Araştırma Makalesi
Research Article

ISSN 2548-0502

söylem FİLOLOJİ DERGİSİ

2022; *7(2):* 441-454

Surviving in 'A World of Wounds': Environmental Ethics in David Greig's *Outlying Islands*

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Abstract

David Greig, one of the pioneering playwrights of the contemporary Scottish theater, deals with such issues as Scottish identity, globalization, war, and the environment in his plays. His play *Outlying Islands* mobilizes these issues together to question the ethics of the human-nature relationship. It demonstrates humanity's adverse impact on nature through a military anthrax test to be conducted on an island before the WWII. The aim of this paper is to display the stances of the characters in terms of environmental ethics by using Aldo Leopold's 'land ethic' and Arne Naess' deep ecological thought as a theoretical framework. Their notions provide a convenient perspective for the exegesis of the play, for they deny the image of humanity as independent of nature. Within this framework, this paper discusses whether the characters adopt an intrinsic value system for the nonhuman beings, and the role of science and religion in the formation of their value systems is demonstrated.

Keywords: David Greig, *Outlying Islands,* environment, ethics, science, religion

'YARALI BİR DÜNYADA' HAYATTA KALMAK: DAVID GREIG'İN *OUTLYING ISLANDS* OYUNUNDA ÇEVRESEL ETİK

Özet

Çağdaş İskoç tiyatrosunun önde gelen yazarlarından David Greig, oyunlarında İskoç kimliği, küreselleşme, savaş ve çevre gibi konuları ele alır. *Outlying Islands* adlı oyunu bu konuları bir araya getirerek insanların doğa ile olan ilişkilerini etik bağlamında sorgular. Oyun, İkinci Dünya Savaş öncesinde askeri amaçlarla bir adada gerçekleştirilmesi planlanan şarbon deneyi üzerinden insan faaliyetlerinin doğa üzerindeki olumsuz etkilerini ortaya koyar. Bu çalışmanın amacı da *Outlying Islands* oyununda karakterlerin çevresel etik bağlamındaki duruşlarını ortaya koymaktır. Bu amaçla, bu çalışmada Aldo Leopold'ün 'toprak etiği' kavramı ve Arne Naess'in Derin Ekoloji düşüncesi kuramsal çerçeve olarak kullanılacaktır. Doğadan bağımsız bir insan tasavvurunu reddetmeleri bakımından bu iki düşünürün görüşleri oyunun yorumlanması için elverişli bir kuramsal bakış açısı sunmaktadır. Bu çerçevede karakterlerin insan olmayan varlıklara yaklaşımında içsel bir değer sistemi benimseyip benimsemedikleri tartışılacak ve bu değer sistemlerinin oluşumunda bilimin ve dinin rolü ortaya koyulacaktır.

Anahtar sözcükler: David Greig, *Outlying Islands,* çevre, etik, bilim, din

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Gönderim tarihi: 14.05.2022 Kabul tarihi: 07.08.2022

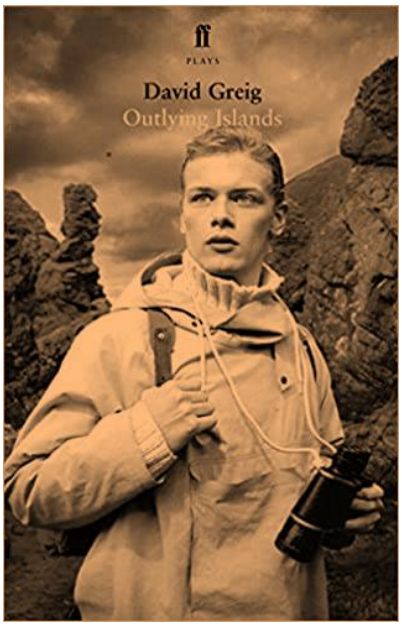
INTRODUCTION

Though wars have been an inseparable part of the thousands-year-old human history, the tools used in warfare during the last century have eclipsed the previous ones with respect to their lethal impact on populations in a wider area. Fueled by the development of science and industrialization, warfare has not only changed but also the pace of the change has increased in a way that made the wars even more violent. Michael Allen Fox indicates that the violent actions "[have] to do with the exercise of power over others, in such a way that their freedom of action, security, and inviolability are limited or eliminated, or their lives are damaged to a significant extent, or else ended" (2015, p. 33). The intersubjective nature of violence makes it one of the fundamental topics of ethics. The problem is that in a world where ethics applies only to human relations, people are more likely to mourn only human losses during conflicts. The damage inflicted on nature almost always goes unnoticed during armed conflicts or the preparation for them.

David Greig's *Outlying Islands* (2002) is a play that revolves around this question. Set on an island in the Outer Hebrides prior to the Second World War, the play evokes a set of questions on the ethicality of the relation of human beings to the environment specifically in a martial context. David Greig's plays are marked by a consciousness that highlights "how the local and global affect each other" (Özata, 2020, p. 238), and *Outlying Islands* reflects the same interaction in that it focuses on how a global crisis echoes on a deserted and forsaken Scottish island. However, during the course of the play, the island ceases to be a peripheral location and becomes the nexus through which the characters explore themselves. Indeed, 'place' is not just a background against which the play is set in *Outlying Islands*; on the contrary, the whole mechanism of play is heavily tied to the category of place.

Though the play covers only one month and takes place on an isolated island in the Outer Hebrides, the ecological implications of the play exceed the spatio-temporal framework of itself and lead the audience to question the deep-seated shortcomings of humanity about the environment across the Earth and centuries. This paper aims to highlight the environmental consciousness and ethics in the play and explore the ways in which the play reflects the overall approach of Western societies to nature. To this end, after a brief theoretical discussion of environmental ethics in Aldo Leopold's thinking and Deep Ecology, the paper demonstrates the ethical stances of the characters when the question is the environment within a context in which personal and national interests lead to a dilemma. Secondly, it manifests how the play expresses the formative role of science and religion in the changing boundaries of (environmental) ethics.

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: LEOPOLD AND NAESS



Aldo Leopold is the first philosopher to bring together the science of ecology and ethics (Özdağ, 2005, p. 35). This is not to say that Leopold is the first person to have and express environmental concerns; but he is the first to carry the environmental concerns into the field of ethics, forcing and conducting humanity to re-evaluate the definition and scope of ethics. The term 'land ethic', Leopold's most prominent contribution to environmentalist thought in the 20th century, has assumed a pivotal role in conceptualizations of human and nature relationships. In his famous work, *A Sand County Almanac*, he draws a theoretical framework for this concept by making use of the historically shifting and expanding boundaries of ethics. To this end, he refers to the incident in which Odysseus hangs "a dozen slave-girls of his household whom he suspected of misbehavior during his absence" and reminds the reader that Odysseus' act is not a matter of propriety on the ground that the girls were merely the property of Odysseus (1968, p. 201). Leopold does not condemn Odysseus for his action, though he is well aware of the unethical characteristic of the action by today's standards. However, he underlines the ethical discrepancy between the two periods to suggest the possibility of an ethical domain with flexible and widening boundaries. The hypothesis of a flexible ethical boundary provides Leopold with fertile soil on which he can ground a new understanding of nature and humanity's role in nature. The ethics which initially organized interpersonal relationships, later, had a formative role in the relationship between individuals and society. Leopold argues that there is hardly any reason why the trajectory of the development of ethics does not consist of nonhuman beings in the near future.

He explains the land ethic as something that "simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land" (1968, p. 204). 'Community' is a keyword in this definition, for this word, until Leopold and also mostly today, has only meant an aggregation of human beings, in the widest sense. For instance, the sociologists R. M. MacIver and C. H. Page explains that "[t]he basic criterion of community […] is that all of one's social relationships may be found within it" (1959, p. 9). This paper does not question the sociological validity of this argument. However, ecologically speaking, this argument denotes the 'community' in highly anthropocentric terms. MacIver and Page also list certain sentiments that are expected to be found in a community. These sentiments are "we-feeling", "role-feeling," and "dependency-feeling" (1959, p. 293) that locate an individual into a relational network of interdependency. Leopold claims that "[a]ll ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts" (1968, p. 203). What Leopold does is to introduce nonhuman elements into this network: The ethics that keep the individual in check within a human community, out of a Hobbesian world, are expected to have the same influence on one's relation to nature. The recognition of interdependencies, in turn, leads humanity to question his/her place on Earth, which eventually ends up with a new understanding

of human-nature relations: "[A] land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies a respect for his fellow members, and also respect for the community as such" (Leopold, 1968, p. 204).

A similar vein that challenges the longstanding ethical anthropocentrism exists in the Deep Ecological movement that started a few decades following Leopold's call for a land ethic. Andrew McLaughlin explains that "the idea that humans are not *only* valuable part of nature is the watershed perception from which Deep Ecology flows" (1995, p. 86). This perception echoes Leopold's idea of the human as a "plain member" of nature, persisting in the same anti-anthropocentric creed. Arne Naess, who coined the term 'deep ecology', lists certain tenets of the movement in his article "The Shallow and The Deep, Long Range Ecology Movements. A Summary", and calls for a biospherical egalitarianism that recognizes "*the equal right to live and blossom"* for all forms of life (1995a, p.152). Though Naess's argument has confronted much criticism, especially by the social ecologist Murray Bookchin, and accused of being misanthropic, the impact of his argument on the value system needs to be recognized.

Both Aldo Leopold's land ethic and the Deep Ecology movement ascribe an intrinsic value to the nonhuman domain. This tendency is, in fact, closely related to the concept of the community stated by Leopold. The intrinsic value that had been thought to be exclusive to human beings is claimed to exist in all beings by Leopold and Naess. In a system that confers intrinsic value only on humanity, the other beings are valuable so long as their existence or destruction serves the needs of the human beings. To state it in more concrete terms, nature ceases to have economic value once the inherent value of the nonhuman beings is acknowledged. Being a conservationist himself, Leopold criticizes the strategies of conservation that solely aims to maximize economic profits:

> It tends to ignore, and thus eventually to eliminate, many elements in the land community that lack commercial value, but that are (as far as we know) essential to its healthy functioning. It assumes, falsely, I think, that the economic parts of the biotic clock will function without the uneconomic parts. (1968, p. 210)

Leopold's objection is largely due to the fact that a conservation policy that adopts an economic perspective is likely to create expendable elements in nature; however, this policy is totally blind to the integrity of the ecosystems in which commercial and non-commercial parts are essential to each other. The value system proposed by Deep Ecology is not different from the one proposed by Leopold. The first of the eight points that Arne Naess puts forward as the general principles of the movement highlights the intrinsic value of all beings: "The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves […] These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes" (1995b, p.68). This belief is also what distinguishes deep ecology from the kind of environmentalism that Naess labels as 'shallow' and that "take[s] an instrumental approach to nature, arguing for the preservation of natural sources only for the sake of humans" (Garrard, 2012, p. 24). Despite its seemingly caring attitude about nature, the shallow approach to environmental problems, as its name implies, is unlikely to find ethical and permanent solutions, primarily because they maintain the Cartesian duality that has shaped and informed humanity's tyrannizing relation to nature. This duality both radically

divides the human culture and nature as two separate domains and introduces a strict hierarchy between these two elements.


David Greig

Deep ecology both challenges the hierarchies that have shaped the Western view of nature for ages and puts forward a new model in which the ontological barriers between humans and nature are shattered. Naess' idea of 'self-realization' aims to achieve this goal by questioning the conventional meanings of such concepts as "self" and "ego" and integrating them into his new ontological model. Naess claims that "we tend to confuse our 'self' with the narrow ego" (1995c, p. 225). Though 'self' has also been associated with wider human communities, its use has never covered nonhuman beings; as a result, Naess "tentatively introduce[s] […] the concept of ecological self (1995, p. 226). This identity is sought to be reached through a series of identifications with the beings outside the narrow ego and social sphere. Once 'ecological self' is achieved, the distinction between ego and the other is obliterated; as a result, any element in nature becomes an intrinsic part of one's identity. There is a concrete result of this newly adopted identity: The protection of nature becomes the protection of 'self', and threats to nature become threats to oneself. Thus, any attempt to defend nature ceases to be an act of altruism and becomes an act of self-defense. In Naess' words, "if your self (in the widest sense) embraces another being, you need no moral exhortation to show care" (1995, p. 234). At this point, Naess' ethical model diverges from Leopold's land ethic. Leopold defines ethics in an ecological sense as "a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence" (1968, p. 202). This definition implies a certain degree of self-sacrifice by those people observing the ethical norms, which shows that the dualism between human beings and nonhuman beings is sustained if not a relationship based on domination and exploitation is fostered.

Regardless of the differences in their views, Leopold's land ethic and Deep Ecology underscore the necessity of reducing the human impact on nature. This does not mean that all human actions are viewed as unnatural. As a result of the mechanism of nature that also consists of human beings, certain species may *naturally* diminish in number or even become extinct, be it anthropogenic or non-anthropogenic. Each constituent of nature has an agency that influences the overall ecosystem. However, two points distinguish human beings from the other constituents. Firstly, as Leopold states, "[m]an's invention of tools has enabled him to make changes of unprecedented violence, rapidity and scope" (1968, p. 217). Though evolutionary change is an inherent phenomenon of ecology, the pace and the radius of influence of the changes precipitated by the scientific and technological developments have overshadowed evolutionary changes. Secondly, as Callicott aptly argues, unlike the other species "*Homo Sapiens* is a moral species, capable of ethical deliberation and conscientious choice" (2001, p. 214). They have the ability to

measure their impact and decide whether their action is ethically right or wrong. Leopold proposes a simple formula to assess the ethical propriety of one's influence on the environment: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (1968, p. 224- 25). Departing from this notion, the following pages will discuss the environmental ethical issues presented in David Greig's play *Outlying Islands.*

AN ORNITHOLOGIST IN A WORLD OF WOUNDS

Outlying Islands presents the story of two ornithologists, Robert and John, arriving on an island to observe, photograph, and keep a record of the birds living there. However, they are not alone in their scientific excursion that takes a month. They are accompanied by Kirk, the owner of the island, and Ellen, Kirk's attractive niece. Though Robert and John suppose that their presence on the island is merely because of a scientific inquiry, especially on Leach's storm petrels, soon it becomes clear that the government aims to turn the island into an anthrax testing zone before the Second World War and the ornithologists are sent to the island to calculate the possible financial loss of Kirk as a result of this test. The ministry and Kirk are revealed to have arrived at an agreement in which Kirk is to be economically compensated for his loss of animals, including the birds on the island. This realization starts the complication in the play. Robert, who truly acts with ecological sensibilities, strongly opposes this project and tries to dissuade Kirk from leasing the island to the ministry. However, Kirk, who is utterly ignorant of the value of the natural environment, rejects Robert's proposal, which leads to a brawl as a result of which Robert causes Kirk's death. The other thread of the plotline focuses on the two ornithologists' relationship with Ellen living under Kirk's guardianship. Robert's attitude towards her is marked by its amoral characteristic. Being a womanizer figure, Robert attempts to manipulate John to view Ellen as a sexual object of desire. However, in these attempts, Robert uses the theses of a biologist who deems sexuality an inevitable part of living organisms rather than merely trying to create a 'Don Juan' out of John. Yet, John does not cede to these desires though he is attracted by Ellen, too. As Sıla Şenlen Güvenç indicates "John is a character […] who acts in accordance with 'super ego' […] [w]hile Robert wishes to be free and independent of all social restrictions. Robert, acting with his instincts or 'id', is truly a part of nature" (2020, pp. 128-129)[1]. Despite his initial reluctance, John cannot further resist his desires towards the end of the play. In the scene, in which Ellen and John have a sexual affair, Robert enters the scene for a brief moment and later leaves to jump off the cliffs, which takes place off the scene and is told to the audience when the Captain arrives on the island to transport them back to the mainland.

The whole story is replete with ethical questions. However, these ethical questions are not restricted to interpersonal relations only. They also include those concerning the environment in a way that, at some points, intersects with social ethics. From this perspective, Ellen is not just a woman figure whose existence calls for the discussions of intersexual ethical relations, but is an 'object' of male oppression, namely her uncle Kirk who also dominates nature without any ethical

[1] The translation from Turkish into English has been made by the author of this article.

impediment. Another example of ethical question is the use of chemical and biological weapons. Though the United Kingdom, albeit with some reservations, ratified the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which banned the use of asphyxiating and other poisonous gases in warfare, the play is mainly based on the United Kingdom's plans to use these gases. The play does not separate the questions concerning the use of these gases on humans during a possible war from the questions concerning their possible impact on nature. Thus, the notion of "survival of the fittest' does not only governs international relations but also determines the fate of ecosystems. The biological aspect of Darwin's evolutionary theory is based on the idea of "survival of the fittest", but the evolutionary ethics of Darwin demonstrates that survival is not merely a matter of conquest of a living being against the other living beings. In fact, cooperation and self-restriction become essential elements in the struggle for existence, which eventually leads to the formation of morality and ethics. In the *Descent of Man*, Darwin states that "[n]o tribe could hold together if murder, robbery, treachery, &c. were common; consequently such crimes within the limits of the same tribe 'are branded with everlasting infamy'" (1981, p.93). The historical evolution of ethics, as it has also been demonstrated by Leopold, has had an ever-widening boundary since its beginning. Thus, it may be argued that the ethical boundaries within the tribes had a tendency to expand in a way that encapsulates greater human populations (e.g. nation); and according to this perspective, peace in international relations can be interpreted as a period in which nations keep their insatiable desire for more power in check. Indeed, the existence of international law ensures "a common standard of conduct for states in their relations with one another" (Nardin, 1983, p. 233). Under these circumstances, the time in which the play is set needs to be marked in terms of international law and ethics. This peculiar time, which is the eve of the Second World War, signifies a period of a state of exception in which virtually all the regulations governing international relations, or ethics, start to melt away. In such a political atmosphere, the historically widening ethical boundaries recedes so strongly that 'the land', the subsequent nominee to be included in the ethical circle, is immediately lost on the horizon. The environment that has already been suffering from the objectifying practices of humans becomes dispensable for the sake of the war effort. This becomes the main field of conflict between the characters in *Outlying Islands.* The attitudes of the three characters about this matter can be summarized as follows: the degradation of nature is totally ignorable for Kirk, an acceptable loss for John and totally objectionable for Robert.

The beginning of the second act, which really commences the plot, manifests a huge difference between John and Robert. In this scene, John is shown to be at pains to create a civilized space that may enable human habitation in a derelict chapel. However, Robert is rather occupied by the natural environment of the island at that moment, exploring it and immersing himself within it. He is neither interested in their scientific objectives nor securing a convenient place for their accommodation:

> Robert: I went for a swim. At the cliff bottom, there is rock stack about twenty yards offshore. It looked inviting. […] The cliffs, John- you must see them- the noise of them. Kittiwakes, guillemots, razorbills, puffins, fulmars, shags… (2010, pp. 137- 138)

Their first preoccupations on the island confirm Şenlen Güvenç's above-given commentary on their personalities. On the one hand, Robert disregards the possible consequences of his actions by

swimming and immersing himself in an environment in which he does not have any practical experience, at all. In line with his belief that "the more outlying the island- [t]he further it is in the remote ocean- [t]he stronger the force that pulls us towards it" (2010, p. 131), he has a deep attachment to the wilderness where the human beings do not enjoy a privileged position. On the other hand, John displays a prudent attitude by trying to shield himself from nature, thus fostering a culture-nature discrepancy. Robert is perfectly aware of the contrast between them and as he aptly observes he is "a gambler" and John is "a saver" (2010, p. 149). His attachment to the wilderness also foreshadows the extent to which his opposition to Kirk may reach. Unlike Robert, Kirk represents the anthropocentric view that objectifies the nonhuman world in order to derive financial benefits. Until the moment of his death, he seems to be in a continual attempt to rationalize and justify his arbitrary power over the island and the other nonhuman living beings. Referring to the other living beings on the island, he says that "we are their husbandmen. God made them for our food" (2010, p. 159). This point of view is symptomatic of a mindset that puts nature outside the ethical boundaries, for Kirk does not include nonhuman beings as a member of the community to which he belongs.

Though he is not as blatant as Kirk, John displays a similar anthropocentric attitude. At this point, the national identities of the two ornithologists need to be marked in order to notice the degree of dissimilarity between them in terms of environmental ethics. While John is Scottish, Robert is an Englishman. However, the imminent danger that awaits the ecosystem of a Scottish island ironically terrifies Robert more than it does John. About the ecological impending crisis, John puts forward contradictory statements:

> **John:** If there's going to be a war, we'll need weapons.
> **Robert:** Let them use bayonets.
> **John:** That's hardly sensible.
> **Robert:** How dare they interefere! What's the bloody point of coming here if it's to be wiped out?
> **John:** Maybe we can persuade the ministry. If we make the scientific case-
> **Robert:** […] What does anyone care about an outlying island?
> **John:** Weapons have to be tested. Maybe we just have to accept… there are other islands we can study. (2010, p. 169)

John's contradictory statements are a result of his confusion at the moment of an ethical decision he has never made before. Robert's argument reminds him of his identity as an ecologist, which forces John to present a half-hearted solution to the crisis. However, apparently having grown up under the influence of authority, he also has an identity as a patriot and dutiful citizen. He does not only justify the country's war effort but also has an intention to join the air force.

What distinguishes Robert from John is that the horizon of his environmental ethical boundary is wider than John. The moral responsibility he feels exceeds the national boundaries and includes the whole Earth. Robert's gradually increasing attachment to and identification with nature overshadow any other previous allegiances he had prior to his arrival on the island. For this reason, he proposes John to cut off their ties with the ministry and, of their own accord, follow the migration of the birds whose route overlaps with several sovereign political powers (2010, p. 207).

This signifies that he is not concerned with the imminent war or the destruction it would be likely to bring into his country, having left behind the social and political realities in which he is embedded. The spatial detachment of the island from the mainland serves as a catalyst for Robert's detachment from all kinds of human institutions. Such an inclination is already observable in his coarse manners; for instance, his obscene language or debauchery evinces his disregard for religious and social ethics; and his contempt for conventional values serves to foreground his ethical allegiance with the nonhuman world. However, despite his environmental commitments, it is hardly possible to include Robert's attitude within the ethical system as it is proposed by Aldo Leopold. As J. Baird Calliott aptly demonstrates Leopold does not introduce the land ethic as a substitution for the social ethics that has been evolving for ages; instead, he defines Leopold's land ethic as an "accretion" over the already existing one (2011, p. 211). Thus, Robert's position in environmental ethics becomes closer to a rather radical interpretation of deep ecology than Leopold's land ethics. Especially, the dialogue between Robert and John given above has strong discursive clues about this tendency. While John uses the pronoun "we" to refer to the United Kingdom, Robert prefers "they", isolating himself from the human institutions against which he apparently has a grudge.

Robert's environmental concerns can be said to go so far as to the level of misanthropy. For him, the well-being of the island's ecosystem and wilderness outweighs the welfare of human beings. As to the anthrax test to be carried out on the island, he comments as follows:

> **Robert:** […] Let them test their fucking bombs on London.
> **John:** Excuse your French.
> **Robert:** Why don't they infect the salons and gas slums?
> Spread botulism in the suburbs?
> **John:** Steady on.
> **Robert:** People are the problem, Johnny, not the birds,
> Wherever they gather, they spread contagion.
> Let them take the mainland, and leave me the island.
> I've been here a day, but it is more mine than [Kirk's]. (2010, p. 170)

This point of view spots a parasitic relation between human institutions and nature; and indeed, Robert accuses Kirk of being a "parasite" (2010, p. 170) when he realizes that he would not be able to persuade Kirk not to lease the island to the ministry. This perspective also serves to annul the social ethics that organize the relationship between Robert and Kirk, which makes it easier for the former to kill the latter. The basic reason why Robert associates Kirk with a parasite is that Kirk evaluates the environment as a source of human welfare. For instance, as an apology for leasing the island to the government, he claims that "[this island] is a useless lump of rock […] For seven hundred pounds my niece can be married and her husband given a share of a herring drifter" (2010, p. 167). Kirk's commentary suggests that he believes in an extrinsic value system that confers value on things so long as they are useful and economically beneficial for human beings. However, the kind of value that Robert attaches to the environment is intrinsic, which further indicates a deep ecological point of view.

Except for Kirk, "[a]s the play unfolds, they embark on a journey of self-discovery, pushing at the limits of their existence to explore what is to be human" (Holdsworth, 2008, p. 139). On the one hand, John and Ellen have an opportunity to discover their repressed sexuality in this period of self-transformation. As Şenlen Güvenç suggests, the death of Kirk who represents authority facilitates the freedom of the characters (2018, p. 147). On the other hand, Robert ends up with a new and wider self beyond the boundaries of his skin and beyond his narrow ego. This new identity is close to what Arne Naess calls the "ecological self" that is achieved by self-realization. Though his curiosity about the relationship between the newly hatched birds and their mothers, his inquiries into the relationship between various species of birds, and his urge to follow the migration routes of the birds seem to be the ordinary questions of a scientist who regards nature as just an object of inquiry, these may well be read as the exploration of Robert's newly found wider identity. Despite being an ornithologist, John is not as fervently interested in such questions as Robert, only taking photographs of the natural life to be included in a catalogue. Robert, on the other hand, starts a process of identification with natural life starting from the beginning of the play. The birds on the island are no longer separate entities independent of Robert's self, but an intrinsic part of who he *is*. The way he commits suicide, as Ellen relates it, is highly suggestive of this argument. To the captain, who comes to retrieve the group from the island, Ellen says that "[h]e ran at the cliff edge. And spread his arms out and flew" (2010, p. 230). His actions blur the boundaries between human beings and birds. What is more crucial than a mere zoomorphic depiction of his suicide, Robert's identification with the animals can give the audience an idea about why he commits suicide. Though Kirk's death provides Ellen and John with sexual freedom, it is just a palliative solution for Robert's desire to protect the environment, or 'his self', for Robert is well aware that the ministry is going to conduct the anthrax test. Although after Kirk's death, he gladly expresses that "[t]he ministry will never get their hands on the island with Kirk gone", the characters share the tacit understanding that reality, would sooner or later, intrude into their dream space. The expected boat that would come from the mainland symbolically represents this reality. When he is about to cede to his sexual desires, in a monologue, John preaches to himself that "I feel myself to be falling. I must remember- there is a boat coming. I must remember there is a war coming. I must remember- there are other people to consider" (2010, p. 201). These self-inculcations manifest the strong consciousness that they cannot isolate themselves on the island from reality (e.g. ethical rules, social conventions, national political agenda, and human institutions). Though Robert never voices this consciousness as openly as John, he is aware of it, and as an individual who has been developing an ecological self, Robert submits to the same fate that awaits the nonhuman world. Arne Naess says that "[t]he joy is a feature of the indivisible, concrete unit of subject, object and medium" (1995c, p.236) to express the ontological unity of the individuals with the rest of the world. However, in the face of greater political forces over which he practically has no control, Robert is forced to share the doom, rather than the joy. In short, Robert can be said to have "an ecological awareness that nature and the self are one" (Capra, 1995, p. 20). Furthermore, Verónica Rodríguez highlights that shamanism and shamanic practices have a profound effect on the theater of Greig, which leads to the recognition of the interrelatedness of all

beings and that " 'we' […] are all implicated in an ecology of ethical responsibility" (2019, pp. 4-5). *Outlying Islands* displays the same characteristic in its own way. Thus, the (possible) loss of an element in the web of interrelation affects another element, namely Robert, in the play. Aldo Leopold famously states that "one of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds" (1953, p. 165). The degree of ecological consciousness determines the psychological effect of environmental degradation and change. During his last appearance on the stage, according to Ellen, Robert weeps, which can be interpreted as an indication of ecological grief.

Outlying Islands puts forward an overall commentary on and an inquiry into the nature of the current human and nonhuman relationship. At the end of this attempt, the play can be argued to identify two major elements that are responsible for the ecological degradation that the island faces. The first of these is the science that is put to the service of capitalism and anthropocentric ideals of the conquest of nature. This urge eventually leads to the formation of 'cheap nature' that is expendable for the sake of endless growth and material accumulation (Moore, 2016, p. 79; Tan, 2022, p. 117). The exponentially improving martial technology, which is intimately related to this urge for accumulation, not only raises the number of human casualties but also targets nature as a testing ground or inflicts 'collateral' damage on nature along with the human casualties. William Gay states that "[e]ven if protecting national security justifies military systems, this benefit needs to be weighed morally against ecological concerns" (2015, p. 53). The play turns the military tests into a conundrum for the reader and the audience who have not heeded their ecological ramifications so far. These tests are the embodiment of a mentality that started with Renaissance anthropocentrism and continued with the Cartesian duality that privileges humanity for its rationality over the nonhuman world constituted by mere bodies. Under such circumstances, the birds on the island become mere functional entities that serve the fulfillment of 'greater' human purposes for the government. Moreover, the characters, Robert and John, can be said to be allegorical figures standing for the modern scientists who have little understanding of the ecological consequences of their actions. In the play, it needs to be marked that, out of the five characters, Robert, John and Ellen are those who are not aware of the government's anthrax test plan at the beginning. On the other hand, Kirk, who apparently does not care about the confidentiality of the government plan, and the captain whose sole task is to transport the ornithologists to the island, have already been informed of the government's plan for the island, which clearly indicates that the plan is, in fact, not a secret one, at all. For this reason, Robert's and John's initial ignorance is ironic and can be construed as a criticism of the scientists' inability to see the ways by which they can serve as an oppressive and instrumental mechanism on nature.

The second element that the play asserts as the culprit of the ecological problems is religion and religion's formative power on human and nonhuman relationships. This issue occupies a central position in the tensions of the play. The pagan past of the island retains its shadowy existence throughout the play and is in a constant confrontation with the Christian domination over the island. George Sessions observes that "[w]ith the beginnings of agriculture, most ecocentric cultures (and religions) were gradually destroyed, or driven off into remote corners of

the Earth by pastoral and, eventually, 'civilized cultures'" (p. 158). In Scotland, the spread of Christianity that started in the sixth century took place at the expense of Celtic paganism. As the play illustrates, the mainland is dominated by the Christian culture while some traces of paganism are still visible on the remote island. Within this framework, Lynn White's famous inquiry into the relationship between religion and the environment can conveniently illuminate the interpretation of the play. He claims that "[t]he victory of Christianity over paganism was the greatest psychic revolution in the history of our culture" (1996, p. 9), for this shift, according to White, radically reorganized the people's way of being on Earth in terms of their intellectual and spiritual frameworks. Kirk represents this new way of understanding and interpreting the world. He is portrayed not only as a greedy and grumpy old man but also as a deeply Christian figure who justifies his actions through the Scripture. He claims that "God put the birds here for man to eat. And God, in all his graciousness, has afforded me the fowling rights. That's all I need to know about nature, boy" (2010, p. 156). Kirk's explanation strongly echoes White's argument that Christianity grants man the license to dominate the nonhuman world. White asserts that, according to Judeo-Christian perspective, "no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes" (1996, p. 9). This mentality is closely related to the Great Chain of Being that puts forward a universal hierarchy in which the spirit-matter ratio of a being's constitution determines its place. As a being that "has no soul" (2010, p. 168), according to Kirk, the death of the island by the chemical agents is a negligible loss when compared to the human benefits to be derived from it. However, an ethical approach to the environment refutes the relations of benefit, seeing human beings as just another member of the biotic community. In fact, the island was once settled by a pagan community who adjusted their beings and ways of living to the natural environment of the island. Robert calls the island "an almost pristine habitat […] [that] has barely been touched by humans" (2010, p. 155). However, both the reader and the characters are aware of the fact that the island was inhabited by the people marginalized and dehumanized by the mainstream Christian culture. In Lynn White's view, such pagan cultures are diametrically opposed to the Judeo-Christian culture with respect to their relation to nonhuman beings: "By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects" (White, 1996, p. 10). For the obliterated pagan culture, claims Christopher Manes, "all the phenomenal world is alive [….] [and] it is filled with articulate subjects, able to communicate with humans" (1996, pp. 17- 18), and exactly, for this reason, the island has a soul, contrary to Kirk's argument. The text does not give the audience much detail about the daily practices of the previous pagan community on the island but, when John expresses his astonishment at how they survived on such an island where there are compelling natural forces like strong winds, Robert simply answers that "You adapt. That's all. You stay underground" (2010, p. 207). Robert's commentary is saturated with the Darwinian notion of adaptation, yet this adaptation process is not restricted to animals; the people who lived on the island were subject to the same process, which deconstructs humanity's imagined privileged position among nonhuman beings.

CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed Greig's *Outlying Islands* with respect to its dialogue with the long-standing ethical problems related to human-nonhuman relationships. The play subtly includes the pagan history of the island to imply that these problems are not only the outcome of modernity and the science driven by it but also a religious shift that took place much earlier and shaped the whole outlook of Western societies towards nature. However, either way, the fundamental flaw that leads to the degradation of nature lies in the value systems adopted by these societies. Kirk's disregard for nonhuman beings is a consequence of the defect in his value system that evaluates them only in terms of financial and use value. As such, he does not feel any ethical responsibility towards the constituents of the ecosystem on the island. Though this paper has not evaluated the play from an ecofeminist perspective, it has also been observed that the oppression from which Ellen suffers is evidently an extension of Kirk's objectifying attitude towards nature. The step Robert takes to liberate the nonhuman beings provides her with freedom. On the other hand, John, whose personality is shaped by conventional ethics and morality, is at a loss to take concrete action against Kirk, being stuck between his identities as an environmental researcher and a dutiful citizen. However, despite its highly misanthropic overtones, Robert's attitude that leaves aside the anthropocentrism and the supremacy of human institutions over nature offers two possible alternatives to the predicament of nature. Firstly, by a recognition of their intrinsic value, the nonhuman beings can be included in the sphere of normative ethics, or, secondly, by an identification with the nonhuman beings, they can become a part of one's self, which eventually turns the defense of nature into the defense of one's self. In conclusion, using the war effort as a yardstick, the play offers an alternative blueprint by which one is led to reconsider and reconceptualize his/her place in nature and reshape his/her overall attitude towards nature.

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