?" (13). Nature, in this context, is a medium through which existential and planetary truths emerge. The woman's subsequent abandonment by Benini parallels Gelincik's own loss. Tekin blurs the distinction between species by aligning the woman's sorrow with that of the weasel: "The woman's sorrow is so similar to mine that I started feeling close to her; it is impossible not to be shaken by it" (51). On the sixth day of mourning, Gelincik finds the blue bag and discovers a hidden compartment containing plastic pouches labeled with the names of lakes. The word "*Zamansız*," engraved on the rings in the bag, is also the title of Benini's film (62). Gelincik writes to Yılanbalığı, suspecting a connection between him and Benini: "the fishers in the lake call the eel Benini because its skin is spotted?" (65).

In its grief, Gelincik wanders the landscape, encountering a young red fox whose mate has been killed by hunters. The fox describes stepping into a trap and hanging injured from a tree, emitting pained cries (68). This harrowing image, emblematic of the violence of trophy hunting and the commodification of animal life, resonates with David Huebert's concept of "ecological cannibalism." According to Huebert, humans become "ecological cannibals" when they consume their own planetary body to the point of excess. "Excess is crucial here… Simply consuming the planet is not ecological cannibalism unless that consumption is excessive" (68–69). This excessive is rendered through the industrial mutilation of nature and the relentless commodification of life. A pivotal passage recounts the narrator's ascent to the Marble Plain, the childhood home of Yılanbalığı, now a devastated landscape. Here, Tekin allegorizes the capitalist exploitation of nature as an act of ecological self-

mutilation. Marble, traditionally associated with monuments, tombs, and permanence, becomes a symbol of ecological death and fossilized time. The petrification of living organisms into marble embodies a loss of vitality—a transformation of animate beings into monuments of ecological grief. In this ecogothic vision, nature does not simply reflect back human violence; it internalizes and re-expresses it, transfigured into monstrous, haunted forms.

The narrative later reveals that Benini's father, who worked in the marble industry, died after being crushed by a marble block. The metaphor of ecological cannibalism becomes painfully literal. In this context, the pandemic silence—when human voices receded and nonhuman worlds reasserted themselves—is refigured as a moment of epistemic rupture. Just as humans were silenced by lockdowns, Benini's father is silenced by marble—death by the very material he helped extract. Marble thus functions as a polyvalent symbol. It marks the entropic transformation of living, breathing entities into lifeless commodities; it stands as a monument to environmental destruction; and it reflects an ecophobic logic whereby human culture erases the vitality of nature in the name of permanence. By portraying the devastation of landscapes and nonhuman lives through this petrified symbolism, Tekin enacts an ecological mourning that implicates the reader in its ethics of loss. Thus, the novel is a serious critique of the capitalist logic of extractivism by invoking the metaphor of ecological cannibalism.

The narrative novel situates its characters within fluid, watery ecologies that dissolve the conventional boundaries between human and nonhuman bodies. These liminal spaces does not serve merely as settings but function as dynamic agents of transformation. Water is a generative medium through which loss, love, and desire unfold, forming a relational matrix that binds human and more-than-human life forms. In doing so, she aligns with Astrida Neimanis's theory of "watery subjectivities," which posits water not as a passive external element but as constitutive of corporeality and selfhood. The transformation of the characters from humans into nonhuman animals is triggered by their submersion in water following a car accident. However, this transformation is never fully completed, and the ambiguity surrounding their corporeal forms underscores the fluidity of subjectivity itself. As Neimanis explains, watery bodies are marked by permeability, vulnerability, and relationality; they resist the logic of closure, coherence, and individualism that underpin anthropocentric and phallogocentric (Neimanis 95). The characters embody this watery ontology, as their identities are continuously reconstituted through relational flows of desire, memory, and grief.

The weasel and the eel possess grotesque features that exemplify Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the "double body." Their animal forms retain traces of the human while simultaneously exceeding them. In Bakhtinian terms, the grotesque

Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları • Sayı: 33 • 2025 • ISSN: 2548-0472

body is a "becoming" body—open, porous, and enmeshed in cycles of birth, death, and rebirth. It challenges the classical ideal of the closed, finished, and autonomous body, emphasizing instead transformation and interpenetration with the world. This grotesque aesthetic is not merely a feature of visual representation but a mode of ontological indeterminacy. The lake, as another watery body, absorbs the characters into its depths, facilitating a death that is also a form of rebirth. This aligns with Bakhtin's assertion that the grotesque body "can merge with various natural phenomena, with mountains, rivers, seas, islands, and continents" (318), and no longer belongs to "the private, egotistic 'economic man,' but to the collective ancestral body of all the people" (19). Though the novel never explicitly states which human becomes which animal, there is clues suggesting that the Woman in the White Dress metamorphoses into the weasel and Benini into the eel. Gelincik dreams of the eel as it "with a burst of light slipping from the hand of a young Japanese woman and twisting in the air, transforming into a human" (81). Likewise, the eel recounts a dream in which it becomes a male fish "electrocuting itself" (38). These dreams blur boundaries and foreground the entangled processes of identity formation that unfold across species lines. Aristotle speculated that eels originates from mud, as they neither appeared to mate nor lay eggs. Freud dissected hundreds of eel in search of their testicles, only to fail in locating them (Svensson 22). Eels lifes are characterized by continuous metamorphosis, exhibiting what Svensson describes as "existential transformations." This ambiguity makes the eel an ideal figure for posthuman resistance to normative identity categories. The eel is neither fully fish nor snake; its serpentine form, oily skin, and ability to slither across land resist containment. It is covered in slime, a substance that symbolizes abjection in its capacity to blur boundaries, cling to the skin, and defy purification.

The eel is consistently gendered male, and the weasel female, reinforcing Judith Butler's notion of the "heterosexual matrix"—a cultural framework that renders bodies intelligible only through the articulation of binary sexual difference (45). Yet the eel's gender remains unstable, if not entirely indeterminate. As Svensson observes, eels develop sexual organs only at the final stage of their lives, just before reproduction (22). They become what they need to be, when the time is right. In this sense, the eel resist temporality and biological fixity, instead embody a temporality of deferred becoming. Tekin's choice of the eel is thus richly symbolic. It collapses distinctions between gender, species, and identity. Its slippery body, mutable form, and mysterious life cycle all serve to destabilize foundational epistemologies of humanism, taxonomy, and sexual difference. The eel, in its radical otherness, becomes a figure of abjection not as something to be expelled, but as a site of rethinking embodiment, identity, and relational being.

Thus, the novel embraces the fluidity of corporeal existence, temporality, and spatiality, destabilizing the boundaries between reality and fantasy, and collapsing notions of time. Following their metamorphosis into animal forms, the eeland the weasel inhabit the lake and surrounding marshland as their natural environment, where they experience intimacy, grief, and transformation. Within this ecotone, temporality flows in synchrony with natural rhythms rather than human chronology. Such nonlinear time functions as a critique of temporal structures, affirming temporal logic shapes by nonhuman modes of existence. The *chora* becomes an ontological and ecological zone where subjectivity is formed through affect, bodily impulses, and semiotic materiality. Kristeva distinguishes the symbolic from the semiotic in terms of meaning production. The symbolic refers to the logical and structured use of language in expressing meaning, governed by syntax and social law. The semiotic is the domain of bodily drives and affects, marked by rhythm, repetition, and contradiction (McAfee 36). The *chora*, derived from the Greek word for space or womb, operates as a pre-linguistic site of pulsional activity that disrupt the symbolic through semiotic eruptions. It is non-representational, non-identitarian, and associated with the maternal body. As Moi explains, the *chora* is "analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm" (13) and manifests as subversive energy within symbolic structures. That semiotic space is represented by the lake, which functions as both a site of loss and renewal. The fluid boundaries of water mirror the unfixity of subjectivity, as characters undergo corporeal and psychic transformations. The nonhuman bodies of Gelincik and Yılanbalığı inhabit a space where subjectivity is formed through elemental, affective relations rather than linguistic signification.

Kristeva's theory of subject formation through the repression of the semiotic and entry into the symbolic order is paralleled in the maternal monologue embedded in Tekin's narrative. This monologue. The act of breastfeeding symbolizes the pre-Oedipal relation between mother and child, prior to the Lacanian mirror stage and the acquisition of symbolic identity (Lacan 98). In Kristevan terms, this stage is a necessary rupture that enables the child's entrance into signification by abjecting the maternal body and establishing subject-object distinctions (Kristeva 43). Tekin's prose resists such closure. Instead, she maintains the maternal as a site of both semiotic intensity and psychic instability. The desire and oral stimulation collapse into one another. The mother's voice becomes an embodiment of the semiotic drive. There is no clear syntactic order, only the flow of bodily intensities. The eroticization of breastfeeding foregrounds the corporeal proximity and psychic fusion between mother and child. Milk becomes a semiotic substance that erodes bodily boundaries and destabilizes fixed identities. The maternal body is at once nurturing and consuming as a site of pleasure, pain, and abjection. Kristeva posits abjection as a necessary operation in subject formation (38).

Yeni Türk Edebiyatı Araştırmaları • Sayı: 33 • 2025 • ISSN: 2548-0472

The child must reject the maternal body in order to achieve symbolic identity. In *Zamansız*, however, the abjection is reversed. The mother, overwhelmed by the child's persistent attachment, seeks to abject him: "Don't run your tongue over my mouth and face… My veins are thin… I'm burn up" (77). Such scenes expose the violence of the maternal relation, in which the pleasure of fusion gives way to suffocation and pain. The mother becomes a subject-in-process, fragmented by her own bodily exposures. Her voice disrupts patriarchal expectations of the maternal as passive and nurturing, instead articulating complex ambivalence, desire, and resistance. This relational dynamic between the mother and child is mirrored in the erotic encounters between Gelincik and Yılanbalığı. Their bodies function as grotesque, border-crossing entities. The eel's electric currents traverse the weasel's meridians, causing her to bleed, while Gelincik desires to "lull to sleep by sinking teeth into neck" (15). The weasel, a predator known for its bloodlust, mirrors the oral-sadistic impulses Freud and Klein identify in the infant's relation to the breast (Freud 89). The novel also evokes the chora as a space of rupture through its poetic structure. The particularly in passages where Gelincik attempts to mourn Yılanbalığı invokes the unrepresentability of loss. For instance: "Don't look at the water when the sun shines" (73). This repetition does not merely express grief. The refrain resist closure, signal the persistence of loss as a bodily and affective condition rather than a linguistic one. Through this fusion, Tekin situates the lake as a semioticized space in which identity is always relational. The characters experiences subjectivity not as autonomous, but as porous, pulsional, and ecologically enmeshed. Gelincik's mourning are not separated narratives, but mirrors each other in structure and affective intensity, each articulate a longing for lost unity and the pain of individuation. Thus, *Zamansız* enacts a literary semiotic chora by immersing its characters in this fluid, heterogeneous environment, Tekin resists symbolic finality and proposes a vision of subjectivity as processual, embodied, and ecologically entangle. The lake becomes a generative matrix for rethinking the boundary between human and nonhuman, self and other, language and affect.

Conclusion

The Anthropocene designates a period in which human activity has become a dominant geophysical force altering the Earth's ecosystems. While the notion of the Anthropocene remain contested across scientific and humanities disciplines, it have catalyzed critical inquiries into human engagements with nonhuman ecologies. This global ecological crisis resonates powerfully within contemporary literature and the arts. Although environmental concerns are not new to literary expression, they have assumed greater urgency since the 1980s. This study examined how definitions of nature and humanity are imbricated with constructions of gender and sexuality. By focusing on representations of

the abject and grotesque female body in women's fiction, the research have developed an interdisciplinary critical framework that integrates ecogothic theory with material ecofeminist and posthumanist thought. It explored the convergence of the gothic and the ecological through a gendered lens, charting their entanglement with structures of oppression including race, class, and coloniality. Throughout study, gender has emerged as central to the ecogothic trope of transgression. The metamorphosing female body have been analyzed as a site of ontological instability. Such figures challenge anthropocentric and androcentric paradigms by defying boundaries and resisting containment. As abject and grotesque, these body enact a politics of ambiguity, refusing to conform to coherent, sealed-off subjectivity. The grotesque female bodies find particular resonance within ecogothic aesthetics, where it represents disorder and excess. This study has demonstrated how the ecogothic enables critical engagement with revaluation of femininity and nature in ways that expose the logic of domination and fear. Ecophobia is not simply a fear of nature's agency but also a cultural expression of hatred and the need for control, which extends to othered human bodies. The study traces of how ecophobic anxieties manifests through representations of female bodies as monstrous, leaky, and grotesque. The bodies are simultaneously feared and eroticized in patriarchal imaginaries. They transgress boundaries and embody an open-ended process of becoming. The monstrous feminine become a site where patriarchal power is contested and reinforced. Such bodies are not merely threats to the symbolic order but also sites of feminist resistance. Their porous and relational materiality opens a space for reconceptualizing female embodiment outside the logic of containment. Metamorphosis materializes the permeability of individual bodies and destabilizes fixed subject positions by foregrounding interspecies entanglements. The transformation of the self in both texts are not a mere metaphor but a process through which the body becomes a dynamic site of resistance. It offers a counternarrative to masculinist devaluations of passivity, instead positioning nature forces in the reconfiguration of being. The female protagonists' bodily transitions embody a refusal of the binary logics that separate nature from culture, human from nonhuman, self from other. The metamorphosing body in both narratives exists in a state of ontological uncertainty. These hybrid bodies reveals the dissolution of the anthropocentric subject. The grotesque is thus both regenerative and destabilizing, echoing Kristeva's notion of abjection as that which threatens the dissolution of the subject. The abject, like the grotesque, exists at the threshold of being and non-being, life and death, order and chaos. It signal a transformative liminality, pregnant with potential. The female characters' transformation through contact with the nonhuman world reflects their alienation from patriarchal and heteronormative structures. Their leaky corporeality embody an incorporation of otherness that resists normative

categorization. These abject, entangled, and ambiguous forms occupy a liminal space beyond the bounds of control. Their bestialization within patriarchal narratives serves to reinforce ecophobic anxieties about nature as feminized, excessive, and threatening. Yet, as this study has argued, such representations can be reappropriated as strategies of resistance. By engaging with the generative dimensions of abjection and grotesqueness, this study contributes to feminist understanding of embodiment. The female authors examined in the research reconfigures the abject not as a symbol of weakness, but as a medium of agency and transgression. They embrace the excessive and the unruly as a way to reclaiming bodily autonomy and destabilize patriarchal forms of knowledge and control. Through their alignment with the nonhuman, the female protagonists resist the regulatory forces that seek to discipline and contain their bodies.

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