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Out of Tune with the World: Thrownness and Everyday Life in Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* and Tezer Özlü's *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*

Dünyayla Uyumsuz: Jean Rhys'in *Good Morning, Midnight*'i ile Tezer Özlü'nün *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*'ında Fırlatılmışlık ve Gündelik Hayat

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Abstract

This article provides a comparative reading of Tezer Özlü's *Zaman Dışı Yaşam* and Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* in light of Martin Heidegger's concepts of thrownness, fallenness, authenticity, and tranquility. It illustrates how the protagonists of these novels are "thrown" into a world whose social and temporal rhythm they can neither fully join nor fully escape. Focusing on the protagonists' strained relationship to everyday life, this article further examines how everydayness appears not as a space of belonging but as a condition marked by drift, withdrawal, and suspension. While Rhys's protagonist Sasha responds to the conditions of everydayness through strategies of self-effacement and imitation, Özlü's narrator actively resists absorption, seeking intensity, withdrawal, and literary engagement as forms of coping. Yet neither text offers resolution or recovery. Instead, both protagonists endure their existence through writing, movement, and fleeting human encounters, sustaining life without stability or closure. By reading them together, the article reveals a shared mode of suspended being that negotiates the tension between fallenness, authenticity, and the precarious temporality of everyday life.

Öz

Bu makale, Tezer Özlü'nün *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*'i ile Jean Rhys'in *Good Morning, Midnight*'ını, Martin Heidegger'in fırlatılmışlık, düşmüşlük, sahicilik ve sükunet kavramları ışığında karşılaştırmalı olarak ele alır. Çalışma, bu romanların kahramanlarının, ne bütünüyle katılabildikleri ne de bütünüyle kaçabildikleri toplumsal ve zamansal ritimlere sahip bir dünyaya "fırlatıldıklarını" gösterir. Kahramanların gündelik hayatla kurdukları gerilimli ilişkiye odaklanan makale, gündeliğin bir aidiyet alanı olarak değil, sürüklenme, geri çekilme ve askıda kalma ile belirlenen bir durum olarak görüldüğünü ortaya koyar. Rhys'in kahramanı Sasha, gündeliğin koşullarına kendini silikleştirme ve taklit stratejileriyle karşılık verirken, Özlü'nün anlatıcısı bu soğurulmaya aktif biçimde direnerek yoğunluk, geri çekilme ve edebî angajman arayışına yönelir. Ancak her iki metin de bir çözümlenme ya da iyileşme sunmaz. Aksine, her iki kahraman da yazı, hareket ve geçici insani karşılaşmalar aracılığıyla varoluşlarını sürdürür; böylece istikrar ya da kapanış olmaksızın yaşamı devam ettirirler. Bu iki metni birlikte okuyan makale, düşmüşlük, sahicilik ve gündelik hayatın kırılğan zamansallığı arasındaki gerilimi müzakere eden, askıda kalmış bir varoluş kipini görürün kılar.

Keywords

Thrownness,
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Introduction

Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*, written in 1939, was found by early critics and readers to be "intolerably depressing."¹ Unsurprisingly, as the devastation of the First World War still haunted Europe and tensions were building toward the Second World War, Rhys's portrayal of an aging and a broken woman, and without any prospect of a new beginning, was unlikely to raise the spirits of an already vulnerable society in need of hope. The protagonist, Sasha Jansen, is an adrift figure throughout the novel, and by its end she continues drifting, carrying her sadness and fragility along the way.

I suggest that the Turkish author Tezer Özlü (1943–1986) reveals an existential relationship with Jean Rhys in her fragmented narrative *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*, which was written in 1983 and published posthumously in 1998. Özlü likewise depicts a drifting, unnamed woman traveling across Europe, moving through transient spaces such as hotel rooms, trains, stations, highways, cafés, and engaging in brief encounters that do not culminate into lasting relationships. For both characters, being adrift in such spaces signals a mode of existence that is at once spatial and temporal, marked by suspension rather than progress. There is no assurance of completeness or reconciliation; rather, both texts foreshadow an unanchored mode of existence that I explore in this study.

This sense of drift, suspension, and the tension between fleeting encounters and the search for meaning calls for an existential reading. Accordingly, this article approaches the protagonists of Jean Rhys and Tezer Özlü through several concepts developed by Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time* (1927), particularly thrownness (*Geworfenheit*), fallenness (*Verfallen*), tranquillizing (*Beruhigend*), and authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*). Together these concepts illuminate how human existence unfolds within the structures of everyday life while remaining marked by contingency, uncertainty, and exposure. While Heidegger develops these concepts as ontological structures of *Dasein*, the present study applies these terms to literary analysis and uses them as a lens to examine the lived experiences of the protagonists depicted by their respective authors. The article therefore reads thrownness, fallenness, authenticity, and the tension between tranquilization and existential awareness alongside recurring experiential modes, such as drift and suspension. Drift refers to the protagonists' movement through urban and social spaces without stable orientation, while remaining distanced from the norms that structure ordinary life. Suspension, in contrast, captures moments in which action and belonging are temporarily postponed, repeated, or deferred, emphasizing a different mode of negotiating the world. Thrownness thus illuminates a paradoxical condition: the protagonists are unable to anchor themselves in the world they inhabit in the sense that they do not feel tuned to its norms, expectations, and temporality, yet they continue to occupy this condition rather than seeking to overcome it. In this way, the analysis does not simply apply

¹ Elaine Savory, *Jean Rhys* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 116.

Heidegger's concepts but employ them to explore how the protagonists navigate a thrown existence, revealing the existential dynamics of drift, suspension, and dislocation in everyday life.

Heideggerian Framework

Heidegger uses the concept of thrownness (*Geworfenheit*)² to describe the existential condition in which human beings find themselves situated in a world. It is a “foundness or givenness”³ that *Dasein*⁴ always finds itself already situated within a set of social and historical circumstances that it did not choose. As Heidegger states, “The expression ‘thrownness’ is meant to suggest the *facticity of its being delivered over*.”⁵ *Dasein* is handed over to a world and to a set of circumstances that it is expected to navigate through. However, thrownness does not refer to a finished act; *Dasein* is caught up in the throw as long as it lives. As Heidegger remarks, “*Dasein* gets dragged along in thrownness [...]”⁶ This ongoing nature of thrownness indicates that *Dasein* is never fully settled; existence is a continual negotiation of circumstances, and ongoing “throws.” As Hubert Dreyfus observes, “*Dasein* has to define itself in terms of the public world. It has to accept the fact that in order to make sense of itself, it must already dwell in the meanings given by the one.”⁷ Thus, human existence begins from concrete circumstances that precede individual control, but this does not mean that thrownness implies passivity. *Dasein*, understanding its existential condition must then “take a stand on what it is.”⁸ Thrownness, therefore does not merely describe the origin of existence but also the range of possibilities through which *Dasein* navigates its everyday life.

Thrownness resonates with another Heideggerian term: Fallenness (*Verfallen*), which describes how *Dasein* lives out this thrown condition in everyday existence. According to Heidegger's definition, fallenness signifies an ontological structure of *Dasein* and it “constitutes all *Dasein*'s days in their everydayness.”⁹ In other words, being “fallen” to the world shows how one engages with its surroundings, people, in short, with everydayness. Everyday life appears

² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Blackwell, 2001), 174.

³ Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (MIT Press, 1991), 173.

⁴ Heidegger explains *Dasein* as an entity that relates to its existence; it understands one's own Being: “*Dasein* is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it [...] It is peculiar to this entity that with and through its Being, this Being is disclosed to it. Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of *Dasein*'s Being.” Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 12.

⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 174.

⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 349.

⁷ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, 177.

⁸ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, 173.

⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 180.

familiar and stable, yet this familiarity conceals the fundamental groundlessness of human existence.

In fallenness, existence becomes oriented toward what Heidegger calls the “they” (das Man), the anonymous social order that dictates what one should do, think, and value. *Dasein* in its everyday interactions is both guided and lured towards the “they,” as Heidegger remarks: “‘Fallenness’ into the ‘world’ means an absorption in Being-with-one-another, in so far as the latter is guided by idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity.”¹⁰ Engaging in idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity allows *Dasein* to remain absorbed in everydayness, deferring the anxiety of its own thrownness. Idle talk circulates meaning without depth, curiosity seeks novelty without commitment, and ambiguity keeps possibilities open without resolution, forming a mode of coping that sustains everyday existence.¹¹ In this sense, fallenness is not a mere passivity but an active inclination of *Dasein* toward everyday practices that make existence bearable. *Dasein* is tempted to treat everydayness as ground and lose itself in it. As Heidegger states, “Dasein prepares for itself a constant temptation towards falling.”¹² This absorption in the “they” not only misleads *Dasein* into thinking it leads a fulfilling life but also produces a calming effect, a *tranquility* that masks the ontological uncertainty of existence. As Heidegger notes, “The supposition of the “they” that one is leading and sustaining a full and genuine ‘life,’ brings *Dasein* a *tranquility*, for which everything is ‘in the best of order’ and all doors seem open. Falling Being-in-the-world, which tempts itself, is at the same time *tranquillizing* [*beruhigend*].”¹³ Tranquility reassures *Dasein* that everything is in order; it functions as a form of existential sedation, a postponement that covers over existential disturbance rather than confronting it. It produces a sense of settlement and order, a reassuring familiarity in which everything appears to be in place, whereas nothing is truly grounded.

It is at this point that question of authenticity emerges as a different way of inhabiting thrown existence, one that is deferred by the comforts of everydayness. Authenticity, in Heidegger’s terminology, does not refer to an essential inner truth but to an understanding of one’s own “potentiality-for-Being” in a world, recognizing one’s thrown condition without becoming entirely absorbed in the comforting illusions of everydayness.¹⁴ As Heidegger states, *Dasein* is enlightened about itself in the falling and understands that the world that presents itself as all-knowing, but the real question is to understand itself, the potentiality-for-Being.¹⁵

¹⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 176.

¹¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 177.

¹² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 17

¹³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 178.

¹⁴ Heidegger explains the “potentiality-for-Being” as follows: “The kind of Being which *Dasein* has, as potentiality-for-Being’ lies existentially in understanding. *Dasein* is not something by way of an extra; it is primarily Being-possible. *Dasein* is in every case what it can be, and in the way in which it is its possibility.” Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 144.

¹⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 178.

Tranquillizing effect of everydayness lulls *Dasein* into familiarity and keeps anxiety at bay, but at the expense of obscuring possibility of authenticity. Authenticity, then, is not an escape from fallenness, but a modification of it; it does not cancel tranquility by discovering a hidden inner essence but comes out through an acknowledgment of thrownness without being completely tranquillized by it. In other words, it is a mode of being that does not negate thrownness but refuses to be tranquilized by it. According to Heidegger, if one completely “tranquillized” this creates an alienation in the *Dasein*: “When *Dasein*, tranquillized, and ‘understanding’ everything, thus compares itself with everything, it drifts along towards an alienation [Entfremdung] in which its ownmost potentiality-for-Being is hidden from it. Falling Being-in-the-world is not only tempting and tranquillizing; it is at the same time *alienating*.”¹⁶ This alienation, according to Heidegger, closes off authenticity insofar as *Dasein* becomes “fascinated by the ‘world’ and by the *Dasein*-with of Others in the ‘they’.”¹⁷ Fascination meaning ways of being that promise fullness, stability: it lets itself be absorbed by appearances, norms, and modes of acting. Rather than resolving such questions, *Dasein* remains absorbed in their postponement. *Dasein* is thus lured into everydayness, into a form of fallenness that exerts a tranquillizing effect, casting it away from authenticity.

Good Morning, Midnight: Thrownness in Relational Time and Space

Heidegger’s notion of thrownness offers an insight into how Jean Rhys’s main character, Sasha relates to everydayness. If thrownness indicates finding oneself in a setting that one must navigate without ever chosen its conditions, Sasha’s thrownness may best described as drifting: a peculiar mode of relating to the world, to time, and to space, which suggests that she inhabits the time of the world, yet simultaneously she places a distance between herself and it, not by fully withdrawing from it, but by enduring it and responding to it.

Sasha’s rootlessness, her drifting restless and homeless existence in cosmopolitan Paris figuratively attests to her “thrownness.” In the hope of “changing her luck,” she attempts to conform to the life that is laid out in everydayness.¹⁸ She naively believes that with the right dress her luck might turn for the better, that she might be welcomed back into the ordinary flow of life, or that a change of name might produce such a transformation. At one point, she changes her name from Sophia to Sasha in the hope that her life will shift accordingly. However, this attempt solely can itself be read as another aspect of thrownness: an identity without secure anchoring or a grounded continuity.

Thrownness in her case takes the form of displacement and precarious presence in the city. Sasha is aware that people judge others based on their looks, that people who are vulnerable don’t get love or understanding, and that a single woman can only dwell in a public space if she meets social and heteronormative standards. Sasha is literally displaced from the cityscape whenever she

¹⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 178.

¹⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 176.

¹⁸ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 5.

does not “fit”: she drifts from one hotel room to another, from cafés to transient public interiors. The narrative moves in similarly wandering patterns: the text is structured through fragments of memory, abrupt temporal shifts, and repetitive returns to the same urban spaces. Sasha’s movements in-between these spaces are mirrored by the narrative’s discontinuous structure, in which past and present merge and resist linear progression.

This shows that Sasha’s thrownness is both relational and spatial at the same time. She exists without lasting connections: her husband has left her, her child died shortly after birth, her relatives have stopped giving her money, and her interactions with others are still fleeting and temporary. Interior spaces, rooms, houses, thus matter not as stable dwellings but as fragile sites of exposure and recognition. They are tied to whether Sasha is momentarily received or refused, whether she encounters warmth or indifference, genuine human touch or its absence. As she notes, only under certain conditions do houses become hospitable at all: “If you have money and friends, houses are just houses with steps and a front door – friendly houses where the door opens and somebody meets you, smiling.”¹⁹ Thus, having no stable work, home, or community, Sasha’s connection to the world is not based on belonging, which she neither fully resists nor transcends.

In this drifting mode, she experiences time as a series of repetitions rather than as a progression, and the spaces she occupies are temporary and transitional. This condition is best shown by what could be called a spatial temporality characterized by movement without a goal: an “impasse,” which is a fitting name just like the street she lives on.²⁰ The novel’s opening sentence already signals this repetitive temporality, situating Sasha in cheap hotel rooms, cafés, streets, and public interiors that form an endless circle rather than certain destinations. The hotel room, in particular, reverberates Sasha’s voice: “‘Quite like old times,’ the room says. Yes? No?”²¹ Many more hotel rooms follow, as if Sasha’s condition were measured through their repetition. Through this spatiotemporal logic, her existence unfolds not as progression but as circular drift:

Eat. Drink. Walk. March. Back to the hotel. To the Hotel of Arrival, the Hotel of Departure, the Hotel of the Future, the Hotel of Martinique and the Universe.....Back to the hotel without a name in the street without a name. You press the button and the door opens. This is the Hotel Without-a-Name in the

¹⁹ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 23.

²⁰ Rachel Bowlby and Laurel Harris also dwell on the notion of *impasse* in its capacity to reflect suspension. Rachel Bowlby interprets the notion of *impasse* as a condition that permeates the entire novel. For Bowlby, the repetitions of memory, gesture, and movement, where “nothing seems to change,” signal the absence of an exit: “once there might have been hope for change, for a long time there has been none.” Rachel Bowlby, *Still Crazy After All These Years: Women, Writing, and Psychoanalysis* (Routledge 1992), 58. Building on this formulation, Laurel Harris argues that Sasha actively produces her own *impasse* by embedding herself in objects and relations that simultaneously sustain and entrap her. In this sense, the novel “traces an increasing identification with a world that also rejects its protagonists,” binding agency and failure together rather than opposing them. Laurel Harris, “Impassagenwerk: Jean Rhys’s Interwar Fiction and the Modernist Impasse,” *Journal of Modern Literature*, 44, no. 3 (Spring 2021), 32.

²¹ Jean Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight* (Penguin Books, 2016), 3.

Street Without-a-Name, and the clients have no names, no faces. You go up the stairs. Always the same stairs, always the same room. The room says: 'Quite like old times. Yes? No? Yes'²²

The personified room repeating the novel's opening line reveals an existential condition defined by recurrence rather than change. Streets without names and hotels without names signal a state of homelessness without destination, while clients "with no faces" and Sasha's shift to the pronoun *you* externalize her singular experience, transforming it into a generalized pattern of suspended life. "The Hotel of the Future" suggests that Sasha's future will mirror her present, marked by suspension rather than forward movement. In contrast, "The Hotel of Martinique" tells the story of a Russian painter named Serge who remembers a mulatto woman from Martinique who was racially marginalized and lived in dilapidated conditions. By bringing up this figure, Rhys creates a subtle but important relational space in the story, suggesting that Sasha's feeling of being alone is part of a larger pattern of discrimination that affects women who are already on the margins.²³ The insistence on sameness, on the other hand, ("always the same stairs, always the same room") reinforces a temporality emptied of futurity, a suspension.²⁴

Hotel rooms function as metonyms not only for the cities Sasha inhabits but also for the memories lived within them. Space is inseparable from experience, and a single object, a painting of a banjo player that she bought from the Russian artist, Serge, condenses this fusion, triggering a reflection on thrownness and repetition:

I unroll the picture and the man standing in the gutter, playing his banjo, stares at me. He is gentle, humble, resigned, mocking, a little mad [...] He is singing 'It has been', singing 'It will be'. Double-headed and with four arms.... I stare back at him and think about being hungry, being cold, being hurt, being ridiculed, as if it were in another life than this.

This damned room - it's saturated with the past.... It's all the rooms I've ever slept in, all the streets I've ever walked in [...] Rooms, streets, streets, rooms...."²⁵

Sasha appears to recognize herself in the banjo player's double temporality ("*it has been*" and "*it will be*") a self-reflexive moment that suggests recurrence. Hotel rooms and streets become the

²² Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 119.

²³ A connection that gains additional importance given Rhys's own Creole roots.

²⁴ Deborah L. Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, The City, Modernity* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 145. Sasha's inability to enter everyday life thus does not intimate an isolated existential failure but as part of a wider gendered and racialized dispossession. Deborah Parsons attract the reader's attention to other Rhys characters such as Anna, Julia, and Sasha, single women who also seem to be "drifting" in the urban space of the city by staying in numerous cheap hotels and boarding-houses for short periods, but who also carefully maps "public spaces and the selection of certain places where they can feel comfortable." Similar to those characters, and attentive to the limitations of the urban space, Parsons argues, Sasha "possesses an instinctive knowledge of the marginal and in-between areas she inhabits, and is sensitive to the tone of acceptance, rejection, or indifference that they exude.

²⁵ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 89.

sites where her thrownness is both registered and fixed: the future offers no promise other than repetition. As long as the room provides temporary refuge from what she calls “the wolves outside,” its specific location becomes irrelevant.²⁶ Amsterdam—where she once lived with her ex-husband, Enno, and London—associated with her earlier life, collapse into the same experiential unit. London, she remarks, is reduced to “a little room, smelling stuffy, with my stockings hanging to dry in front of a gas fire.”²⁷

For Sasha, everydayness does not unfold along a linear or progressive timeline; there is no prospect of culmination, only the repetition of falling and thrownness. She reflects: “You are walking along a road peacefully. You trip. You fall into blackness. That’s the past – or perhaps the future. And you know that there is no past, no future, there is only this blackness, changing faintly, slowly, but always the same.”²⁸ Such passages can be read as the reverberations of a traumatized life, marked by loss, sexual exploitation, poverty, and loneliness. Yet they also register a more fundamental acknowledgment of thrownness, one that collapses temporal distinctions. Midnight, or “blackness,” does not simply stand for despair but signals a condition in which past, present, and future lose their differentiating force. Sasha does not move toward the future; she falls into a time that remains “always the same.” The title of the novel, *Good Morning, Midnight*, derived from Emily Dickinson’s poem, already reflects this condition of suspension and repetition.²⁹ Sasha greets every day as a promise of renewal and possibility (by welcoming the day: “*Good Morning*”), yet what confronts her is only midnight: darkness, repetition, and the beginning of another long night that bleeds into the day. This temporal and existential in-betweenness is articulated in her recurring hope of breaking the cycle of drifting: “One day I’ll make a plan. I’ll know what to do,”³⁰ a promise that quickly gives way to the hopelessness: “Tomorrow never comes.”³¹

Sasha’s Fallenness and Tranquilization: Performing the Everyday

If “thrownness” figuratively describes Sasha’s being adrift within a spatial and temporal condition, “fallenness” names the mode through which this thrownness is lived. Heidegger’s notion of fallenness designates the extent to which she allows herself to be absorbed into everydayness. In

²⁶ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 28.

²⁷ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 93.

²⁸ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 143.

²⁹ The poem, according to Judith Kegan Gardiner, is emblematic of polarized desires, and the title of the novel addresses several juxtapositions in the novel, first introduced as an opposition and later recuperated such as oppositions between dark and light, past and present, despair and hope, inside and outside, nature and art, life and death, male and female. Gardiner contends that the day personifies in Dickinson’s poem alludes to the themes of coming home and male rejection observed in the last scene of the novel, however these polarizations prove to be illusory or unclear later on in the novel. Judith Kegan Gardiner, “*Good Morning, Midnight; Good Night, Modernism*,” *boundary 2* 11, no. 1/2 (Autumn 1982–Winter 1983): 234.

³⁰ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 94.

³¹ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 132.

this sense, the question is not whether Sasha is thrown, but how she inhabits that condition: whether she submits to the consolations of everydayness and lives it as she imagines the others do or becomes attentive to its limits.

In a modernist fashion, the everyday is the playground of the modern subject;³² Sasha, it seems, is repeatedly attempting to encounter the everyday life of the modern world, what J. Alfred Prufrock famously describes as “To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet,” yet without ever fully adopting it. Everyday routines carried out in public spaces do not provide grounding so much as they temporarily suspend the confrontation with meaninglessness. In other words, everydayness conceals groundlessness, allowing Sasha’s pain and existential anxiety to be temporarily forgotten. Instead of dealing with the circumstances that produce it, she tries not to ground her life but to fill it with “Hours and hours and hours yet.”³³ Thus, Sasha’s everyday consists of repetition structured through minor variations rather than progress. Her life unfolds as a restless calibration of spaces, moods, and appearances:

My life, which seems so simple and monotonous, is really a complicated affair of cafés where they like me and cafés where they don’t, streets that are friendly, streets that aren’t, rooms where I might be happy, rooms where I never shall be, looking glasses I look nice in, looking glasses I don’t, dresses that will be lucky, dresses that won’t, and so on.³⁴

Any act of going against the current of everydayness, any decisive movement against the rule of the “they,” is persistently postponed: “After the first week I made up my mind to kill myself—the usual whiff of chloroform. Next week, or next month, or next year I’ll kill myself. But I might as well last out my month’s rent, which has been paid up, and my credit for breakfasts in the morning.”³⁵ This deferral reveals how even the thought of a decisive act is absorbed into the calculations of everyday existence.

Tranquillization, according to Heidegger, is the everyday sedation of anxiety that allows life to continue without confronting thrownness. Sasha’s performance of normalcy in everyday life can thus be read as a form of tranquilizing: an attempt to soothe existential anxiety that, in fact, avoids it through perpetual postponement. In this way, Sasha continues to live without confronting her thrownness, inhabiting an ordinary world that seemingly sedates anxiety.

In the novel, Sasha’s attempts to become invisible by copying behaviors, rehearsing speeches, and carefully adjusting her interactions, in short, her performativity, can be read as examples of tranquilizing. She believes that in order to continue living, one must appear in accordance with the accepted norms of everyday life. Therefore, how she looks in public and to

³² A comparison of how everydayness works in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Good Morning, Midnight* can be illuminating. One may easily notice that while the hours are welcomed by Mrs. Dalloway, they are a burden to Sasha.

³³ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 45.

³⁴ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 35.

³⁵ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 70.

people she meets becomes very important. The novel has many scenes in shop windows, mirrors, *lavabos* (public washrooms), and public spaces that serve as Sasha's reflection of herself. In these scenes, Sasha has to affirm her "normalcy." For example, in the passage where she takes René, the gigolo, to a restaurant, she feels to need to see herself on the mirror: "I want to see myself in a good light and I go upstairs to the lavabo, one of the attractions of the Pig and Lily. So clean and resplendent, so well lit, with plenty of looking-glasses and not a soul there to watch you. Am I looking all right? Not so bad. Surely, not so bad..."³⁶ As much as this passage reveals her anxiety to appear acceptable, it provides an ideal image in a Lacanian sense that is wholesome with plenty of looking glasses in a well-lit room for the fractured soul of Sasha. She enjoys the moment of reflection without the scrutinizing eyes that cast doubts on her existence.

At times, Sasha deliberately effaces herself, as when the shop owner arrives from London and she tries not to be noticed: "Of course, you must make your mind vacant, neutral, then your face also becomes vacant, neutral – you are invisible."³⁷ The face here acts like a mask as it hides her thoughts and feelings. On another occasion, she refers to the mask again: "Besides, it isn't my face, this tortured and tormented mask. I can take it off whenever I like and hang it up on a nail."³⁸ At other times, "a perfect dress," dyed hair, her coat, or a hat, both being protective and instrumental in her performance, can become masks in order for Sasha to cope with everyday life. Like a mask, she feels at once protected and partially aligned with everydayness, especially when she imagines herself as "armored": "Today I must be very careful, today I have left my armour at home."³⁹ Fashioning the self as such, ironically, helps Sasha to become invisible, which seems to be a condition for her, a way of passing into everydayness without attracting attention.⁴⁰

³⁶ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 128.

³⁷ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 11.

³⁸ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 33.

³⁹ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 38.

⁴⁰ Nesrin Koç, "Fashioning the Self: Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* and *Good Morning, Midnight*," *Cankaya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 18, no. 1 (2024): 67–75. Koç focuses on representation of fashion and clothing and points to Rhys's characters' struggles in fashioning the self. According to Koç, portrayal of fashion both in *Good Morning, Midnight* and Rhys's 1934 novel, *Voyage in the Dark* is a reflection of "near impossibility" of attaining a unified identity, a coherent sense of the self for their main characters, Sasha and Anna (67). As Koç argues, fashion itself is not separable from identity construction for both Anna and Sasha. Oppressed by patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism, the characters' search for the right hat or the perfect dress could address an existential crisis that results in "dissolution of subjectivity, isolation, and estrangement from one's own self" (75). Thus, according to Koç, "fashioning an identity is portrayed as a performance, a masquerade" although they are "often inefficient in their performances as fashioned bodies" (70–71). Sasha's desire to be confirmed by others after she buys a hat is an example to fashioning an identity. Watching her hat's effect on people's faces is a mirroring reflection, awaiting approval which in turn would grant passage into the public space: "I feel saner and happier after this. I go to a restaurant near by and eat a large meal, at the same time carefully watching the effect of the hat on the other people in the room, comme ça. Nobody stares at me, which I think is a good sign." Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 55–56.

Exploring the intersection of Rhys's own Parisian years and experiences of her characters, particularly Anna in *Voyage in the Dark* and Sasha in *Good Morning, Midnight*, Lauren Elkin draws attention to the invisibility of Rhys's characters and argues that they cannot pass unobserved or be idle wanderers of the city like the *flâneur* figure. According to Elkin, the impossibility of being invisible is what differentiates the *flâneur* and the male novelist from the *flâneuse* and specifically Jean Rhys in her experience of navigating in Parisian urban landscape. She remarks:

While the *flâneur*—and the male novelist—has the freedom to pass unobserved in the crowd, Rhys's characters move through the city, painfully aware that they are mocked. They try, desperately, to be invisible. They may spend all their money on clothing—the astrakhan coat as protective camouflage—but they are inevitably caught out, accosted by men who are disappointed to find they aren't as beautiful close up as they appeared to be from afar. They try for self-effacement, but this is impossible.⁴¹

Unlike a *flâneur*, Sasha's attempts to pass unobserved fail even though she performs, since the others “see through” her. The shop owner, the hotel patron, the waiters, in short, the guardians of public space who regulate passage and belonging, always recognize her as out of place: “I try, but they always see through me. The passages will never lead anywhere; the doors will always be shut. I know...”⁴² Although Sasha does her best to perform gestures, speech, and femininity required for acceptance, by “laughing heartily in the right places,” she can never become an unquestioned part of everydayness.⁴³ The “they” see through her everyday performance, her act of normalcy.

Her crying or “making a scene” in public, expose the fragility of this performativity. Such displays are treated as unacceptable disruptions of normalcy, whether policed by women or men. Sasha, for instance, is scolded by a woman for crying in public at the very beginning of the novel. Her acceptability in the city, then, is dependent on her capacity to suppress emotion: “I don't see why I shouldn't revisit it. I have never made scenes there, collapsed, cried - so far as I know I have a perfectly clean slate.”⁴⁴ Ironically, despite maintaining this “clean slate,” Sasha repeatedly becomes visible in ways she cannot control. When a young woman insults her in a café, “Et qu'est-ce qu'elle fout ici, maintenant?”⁴⁵ Sasha translates the moment as: “What the devil... is she doing here, that old woman? What is she doing here, the stranger, the alien?”⁴⁶ The scene reflects Sasha's acute awareness of how she appears under the scrutinizing gaze of others. In Heideggerian terms, this awareness signals a disturbance in everyday tranquillization: rather than being fully absorbed in the norms of the “they,” Sasha recognizes the performative nature of those norms and her own failure to inhabit them convincingly.

⁴¹ Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016), 62.

⁴² Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 22–3.

⁴³ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 9.

⁴⁴ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 29.

⁴⁵ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 39.

⁴⁶ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 42.

Keeping pace with the “they,” and absorbing everydayness for its tranquillizing effect, demands a constant effort to fill time leaving no gaps, cracks, or moments of exposure. Sasha accordingly plans her days in advance, fearing visibility in what might be called her state of exception. As long as she remains on the surface, public tranquility is preserved; once a crack opens, weakness and despair threaten to spill out. Her self-imposed “program” reveals an attempt to merge seamlessly with the mechanisms of everydayness:

Having no staying power....Yes, exactly....So, no excitement. This is going to be a quiet, sane fortnight. Not too much drinking, avoidance of certain cafés, of certain streets, of certain spots, and everything will go off beautifully.

The thing is to have a programme, not to leave anything to chance - no gaps. No trailing around aimlessly with cheap gramophone records starting up in your head, no ‘Here this happened, here that happened’. Above all, no crying in public, no crying at all if I can help it.⁴⁷

Sasha believes that successful integration will bring acceptance and normalcy, and with them, the possibility of continuing life itself. Yet this belief already signals a precarity sustained only through self-erasure.

In sum, the comfort of ordinariness promised by the “they” is soothing on the surface, yet Sasha repeatedly fails in her attempts to be fully soothed. Rather than achieving the tranquillization that everydayness promises, she remains exposed to her thrownness, unable to settle into the forgetfulness that would stabilize her existence. From this perspective, Sasha can be read as suspended between tranquillization and authenticity in a Heideggerian context, not as one who arrives at authenticity, but as one who cannot fully abandon her exposure to thrownness.

Suspension Between Tranquility and Authenticity

Suspension between tranquillization and authenticity is most explicit in Sasha’s fleeting, everyday relations with others. She is repeatedly drawn into conversations and encounters she does not actively choose; her relationships remain fragmentary, temporary, and peripheral. Although she longs for genuine connection, she approaches the world from a distance enabled by masks or armors, which keep her both protected and estranged. Those she encounters appear as unstable and drifting as she is: names are fabricated, identities and nationalities remain questionable, and only in rare moments, such as her encounters with Serge or the young woman selling hats, Sasha senses genuine human touch.

Sasha is clearly able to differentiate between authentic affection and what she perceives as performance whether in herself or in others. In Heideggerian terms, she sees through the banality of idle talk, repetition, and mediocrity that frames everydayness. For example, when she meets the gigolo, René, she anticipates his rehearsed narrative: “He is going to say his piece. I have done this

⁴⁷ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 8.

so often myself that it is amusing to watch somebody else doing it.”⁴⁸ After listening to his story, she “starts her piece”⁴⁹ in turn, knowingly resuming the performance. This moment reveals not only her insight into the mechanisms of everydayness but also her complicity in them. Like the armor she wears to shield her vulnerable self, performance functions as a defensive strategy. As the following section will show, this mode of performance culminates in the novel’s final and most decisive scene.

Sasha also has fleeting moments of clarity in which she recognizes that the tranquility offered by everydayness is inauthentic and that conformity requires imitation. In one of the novel’s most self-aware passages, she explicitly condemns this compelled acting in a tone that is at once sarcastic and desperate:

But this is my attitude to life. Please, please, monsieur et madame, mister, missis and miss, I am trying so hard to be like you. I know I don’t succeed but look how hard I try. Three hours to choose a hat; every morning an hour and a half trying to make myself look like everybody else. Every word I say has chains round its ankles; every thought I think is weighted with heavy weights. Since I was born, hasn’t every word I’ve said, every thought I’ve thought, everything I’ve done, been tied up, weighted, chained? And, mind you, I know that with all this I don’t succeed. Or I succeed in flashes only too damned well....But think how hard I try and how seldom I dare. Think - and have a bit of pity. That is, if you ever think, you apes, which I doubt.⁵⁰

Staged as a grotesque monologue (“Please, please, monsieur et madame”) this passage exposes the theatricality of everyday existence and Sasha’s awareness of her own participation in it. Ironically, she condemns the “they” as “apes,” animals defined by imitation, even as she acknowledges her own tendency to copy and perform. The imagery of chains and weights signals her recognition that existence reduced to appearance is a form of constraint rather than belonging. In Heideggerian terms, this moment signifies authenticity as resistance to the fascination of the “they” and to the fallenness of everydayness. But as the novel shows, this clarity is only temporary; understanding does not lead to a lasting change in how she sees the world.

One might be tempted to argue that having reached such clarity, Sasha becomes immune to the risk of “losing herself” in the “they,” that even if she continues drifting, she is now able to realize her thrownness. The novel’s final scene can be read as an affirmation of this claim in my reading. Rather than withdrawing from performance, Sasha persists in it, fully conscious of its falseness. Being aware of its falsity does not end acting; however, instead, she continues to perform (“for the last time”).⁵¹

In this scene, Sasha’s suspension between tranquility and authenticity becomes most visible. Although she initially turns down René on the street, she welcomes him into her room with sudden joy, momentarily hoping that something might be retrieved: her youth, beauty, her former self.

⁴⁸ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 57–8.

⁴⁹ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 62.

⁵⁰ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 86–7.

⁵¹ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 158.

This fragile hope collapses when René mocks her for “playing a comedy,” a sinister remark that recalls her earlier encounter with him and the broader motif of “acting” that permeates the novel.⁵² Their dialogue turns explicitly theatrical thereafter: René insists on “seeing this comedy,”⁵³ shouting in a “high falsetto voice,”⁵⁴ while Sasha attempts to reassure herself by reframing the situation: “This is really damned comic.”⁵⁵

What follows is a brutal inversion of performance. Sasha “plays” dead during the rape, a gesture that exposes the limits of acting as a strategy of survival. This is a comedy in which only one party performs: René no longer needs to act, while Sasha resumes her role, responding with the “ritual answer” (“Si, j’ai compris”)⁵⁶ and even ending the encounter with a grotesque echo of theatrical closure: “I shall laugh every time I think about you.”⁵⁷ Needless to say, performance here functions not as protection but as erasure.

After René leaves, Sasha collapses into a split consciousness: between the self who cries and the self who watches: “This is me, this is myself, who is crying. The other – how do I know who the other is? She isn’t me.”⁵⁸ The scene then assumes a hallucinatory, nightmarish tone.⁵⁹ Hoping irrationally for René’s return, Sasha leaves the door open, stripped and defenseless. Instead, the figure she has long feared appears: the traveling salesman (*commis voyageur*), her next-door neighbor, previously associated with threat and exposure. His arrival completes what Sasha has struggled to evade throughout the novel—the image of herself as a “fallen” woman, a *femme convenable*, sexually available and seen as such. Despite all her efforts to imitate, perform, and tranquilize herself into respectability, this encounter renders those strategies meaningless. Her final words while yielding to the man in white gown, “yes, yes, yes”⁶⁰ echoing the famous expression of Molly Bloom at the end of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* is another allusion to fictionality. Sasha surrenders, embraces him, and repeats “yes, yes, yes,” bringing the narrative to end.⁶¹

⁵² Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 149.

⁵³ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 149.

⁵⁴ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 149.

⁵⁵ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 150.

⁵⁶ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 152.

⁵⁷ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 153.

⁵⁸ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 153.

⁵⁹ This scene can be read emblematic of Sasha’s polarized and split identity which is seen throughout the narrative. As Judith Kegan Gardiner notes, “She is simultaneously old and young, rich and poor, stupid and bright, desiring and chaste, repellent and desirable, English and French, a mother and not a mother, a good woman and a bad one” Gardiner, “*Good Morning, Midnight, Good Night, Modernism*,” 239.

⁶⁰ Rhys, *Good Morning, Midnight*, 158.

⁶¹ Many critics have pointed to the resemblance of Sasha’s repetition of “yes” to Molly Blooms decisive “Yes” that ends James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Judith Kegan Gardiner draws attention to many other similarities between Molly and Sasha and coming to the last scene shows how both characters welcome a less satisfactory lover while fantasizing the other. Molly, Blazes Boylan instead of her husband

The final scene thus crystallizes Sasha's repeated attempts to survive social norms through performance and strategic invisibility, what she herself names as "comedy."⁶² This comedy, however, is dark and uncontrollable: she cannot end it, even while fully aware that she is performing. That is to say, Sasha is suspended between acting and refusal, unable either to withdraw from the scene or to transform herself into a fictional role that would offer distance or resolution.⁶³

Critical responses to the ending diverge significantly, recognizing Sasha as a character caught between performance, trauma, resistance, and fragmentation. Judith Kegan Gardiner offers an affirmative reading of the ending, interpreting Sasha's final scene as a moment of empowerment, suggesting that she regains agency through speech and gesture as she returns from "the wrong bed" to her own capacious one. Her final "yes – yes – yes," Gardiner argues, signals an acceptance of "the burdens of a full humanity" under patriarchy and a refusal of polarized oppositions between self and other, man and woman, reader and character.⁶⁴ Such a reading positions Rhys as destabilizing symbolic structures of language and literary authority that have historically discredited women's voices.

Other critics, however, question this affirmative interpretation. Maren Linett, for instance, cautions that readings which emphasize resistance to "culturally constructed oppositions" risk underestimating the protagonists' profound helplessness. Rhys's women, she reminds us, are "poor, badly educated, female, and often colonial subjects exiled to the metropolis," facing several forms of exclusion.⁶⁵ From this perspective, focusing solely on social critique risks overlooking

Bloom and Sasha, the young gigolo while she opens her arms to the less attractive commercial traveler. Gardiner, "Good Morning, Midnight; Good Night, Modernism," 248.

⁶² The description of the man with white gown as "paper man" "obscene, half understood religion" foregrounds the themes of deception, ambiguity, and appearance vs. reality that permeate the novel. The artifice indicated in these themes is re-enacted in the final scene in the form of a "comedy." As Carmen Woolgar remarks other items of artifice in the novel point to how Sasha builds her life on the discrepancy between doubles: "The real world, as Rhys sees it, is composed of deceptive appearances, game playing and hypocrisy. Rhys often employs images such as masks, puppets, mirrors, parrots, and doubles, as a means of revealing how our foundations of truth are built on artifice." Carmen Woolgar, "Truth and Strangers in Jean Rhys's Novels: *Good Morning, Midnight* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*" (MA thesis, Concordia University, 1997), 9.

⁶³ For Molly Hite, Rhys's protagonists are victims who are fully aware of their victimization. However, their awareness does not make them any less victimized: "[I]t serves only to make them self-conscious in their roles and thus alienated from the society that wants to identify them completely with these roles." Molly Hite, *The Other Side of the Story: Structures and Strategies of Contemporary Feminist Narratives* (Cornell University Press, 1989), 28.

⁶⁴ Gardiner, "Good Morning, Midnight; Good Night, Modernism," 249.

⁶⁵ Maren Linett, "'New Words, New Everything': Fragmentation and Trauma in Jean Rhys," *Twentieth Century Literature* 51, no. 4 (2005): 437–8.

the psychic dimension of trauma that Sasha has experienced. By identifying symptoms of post-traumatic stress, Linett offers a reading signaling how trauma informs Rhys's textual strategies.⁶⁶

Between these positions, critics such as Celiese Lypka and Coral Ann Howells complicate the relationship between empowerment and victimhood. Lypka rejects the notion of passive victimhood, arguing that Rhys's heroines arrive at a form of "self-indifference" which signals not passivity but a refusal of normative narratives of successful womanhood.⁶⁷ Self-indifference, she claims, is "an active removal of the self from the reading of societal expectations through human essentialism."⁶⁸ In this sense, Sasha's final encounter with the gigolo affirms a confrontation with her own sense of being lost, aligning her with other Rhys heroines who embrace precariousness as a mode of resistance rather than as feminine failure. Similarly, Coral Ann Howells reads the ending through the novel's pervasive doublings and distortions, claiming that Sasha is neither simply unstable nor fully split, but a fragmented subject whose precarious coherence is repeatedly disrupted by memory and fantasy.⁶⁹ This fragmentation reveals a recurring double bind in Rhys's fiction: although her heroines recognize the social structures that entrap them, they do not attempt to escape them. Instead, they remain within these conditions, where each betrayal marks "another expulsion from paradise."⁷⁰

This interpretation parallels the reading I proposed above: Sasha's drifting does not simply register failure. As long as she does not fully disappear into the tranquilized rhythms of everydayness, her movement remains open-ended, marked less by resolution than by endurance. The novel's final scene therefore becomes the most decisive moment for anticipating Sasha's future mode of being. She neither achieves stable authenticity nor fully succumbs to the soothing mechanisms of the "they." Instead, she remains suspended, continuing to drift, revealing how thrownness could elicit various existential responses rather than a singular structure of *impasse*. It is at this point that Tezer Özlü's *Zaman Dışı Yaşam* establishes a dialogue with Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*.

Both texts portray protagonists who drift without stable ground while navigating the social and temporal rhythms of everyday existence, yet they respond to this condition differently. While Sasha attempts to continue living in the world by blending into it through imitation and performance, the narrator of *Zaman Dışı Yaşam* seeks distance from the norms and temporality of the everyday. The analysis that follows approaches this divergence through the Heideggerian framework introduced above.

This divergence can also be understood in relation to the distinct historical contexts in which the two works were produced. *Good Morning, Midnight*, written in the interwar period, portrays

⁶⁶ Linett, "Fragmentation and Trauma," 438.

⁶⁷ Celiese Lypka, "I Look Straight into His Eyes . . . For the Last Time': Intimacy and Indifference in Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*," *Journal of Modern Literature* 46, no. 4 (Summer 2023): 170.

⁶⁸ Lypka, "Intimacy and Indifference," 181.

⁶⁹ Coral Ann Howells, *Jean Rhys* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 94.

⁷⁰ Howells, *Jean Rhys*, 13.

Sasha's wandering through Paris as shaped by precarious social and economic conditions that intensify her vulnerability and sense of entrapment. By contrast, Tezer Özlü wrote *Zaman Dışı Yaşam* more than four decades later, after experiencing the political turbulence of Turkey in the 1960s–1980s and spending extended periods in Europe, where she encountered existentialist and modernist literature. Her writing also emerges at a moment when feminist debates and women's movements were gaining greater visibility in 1980s. While Özlü's work retains a strong existential dimension, the narrator's mobility reflects a later historical moment in which women's autonomy and subjectivity were being reconsidered in literary and social discourse.⁷¹ These differences should be taken into account in explaining why the two protagonists respond to thrownness in contrasting ways: Sasha seeks survival through conforming everyday norms, whereas Özlü's narrator rejects the temporal and social order that sustains them.

Zaman Dışı Yaşam: Thrownness and The Refusal of Tranquility

Özlü's protagonist, an unnamed first-person narrator, also confronts the condition of thrownness, however, unlike Sasha, she refuses to be tranquilized by conforming the habits, appearances, and temporal rhythm of the "they." Everydayness appears to her as banal and inauthentic, something to be resisted rather than absorbed. Because of this, her relation to the world does not exactly correspond to Heidegger's account of fallenness as absorption in the everyday. Instead of "falling" into the world, Özlü's character actively resists absorption, seeking an existence lived outside the time of the "they."

Yet this refusal does not mean reaching a transcendence or mastery. Even as she puts a distance between herself and everyday temporality, Özlü's character remains exposed to drift and instability. She inhabits a suspended position between two temporalities: the time of the "they," and an alternative "out-of-time" existence suggested by the title itself. In this sense, *Zaman Dışı Yaşam* (literally translated as "*Life Outside Time*") articulates a mode of thrownness without tranquility: a life lived neither fully within everydayness nor entirely outside it, but in a restless interval that will require a different understanding of authenticity.

As in *Good Morning, Midnight*, the predicament of thrownness in *Zaman Dışı Yaşam* is both temporal and spatial. *Zaman Dışı Yaşam* similarly resists narrative progression while moving between memory, travel, and reflection. Designed as a film script, the text is intertextual and multivocal, drawing on moments from Özlü's other writings, particularly from her semi-autobiographical fragmented text, *Yaşamın Ucuna Yolculuk* (1984). Cesare Pavese, a writer Özlü deeply admired, appears both as a shadow author and as a narrative presence, most notably through

⁷¹ The differing trajectories of Sasha and Özlü's narrator therefore emerge not only from individual psychological conditions but also from their cultural and historical milieus, which can be elaborated in further studies. On the development of feminist discourse and the women's movement in modern Turkey, see: Şirin Tekeli, *Women in Modern Turkish Society: A Reader* (Zed Books, 1995).

the narrator's journey to the hotel room in Turin where Pavese committed suicide. The overlapping of past and present, the camera-like cuts and transitions between scenes, voiceovers do not only render the text a site in which different temporalities and voices coexist, but these narrative techniques produce a sense of ephemerality and resistance to closure. Rather than resolving the narrator's search, the text sustains a condition of suspension, while her character keeps on drifting to pursue her ongoing negotiation with memory and selfhood.

Özlü's character is constantly on the move, passing through transient spaces such as hotel rooms, cafés, trains, highways, streets without settling in any of them. This ongoing movement points to an existential orientation. Being "on the way" becomes a mode of existence in itself, though one that does not fully coincide with Heidegger's notion of fallenness as involvement and absorption. Rather than being immersed in the world, Özlü's character inhabits it provisionally, keeping distance from places, identities, and attachments. Her confession about her desire to avoid all kinds of attachments, echoes her desire to embrace her "thrownness" instead of her willingness to be tranquilized by conformities of everyday life. The exterior voice, meaning the inner voice of the woman speaks: "My greatest happiness is to escape from everything. From everything. From all children. From all pains. From all loves. From all orgasms. From all nights. From all days. From every crescentmoon, from every country. From every border."⁷² Likewise, when a waiter asked about her nationality, she responds simply, "None of them,"⁷³ a gesture that figuratively rejects all spatial and political bonds.

The recurring image of the train at the beginning and at the end of the text, moving toward an unknown destination, establishes the existential frame of thrownness in *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*: As the train rides towards an obscure future, it harbingers a life doomed to perpetual departure. The first image of the train carries the narrator back to her childhood in 1949, Gölcük. The child encounters her grandmother, crouched in a shallow pit, who explains that she has escaped home and intends to disappear behind the hills. As a train passes beyond those hills, the child watches it with longing. This early, cinematic scene foreshadows the narrator's future orientation toward escape, toward drifting itself. As the grandmother tells her granddaughter, what she desires is not arrival but "getting lost."⁷⁴

The narrative then shifts to the present: the narrator is now on a train herself. Her words confirm that being on the road has become a mode of existence rather than a means to an end: "The train departs. The woman is sitting on the train... She is on the train, yet she is nowhere. At the same time, she is everywhere."⁷⁵ The final scene mirrors this image, showing her once again seated

⁷² Tezer Özlü, *Zaman Dışı Yaşam* (Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2023), 44. Original Turkish: "Benim en büyük mutluluğum herşeyden kaçmak. Herşeyden. Tüm cocuklardan. Tüm acılardan. Tüm sevgilerden. Tüm orgazmlardan. Tüm gecelerden. Tüm günlerden. Her hilal Aydan, her ülkeden. Her sınırdan."

⁷³ Özlü, *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*, 18. Original Turkish: "Hiçbirinden."

⁷⁴ Özlü, *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*, 7.

⁷⁵ Özlü, *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*, 8. Original Turkish: "Tren kalkar. Kadın trende oturmaktadır... Trendedir, ama hiçbir yerdedir. Aynı zamanda da her yerdedir."

alone by the train window, moving rapidly toward an unknown destination. Both of these framing scenes suggest that no form of settled life offers solace and that drifting persists as an existential condition rather than a temporary crisis.

Throughout the text, the narrator continues this motion by shifting between trains, buses, and cars, remaining simultaneously “everywhere and nowhere.” This ambiguity resonates with Heideggerian thrownness, though it does not entail complete disorientation. The narrator does move toward particular figures by following her lover Rainer across European cities and later seeking out the hotel room where her favorite author, Cesare Pavese committed suicide. But these destinations do not promise union, resolution, or grounding. Instead, they function as orienting points within a life structured by exposure rather than fulfillment. Like Sasha, she allows herself to be carried into haphazard encounters and ephemeral relationships that do not culminate in completion; yet, also like Sasha, she remains acutely attentive to moments of genuine human contact and sincerity, fleeting as they may be.

In search of genuine human sincerity and an intensified sense of existence, Özlü’s character prefers thrownness over the tranquillization offered by everydayness. In Heideggerian terms, she resists being “fascinated by the ‘world’ and by the Dasein-with of Others in the ‘they’.”⁷⁶ Such resistance would ordinarily result in alienation from society; yet, because her relationships to both places and people are temporary and non-binding, alienation does not trouble her. On the contrary, detachment enables her to pursue what she perceives as an unchanging truth about life, one that can only be approached by escaping the routines and consolations of everydayness.

This desire is articulated, for instance, after she arrives in Trieste with the Greek young man she met on the train. In the hotel room, looking at herself in the mirror, she expresses a wish to separate herself from the tranquillizing structures of daily life: “If only I could detach myself from everything. From everything, from the bourgeois or petit-bourgeois, from everything that this accursed daily order unleashes upon me.”⁷⁷ Significantly, at this very moment, the city is unified by a football match broadcast on the radio and TV, everyone absorbed into the same official time of the “they.” The narrator, however, observes this collective temporality from a distance, situating herself outside its rhythms and shared temporality.

She thus seeks a form of life that is not ruled by normalized time, routine, or triviality, but one that resists tranquillization. Watching the abandoned vineyards from her window, she meditates on whether it is possible to strip life of this effect: “From time to time, after listening to worthless news bulletins, when I look at the abandoned vineyards outside from the edge of my window, I think that a life consisting of coincidences is not a life. And I ask myself whether I have

⁷⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 176.

⁷⁷ Özlü, *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*, 27. Original Turkish: “Herşeyden ayırabilseydim kendimi. Herşeyden, burjuva ya da küçük-burjuva, allahın belası gündelik düzenin üstüme saldıgı herşeyden...”

truly escaped from coincidences or not.”⁷⁸ To detach oneself from what Özlü distinguishes as “coincidence,” here, means to assume responsibility for one’s choices and to live in accordance with oneself rather than dissolving into the everydayness of the “they.” This is why she remains open to meaningful moments with others; however contingent they may be. The figures she encounters such as the Greek boy, her lover Rainer who drifts away from her, the lonely man on the train, the hotel’s secretary, and others she meets in transient spaces, do not anchor her in stable relationships, but neither are they absorbed into habitual sociality. She remains at the periphery instead, suspended between participation and refusal. One might argue that she occupies a liminal state in which she can never fully escape everydayness, yet never fully submit to the time of the “they” either.

Escape as a Mode of *Thrownness*

The desire to be outside time that the title implies—expressed through the acts of leaving, escaping, and remaining on the way—is not only peculiar to *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*, but constitutes a defining motif across Tezer Özlü’s oeuvre. Throughout her semi-autobiographical novellas, short stories, and essays produced during her short life, the reader repeatedly encounters a persona who resists the conformities of social life, patriarchal structures, and the oppressive political climate of her time. This impulse to leave often originates at home. In *Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleri* (1980), for instance, the stifling atmosphere of a middle-class provincial home, ruled by an authoritarian father, extends beyond the household into the surrounding suburbs (*taşra*), drawing the narrator’s life within rigid boundaries. The escape from home thus suggests a leap towards survival and liberation.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Özlü, *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*, 31. Original Turkish: “Zaman zaman hiçbir şey yaramaz haber bültenlerini dinledikten sonra, pencereimin kenarında dışardaki terk edilmiş üzüm bağlarına baktığımda, rastlantılardan oluşan bir yaşamın yaşam olmadığını düşünüyorum. Ve kendi kendime gerçekten rastlantılardan sıyrılıp sıyrılmadığımı soruyorum.”

⁷⁹ The motif of leaving is a recurrent theme in Özlü’s collection of essays, *Kalanlar* as well. In the following passage Özlü reveals how she wants to escape from her home, family and country. Her rootlessness reminds Sasha’s rootlessness, in the sense that she names herself and that she belongs nowhere: “I think my life has no connection to the lives of my mother and father. I am not born of a mother and a father. I sprouted like a weed on the Anatolian plateau. My very birth was a severing from roots. I never searched for my roots. I could have had roots severed from ‘back-worlds’ in which I could live with love. Like my mother and father; all cities, countries, days, nights, every sky remained a stranger to me. As I draw closer to people, I move further away from these things I have listed. I will distance myself from the sky, from its lights, sunsets, darknesses, and clouds... until I reach the darkness from which I emerged. Yes, where do I come from? From a mother and father who are strangers to me. From a mother tongue that has become foreign to me. From a nature that both gladdens and terrifies me. From a country where I suffer and from which I want to flee.” Tezer Özlü, *Kalanlar*, 16th ed. (Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2015), 44.

The motif of leaving recurs across Özlü's works in different guises: as flight from domesticity, from institutional life, from fixed identities, and from socially prescribed roles. While some critics have read this impulse through the lens of modernization and the alienation of the intellectual,⁸⁰ others have emphasized how Özlü's women resist imposed subject positions, such as motherhood, marriage, normative sexuality that confine their existence, and to leave suggests hope, a new path without boundaries for these characters.⁸¹ These interpretations are undoubtedly persuasive. Yet they do not fully account for the existential dimension of Özlü's insistence on leaving.

I suggest that Özlü's characters' desire to escape and to remain on the way exceeds sociological or political explanations and gestures instead toward a mode of being that seeks meaning in drift itself. Leaving is not just a reaction to oppression or trauma, but an affirmative existential stance, a refusal of settled life even if it may lead to an uncertain existence. Özlü articulates this position explicitly: "I am going, in order to escape from molds. I will not grow weary of going. Going from cities, going to husbands, returning, going to countries, going to the asylum, going again, coming again, nothing will deter me. I perceive life as GOING."⁸² Read in this light, *Zaman Dışı Yaşam* appears as the realization of this dream, not as a destination reached, but as an existence sustained through movement.

What is at stake in this compulsion to leave is not merely movement, but a search for authenticity itself: a desire to experience life in its intensity, that is stripped of the comforts, appearances, and disguises of everydayness. Such an understanding of authenticity is reduced to naked existence, something akin to raw feeling, vulnerability, and genuine compassion for Özlü. "I must be able to return to my skin... I must find my skin again," the narrator tells herself, expressing a longing to return to her own body as a site of truth and shelter.⁸³ This desire to "find her skin" stands in marked contrast to Sasha's repeated attempts to alter her appearance through dresses, hats, and masks in order to survive the social world. While Sasha seeks invisibility by suppressing her fragility, Özlü's character refuses such invisibility, a form of concealment.

Likewise, she does not imitate, perform, or wear masks. But instead, she seeks intensity in lived experience, particularly in her relations with others, however fleeting they may be. This intensity, paradoxically, often emerges through simple, fleeting moments or encounters. Recalling

⁸⁰ Hasan Akgöğ, "Tezer Özlü'nün Eserlerinde Yabancılaşma Bağlamında Gitme Temi," *Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 8, no. 15 (June 2018): 145.

⁸¹ Hazel Melek Akdik, "Tezer Özlü Yazımında Kadınlık Durumu ve Öznenin Varoluş Umudu," *Monograf*, no. 12 (2019): 123.

⁸² Tezer Özlü, *Yaşamın Ucuna Yolculuk* (Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2018), 52. Original Turkish: "Kalıplardan kaçmak için gidiyorum. Gitmekten yılmayacağım. Kentlerden gitmek, kocalara gitmek, geri dönmek, ülkelere gitmek, tımarhaneye gitmek, gene gitmek, gene gelmek, hiçbir şey yıldırılmayacak beni. Yaşamı, GİTMEK olarak algılıyorum."

⁸³ Özlü, *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*, 11. Original Turkish: "Tenime geri dönebilmeliyim... Tenimi bulmalıyım yeniden."

Pavese after a chance sexual encounter in a hotel in Nish, she repeats: “There is a life to be lived. There are bicycles to be ridden. There are sidewalks to be walked upon and sunsets to be savored.”⁸⁴ What surfaces here is not reconciliation with everydayness, but a reclaiming of life from its tranquilized, normalized forms. A powerful desire for life (*güçlü bir yaşam özlemi*) thus coexists with her refusal to inhabit the time of the “they.” Life, for Özlü’s character, is not defined by continuity or social belonging, but by intensity, by moments that rupture habitual time rather than submit to it. Likewise, her longing to live intensely does not negate her desire to escape from bonds; instead, it reflects a refusal of binding attachments that immobilize, in favor of transient encounters that keep existence open.

Writing and The Possibility of Authenticity

The above-mentioned irresoluteness appears as a dilemma Özlü’s character cannot resolve within lived time itself. Her desire to exist outside of standardized, public time appears to be a possibility reserved for the realm of fiction. Writing, for Özlü, becomes a way of staying alive, not because it offers resolution or redemption, but because it bears the intensity of life in excess: love, emotion, death, even when these appear only in fragments. In the following passage, she articulates what this intensity means for her and how she hopes to encounter it:

The woman thinks of her insatiable longing. This is not a longing for love; it is a longing for a life just as strong as it is. Until that moment, she had tried to fill this longing with love, with her relationships with people she knew and did not know, and with her love for literature. Through reading and writing. At this moment, sitting alone on the train to Turin, she decides to change herself. In that moment, she realizes that literature is more alive than life itself, and she thinks this is the very reason literature is born. Until then, she had believed that life was more vivid than literature. But literature is more charged with life, more charged with love, more charged with emotion, more charged with death. SHE IS NO LONGER AFRAID OF BEING ALONE.⁸⁵

In tandem with a Proustian desire to search for wholeness (to recuperate loss and respond to the fragmentation of modernity and the modern subject), Özlü’s character turns to fiction in the hope of finding intensity, if not authenticity, there. By transforming herself into a fictional character, as she does throughout this text, she remains outside real, linear time while simultaneously finding a

⁸⁴ Özlü, *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*, 17. Original Turkish: “Yaşanacak bir yaşam vardır. Binilecek bisikletler var. Yürünecek yaya kaldırımları ve tadına varılacak güneş batışları vardır.”

⁸⁵ Özlü, *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*, 30–1. Original Turkish: “Kadın doyumsuz özlemini düşünür. Bu bir aşk özlemi değil tıpkı onun gibi güçlü bir yaşam özlemidir. O bu özlemi o ana kadar, aşkla, tanıdığı ve tanımadığı insanlarla olan ilişkileriyle, edebiyata olan sevgisiyle doldurmaya çalışmıştır. Okumak ve yazmakla. Turin’e giden trende tek başına oturduğu bu anda kendisini değiştirmeye karar verir. O anda edebiyatın, yaşamın kendisinden daha canlı olduğunu kavrar ve edebiyatın doğmasının nedeninin de bu olduğunu düşünür. O ana kadar o yaşamın daha canlı bir şey olduğuna inanmıştır. Ama edebiyat daha çok yaşam, daha çok aşk, daha çok duygu, daha çok ölüm yüküdür. ARTIK YALNIZ KALMAKTAN ÜRKMEZ.”

form of solace unavailable to her in lived experience. This also explains why she is constantly writing, between journeys, during travels, in hotel rooms, and on trains.

Writing does not restore wholeness in any final sense, nevertheless, it holds fragmentation together and sustains the desire for a more intensive life. As she drifts from affair to affair, from place to place, content with brief intimacies, whether sexual or friendly; she comes to accept that there will be no culmination, no certitude, no homecoming that would stabilize existence once and for all. What remains is the acknowledgment of thrownness, of being perpetually on the way without the promise of arrival. As the final scene shows, her character's cathartic tears do not signal resolution but an acceptance of this irresoluteness.

The last scene, one of the key moments in the text, brings together these existential concerns in a condensed passage. The narrator arrives at a small, non-touristic village where Pavese was born, a place where strangers, especially a woman traveling alone, are immediately noticed. She wishes to meet an old man named Nuto, supposedly a relative of Pavese. Orazio, the hotel secretary whom she briefly met in the room where Pavese committed suicide, unexpectedly visits the village to see her. While introducing Orazio to Nuto, she notices a newspaper Nuto is reading and learns that Rainer has been involved in a car accident. Frozen by the news, she takes Orazio to a vineyard, where they make love. When they return, Nuto asks where they had met before. She responds that they met at Hotel Roma and that they are in love. This abrupt confession signals not deception but an existential assent: an acceptance of life itself, whether with Rainer or with anyone who "is able to love."⁸⁶ Two funeral rites pass; Nuto plays the clarinet. She sobs quietly, unnoticed by those around her. When Nuto asks why she is crying, she responds: "Is it not death itself that intensifies life?"⁸⁷ Death is the inescapable "intensifier" that gives life its meaning. It is as if she moves beyond the imminent loss of her beloved toward a question that concerns existence itself. The narrator faces mortality, and the scene ends with a cut. In a circular movement, the final lines return to the opening image of the train she once watched with longing. Merged with the obscure ancestral link with the grandmother, whose desire to escape home remains unexplained, though mental illness is implied in her attempt to escape home, we see the narrator once more on a train: "The train whistles and moves swiftly... it whistles and moves swiftly... The woman is sitting alone by the window.... The train whistles and moves swiftly."⁸⁸

The image of the train whistling and speeding forward calls to mind the passage of an unstoppable time. The narrator sitting "alone by the window" makes her the observer of this time. She is *in* the world (the train), yet she is observing it from a place of solitude, clearly separating herself from the "they." The repeated effect of the train whistling sounds also recalls Sasha's insistent "yes yes yes." In both cases, what persists is life without futurity: a mode of existence

⁸⁶ Özlü, *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*, 49.

⁸⁷ Özlü, *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*, 49. Original Turkish: "Yaşamı yoğunlaştıran ölümün kendisi değil mi?"

⁸⁸ Özlü, *Zaman Dışı Yaşam*, 49. Original Turkish: "Tren düdüğü öttürür ve hızla yol alır...düdüğü öttürür ve hızla yol alır...Kadın pencere kenarında yalnız oturmaktadır....Tren düdüğü çalar ve hızla yol alır."

sustained not by promise or resolution but by continuation itself. We sense that Sasha will go on living in this manner, just as Özlü's character will continue drifting. The train's whistle, whistling insistently, marks the urgency of life, of being on the road.

Yet unlike Sasha, whose planned suicide is ultimately postponed, Özlü's character moves under the constant shadow of death. She visits the hotel room where Pavese committed suicide, lies on the bed where he died, traces his birthplace and surviving relatives, and encounters funeral processions that echo both Pavese's death and the possible loss of Rainer. Still, she chooses life. Her reflection, "Is it not death itself that intensifies life?" registers an epiphanic understanding: death is not the negation of life but the force that intensifies it. Instead of closure, the text ends in movement. The final train scene mirrors the opening image, producing a temporal suspension in which the narrator remains caught in drifting—thrownness itself. At the same time, the recurrence of death binds her to the grandmother who once fled home and who dies earlier in the narrative, suggesting an unresolved, transgenerational inheritance of flight.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both Tezer Özlü's *Zaman Dışı Yaşam* and Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* depict protagonists who are profoundly out of tune with the worlds they inhabit. This article has elaborated on their tense relationship with everyday life, the temporality that structures it, reading both texts through Heidegger's concepts of thrownness, fallenness, authenticity, and tranquility. In both texts, existence is experienced as thrownness: the protagonists find themselves cast into social and temporal orders not of their choosing. Yet, their responses diverge. Özlü's narrator resists the tranquilizing lure of everydayness, seeking intensity in fleeting encounters and in writing. Writing becomes a defensive gesture against the external world and its shared temporality, opening the possibility of a more authentic mode of existence ("I perceive more and more that the desire to write is a kind of defense against the outside world.")⁸⁹ By contrast, Sasha is already entangled in fallenness. She drifts within the routines and performances of everyday life, attempting to stay in tune with the temporality and norms of the society that she is trying to be part of. She accepts her condition of drifting, giving up on the hope of coherence or restoration.

However, despite these differences, the two protagonists share a deeper kinship. Both continue to live through writing, movement, and fleeting human contact even as they fail to attain stability or coherence. For Sasha and Özlü's character, life persists uneasily and incompletely, in a shared suspended temporality that neither resolves nor redeems fragmentation. Their kinship lies in this very persistence itself, which points to a mode of existence that exposes the uneasy tension between fallenness and authenticity, where life continues not through resolution but through drifting in the absence of a secure future.

⁸⁹ Özlü, *Kalanlar*, 65. Original Turkish: "Yazı yazmak isteğinin dış dünyaya karşı bir tür savunma olduğunu daha bir algılıyorum."

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In this study, artificial intelligence-supported tools were used to a limited extent within the acceptable boundaries defined in *Nesir: Journal of Literary Studies*' Artificial Intelligence Use Policy; all content has been reviewed and approved in its final form by the author(s). Artificial Intelligence was employed only as a tool for translation assistance and grammatical proofreading. All final edits, structural refinements, and factual verifications were performed by me. The core intellectual content and analysis remain my original work.

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