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## John Cheever'in *The Swimmer* Adlı Eseri Üzerine Anlatımbilim Kuramları Bağlamında Eleştirel Bir İnceleme\*\*

*A Critical Study on John Cheever's The Swimmer  
within the Context of Narrative Theories*

### ÖZ


John Cheever, Amerikalı önemli bir kısa öykü yazarı ve romancıdır. Geçen yüzyılın en önemli kısa öykü yazarlarından biri olarak kabul edilir. Eserlerindeki ana tema, bazen bir karakterin şaşalı sosyal kişiliği ile iç dünyasının çürüklüğü arasındaki ayrımında kendini belli eden, insan doğasının ikircikli yapısıdır. Ayrıca, eserlerinin çoğunda çağdaş varoşların yabancılaştırıcı göçebeliliğine karşı kültürel geleneklere ve toplum inancına sıkı sıkıya bağlı kalınarak yitip giden insan ömrüne duyulan özlemi de görmek mümkündür. Cheever'in en çok bilinen eserleri olan *The Swimmer* (1964), sözde huzur dolu bir Amerikan banliyösünün keşmekeşinde yaşayan bireylerin görkemini ve acılarını anlatan varoş hikayelerini konu alır. Sıklıkla Cheever'in en iyi öyküsü olarak kabul edilen *The Swimmer*'de, Neddy Merrill'in Westchester bölgesindeki evlerin havuzlarında geçen nisbeten uzun yolculuğu, gerçeklik ve efsane harmanlanarak anlatılır. Bu çalışmada, *The Swimmer*, anlatımbilimin ana kuramları kapsamında ele alınarak, yazar tercihlerinin hikayedeki ana tema ve motifleri nasıl desteklediği incelenmeye çalışılacaktır. Bunun için çalışma, anlatı ajanlarını ve onların seslerini ortaya çıkarmayı, bilinç altının nasıl temsil edildiğini incelemeyi ve son olarak da Amerikan kurgu edebiyatında post-modern gerçeğin nasıl yansıtıldığını tartışmayı hedeflemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** John Cheever, *The Swimmer*, Anlatımbilim, Amerikan kurgu edebiyatı

### ABSTRACT

John Cheever is a remarkable American short story writer and novelist. He is recognized as one of the most significant short story authors of the previous century. His themes mainly involve the duality of human nature which is usually illustrated through the chasm between a character's *comme il faut* communal character and interior degradation. Most of his works also reflect nostalgia for a disappearing lifestyle, demonstrated by following cultural customs and a deep communal feeling, in contrast to the estranging nomadism of contemporary backstreets. Being Cheever's most popular story, *The Swimmer* (1964) represents these backstreet stories, which discover the glory and sufferings of people living within the chaos of a so-called peaceful American suburbia. Mostly considered as Cheever's best work, *The Swimmer* mixes legend and reality while narrating Neddy Merrill's relatively long trip along the pools of Westchester County. In this study, *The Swimmer* will be analysed in terms of major narrative theories in order to examine how authorial preferences support major themes and motifs within the short story. To do so, the study sets out to reveal narrative agents and their voices, analyse the representation of consciousness, and finally discuss post-modern reality in American fiction.

**Keywords:** John Cheever, *The Swimmer*, Narratology, American fiction

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### Introduction: Narrative Agents and Their Voices

Seymour Chatman diagrams the whole situation of narrative-communication as illustrated below (1978: 164):

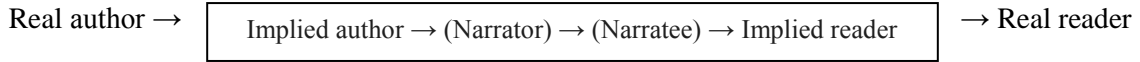


Table 1. Narrative Text

Following the diagram above, the present study first examines manifestations of these narrative agents in *The Swimmer*. It is a well-known fact that determining real author and real reader is an easy task. However, other agents of a narrative text are often debatable within the framework of major narrative theories. For instance, Booth defines the implied author to be “an implicit picture of an author who stands behind the scenes, whether as stage manager, as puppeteer, or as an indifferent God” (1983: 147). Therefore, he “has no voice, no direct means of communicating. He instructs us silently through the design of the whole” (Chatman, 1978: 163). We can only grasp him by contrasting various accounts of the same genuine writer. In this context, it can be argued that the implied author in *The Swimmer* is very much concerned with many similarities between the legendary and the contemporary, the dreamlike and the authentic, and the American Dream and the American reality. John Cheever's main character sets out on a legendary tour that questions readers' understanding of the world around them. As Neddy starts his tour, Cheever presents a rigidly realist depiction of suburban America. Even at the very beginning of the story, a typical Sunday afternoon in a small neighbourhood is vividly described by Cheever. He accounts that

“It was one of those midsummer Sundays when everyone sits around saying, “I *drank* too much last night.” You might have heard it whispered by the parishioners leaving church, heard it from the lips of the priest himself, struggling with his cassock in the *vestiarium*, heard it from the golf links and the tennis courts, heard it from the wildlife preserve where the leader of the Audubon group was suffering from a terrible hangover” (Cheever, 1964: 726).

In this quote, it can be clearly seen that a neighbourhood atmosphere is reflected in a realist fashion without much surprise. However, when the story goes on, Cheever shifts the atmosphere around Neddy to deliver a distinctive communication. The protagonist of the story is defined by Cheever to be “a slender man” (Cheever, 1964: 726). Cheever keeps on narrating the legendary figure of Neddy Merrill. He recounts that “while he was far from young he had slid down his banister that morning and given the bronze backside of Aphrodite on the hall table a smack, as he jogged toward the smell of coffee in his dining room” (Cheever, 1964: 727). Cheever compares Neddy to “a summer's day, particularly the last hours of one” (Cheever, 1964: 727). Therefore, according to Cheever, “while he lacked a tennis racket or a sail bag the impression was definitely one of youth, sport, and clement weather” (Cheever, 1964: 727). In short, at the beginning of the journey, Cheever identifies Neddy to be “a pilgrim, an explorer, a man with a destiny” (Cheever, 1964: 727). Thus, Neddy receives a warm welcome in his early destinations. For instance, when he comes out at the Grahams' pool, Mrs. Graham says “what a marvelous surprise. I've been trying to get you on the phone all morning. Here, let me get you a drink” (Cheever, 1964: 727). Likewise, at another pool party, as soon as Enid Bunker sees him she begins to scream “Oh, look who's here! What a marvelous surprise! When Lucinda said that you couldn't come I thought I'd *die*” (Cheever, 1964: 729). Here, when Neddy is making his

way through the crowd, he kisses ten other women and shakes the hands of as many men (Cheever, 1964: 729).

However, in his later visits, the joy and happiness begin to disappear. Neddy's memory gets unclear and he feels "a peculiar sadness at this sign of autumn" (Cheever, 1964: 731). He also gets disappointed at discovering certain things including an empty pool and shut doors and windows at one of his destinations (Cheever, 1964: 731). Therefore, he starts to lose his self-esteem and his social standing declines, as well. Cheever accounts that "standing barefoot in the deposits of the highway— beer cans, rags, and blowout patches— exposed to all kinds of ridicule, he seemed pitiful" (1964: 733). He further states that "he was laughed at, jeered at, a beer can was thrown at him, and he had no dignity or humor to bring to the situation" (1964: 733). Physically, he also loses his former strength and energy. He has lost some weight. He was cold and tired (Cheever, 1964: 735). And now, the dark water in the pool, being once his source of power "depresses him" (Cheever, 1964: 735). At some stops during his journey, he is reminded of his misfortunes, which he does not remember. He learns from others that he has sold his home and that his girls are in trouble. Neddy does not want to face with these truths. However, he is still humiliated by those at whom he once showed displeasure. He is even rebuffed by a barmaid at a pool party and served rudely there (Cheever, 1964: 735). In short, he suffers some loss of social esteem at any place he calls at. Eventually, to find solace and restore his self-confidence, he heads for the property of his ex-mistress. He considered that "love— sexual roughhouse in fact— was the supreme elixir, the pain killer, the brightly colored pill that would put the spring back into his step, the joy of life in his heart" (Cheever, 1964: 735). However, he is also rejected by her and therefore, probably for the first time ever in his adult life, he cried bitterly. According to Cheever, "certainly the first time in his life that he had ever felt so miserable, cold, tired, and bewildered" (1964: 737).

As seen above, Neddy's journey throughout the pools in his neighbourhood is not a fantasy but a spiritual re-discovery of his self and social identity. His physical, mental and social decline throughout the journey symbolizes man's fall and sufferings. Kathryn Riley also suggests that "we are frequently confronted with characters who achieve, at best, a qualified success or, at worst, unqualified defeat" (1983:21). Similarly, with a purposeful ideology, John Cheever aims to illustrate how human beings might easily lose their physical and spiritual superiority even in a small American neighbourhood. By doing so, John Cheever's second self as the implied author pushes the reader of *The Swimmer* to challenge the status quo. As a result, the implied author functions as the one who challenges the understanding of many American readers on reality and the common nature of things.

On the other hand, Norman Friedman classifies types of narrators into many categories ranging from 'editorial omniscience' to 'the camera eye' (1955: 1172). In Friedman's typology, the narrator in *The Swimmer* corresponds to the third-person selective omniscience. For, in the story, although the reader seemingly hears someone, the story is straightly delivered via the mind of the protagonist. Therefore, the inclination is nearly completely in scene, not only within the mind but also externally with word and movement. However, this creates a problem. This problematizing effect regarding the narrator will be elaborated with textual evidences in the second part of this study.

### 1. A Disputed Agent: The Narratee

Manifestations of the narratee are a rather disputable subject within narrative theory. However, not much study has been carried out until Gerald Prince raised an interest in the subject in his popular paper "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee". The term 'narratee' could be simply defined as the one whom the narrator addresses in a fiction. If we imagine a table that consists of a narrative situation, the one at the one end of the table who tells a story is regarded to be the narrator. Similarly, the one at the other end of the table to whom the narrator tells his story is the narratee. Prince suggests that there are implicit and explicit signals that refer to the narratee (1981: 13). Prince calls these signals over-justifications, which include questions, negations, exclamations and other demonstrative signs to an extra-textual experience (1980: 15). However, Prince warns that one should bear in mind the simple fact that the narratee of a fiction cannot be automatically identified with the actual reader (1980: 8). While one is real, the other is fictive. Real readers might see features of themselves in the narratee(s), yet they may obviously differentiate themselves as readers *of* the text from readers *in* the text. Neither should the narratee be mistaken for the implied reader, according to Prince (1980: 9). The implied reader is actually the reader idealized by the author of the text. He approves of the beliefs and presuppositions of the text and acknowledges its legitimacy thanks to certain qualities and inclinations that the author grants him. Therefore, the narratee is also distinct from an implied reader, as well.

If the narratee is different from both these kinds of readers, then how is he portrayed within a fictive text? Prince coins a new term 'zero-degree narratee', and generates a typology by comparison with this ideal notion (1980: 9). The zero-degree narratee knows linguistic features of a text and resolves semantic or syntactic ambiguities as he is aware of the context. Apart from this knowledge of the language, he also has certain faculties of reasoning so that he can grasp the presuppositions and consequences of a given series of sentences. Deviations from the above-mentioned characteristics of the zero-degree narratee gradually constitute the portrait of a specific narratee. Prince lists these narrative deviations as the signals of the narratee. The first category in which one can easily distinguish the signals portraying the narratee are those statements that refer directly to the narratee by such words as 'reader', 'listener', 'my dear', or 'my friend'. In these cases, certain characteristics of the narratee, like his profession or nationality, may be identified by the narrator. Moreover, passages that are constructed by second-person pronouns and verb forms should also be retained in this first category. For instance, in Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), the god-like narrator often refers to the narratee and maintains the fact that he is illustrating his readers a narrative tour. In Chapter 4, for instance, he amusingly considers that his depiction of a house situated on a peak has taken the "Reader . . . to the top of a hill . . . and how to get thee down without breaking thy neck I do not well know" (Fielding, 1749: 45). In another famous example, the omniscient narrator Jane Eyre mostly refers to her 'reader' throughout the book and popularly ends her story with the sentence "Reader, I married him" (Bronte, 1847: 400). In these examples, the narratee and the reader might coincide, which, according to Prince, is an exceptional situation.

Similarly, in the very beginning of *The Swimmer*, there exists an explicit sign to the narratee: "It was one of those midsummer Sundays when everyone sits around saying, I drank too much last night. You might have heard it whispered by the parishioners leaving church" (Cheever, 1964:

726). Here, *you* refers to the narratee. Likewise, in another quote, *you* appears to be as a signal to the narratee, as well. Cheever recounts that

“Had you gone for a Sunday afternoon ride that day you might have seen him, close to naked, standing on the shoulders of Route 424, waiting for a chance to cross. You might have wondered if he was the victim of foul play, had his car broken down, or was he merely a fool” (Cheever, 1964: 728).

Moreover, there are more than one occasions within the story where we might find other over-justifications such as questions and exclamations signalling a narratee. When Neddy's memory starts to fail, he asks questions to someone who is totally invisible within the story. For instance, speculating about an item he saw in one of his pool stops, he asks “A train whistle blew and he wondered what time it had gotten to be. Four? Five?” (Cheever, 1964: 729). Similarly, in order to convey his message throughout the text, the author also asks many questions to someone that was – as if – a character in the story. For example, while telling about Neddy's inner psychology, he asks “was he losing his memory, had his gift for concealing painful facts let him forget that he had sold his house, that his children were in trouble, and that his friend had been ill?” (Cheever, 1964: 732). Cheever further seeks to clarify Neddy's lust to set out on such a weird journey. While doing so, he uses the literary strategy of asking some other rhetorical questions.

“Why did he love storms, what was the meaning of his excitement when the door sprang open and the rain wind fled rudely up the stairs, why had the simple task of shutting the windows of an old house seemed fitting and urgent, why did the first watery notes of a storm wind have for him the unmistakable sound of good news, cheer, glad tidings?” (Cheever, 1964: 731).

On the other hand, regarding the visibility of the narratee, Gerard Genette refers to two different kinds of narratee depending on his position within the narrative. While an intradiegetic narratee is always interposed between the narrator and the reader, and therefore, it keeps actual readers at a distance, extradiegetic narratee merges with the implied reader and with him, every reader can identify himself (Genette, 1972: 260). In *The Swimmer*, the narratee is not a separate unit. Instead, he coincides with the reader - whether implied or real. Therefore, it becomes an exceptional situation as many narratives include an extradiegetic narratee who is out of the text.

Likewise, since there is an explicit sign (*you*) to the narratee within *The Swimmer*, everyone who regards himself as the addressee of this *you* becomes an implied reader according to Chatman (1978: 164). For, he accepts the fictional contract and adds another self. Therefore, although there is no readership targeted by the narrative itself, those who share the stance of the implied author on both cultural and moral terms can regard themselves as implied readers.

## **2. Representing Consciousness in Third-Person Context**

Wayne Booth claims that “the most important narrators in modern fiction are the third-person ‘centres of consciousness’ through whom authors have filtered their narratives” (1961: 151). These reflectors are – to a large degree – shining reflectors that represent complicated mind experience. In *The Swimmer*, Cheever employs a similar technique to reflect Neddy Merrill's chaotic and complex mental experience. Terence Bowers argues that Cheever “creates a network of relationships between the tale of Neddy Merrill and other stories, myths, and poems” (2007: 17). Rather than using direct quotation or first-person psycho narration, Cheever manipulates his protagonist's inner thoughts by means of what Dorrit Cohn calls “narrated

monologue” (1978: 101). So as to render the consciousness of the character's mental domain, Cheever changes the figural mind-language into the language of third-person narration. Therefore, narrative language seems like a sort of veil, behind which one can hear the sound of a figural psyche.

Cortland P. Auser claims that “[John Cheever] has created an imaginative and vital myth of time and modern man” (1967:18). In a similar fashion, *The Swimmer* begins with a scenic representation of the time and setting. Cohn suggests that this is a typical example of narrated monologues which start with a neutral and objective natural stance, describing a specific site and situation (1978: 102). However, later on, the narrator narrows its focus to the figural mind.

“It was not a serviceable stroke for long distances but the domestication of swimming had saddled the sport with some customs and in his part of the world a crawl was customary. To be embraced and sustained by the light green water was less a pleasure, it seemed, than the resumption of a natural condition, and he would have liked to swim without trunks, but this was not possible, considering his project. He hoisted himself up on the far curb— he never used the ladder— and started across the lawn. When Lucinda asked where he was going he said he was going to swim home” (Cheever, 1964: 727).

In the quote above, it is clearly seen that a basic change of grammatical body and time will render a series of accounted actions into an interior monologue. However, here, the narrator willingly glides in the protagonist's mind, embracing his internal language at significant instants in the context of third-person fiction. It may be seen that this is a deliberate choice since the narrated monologue as a medium reveals a fictional mind left in suspense during an immediate moment, between a recalled past and an unforeseeable future. Therefore, “the past tense loses its retrospective function and becomes the tense that creates a fictional reality before our eyes” (Cohn, 1978: 105). It is from the protagonist's vintage point that we may see the past as a zone which can be acquired via remembrance, and the future as an area fundamentally unfamiliar, open solely to surmise and speculation.

Considering Cheever's overall aim of creating ambiguity of time through a peculiarity on the figural consciousness, it can be argued that employing narrated monologue technique suits his purpose very well. For, the pools in which Neddy swims while he is returning home reflect instances of time that Neddy marches through. When he swims home, he loses his power, and his acquaintances start to tell things which hint that much time has passed by. More than a year dies out in a single afternoon. As a result, the reader is left in suspense regarding the time in the book - an afternoon apparently extending to months, even years. In addition, the story is concluded as demonstrating either Neddy's encounter with the real present or a glance at the future.

There are some other things that help the narrated monologue technique represent ambiguity in terms of fictional reality. These are listed by Cohn to be questions, exclamations, repetitions, overstatements, and colloquialism (1978: 114). Below is a good example of this sort:

“The Welchers had definitely gone away. The pool furniture was folded, stacked, and covered with a tarpaulin. The bathhouse was locked. All the windows of the house were shut, and when he went around to the driveway in front he saw a for sale sign nailed to a tree. When had he last heard from the Welchers— when, that is, had he and Lucinda last regretted an invitation to dine with them? It seemed only a week or so ago. Was his memory failing or had he so disciplined it in the

repression of unpleasant facts that he had damaged his sense of the truth? Then in the distance he heard the sound of a tennis game” (Cheever, 1964: 730).

As can be seen above, the presence of questions, exclamations and even speculative “as if” clauses within the short story refer to the fact that the scene is totally comprised in the figural mind and obviously detached from the protagonist's present environments. The report of his conscious imagination is given in such a way that it resembles an unbiased statement. But, with a more cautious look, it may be seen to be transcriptions on consciousness instead of reality.

The reason why Cheever employs narrated monologue as a narrative technique can also be associated with the claims by Dorrit Cohn. According to Cohn, “narrated monologues tend to commit the narrator to attitudes of sympathy or irony” (1978: 125). At the start of the story, Neddy is fit and powerful, has a profound satisfaction with his life, and is respected by his acquaintances. In short, the American dream of physical and communal achievement comes true for Neddy Merrill. Nevertheless, while he is wandering along the pools in Westchester County, Neddy transforms. Physically, he becomes weaker, not powerful enough to get himself out of the pools without using the stairs. He also shows reluctance to dive in as he once did. Finally, Neddy's concern with physical achievement and communal status abandons him. Thus, he feels empty. Neddy's ironical paradoxes of well-being and misery, of success and decadence go on throughout the story, and finally overcome him. This establishes a sense of sympathy for Neddy among the reader. As a result, we pity him for his misfortunes, which he has been suffering without being aware.

### **3. Problematizing the Post-Modern Reality**

*The Swimmer* is one of the most significant fantastic trips in literature that happens over the course of one afternoon. Cheever cleverly mixes the outer reality with an inner fantasy. On the one hand, he illustrates the outlooks of modern American suburbia through a realist language. By doing so, he also seeks to depict inner thoughts and emotions of the main character. Therefore, the content of his story turns out to be left indeterminately between dream, falsehood, fantasy, and reality. Similarly, Eugene Chesnick argues that “even in his short stories Cheever shows the need to establish a fictional place for himself” (1971:535). While including much of Cheever's social realism about the American lifestyle, *The Swimmer* also has a hint of the supernatural in the prosaic world. A feeling of the uncanny gets into the book, as a result, it resembles a ghost story. Neddy Merrill discovers an imaginary stream that passes under the pools across the neighbourhood he lives in. He hopes to cross over this stream that he names after his wife Lucinda. Neddy hopes to find a link between these pools and sets himself a goal. He does so to show everyone that he is still physically strong and financially powerful. He does what he wants to do, he swims the county. But, he is so stupefied with exhaustion that his triumph seems vague.

Representations of the post-modern American reality are best exemplified in the beginning of *The Swimmer*. Cheever depicts a rich, first-class world, at which grown-ups may spend the whole afternoons drinking whisky at the pool, happy with their status within the community. Nevertheless, under this happiness and swollen pleasant feelings, can one observe a firm, punishing, and communal hierarchy, delicate relationships, and sadness. For instance, social inequality is first emphasized by Cheever in the short story. He reports that “prosperous men and women gathered by the sapphircolored waters while caterer's men in white coats passed

them cold gin” (Cheever, 1964: 730). In addition, social status of certain people within the community is humiliated by the protagonist, himself. For example, The Biswangers were one of them. According to Neddy,

“They were always rebuffed and yet they continued to send out their invitations, unwilling to comprehend the rigid and undemocratic realities of their society. They were the sort of people who discussed the price of things at cocktails, exchanged market tips during dinner, and after dinner told dirty stories to mixed company” (Cheever, 1964: 735).

Therefore, although The Biswangers invite Neddy and his wife Lucinda for dinner many times, they are rejected due to their social standing. In a similar fashion, Cheever further reports that “They did not belong to Neddy’s set— they were not even on Lucinda’s Christmas-card list” (Cheever, 1964: 735). However, Neddy has certain unidentified bad luck that causes him to fall down in the communal hierarchy, as well. He breaks up with his acquaintances and becomes even unaware of their actions or sicknesses. He deceives his wife, leaves his lover, and eventually ends up desolate. Returning home is the most climactic moment in the book. While arriving home, Neddy understands that his house is closed and that it seems drastically changed and harmed. He cannot find anything or anyone at home – his family has somehow left him, but he has not noticed that. Neddy is abandoned as a shocked and fatigued person with all the things, he once attached value, disappeared.

However, the social realism explained above is portrayed in a problematized way. Cheever adopts narrated monologue technique in an omniscient third-person context. This technique enables him to represent his protagonist's paradoxical dualities in an ironical way. Since the narrator has the privilege of acquiring an inner image of Neddy Merrill, he uses the rhetorical strength that this concession grants upon him. However, the validity of Ned’s recalling capacity is questioned when he notices certain events. For instance, on a single occasion, he falsifies his own memory: “the Japanese lanterns that Mrs. Levy had bought in Kyoto the year before last, or was it the year before that?” (Cheever, 1964: 730). Moreover, following the rain, he sees that “the force of the wind had stripped a maple of its red and yellow leaves and scattered them over the grass and the water. Since it was midsummer the tree must be blighted, and yet he felt a peculiar sadness at this sign of autumn” (Cheever, 1964: 730).

Neddy's failing memory and repression of unpleasant facts clearly demonstrates how he damages his sense of the truth. Although Neddy is presented to the reader as a ‘pilgrim’, an ‘explorer’ in the beginning, the near-miraculous journey he describes turns out to be a delusion of post-modern reality. Neddy's surreal but finite journey does not yield what he expects. On the contrary, it makes him an outcast within the society, facing the mocking reality of American dream.

### **Conclusion**

To study the typology of narratee agents is a very useful analytic exercise. For, it enables us to examine better the narrative functions of a text. The distance among the characters, the narrator, and the narratee, and the complexity of the harmony that are established among them are significant indicators that emphasize the tone, value and nature of the narration. It is also useful to comprehend the functions of the narratee agents within a text. To analyse the literary devices manipulated by the author, one had better formulate how the addresses of the narration, i.e. the narrator and the narratee, are positioned within a literary form.



As illustrated through textual evidences above, *The Swimmer*, as a piece of prose, is a great representative of Cheever's depiction of modern American suburbia and its alienating effect that results in the inner corruption of vanishing human life. This dichotomy is well supported by Cheever's authorial style and choices in terms of narrative agents and their voices. Particularly by employing narrated monologue technique, Cheever succeeds in representing the conscious within the context of third-person narration. This enables him to establish an ambiguity of time between past and present, which contributes to the ironical paradox portrayed in Neddy's surreal journey between dream and fantasy. It also problematizes post-modern reality in fiction. Although Neddy's downfall and misery make the reader feel sympathy, it also portrays Cheever's objective of mocking the illusion of American dream and its consequences in real life.

A house with a pool and a nice, blonde woman waiting her husband in it are mostly associated with the dreams of many American men who belong to low and middle classes. However, Cheever clearly illustrates sorrows and miseries suffered in these houses due to the alienating effect of modern society. Neddy's mistress stands out as a significant figure representing the dim line between dream-like happiness and deep sorrow. Her hair symbolizing the colour of brass and her figure reflected in cerulean pool water provide solace and refreshment for Neddy when he first sees her after he is reminded of his misfortunes. However, as soon as she talks to him in bitter resentment, Neddy starts to remember what has happened in the past. But, this excites in him no profound memories. Particularly, loneliness stands out as a great challenge for those who live in these houses in isolation, as well. Thus, it also becomes one of the major themes in Cheever's short story as illustrated in the typification of Neddy Merrill.

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