

# NOMADLAND AS THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE MODERN EPIC: PRECARITY, DIMINISHED MYTHOLOGY, AND CULTURAL MEMORY WITHIN THE GEOGRAPHICAL MEMORY OF AMERICAN MYTHOLOGY

\* \* \*

MODERN DESTANIN TOPOGRAYASI OLARAK NOMADLAND:  
AMERİKAN MİTOLOJİSİNİN COĞRAFI HAFIZASINDA PREKARİTE,  
EKSİLTİLMİŞ MİTOLOJİ VE KOLEKTİF BELLEK

Serap SARIBAŞ\*

## ABSTRACT

Chloé Zhao's *Nomadland* reconfigures the erosion of the American Dream into a cinematic parable where heroic myth is dismantled, precarity is dramatized as cultural grammar, and collective rituals are inscribed as archives of memory. Fern's journey displaces the closure of classical mythic structures and situates survival as the residual archetype of late modernity. Heroism is reframed through endurance, and mobility is historicized as an allegory of incompleteness. The national ideal of permanence unravels across domains of housing, labor, and property. Domestic space collapses into the van's fragile interior; industrial work is transposed into repetitive liturgy of exhaustion; ownership is recoded through Fern's affirmation of *houselessness* as dignity. Zhao's austere style accentuates these transformations: deserts register trials, highways configure itinerancy without destination, ghost towns function as ruins of capitalism, and campfires delineate ephemeral solidarity. Communal practices emerge as counterpoint to individual dispossession. Testimonies of loss, ritualized around firelight, construct cultural memory in Jan Assmann's sense; solidarity enacted through repair and reciprocity embodies Judith Butler's precarious life; Turner's *communitas* acquires cinematic form in repeated assurances. Community is configured as provisional constellation enacted through gestures. The film demonstrates that mythology survives in fragmentary form, recoded under neoliberal conditions as memory of vulnerability. *Nomadland* inscribes modernity with an incomplete mythology, situating dispossession, itinerancy, and precarious solidarity as central tropes of a new epic imagination. The contribution resides in demonstrating how contemporary cinema archives social vulnerability as mythic residue and rearticulates absence as cultural memory.

**Keywords:** *Nomadland, American Dream, Diminished Mythology, Precarity, Cultural Memory*

\* Assoc. Prof. Dr., Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Faculty of Letters, Department of English Language and Literature Karaman.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4079-8024> ♦ e-Mail: [serapsaribas@kmu.edu.tr](mailto:serapsaribas@kmu.edu.tr)

**ÖZ**

Chloé Zhao'nun *Nomadland* filmi, çağdaş sinemanın yalnızca estetik bir temsil pratiği değil, aynı zamanda modernitenin mit üretim kapasitesindeki yetersizliğini kültürel düzlemde görünür kılan bir palimpsest olarak değerlendirilebilir. Fern'in yolculuğu, Joseph Campbell'in kahramanın döngüsel serüveni olarak formüle ettiği yapının eksik ve yarım kalmış halkalarını belirginleştirir; dönüşün, bütünleşmenin ve telafi edici kapanışın yokluğunda mit, tamamlanmış bir anlatı olmaktan çıkarak sürekli ertelemeye ve kalıcı belirsizliğe bağlı hale gelir. Fern figürü, zaferle taçlanmış bir arketip yerine, kırılmanın, güvencesizliğin ve dayanıklılığın zorunlu kahramanlığına işaret eden eksik mitolojinin simgesine dönüşür. Bu figür, modern çağın bütünsellikten çok parçalanma, süreksizlik ve boşluk üzerinden inşa edilen kültürel tahayyülünü cisimleştirir. Amerikan Rüyası'nın çöküşü yalnızca ekonomik bir gerileme ya da sosyolojik bir kriz değil, aynı zamanda kültürel belleğin mitik temellerinin aşınması olarak ifşa edilir. Tarihsel süreçte ev sahibi olma, kalıcı istihdam ve toplumsal aidiyet idealleri üzerine kurulan ulusal tahayyül, neoliberal kırılma karşısında geçerliliğini yitirmiştir. Fern'in mülksüzleşmesi, Amazon gibi çokuluslu şirketlerde güvencesiz işlerde sürüklenmesi ve "houselessness (barınaksızlık)" kavramını özgürlük retorikleriyle yeniden çerçevelemesi, bu çözümlüğün bireysel düzeydeki izdüşümünü sunar. Roland Barthes'in miti "tarihin seçtiği bir söylem biçimi" olarak tanımlaması, bu noktada güncel karşılığını bulur: tarihsel yoksunluk, özgürlük söylemi aracılığıyla yeniden kodlanır; yapısal güvencesizlik, bireysel seçimin diline tercüme edilir. Zygmunt Bauman'ın "likit modernite" kavramı, Guy Standing'in "prekarya" analizi ve Pierre Bourdieu'nun yapısal şiddet tartışmaları, bu mitolojik erozyonun sosyolojik ve politik zeminini kavramsallaştırır. Amerikan Rüyası artık erişilebilir bir ufuk değil, hafızada dolayan bir enkazdır. Zhao'nun sinematografisi, bu çözümlüğün mekânsal düzlemde kayda geçirerek topografyanın kendisini bir bellek zemini olarak kurar. Çöl manzaraları sınav mekânlarına, otoyollar bitimsiz güzergâhlara, terk edilmiş kasabalar endüstriyel yıkımın harabelerine, kamp ateşleri ise geçici cemaatlerin litürjik merkezlerine dönüşür. Uzun planların, doğal ışığın ve sessizliğin tercih edilmesi, mekânı yalnızca fon olmaktan çıkarıp, mitin boşluğunun ve sosyolojik kırılmanın sahnesi haline getirir. Bu görsel dil, Amerikan Rüyası'nın enkazını coğrafi belleğin bir haritası olarak kodlar ve topografiyayı modern çağın eksik mitolojisinin alegorik arşivine dönüştürür. Filmin bireysel deneyimi aşan en önemli boyutu, kolektif ritüellerin üretimidir. Kamp ateşlerinin çevresinde anlatılan yas hikâyeleri, Jan Assmann'ın kültürel bellek teorisi çerçevesinde kolektif hafızayı simgeselleştirir. Victor Turner'ın *communitas* (dayanışma topluluğu) kavramı, Bob Wells'in "Yolda yine görüşürüz" sözüyle sinemalığa bedene bürünür. Judith Butler'ın kırılma üzerine düşünceleri, ortak onarım, paylaşım ve yas pratiklerinde cisimleşir. Jean-Luc Nancy'nin "tamamlanmamış topluluk" anlayışı, bu geçici kabilelerin kalıcı kurumsallaşmaya direnen ve yalnızca törensel tekrarlar üzerinden varlık kazanan yapısını kavramsallaştırır. Giorgio Agamben'in potansiyel topluluk fikri, bu ritüellerde her defasında yeniden kurulan ve asla tamamlanmayan aidiyet deneyimlerinde görünür hale gelir. Böylelikle film, Amerikan bireycilik mitini askıya alarak, kırılma dayanışmasının geçici ama sembolik açıdan yoğun biçimlerini öne çıkarır. *Nomadland*, mit kuramı, sosyolojik analiz ve sinema estetiğini sentezleyerek modern çağın "eksik mitolojisini" kültürel düzlemde görünür kılar. Fern'in dönüşsüz yolculuğu, Amerikan Rüyası'nın ideolojik boşluğunu belirginleştirirken, kamp ritüelleri neoliberal bireyciliğe karşı kırılma fakat etkili bir kolektif dayanışma tahayyülünü güçlendirir. Kahramanlık artık zaferle değil, süreklileşmiş güvencesizlik koşullarında dirençle tanımlanır; toplumsal bellek ise kalıcı kurumlarla değil, geçici ve törensel topluluklarla kurulur. Zhao'nun sineması, Amerikan Rüyası'nın enkazı üzerinde yükselen hem destansı hem de elegik bir kültürel hafıza kaydı sunar. Bu bağlamda *Nomadland*, modern çağın bütünlenmemiş mitolojisini ifşa ederek, neoliberal çağın görünmez öznesini estetik, sosyolojik ve mitolojik düzeylerde temsil eder.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Nomadland*, Amerikan Rüyası, Eksiltilmiş Mitoloji, Prekarite, Kültürel Bellek

## Introduction

Chloé Zhao's *Nomadland* (2020), adapted from Jessica Bruder's influential nonfiction *Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century* (2017), configures a lyrical yet unsparing portrait of contemporary American life (Bruder, 2017; Zhao, 2020). The narrative traces Fern, embodied with austere precision by Frances McDormand, following the collapse of her town in rural Nevada, who reconceives her van as a precarious dwelling and traverses the American West in search of provisional forms of survival (Zhao, 2020; Time, 2020). Along her passage, she encounters real-life nomads, Linda May, Swankie, and Bob Wells, appearing as themselves and thereby unsettling conventional cinematic boundaries between fiction and ethnography (The New Yorker, 2021). This intermingling of professional and nonprofessional performers does not merely depict social reality but reconstitutes it in aesthetic form, resisting the sentimental reduction of hardship to moral allegory. By interlacing Bruder's journalistic observations with an elegiac visual idiom, Zhao articulates a hybrid text at once documentary, cultural memory, and mythopoetic meditation. As Bruder (2017) notes, "The people I met were not drifters or dropouts, but citizens driven by necessity into lives of perpetual motion" (p. 14). In this sense, the film mobilizes cinema simultaneously as testimony and as a site of myth-making.

Emerging in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, amid widespread foreclosures and the dismantling of stable labor markets that had sustained the postwar American Dream (Davis, 2012; Peck, 2010), *Nomadland* foregrounds the tenuousness of freedom under neoliberal precarity. The recurrent imagery of Fern's van, oscillating across highways and deserts, configures mobility not as heroic expansion but as a fragile horizon conditioned by dispossession. Zhao's cinematography, indebted to neorealist traditions, frames the grandeur of the American landscape while delineating the vulnerability of those inhabiting its margins (Rieser, 2024). Instead of reinscribing the frontier as a locus of conquest and prosperity, the film unsettles it as a terrain of loss, memory, and diminished possibility. Extended silences, unhurried temporalities, and the deliberate suspension of narrative closure compel the spectator to inhabit a rhythm aligned with nomadic existence. In one of the film's most poignant moments, Fern insists, "I'm not homeless, I'm just houseless. Not the same thing, right?" (Zhao, 2020). This statement captures the paradoxical dignity of displacement, foregrounding the fragile redefinition of belonging.

The film's critical reception underscores its cultural resonance. Debuting at the Venice Film Festival, where it secured the Golden Lion, and later at the Toronto International Film Festival, where it received the People's Choice Award, *Nomadland* culminated in recognition at the 93rd Academy Awards with Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actress (Glamour, 2021; The New Yorker, 2021). Acclaim, however, was tempered by critique: while commentators praised Zhao's humanist sensibility, others argued that the adaptation attenuated Bruder's incisive critique of precarious labor, particularly within Amazon fulfillment centers (Vanity Fair, 2021). This ambivalence reflects the film's aesthetic strategy of privileging ambiguity over overt indictment,

advancing an idiom that renders survival practices with dignity while withholding didactic denunciation. Notably, Fern's odyssey unfolds through the subjectivity of an older woman, disrupting Hollywood's masculinist heroics and revising gendered codes of mythic narrative (Huang & Tian, 2022). By situating marginal lives at the symbolic center, Zhao reframes precarity as both a structural condition and a space of cultural reimagination.

Approached from this discursive vantage, *Nomadland* reconfigures the American Dream as a collapsed myth, emptied of permanence, prosperity, and home ownership. It simultaneously articulates a "nomadic mythology," with Fern's journey assuming the form of an endless quest without restitution (Campbell, 2004; Eliade, 1959). The implication, then, is that the mythology of freedom, long tethered to frontier expansion and the ethos of self-reliant individualism, is recast as compelled mobility under conditions of economic displacement (Bauman, 2000; Standing, 2011). In this sense, Zhao's film operates simultaneously as a cultural document of crisis and as a symbolic rearticulation of myth, proposing new figurations of resilience and endurance for an era defined by precarity.

### **Literature Review: Critical Approaches**

The body of critical engagement with *Nomadland* constitutes not a unified paradigm but a dispersed constellation of inquiries that reveal the film's contested symbolic status. Analysts have traced three dominant genealogies: the American Dream refigured as exhausted myth, the gendered and aging body mobilized as a site of endurance, and a cinematic idiom aligned with neorealist and mythopoetic registers. Each trajectory produces valuable insight, yet their separation exposes a deeper fracture: interpretive energies have stabilized within discrete silos that illuminate fragments of Zhao's work without articulating their convergence. The result is a literature that maps symptoms of collapse, economic displacement, embodied vulnerability and aesthetic sublimation without theorizing how these dimensions interlock as part of a singular cultural formation. To begin from this dispersion is to recognize that Zhao's film has become a touchstone precisely because it resists containment within a single disciplinary grammar, demanding instead an analytic capable of linking archetypal form with sociological vulnerability in one interpretive frame.

Atanasova (2021) situates Zhao's film within the lineage of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, noting that "Nomadland follows in the path of Steinbeck's migrant families, yet the dream of stability dissolves into a cycle of motion without rest" (p. 88). This remark casts Fern's itinerancy as the afterlife of Depression-era migration myths, revealing the hollow persistence of ideals once tethered to permanence. Zhu (2022) extends this critique, observing that "resilience is presented as a personal virtue while veiling structural injustice" (p. 7). His account construes Zhao's narrative as reproducing individualism in diminished form, transforming survival into an ethic rather than exposing systemic collapse. Seen from this angle, these perspectives delineate a field in which myths persist not as triumphant ideals but as fragile residues that continue to shape cultural imagination.

Embodiment has generated a second interpretive cluster. Huang and Tian (2022) argue that “aging women in film often disappear into stereotypes of weakness or invisibility, but *Nomadland* insists on agency within vulnerability” (p. 47). Their reading dislodges patriarchal heroics, reframing endurance as a mode of mythic strength. Bruder’s reportage reinforces this claim, describing nomads as “citizens driven by necessity into lives of perpetual motion” (2017, p. 14). Zhao transposes such testimony into allegory, recoding necessity as emblematic survival. Fern’s body thus becomes the site of figurative revision, installing a signifying grammar that recasts heroism as persistence. In another register, *Nomadland* functions as a feminist intervention into myth-making, showing how symbolic authority can emerge through figures long excluded from archetypal scripts.

Formalist and philosophical readings broaden the interpretive horizon. Rieser (2024) positions Zhao’s practice within a genealogy of realist cinema that refuses spectacle, remarking that long takes and natural light make marginal lives legible (p. 9). His account clarifies that myth emerges not only from narrative but from visual grammar, where ordinary gestures are elevated into emblematic registers. Laist (2024) advances a new materialist perspective, stating that “freedom emerges here as an ecological entanglement, not an individual triumph” (p. 12). This orientation construes autonomy as exposure rather than mastery. Zhao’s work, interpreted through these strands, installs an allegorical mode at the level of style, transforming itinerancy into a parabolic idiom that renders fragility visible without capitulating to spectacle.

Public commentary has consolidated around competing emphases. *Jacobin* condemned Zhao for softening labor critique, declaring that “Amazon is shown as a benign backdrop, when in reality its warehouses exemplify the brutality of contemporary capitalism” (2021, para. 3). *The New Yorker* offered an alternative assessment, suggesting that “the wide-open spaces of the American West become a theater of mourning, a stage on which freedom and loss converge” (2021, para. 4). These responses crystallize distinct critical economies: scholarship gravitates toward structural abstraction, while journalism presses for immediacy, affect, or accountability. The contrast clarifies how interpretive communities allocate value, producing divergent judgments of the same cinematic text.

Comparative frameworks situate Zhao’s contribution within broader realist traditions. Ken Loach’s *Sorry We Missed You* (2019) depicts precarity through unembellished social realism, insisting on structural indictment. Andrea Arnold’s *American Honey* (2016) chronicles itinerant youth culture with documentary intensity, embedding instability in subcultural drift. Zhao diverges by casting itinerancy as a parabolic itinerary across the ruins of the American Dream. Loach mobilizes confrontation, Arnold foregrounds drift, Zhao stages allegory. Such triangulation reveals Zhao’s hybrid idiom: a cross-register style that does double work, testimonial and figurative, positioning vulnerability within a signifying economy rather than reducing it to sociological record.

The adaptation from Bruder’s nonfiction text intensifies the debate. Bruder writes, “Amazon’s warehouses function as symbols of systemic power, offering temporary refuge while enforcing exhaustion” (2017, p. 105). Zhao retains this imagery but reframes it as milieu rather than charge. The shift has become a focal point in critical argument:

reportage indicts through documentation, while cinema transposes critique into figural composition. The transformation makes clear how myth travels across media, abandoning evidentiary posture in favor of allegorical resonance. The controversy illustrates how myth never erases critique but redistributes it through symbolic reformulation.

Pandemic-era reception magnified these dynamics. Released during global lockdowns, *Nomadland* resonated with audiences who interpreted Fern's perpetual motion as allegory for collective dislocation. Viewers confined to domestic stasis read their own instability through her itinerancy, making the film both image and conduit of crisis. Within this reception context, myth and sociology converge not only in the text but in its circulation, as external upheaval intensifies symbolic charge.

Read within a relational frame, the existing literature illuminates fragments of Zhao's work but never secures their integration. Analyses of mythic inheritance, feminist embodiment, realist form, and reception remain dispersed, each generating insights yet none articulating their interaction. A clear gap persists: the coupling of mythic form with sociological vulnerability still lacks a developed theory. This article intervenes by construing *Nomadland* as nomadic mythology, a cinematic formation that does double work, as allegorical narrative and sociological document. This framework underscores freedom not as heroic autonomy but as compelled mobility and redefines the American Dream as residual myth emptied of substance. The proposed synthesis illuminates how contemporary cinema reconfigures collective myths at the moment of their collapse, generating vocabularies adequate to conditions of structural vulnerability.

### **Theoretical Framework: Myth and Sociology in Convergence**

This study grounds its inquiry in the recognition that *Nomadland* eludes reduction to aesthetic description or sociological record alone. Its resonance emerges from the collision of archetypal forms with the structures of precarity. Mythic theory supplies a symbolic idiom for interpreting Fern's odyssey, whereas sociology situates that idiom within late-capitalist instability. In parallel articulation, these perspectives disclose Zhao's film as at once allegorical narrative and sociological document, casting mobility simultaneously as aspiration and coercion.

Joseph Campbell's monomyth outlines a ritualized sequence of separation, initiation, and return (2004, p. 28). Fern enacts separation through bereavement and the collapse of Empire, Nevada; she undergoes initiation through itinerant labor and transient encounters. The cycle fractures at the point of return, for reintegration or closure never materializes. Campbell's typology foregrounds this rupture but simultaneously exposes its own limitations: it presumes teleology and masculinist agency. Fern destabilizes that teleology, recoding the heroic archetype into a myth of perpetual passage in which survival supplants conquest and endurance displaces transcendence.

Mircea Eliade conceptualizes sacred space as rupture within otherwise homogeneous geography: "some parts of space are qualitatively different from others" (1959, p. 20). Zhao's desert camps exemplify such ruptures, temporary sanctuaries that accumulate ritual intensity through recurrence. Each annual migration functions as a rite

that grants symbolic density to itinerancy. Eliade asserts, “The road leading to the center is a sacred road” (1959, p. 37). Zhao secularizes this dictum: the endless highway becomes axis not of transcendence but of subsistence. Eliade’s conceptual vocabulary delineates the persistence of ritual after metaphysical ground has receded, though his universalizing assumptions falter when confronted with Zhao’s materialist imagery.

Zygmunt Bauman identifies late modernity as liquid, remarking that “Forms of social life are no longer expected to keep their shape for long” (2000, p. 1). Fern exemplifies this liquidity through the provisionality of dwelling, the seasonality of employment, and the instability of ties. The dissolution of permanence renders Campbell’s return structurally impossible. Zhao’s cinematic idiom situates itinerancy not as elective lifestyle but as outcome of systemic volatility, embodying Bauman’s thesis in visual form.

Guy Standing’s theorization of the precariat strengthens this diagnosis. In *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* he notes, “The precariat lacks an occupational identity, is subject to insecure labor, and flits in and out of jobs, often without a sense of occupational narrative to give a meaningful identity” (2011, p. 10). Fern’s fragmented employments, from Amazon warehouses to agricultural labor, materialize this definition. The precariat concept marks the structural fragility of her condition: the rhetoric of “freedom” disguises systemic dispossession. Eliade’s ritual repetition intersects with Standing’s precarious class, for the sacred aura of communal rituals acquires force precisely through abandonment by institutional structures.

Supplementary theoretical registers expand this interpretive horizon. Roland Barthes defines myth as “a type of speech chosen by history” (2000, p. 129). Zhao’s film exemplifies this process, naturalizing dispossession in the idiom of “houseless freedom.” Richard Slotkin affirms that “Myth has been the primary language by which American culture has explained itself to itself” (1992, p. 5). Zhao redeploys frontier iconography, deserts, highways, horizons, yet empties it of triumph, leaving allegorical residue. Read in concert, Barthes and Slotkin reveal how *Nomadland* translates historical crisis into symbolic speech, preserving mythic form while stripping it of closure.

Synthesized in analytic constellation, these frameworks portray Fern as paradox: a hero without return, a pilgrim without transcendence, a worker without stability. Campbell delineates the absent resolution; Eliade identifies ritual persistence, Bauman theorizes structural volatility; Standing situates insecurity within neoliberal economy, Barthes and Slotkin reveal myth as cultural language, emptied yet operative. Their convergence reframes Zhao’s film as allegorical form in which collapse does not annihilate myth but reduces it to symbolic residue, a shell that continues to structure meaning under systemic vulnerability.

As the framework’s decisive movement, this synthesis reconceives Fern’s odyssey as emblematic parable: the American Dream appears as residual archetype, freedom emerges as compelled mobility. Methodologically, the framework advances film theory by demonstrating how symbolic forms and material structures interpenetrate. It obliges criticism to transcend disciplinary compartmentalization, demanding analyses that cap-

ture the co-production of representation and condition. By unsettling Campbell's teleological hero and Eliade's transcendent sacred, the analysis articulates new archetypes forged in neoliberal dislocation. By aligning Standing's precarity with Barthes's semiotics, it reveals myths mutating into speech that both naturalizes crisis and discloses its fractures. In its final articulation, the framework positions *Nomadland* not as chronicle of decline but as laboratory of mythic reinvention, a cinematic site where cultural memory is dismantled, recycled, and experimentally reimaged under systemic instability.

### **The Construction of Nomadic Mythology: Fern's Journey**

Fern's odyssey is framed as an enactment of rupture. Zhao establishes the diegetic world with Empire, Nevada abandoned by industrial collapse, presenting Fern relocating belongings into a van that functions simultaneously as dwelling, shrine, and vessel of exile. The sequence translates Campbell's stage of "separation, initiation, return" (2004, p. 28) into a register where transcendence is displaced by material loss. Campbell formulates, "The call to adventure signifies that destiny has summoned the hero" (2004, p. 45). Fern instead states, "My husband worked at the US Gypsum plant. It shut down, and so did the town" (Zhao, 2020). Bruder corroborates: "The people I met were not drifters or dropouts, but citizens driven by necessity into lives of perpetual motion" (2017, p. 14). Zhao reframes this testimony in imagery, staging separation as economic expulsion rather than divine summons.

Turner's vocabulary of liminality illuminates this fracture. He observes, "Liminality is a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise" (1969, p. 97). Fern inhabits liminality through the van as chamber of transition, the road as expanse of suspension, and labor as ordeal of passage, all condensed into ritualized figuration. Van Gennep articulated rites of passage as "separation, transition, incorporation" (1960, p. 11). Fern enacts the first two phases; incorporation remains foreclosed. Atanasova interprets this refusal of closure as structural: *Nomadland* inherits Steinbeck's migration myth but "the dream of stability dissolves into a cycle of motion without rest" (2021, p. 88). Seen through this lens, Fern embodies perpetual transition, her life organized by thresholds without resolution.

Encounters with nomadic peers instantiate the archetype of auxiliary figures. Campbell designates this stage "supernatural aid" (2004, p. 63). Zhao secularizes the archetype: Bob Wells, Linda May, and Swankie appear as themselves, transmitting testimony as mythic speech. Bob Wells consoles Fern with the refrain, "I'll see you down the road" (Zhao, 2020), converting farewell into cyclical recurrence. Linda May recounts her modest aspirations yet foregrounds community as ethos of survival. Swankie asserts, "I don't want to die in a hospital. I want to die out here" (Zhao, 2020), aligning mortality with landscape, integrating death into nomadic cosmology. Huang and Tian (2022) emphasize: "aging women in film often disappear into stereotypes of weakness or invisibility, but *Nomadland* insists on agency within vulnerability" (p. 47). Fern embodies this paradox, enduring through companions whose words and presence recast solidarity as secular rite.

Labor sequences are staged as initiatory ordeals that ritualize endurance. Zhao portrays Amazon warehouses, beet harvests, and caravan parks as spaces where repetition acquires symbolic density. Bruder records, “Inside the warehouses, nomads worked ten-hour shifts, walking miles each day on concrete floors” (2017, p. 89). Zhao visualizes this account cinematically, showing Fern dwarfed by conveyor belts, body synchronized with mechanical rhythm. Turner’s liminality resurfaces: labor dramatizes ordeal, endurance becomes symbolic test. Rieser asserts that Zhao’s method belongs “to a genealogy of realist cinema that refuses spectacle” (2024, p. 9). Refusal of spectacle sanctifies repetition, elevating labor into allegorical idiom. Laist extends: “freedom emerges here as an ecological entanglement, not an individual triumph” (2024, p. 12). Fern enacts this entanglement, her survival tethered to ecological and corporeal demands.

The absence of return dismantles the heroic cycle at its constitutive level. Campbell writes, “The hero returns from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man” (2004, p. 30). Zhao withholds that resolution. Fern revisits the abandoned house in Empire, touches the walls and sink, then departs once again. She confides, “What’s remembered, lives. I maybe spent too much of my life just remembering” (Zhao, 2020). Memory substitutes for return. Zhu critiques this substitution, observing that resilience becomes ethic while injustice remains occluded (2022, p. 7). Butler clarifies precarious life as “always in the hands of the other” (2004, p. 20). Fern’s memory dramatizes exposure, her survival reframed through vulnerability rather than restitution.

The van condenses both symbolic and sociological registers. Fern arranges photographs and heirlooms within its confined space, transforming vehicle into fragile cosmos. Eliade asserts, “The house is not an object; it is the universe that man constructs for himself” (1959, p. 50). Zhao reshapes this dictum: the van operates as cosmos of dispossession. Fern remarks, “It’s just my home” (Zhao, 2020). Bauman delineates liquidity: “Forms of social life are no longer expected to keep their shape for long” (2000, p. 1). Agamben defines bare life: “The sacred man is the one who may be killed and yet not sacrificed” (1998, p. 8). Fern exemplifies bare life, abandoned yet persisting, stripped of guarantees yet rendered symbolically legible.

Narrative fragments consolidate Fern’s mythic identity. She harvests beets by night under headlamps, scrubs toilets in national parks, and shares a cigarette with young travelers, warning, “You gotta be careful on the road” (Zhao, 2020). Standing theorizes, “The precariat flits in and out of jobs, often without a sense of occupational narrative” (2011, p. 10). Fern embodies this fragmentation, yet Zhao translates scattered labors into allegorical idiom, situating the precarious worker as archetype of endurance. Turner’s notion of *communitas* elucidates these encounters as ritualized collectivities, fleeting solidarities that endow survival with symbolic depth (1969, p. 125).

The closing images articulate myth through vestigial idiom. Bob Wells repeats, “I’ll see you down the road” (Zhao, 2020). Slotkin affirms, “Myth has been the primary language by which American culture has explained itself to itself” (1992, p. 5). Zhao

retains this idiom but empties it of redemption. Barthes defines myth as “a type of speech chosen by history” (2000, p. 129). Zhao naturalizes dispossession as idiom of freedom, translating collapse into cultural speech. Butler and Standing together clarify that life persists in precarity, myth persists as cultural trace. At the decisive juncture of the narrative, Fern is inscribed as the archetype of the hero without return, a form that redefines myth as endurance rather than transcendence. Her figure functions as emblem of cultural remainder, a body marked by dispossession yet charged with allegorical weight. Zhao positions Fern as cultural archetype for an era of systemic fragility, where mobility is compulsion and community endures only as ritualized farewell.

### **The Mythic Meaning of Space**

Zhao reimagines desert expanses as arenas of ordeal where emptiness acquires ritual density. Eliade affirmed, “some parts of space are qualitatively different from others” (1959, p. 20), a dictum refracted through Fern’s solitary crossings of Nevada and South Dakota. Bruder observed, “The desert became for many nomads a proving ground, a place where survival required invention and mutual aid” (2017, p. 142). Zhao visualizes this testimony through extended images of Fern repairing a tire against freezing wind, resting in her van beneath canyon walls, and contemplating barren horizons in silence. Rieser interprets these sequences as “a realist grammar that elevates ordinary gestures into emblematic images” (2024, p. 5). Zhu contests such elevation, remarking that “resilience is constructed as aesthetic surface, leaving systemic critique muted” (2022, p. 11). The desert, therefore, functions as paradoxical terrain: geography of ritualized trial and aesthetic veil simultaneously.

Highways delineate pilgrimage by converting infrastructure into symbolic trajectory. Eliade remarked, “The road leading to the center is a sacred road” (1959, p. 37). Zhao reframes this dictum: highways appear not as routes of arrival but as perpetual axes of motion. Fern confesses, “I like to think of the road as home” (Zhao, 2020), a declaration that resignifies asphalt as idiom of belonging. Barthes argued that myth is “a type of speech chosen by history” (2000, p. 129); highways become precisely such speech, domesticating exile into cultural language. Augé described motorways as “non-places” that generate identity-less passage (1995, p. 78). Fern’s ceaseless driving exemplifies this ontology, yet Zhao overlays intimacy, transforming anonymity into affective dwelling. Rieser highlights the lyricism of these frames, while Zhu underscores ideological cost, reading mobility as aesthetic compensation for dispossession. The road, consequently, becomes grammar of compulsion, pilgrimage refracted through precarity.

Abandoned towns configure capitalist ruins into allegorical remnants. Empire, Nevada appears through shuttered homes and factories silenced by economic decline. Slotkin maintained, “Myth has been the primary language by which American culture has explained itself to itself” (1992, p. 5). Zhao appropriates that language, translating triumph into dereliction. Fern’s tactile engagement with her vacant house, walls, sink, and garage, culminates in renewed departure, home resignified as vestige. Bruder corroborates: “Workers wandered through ghost towns where silence replaced community” (2017, p.

198). Lefebvre's claim that space is socially produced clarifies the contradiction: Empire operates simultaneously as site of production and abandonment (1991, p. 26). Rieser emphasizes austerity of Zhao's lens, while Butler's conception of precarious life reveals how vulnerability becomes inscribed upon geography. Abandoned towns therefore manifest the exhaustion of the Dream, spatial archives of national decline.

Natural vistas register grief as ritualized communion. Eliade asserted, "The sacred mountain marks the point of absolute orientation" (1959, p. 38). Fern contemplates cliffs after Swankie's death, whispering, "You were right, Swankie. This place is beautiful" (Zhao, 2020). Tuan defined *topophilia* as "the affective bond between people and place" (1977, p. 93), a concept materialized in Fern's attachment to landscape. Laist interprets Zhao's landscapes as "ecological entanglements where survival intertwines with environment" (2024, p. 14). Turner's *communitas* illuminates this moment: grief binds living, dead, and land in symbolic solidarity (1969, p. 131). Zhu warns that such sacralization risks aestheticizing precarity, yet its very tension discloses myth persisting as idiom of mourning. The vista thus embodies mythic residue, geography transformed into funerary rite.

Campgrounds install ritual nodes where solidarity assumes symbolic expression. Turner theorized *communitas* as "undifferentiated comradeship generated in liminality" (1969, p. 131). Zhao depicts firelit faces, circles of testimony, and meals shared as rites of belonging. Bob Wells asserts, "We've all had to learn how to take care of each other. I'll see you down the road" (Zhao, 2020). Bruder noted, "Campfires became classrooms, confessionals, and altars for the houseless tribe" (2017, p. 164). Augé might have designated camps as non-places; Zhao resignifies them as sanctuaries where vulnerability is transposed into ritual community. Rieser underscores realism's austerity, while Butler clarifies dependency as foundation of solidarity. Camps thereby enact mythic speech, ephemeral yet saturated with cultural memory.

Amazon warehouses refract industrial architecture into secular temples of exhaustion. Fern is depicted walking miles through towering aisles, body synchronized with conveyor rhythm. Bruder described, "Ten-hour shifts demanded miles of walking on concrete floors, leaving bodies aching, blistered, and drained" (2017, p. 89). Rieser reads Zhao's portrayal as austerity realism; Butler asserts, "Life is always in the hands of the other" (2004, p. 20). Agamben's *Homo Sacer* intensifies the interpretation: survival enacted as sacrifice without transcendence (1998, p. 8). Zhu critiques Zhao for aestheticizing exploitation, but the severity of imagery registers labor as liturgy of late capitalism. Warehouses thus appear as labyrinths of ritualized fatigue, sanctuaries of compulsion disguised as productivity.

Van interiors embody cosmos in miniature, intimate sanctum where dispossession is resignified as fragile order. Fern arranges photographs, porcelain plates, and coats, curating symbolic space of memory. Eliade stated, "The house is the universe man constructs for himself" (1959, p. 50). Zhao redefines this dictum: the van materializes cosmos of loss. Fern remarks, "It's just my home" (Zhao, 2020). Bauman identified

liquidity as dissolution: “Forms of social life are no longer expected to keep their shape for long” (2000, p. 1). Tuan’s *topophilia* clarifies that attachment persists within impermanence. Agamben’s *bare life* exposes paradox: existence stripped to essentials yet preserved through ritual care. Rieser highlights austerity of cinematography, making fragility visible as symbolic cosmos.

At this narrative fulcrum, *Nomadland* articulates geography as mythic cartography. The desert emerges as ordeal, the highway as pilgrimage, the abandoned town as ruin, the vista as ritualized mourning, the camp as ephemeral solidarity, the warehouse as capitalist liturgy, the van as cosmos of fragility. Each spatial register embodies allegorical labor, reconfiguring myth as vestige, allegory, and repetition. Zhao inscribes American landscapes as archive of collapse, cartography of vulnerability, and topography of endurance. Space becomes grammar of late modern myth, repository where memory, fragility, and survival acquire cultural density.

### **The Collapse of the American Dream**

Within the symbolic economy of American modernity, the Dream was anchored in three coordinates: the dwelling as axis of permanence, employment as guarantor of dignity, and property as emblem of belonging. James Truslow Adams in *The Epic of America* articulated it as “a better, richer, and happier life for all our citizens” (1931, p. 214). The postwar decades sedimented this formula in suburban expansion, mortgage subsidies, and the iconography of the white picket fence. Slotkin observed that “Myth has been the primary language by which American culture has explained itself to itself” (1992, p. 5). Zhao’s *Nomadland* exposes this language as residue, situating the Dream not within achievement but within ruin. Long takes of shuttered homes and deserted streets saturate the frame with absence, transforming architecture once celebrated as fulfillment into monuments of abandonment and silence. The image registers not prosperity but vestige, not stability but its dissolution.

The collapse of home materializes through Fern’s dispossession. She recounts with bluntness, “My husband worked at the US Gypsum plant. It shut down, and so did the town” (Zhao, 2020). This utterance condenses the industrial Dream into a single syllogism of void. Bruder recorded, “People abandoned houses they could not pay for, drifting into vans, RVs, and cars” (2017, p. 43). Eliade maintained, “The house is the universe man constructs for himself” (1959, p. 50). Zhao transposes that dictum into irony: Fern’s van, a confined chamber illuminated by dim light, becomes microcosm of dispossession. The lens dwells on porcelain dishes balanced on improvised shelves, photographs taped against van walls, coats carefully folded in narrow compartments. Each object is framed as relic, each surface as archive of fragility. Zhu cautions that Zhao “aestheticizes houselessness as resilience, thereby veiling structural devastation” (2022, p. 9). Fern’s refusal to remain with Dave’s family dramatizes the impossibility of return, rendering domestic ideal as fragile mobility rather than permanence. The Dream of ownership is recoded as precarious sanctuary, myth transposed into itinerant shrine.

Employment is staged as liturgy of exhaustion rather than pathway of stability. Fern is shown under fluorescent lights at Amazon, her body synchronized with conveyor

rhythms; later she cleans restrooms in national parks, harvests beets under cold night lamps. Bruder emphasized, “Many of the nomads were past retirement age, working through pain and illness, with Social Security checks insufficient to survive” (2017, p. 112). Standing defined the precariat as class “without occupational identity, subject to insecure labor” (2011, p. 10). Bauman located this instability in liquid modernity: “Forms of social life are no longer expected to keep their shape for long” (2000, p. 1). Harvey tied it to neoliberal restructuring: “Flexibility became watchword of accumulation, destroying stable contracts and dismantling welfare guarantees” (2005, p. 3). Zhao configures these abstractions in corporeal imagery: Fern repeats gestures without teleology, her labor refracted as ritualized depletion. Extended shots refuse closure, denying catharsis. Rieser praised this austerity as realism, but Zhu identified it as ideological, “rendering exploitation bearable through lyric framing” (2022, p. 11). Employment emerges as industrial liturgy, secular rite of fatigue that affirms survival but denies stability.

Property ideology is dismantled through Fern’s declaration, “I’m not homeless. I’m just houseless. Not the same thing, right?” (Zhao, 2020). Barthes asserted that myth is “a type of speech chosen by history” (2000, p. 129). Fern’s words enact precisely such speech, recasting dispossession as idiom of freedom. Bruder noted, “Nomads often insisted they were not homeless but houseless, a distinction that allowed dignity to survive in motion” (2017, p. 203). Bourdieu described neoliberal regimes as producing “structural violence that normalizes insecurity” (*Acts of Resistance*, 1998, p. 42). Fern’s phrase exemplifies that violence translated into resilience rhetoric. Faludi analyzed collapse of the Dream as gendered betrayal, observing men “stiffed by broken promises of prosperity” (1999, p. 14). Zhao discloses its universality: Fern’s houselessness embodies resilience, yet also inscribes erosion of citizenship. The van’s fragile intimacy, filmed as cosmos of loss, dramatizes the Dream’s transmutation into ritual language of survival.

Myth does not vanish with collapse; it mutates into ritualized circulation. Bob Wells affirms, “I’ll see you down the road” (Zhao, 2020). The phrase translates departure into solidarity, inscribing mobility as communal grammar. Turner defined *communitas* as “a comradeship generated in liminality” (1969, p. 131). Bauman’s liquidity, Standing’s precarity, Butler’s exposure converge here: myth lingers as endless farewell, solidarity enacted through perpetual departure. Slotkin’s myth of settlement unravels into nomadic refrain, parable of impermanence. The horizon at the film’s end stretches without closure, offering only iteration. Zhao situates this horizon as geography of absence, landscape refashioned as epic of loss. The American Dream continues as ritualized wreckage, cultural memory hollowed into refrain, national myth reconstituted as testimony of fragility.

### **Collective Nomadism and Rituals of Solidarity**

Zhao’s desert encampments configure collective life as ceremonial practice woven into precarious landscapes. Turner described *communitas* as “undifferentiated comradeship generated in liminality” (1969, p. 131), and this principle is dramatized in the film’s firelit circles where testimony resonates with liturgical cadence. Bob Wells affirms, “We’ve all had to learn how to take care of each other. I’ll see you down the road”

(Zhao, 2020). Repetition of this phrase functions as covenant, transforming a mundane farewell into incantatory affirmation of solidarity. Bruder emphasized that “Campfires became classrooms, confessionals, and altars for the houseless tribe” (2017, p. 164). Zhao’s visual syntax renders visible the choreography of silence, the uneven rhythms of speech, and the way firelight redefines fragility as shared presence. The aesthetic austerity intensifies the perception of vulnerability transposed into communal form, dramatizing solidarity as lived grammar.

Mourning is articulated as cultural practice that inscribes mortality within shared frameworks of memory. Fern invokes her husband’s absence through hesitant phrasing, while Swankie declares, “I don’t want to die in a hospital. I want to die out here” (Zhao, 2020). Such speech positions death as horizon navigated collectively rather than private dissolution. Assmann defined cultural memory as “the collective knowledge that directs behavior and experience in the interactive framework of a society” (2011, p. 6). Zhao materializes this principle in firelit testimonies where recollections of loss accumulate into archive of itinerant life. Bruder noted, “Stories of illness, bereavement, and endurance moved through the circle like common currency, ensuring pain recognition otherwise unseen” (2017, p. 172). Cinematic duration, devoid of non-diegetic score, accentuates silence as semiotic medium, allowing mourning to be registered as shared rite. Through this cinematic strategy, grief is not reduced to individual emotion but reconstituted as collective reservoir of meaning.

Solidarity is staged in performative gestures of repair, caregiving, and mutual apprenticeship, each elevated by Zhao into symbolic register. Fern instructs a younger traveler, “Be careful on the road” (Zhao, 2020), an utterance that condenses experience into pedagogy. Vehicles are repaired through joint labor, food is circulated without calculation, and advice flows freely as cultural currency. Bruder reported during the RTR gathering, “Guidance traveled like current, medicine, mechanics, survival strategies, binding strangers into apprenticeship of necessity” (2017, p. 190). Butler argued that “Precariousness implies living socially, that one’s life is always in the hands of the other” (2004, p. 20). Zhao’s composition emphasizes tactile actions, hands tightening bolts, passing bowls, insulating vans, gestures that dramatize interdependence as ethic. Solidarity here is constituted not in manifestos but in embodied repetition of assistance, a choreography of survival reframed as cultural practice.

Historical comparisons intensify the resonance of these enclaves. Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* chronicled Depression-era camps as fragile collectivities where displacement engendered fellowship. Countercultural communes of the 1960s rehearsed similar practices of mutuality against industrial alienation. Durkheim argued that “rituals create and recreate society by reaffirming the collective conscience” (1995, p. 474). Zhao’s desert camps extend this lineage: not permanent institutions but episodic formations where solidarity is enacted in cycles of assembly and dispersal. Nancy theorized community as “inoperative,” never finalized but continuously performed (*The Inoperative Community*, 1991, p. 35). Bruder described the annual RTR convergence: “Thousands arrived with vans and tents, exchanged knowledge, built kinship, and

dispersed again into the horizon” (2017, p. 200). Such gatherings produce continuity through recurrence, inscribing collective identity in the temporality of ritual repetition rather than institutional permanence.

Nomadic collectivity is delineated as provisional tribe, fragile yet symbolically saturated. Agamben envisioned *The Coming Community* as belonging constituted through potentiality rather than juridical form (1993, p. 49). Zhao’s imagery resonates with this conception: firelight rituals, testimonies of loss, gestures of care, and repeated farewells configure belonging without foundation. Wells’s affirmation, “I’ll see you down the road” (Zhao, 2020), is transformed into mnemonic device linking remembrance with futurity. Zhu criticized Zhao for “transforming devastation into elegiac imagery” (2022, p. 10), yet elegy itself functions as cultural idiom enabling endurance. Camps are thus inscribed as sacralized enclaves where myth converges with sociology, precarity converted into shared endurance through ceremonial exchange.

At the horizon of the narrative, *Nomadland* reframes the American myth of self-sufficiency by narrating vulnerability as collective parable. Firelit assemblies foreground interdependence; mourning is registered as cultural memory, acts of repair are dramatized as ethical exchange. The Dream of private property and permanent autonomy unravels into fellowship itinerant and temporary, yet reinforced through symbolic recurrence. Zhao situates neoliberal ruins within cinematic cartography of community, producing topography where Turner’s *communitas*, Assmann’s memory, Butler’s precarity, and Agamben’s potentiality converge. Solidarity here is neither utopia nor institution but ceremonial practice continually rehearsed, fragile yet enduring, a horizon where the myth of individuality is displaced by collective rite.

### **Conclusion: The Incomplete Mythology of Modernity**

At the horizon of this analysis, *Nomadland* reveals itself as a cinematic discourse where mythology, sociology, and aesthetic practice intersect to dramatize absence as the fundamental condition of late modernity. Fern’s odyssey exemplifies a narrative that refuses the closure of classical myth, replacing cyclical return with open-ended passage and transfiguring heroism into endurance enacted under precarious conditions. Her figure registers void at the center of myth, configuring survival as the residual archetype through which contemporary existence is narrated. The film’s visual grammar configures departure without arrival as emblematic form, historicizing mobility as the central parable of an age defined by instability.

The American Dream discloses its erosion not simply in economic statistics but in the symbolic disintegration of cultural imagination. Housing as emblem of permanence dissolves into van interiors curated as fragile sanctuaries. Work as index of dignity remaps itself into repetitive gestures performed under the fluorescent lights of warehouses and the dim lamps of seasonal fields. Property as foundation of citizenship reframes itself in Fern’s speech act distinguishing “houselessness” from “homelessness,” a distinction that functions less as semantic nuance than as cultural idiom of survival. Zhao’s aesthetic apparatus accentuates these transformations through austere imagery of landscapes

emptied of permanence. What persists is the Dream reconstituted as cultural trace, a foundational promise reframed into memory and recoded as remnant rather than horizon.

The film assumes the contour of a modern epic not through spectacle of conquest but through its capacity to translate dispossession into allegorical discourse. Deserts register ordeal, highways operate as itineraries without conclusion, abandoned towns embody ruins of industrial collapse, and firelit camps accentuate fragile collectivity. Each spatial configuration dramatizes instability through symbolic cartography, situating geography as archive of social fracture. Zhao's cinematic idiom reconstitutes economic precarity into mythopoetic language, foregrounding fragility as aesthetic form and inscribing vulnerability as cultural grammar.

Collective life surfaces as counterweight to individual dislocation. Camp assemblies accentuate solidarity dramatized through storytelling, mourning, and reciprocal labor. Turner's *communitas* finds cinematic embodiment in circles where testimony resonates with ritual cadence; Assmann's cultural memory materializes in confessions that accumulate as mnemonic archive; Butler's precarious life is configured in gestures of care, repair, and distribution. Zhao's visual syntax renders these dimensions palpable through compositional austerity: silence replaces musical score, natural light sacralizes the ordinary, and duration registers vulnerability as liturgical presence. Community in this framework is configured as ephemeral constellation, its presence enacted through recurring gestures that register survival in historical time.

Considered in its final inflection, the broader significance of *Nomadland* lies in its reconstitution of mythology under neoliberal conditions. Heroic archetypes fragment into narratives of survival; national epics dissolve into itinerant testimonies, promises of permanence are translated into idioms of exposure and displacement. Cinema, in Zhao's articulation, functions as cultural cartography: an archive of collapse and a symbolic economy of endurance. The film emerges as cinematic text in which absence acquires epic status, vulnerability assumes archetypal form, and solidarity is articulated through ceremonial practice.

This study demonstrates the methodological necessity of aligning mythological theory, sociological critique, and cinematic analysis to interpret contemporary cultural texts. Myth theory elucidates disrupted structures of narrative; sociological frameworks diagnose instability and precariousness, cinematic analysis reveals how visual form historicizes crisis. In synthesis, *Nomadland* is registered as incomplete mythology of modernity, a narrative architecture where the American Dream endures as ruin and memory rather than promise. Within this articulation, Fern embodies the invisible subjects of neoliberal society, workers expelled from security, retirees displaced from permanence, wanderers excluded from institutions, yet through Zhao's lens these figures acquire symbolic presence.

In culmination, the film situates the collapse of America's foundational promise as both sociological catastrophe and mythological void. By conjoining aesthetic restraint with testimonial immediacy, Zhao redefines dispossession as cultural epic, installing

precariousness as central trope of modernity. Myth endures in fragmentary form, reappearing as remnant and ritual enacted within the lives of those displaced to the cultural margins. *Nomadland* therefore inscribes late modern culture with an incomplete mythology, one that remembers conquest only as vulnerability, permanence only as itinerancy, and stability only as fragile solidarity rehearsed in ritual time.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, J. T. (1931). *The epic of America*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Agamben, G. (1993). *The coming community* (M. Hardt, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Assmann, J. (2011). *Cultural memory and early civilization: Writing, remembrance, and political imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Atanasova, A. (2021). Nomadland: The new frontiers of the American Dream. *Markets, Globalization & Development Review*, 6(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.23860/MGDR-2021-06-01-07>
- Augé, M. (1995). *Non-places: Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*. London: Verso.
- Barthes, R. (2000). *Mythologies* (A. Lavers, Trans.). New York: Hill and Wang. (Original work published 1972)
- Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Acts of resistance: Against the tyranny of the market*. New York: New Press.
- Bruder, J. (2017). *Nomadland: Surviving America in the twenty-first century*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*. London: Verso.
- Campbell, J. (2004). *The hero with a thousand faces* (Commemorative ed.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Davis, M. (2012). *Planet of slums*. London: Verso.
- Durkheim, E. (1995). *The elementary forms of religious life* (K. Fields, Trans.). New York: Free Press. (Original work published 1912)
- Eliade, M. (1959). *The sacred and the profane: The nature of religion*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Faludi, S. (1999). *Stiffed: The betrayal of the American man*. New York: William Morrow.
- Glamour. (2021, April 26). Chloé Zhao becomes the first woman of color to win the Oscar for best director. Retrieved from <https://www.glamour.com>
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Huang, J., & Tian, Y. (2022). Aging, gender and self-construction: An analysis of elderly women in *Nomadland*. *International Journal of Literature and Arts*, 10(2), 45–52. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijla.20221002.13>
- Jacobin. (2021, March 1). *Nomadland* and the limits of liberal critique. Retrieved from <https://jacobin.com>
- Laist, R. (2024). New materialist freedom in Chloé Zhao's *Nomadland*. *Film-Philosophy*, 28(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.3366/film.2024.0265>
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Nancy, J.-L. (1991). *The inoperative community* (P. Connor, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1986)
- Peck, J. (2010). *Constructions of neoliberal reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rieser, K. (2024). Genre, space, and social critique in Chloé Zhao's *Nomadland*. *Journal of the Austrian Association for American Studies*, 6(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.47060/jaas.v6i1.186>
- Slotkin, R. (1992). *Gunfighter nation: The myth of the frontier in twentieth-century America*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Standing, G. (2011). *The precariat: The new dangerous class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- The New Yorker. (2021, March 1). Framing the wide-open spaces of *Nomadland*. Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com>
- Time. (2020, December 4). What to know about *Nomadland* and the real-life community behind the movie. Retrieved from <https://time.com>
- Tuan, Y.-F. (1977). *Space and place: The perspective of experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Turner, V. (1969). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Vanity Fair. (2021, April 21). *Nomadland* is stirring up controversy. Does the Academy care? Retrieved from <https://www.vanityfair.com>
- van Gennep, A. (1960). *The rites of passage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1909)
- Zhao, C. (Director). (2020). *Nomadland* [Film]. United States: Searchlight Pictures.
- Zhu, Y. (2022). “*Nomadland*: An American or Chinese story?” *Global Storytelling*, 1(2), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.3998/gs.1706>

**Hakem Deęerlendirmesi:** ift “kr” hakem incelemesi.

**ıkar atıřması:** Yazar ıkar atıřması bildirmemiřtir.

**Finansal Destek:** Yazar bu alıřma iin finansal destek beyanı yapmamıřtır.

**Peer-review:** Double-blind peer-reviewed.

**Conflict of Interest:** The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

**Grant Support:** The author declared that this study has received no financial support.



Ege niversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstits | *Ege University, Institute of Social Sciences*

**Ege Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi** | ***Journal of Ege Social Science***

e-ISSN 2651-4982

Cilt 6, Sayı 2, Aralık 2025 | *Volume: 6, Issue: 2, December 2025*

**Sahibi (Owner):** Ege niv. Sosyal Bilimler Enstits adına Mdr (On behalf of Ege Univ. Institute of Social Sciences, Director): Prof. Dr. Mustafa MUTLUER  Yazı İřleri Mdr (Managing Director): Koray KULEYİN (Enstit Sekreteri | Institute Secretary)  Bař Editr (Editor in Chief): Dr. ęr. y. Aytekin ERDOęAN  Editr (Editor): Dr. Ender ZBAY  İngilizce Dil Editr (English Language Editor): Do. Dr. Burcu TRKCAN  Almanca Dil Editr (German Language Editor): Dr. ęr. yesi Hatice Deniz CANOęLU  Yayın Kurulu (Editorial Board): Prof. Dr. Zhal ZEL SAęLAMTİMUR, Prof. Dr. Selami FEDAKAR, Prof. Dr. Saniye UYSAL NALAN, Prof. Dr. Ali Maruf ALASKAN, Prof. Dr. Burcu ARACIOęLU, Prof. Dr. Abdullah TEMİZKAN, Prof. Dr. Gnay Serap TEKİNSAV STC  Grafik Tasarım/ Mizampaj - Teknik İřler - Strateji - Sre Ynetimi - Sekreteryaya (Graphic Desing/page layout - Technical works - Strategy - Process management - Secretarait): **Ender ZBAY**

İnternet Sayfası (Aık Eriřim)

İnternet Page (Open Access)

**DergiPark**  
AKADEMİK

<https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/esbd>

Ege Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi hakemli, bilimsel bir dergidir; Haziran ve Aralık ayında olmak zere yılda iki kez yayınlanır.

Journal Of Ege Social Science is a peer-reviewed, scholarly, periodical journal published biannually, in June.