

22. Scott Russell Sanders' *The Engineer of Beasts* as a Paraenesis to Ecological Crisis¹

F. Gül KOÇSOY²

Muhammed Ali ÇEVİRGEN³

Ashraf ABIROU⁴

Meryem Betül POLAT⁵

APA: Koçsoy, F. G. & Çevirgen, M. A. & Abirou, A. & Polat, M. B. (2025). Scott Russell Sanders' *The Engineer of Beasts* as a Paraenesis to Ecological Crisis. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (45), 320-330. **DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15291750>

Abstract

In this study, American writer Scott Russell Sanders' (1945-) apocalyptic novel *The Engineer of Beasts* (1988) is studied through the lens of ecocritical criticism. In his work, Sanders reflects the aftermaths of industrialization and climate crisis. He explicates the reasons as well as the results of environmental pollution and harm done to nature. In the novel, the future of humanity is threatened by the ongoing ecological problems and at the end an apocalypse actualizes. People are urged to live in domed cities where only machine animals exist. A child of thirteen, Mooch desires to bring back the real animals into daily life. In literature, related to ecological ideology, apocalyptic genre elaborates on ecological disasters and shows the end of the world, making feel people sorry and responsible for nature. The novel is an apocalyptic one and in it Sanders warns humanity about the dangerous potentials of crimes and injustice done against nature. He gives his messages via a child heroine; thus, the work is a children's/juvenile novel and the writer aims to grow up an environmentally conscious generation for the future of the world. He also notifies the adults to be

- ¹ **Beyan (Tez/ Bildiri):** Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur.
Çıkar Çatışması: Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir.
Finansman: Bu çalışmayı desteklemek için TÜBİTAK'tan 2000 TL'lik bütçe kullanılmıştır.
Telif Hakkı & Lisans: Yazarlar dergide yayınlanan çalışmalarının telif hakkına sahiptirler ve çalışmalarını CC BY-NC 4.0 lisansı altında yayımlanmaktadır.
Kaynak: Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur.
Benzerlik Raporu: Alındı – Turnitin / Oran: %6
Etik Şikayeti: editor@rumelide.com
Makale Türü: Araştırma makalesi, **Makale Kayıt Tarihi:** 11.02.2025-**Kabul Tarihi:** 20.04.2025-**Yayın Tarihi:** 21.04.2025; **DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15291750>
Hakem Değerlendirmesi: İki Dış Hakem / Çift Taraflı Körleme
² (Katkı: 50) Doç.Dr., Fırat Üniversitesi, İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Fakültesi, Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü / Assoc. Prof., Fırat University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Western Languages and Literature (Elazığ, Türkiye), **eposta:** fgulkoçsoy@firat.edu.tr, **ORCID ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7813-8961>, **ROR ID:** <https://ror.org/05teb7b63>, **ISNI:** 0000 0004 0574 1529, **Crossref Funder ID:** 100009096
³ (Katkı / Cont.: 20) YL Öğrencisi, Fırat Üniversitesi, İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Fakültesi, Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü / Graduate, Fırat University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Western Languages and Literature (Elazığ, Türkiye), **eposta:** cevirgenmuhammedali35@gmail.com, **ORCID ID:** <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-4129-6547>, **ROR ID:** <https://ror.org/05teb7b63>, **ISNI:** 0000 0004 0574 1529, **Crossref Funder ID:** 100009096
⁴ (Katkı / Cont.: 20) Graduate, Fırat Üniversitesi, İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Fakültesi, Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü / Assoc. Prof., Fırat University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Western Languages and Literature (Elazığ, Türkiye), **eposta:** eshrafabirou1@gmail.com, **ORCID ID:** <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-5602-0556>, **ROR ID:** <https://ror.org/05teb7b63>, **ISNI:** 0000 0004 0574 1529, **Crossref Funder ID:** 100009096
⁵ (Katkı / Cont.: 10) Student, Fırat Üniversitesi, İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Fakültesi, Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü / Assoc. Prof., Fırat University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Western Languages and Literature (Elazığ, Türkiye), **eposta:** betulynwag2@gmail.com, **ORCID ID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6107-9600>, **ROR ID:** <https://ror.org/05teb7b63>, **ISNI:** 0000 0004 0574 1529, **Crossref Funder ID:** 100009096

more conscientious, sensitive and compassionate toward nature, which includes every living and non-living creature.

Key words: Scott Russell Sanders, *The Engineer of Beasts*, ecological crisis, apocalyptic genre

Ekolojik Krize Bir İhtar Olarak Scott Russell Sanders'ın *The Engineer of Beasts* Adlı Romanı⁶

Öz

Bu çalışmada, Amerikalı yazar Scott Russell Sanders'ın (1945-) apokaliptik romanı *The Engineer of Beasts* (1988) ekoeleřtiri merceęinden incelenmektedir. Sanders, eserinde sanayileşme ve iklim krizinin sonuçlarını yansıtmaktadır. Sanders, çevre kirlilięinin ve doğaya verilen zararın sonuçlarının yanı sıra nedenlerini de açıklamaktadır. Romanda, insanlığın geleceęi süregelen ekolojik sorunlar nedeniyle tehdit altındadır ve sonunda bir kıyamet gerçekleşir. İnsanlar sadece makine hayvanların var olduęu kubbeli şehirlerde yaşamaya zorlanır. On üç yaşında bir çocuk olan Mooch, gerçek hayvanları günlük hayata geri getirmeyi arzulamaktadır. Edebiyatta ekolojik ideolojiyle bağlantılı olarak apokaliptik tür, ekolojik felaketleri detaylandırır ve dünyanın sonunu göstererek insanları doğaya karşı üzgün ve sorumlu hissettirir. Roman apokaliptik bir romandır ve Sanders bu romanda insanlığı doğaya karşı işlenen suçların ve adaletsizliklerin tehlikeli potansiyelleri konusunda uyarır. Mesajlar bir çocuk kahraman üzerinden verilmektedir; dolayısıyla eser bir çocuk/gençlik romanıdır ve yazar dünyanın geleceęi için çevreye duyarlı bir nesil yetiřtirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Yetiřkinleri de canlı cansız her varlığı kapsayan doğaya karşı daha vicdanlı, duyarlı ve şefkatli olmaları konusunda uyarılmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Scott Russell Sanders, *The Engineer of Beasts*, ekolojik kriz, apokaliptik tür

⁶ **Statement (Thesis / Paper):** It is declared that scientific and ethical principles were followed during the preparation process of this study and all the studies utilised are indicated in the bibliography.

Conflict of Interest: No conflict of interest is declared.

Funding: TUBITAK funding (2000 TL) was used to support this research..

Copyright & Licence: The authors own the copyright of their work published in the journal and their work is published under the CC BY-NC 4.0 licence.

Source: It is declared that scientific and ethical principles were followed during the preparation of this study and all the studies used are stated in the bibliography.

Similarity Report: Received – Turnitin / Rate: %6

Ethics Complaint: editor@rumelide.com

Article Type: Research article, **Article Registration Date:** 11.02.2025-**Acceptance Date:** 20.04.2025-**Publication Date:** 21.04.2025; **DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15291750>

Peer Review: Two External Referees / Double Blind

Introduction

Beginning with the Industrial Revolution (18th century), rapid urbanization, increasing number of factories, and the exploitation of nature cause environmental pollution and harm both nature and the future of humanity. Capitalist hunger for production and consumption also exacerbates the situation. Climate crisis leads to ecological crisis. As a reaction, from the 19th century on, an environmental ideology/understanding emerges and it gains momentum since the 1960s. It examines the reciprocal relationship among all living and non-living creatures and prescribes a moral stance. It scrutinizes the historical and cultural roots of the environmental problems and offers the preservation of nature. It necessitates an individual, social and political transformation for the good of the universe. Many environmentalists, intellectuals and sensitive scientists tell that humanity should be quick in producing solutions; otherwise we will have no world, that is the apocalypse will arrive.

In literature, many writers draw the readers' attention to the corruption of natural balance. Especially from the Romantic period on, these writers warn humanity about the disappearance of an ideal life, which is in harmony with nature. They criticize anthropocentric cast of mind and the nature/culture dualism; instead, they cherish ecological attitudes. In this respect, some writers like Scott Russell Sanders (1945-) prefer writing in the 'apocalyptic genre' to reflect their sensibility about ecological awareness.

The word 'apokalyptein' denotes the end of the world in Greek and 'apocalypse' means "in the Bible, the total destruction and end of the world" (Cambridge Dictionary,2024). Apart from the religious context, the term signifies the end of the world in the literal sense. The apocalyptic genre in literature addresses the themes such as war, pandemics, natural disasters, zombies, and alien invasions, caused by ecological crisis. Many of the supernatural elements are explored through books and films, although they are still used directly or indirectly in popular media culture that originate from the Book of Revelation by John (Rensburg,2019). Throughout these narratives, questions arise regarding how humanity has arrived at such dire circumstances and, if possible, how it might be redeemed. This genre, which often centers on humanity's conflict with nature, lack of empathy, and the loss of selflessness, enjoys significant popularity and occupies a broad space in American literature.

Scott Russell Sanders is a prominent American writer and essayist who is engaged with apocalyptic literature. Born in Memphis, Tennessee, he earned his doctoral degree from the University of Cambridge. In works such as *Divine Animal* (2014) and *The Engineer of Beasts* (1988) Sanders explores movements like eco-science fiction and the apocalyptic genre. His writings frequently delve into themes such as humanity's place in nature, the relationship between culture and geography, and climate change. Sanders' books often fictionalize the drama of humanity's detachment from nature and emphasize the concept of self. In *The Engineer of Beasts*, he provides a narrative focusing on the apocalyptic genre and humanity's collapse. Like Sanders, many writers of environmental fiction aim to cultivate a deeper understanding of the natural world by highlighting its beauty, its significance for human life, and the dangers that threaten both the environment and those who inhabit it (Kiehne,2018). Sanders' composing of his works reflects on the interconnecting of human life and the environment, emphasizing the ethical and otherworldly goals of living concordantly with nature.

Sanders' literary style is distinguished not just by his environmental interest but also by a strong feeling of location and community. He frequently pulls on his personal experiences in the American Midwest, giving his writing a strong sense of place and a dedication to delving into the area's rich cultural and

historical traditions. Sanders is able to explore themes of identity, belonging, and stewardship thanks to this solid foundation, providing a sophisticated viewpoint on the ways that human activity both shapes and is influenced by surroundings. His writing is distinguished by a somber and reflective tone that invites readers to interact with the world around them in a contemplative manner and to think about the moral ramifications of their choices on a local and global level. He makes a name for himself as a significant figure in modern American literature by promoting a greater awareness of and reverence for the natural, social and environmental surroundings we live in via his elegant and thoughtful language. "We have traded the nonstop spectacle of nature for a shabby electronic substitute, one that requires from us less effort, less skill, less reflection and responsibility" (Sanders,2009:16). He criticizes the access of excessive technology into our lives and implies the apocalyptic risks in natural, individual and social dimensions.

Sanders is a specialist in the personal essay form, as well as in the themes of nature, community, and the human spirit. His contributions in a time when there are more threats to our connection with nature are obvious and his works are a potent cry against the destruction of nature. He prescribes a sensible, deep and sustainable bond to it and criticizes contemporary culture's growing estrangement from it;

it may appear as though Sanders is promoting a simple-minded politics of victimization perpetrated by urban modernity - one that posits an analogy between nature's victimization and the victimization of rural places and their inhabitants - in order to suggest and to appreciate the underdog status of people who work hard at staying put" (Ball,2008:142).

His art inspires people to value and save the environment before it suffers more harm.

Discussion

The narrative of *The Engineer of Beasts* examines the fallout from humankind's attempts to use science and technology to control and alter nature. Sanders criticizes the conceit that comes with pretending to be god and the moral conundrums that occur when people meddle with the natural order. He poses concerns about the potential for technical breakthroughs to have unintended negative effects on the environment and the delicate balance of ecosystems, as well as the moral obligations of individuals who hold such power. Sanders highlights the need of humility, respect in our relationships with the natural world and ecological way of life in his work. Through its portrayal of a world in which artificial, mechanical replacements for nature have proliferated and humanity has grown more and more estranged from the natural world, Sanders' novel serves as a powerful warning/paraenesis against the ecological crisis. Although it is a children'/juvenile novel, it also has many significant messages for adults. Moreover, it conveys paraenetic elements throughout its narrative; *The Engineer of Beasts* operates as a modern paraenetic text, warning readers of ecological devastation while urging ethical reevaluation of human-nature relationship.

With a focus on a disobedient orphan Mooch and the aging engineer Orlando Spinks, the story depicts a future society that has sacrificed its ties to nature for technological advancement and control, with disastrous results for the environment and the human spirit. Orlando, a 71-year-old chief engineer at the New Boston Disney, a futuristic theme park with robotic animals, is introduced at the beginning of the story. He is an example of 'mad scientist' typology and a slave of his hubris. Orlando takes great pride in his work of preserving these mechanical beings, which are his entire life; but the very fact that these robots exist is a sobering reminder of how actual wildlife has disappeared from the planet. The biodiversity that previously existed in this society has been replaced by artificial animals, and nature has

been reduced to little more than simulations. As Sanders writes, "One by one, during the years of Orlando's childhood, the animals withered from old age, or choked to death on candy wrappers, or caught lethal viruses from the syrupy air, or died in some other manner" (Sanders,2024:19). This artificiality is a reflection of a larger subject of environmental degradation, in which man-made structures have supplanted the natural world, causing a rift between man and the planet. A person whose nature has been altered will inevitably perceive unfamiliar nature as wild and frightening.

Mooch, sometimes known as Emitty, presents an opposing viewpoint. She is a feisty girl of 13, who has a tremendous aptitude for machines, but she also feels very much out of place in her manufactured home. Mooch, who was raised in the severe constraints of an orphanage in the floating city, longs to get away from the regulated, antiseptic environments that have come to characterize her life, and return to a location where nature still abounds. She has a strong desire to return to nature, which has been lost in the automated civilization she lives in, as seen by her rebellious attitude and longing for the wild, untamed environment outside the city borders. For Mooch, the artificial world is a constant reminder of what has been lost. In her conversations with Orlando, she asks, "How about animals? You must have seen scads of them," to which Orlando can only recall, "I saw quite a few in Grandfather's taxidermy shop" (69). This exchange emphasizes the stark contrast between her longing for the wild and the reality of a world where even memories of real animals have faded.

The speeches of Mooch also emphasize the idea of standing up to those who would stifle uniqueness and uncontrollable nature. She disobeys the strict rules set by the orphanage throughout the book, and her actions come to represent how the human spirit can persevere in the face of artificial limitations brought about by a technological society. This opposition goes beyond the rigorous regulations of the orphanage to include resistance to broader cultural standards that put technological control ahead of ecological balance and individual freedom. A critique of a civilization that has grown lifeless and sterile, where the natural environment has been sacrificed in the name of progress, is highlighted by Mooch's need to escape to a world where nature still exists. This is poignantly expressed when Orlando reflects on the extinction of the wild: "Since there were no greater apes in the zoo, and none in the jungle, and none in the whole world for sale, that cage remained empty" (19).

Orlando and Mooch's connection is noteworthy in this regard as well; Orlando represents the technological expertise that has come to rule society as a man who has dedicated his entire life to maintaining the mechanical animals of the theme park. Despite his usual emotional detachment, his growing admiration with Mooch reveals a subconscious realization of what has been lost. Orlando's neat, regimented life is put to the test by Mooch's wild, untamed energy and her connection to that idea. Sanders examines the conflict between Mooch's natural, unpredictable forces and Orlando's controlled, mechanical environment through their interaction. This dynamic is evident when Mooch challenges Orlando's perspective by saying, "You call this wild? This juiced-up pussycat? There's more wildness in my left little toe than in your whole kitchy-koo zoo" (8). Her defiance embodies the struggle between the artificial and the authentic, the controlled and the free.

The novel's setting accentuates its ecological themes even more. The artificial surroundings and harsh establishments, such as the orphanage of the floating city represent a civilization that has lost its connection to the earth. Specifically, the orphanage represents the repression of individuality and primal inclinations in favor of control and uniformity. Mooch constantly faces the prospect of being sent to the gloomy Cape Cod Reformatory, which serves as a reminder of what happens when someone disobeys the artificial order. This scene depicts a world in which hard constructions have supplanted nature. In

this sterile, controlled environment, even the weather has been rendered obsolete, as Orlando recalls, "In winter it snowed. Sometimes it got boiling hot. When the weather was lousy, I stayed indoors" (70). This disconnection from the natural world underscores the novel's critique of a society that has sacrificed the beauty and unpredictability of nature for the illusion of safety and control.

Sanders writes a story that alerts readers to the perils of living in a world that is unduly artificial and mechanical in *The Engineer of Beasts*. The novel makes the argument that humanity runs the risk of losing its fundamental connection to nature as well as causing environmental devastation if it keeps emphasizing technical growth and control. This break threatens to take away life's vitality and purpose and turn it into a regimented, sterile existence. Sanders draws his readers' attention to the negative effects of eschewing nature in favor of technology and the significance of maintaining the ecological balance necessary to support life through the characters Orlando and Mooch and the world they live in.

The Engineer of Beasts is a story that warns readers about the ecological disaster and emphasizes the value of keeping a connection to nature. Sanders' depiction of a lost society is a striking cautionary tale about the possible repercussions of carrying on in a direction that puts technological dominance over ecological preservation. The book urges readers to appreciate nature once more and to act now to save the environment before it is too late. It does this by presenting a dystopian society that has totally cut itself off from the natural world. Sanders creates a universe in which man-made structures have supplanted nature through the surroundings and individuals, with profoundly personal and widely communal repercussions.

The depiction of New Boston in Chapter 5 as an artificially constructed, ultra-clean city emphasizes how far society has deviated from its natural foundations. The artificial landscape of the city, which includes Natureland Park's phony mountains, serves as a sobering reminder of what has been lost. These artificial mountains, constructed out of materials like quickfoam, are only replicas of the actual mountains that existed before 'The Enclosure' destroyed all life in North America. This artificiality is pervasive across the city and profoundly ingrained in the way its people live. The fact that even the caves modeled like Stone Age retreats are deserted is a sign of how these man-made structures fall short of offering people the true sense of connection to nature that they are inherently drawn to. "Even in this spick-and-span metropolis, where dirt cost more per kilo than sugar, a mountain could become remarkably filthy in a day's time" (40). This reflects the underlying futility of trying to create a perfect and clean environment in place of something natural. Furthermore, "These days only old-timers, gazing at the pointy hills, could remember the mountains of Maine and Tennessee and Oregon" (41). This shows how the real mountains, once a significant part of the landscape, are now relegated to memory, emphasizing the extent of the loss and the deep disconnect between the city's artificial reality and the natural world that was once a part of it.

The lives of Humphrey Tree and Grace Palomino, an old couple, provide a stark contrast to the immaculate perfection of New Boston. Their defiant pastime of gathering trash from the immaculately maintained streets and hiding it behind one of the park's mountains is a tacit protest against the stifling orderliness of the city. Their refusal to completely integrate into the artificial world that New Boston represents is symbolized by this act of revolt. It also emphasizes a desire for a messier, real world, echoing their memories of a more difficult, flawed past they had to leave behind. Sanders uses this couple to criticize the artificiality and sterility of contemporary life, arguing that when nature disappears, humanity also perishes.

When Mooch turns from a disobedient troublemaker to a conscientious worker at the start of her apprenticeship with Orlando, it seems as though she may be losing her genuine soul. Grace and Humphrey, among others, are worried by her sudden loyalty, which is a reflection of a larger fear that the artificial environment of New Boston may stifle human creativity, uniqueness, and a connection to the natural world. The city's concern with perfection and cleanliness, which extends to the point of eliminating all hints of the natural world, is a reflection of actual urbanization and industrialization trends, which frequently compromise the environment. This is specified in the way animals are no longer part of the ecosystem but are preserved artificially: "*Imagine a day when such creatures walked the earth! On all the heads, the glass eyes shone, the fur bristled as though freshly groomed*" (51-52). The preservation of these animals in a lifeless form reflects the corruption of the ecosystem, where nature is reduced to lifeless imitations. Another example of this artificiality is the depiction of the stuffed animal heads: "It gave her a scare to see the stuffed animal heads glooming down from their mounts near the ceiling. Buffalo, antelope, musk ox, wolf, moose—her glance darted from one to another, and came to rest on the grizzly bear. As on her poster, the lips were curled back, teeth bared in a snarl" (51). These taxidermy animals are reminders of the extinct wildlife, which once roamed freely but now only exist in lifeless representations. "The whole menagerie of mechs had been nothing more than clumsy imitations of nature, mere playthings, toys" (225) However, throughout the novel, humanity's failure to imitate nature is depicted as grotesque.

Once meant to serve as a link to humanity's prehistoric past, the abandoned caves in the man-made mountains are now used as places to store damaged and outdated objects. This artwork suggests that society has become disconnected from nature. In trying to control nature through technology, our efforts to protect it have become pointless. The environmental collapse and societal oppression in New Boston parallel the apocalyptic and dystopian themes in the story, where even simple acts like wearing hats have become obsolete: "In windless, rainless, sunless New Boston, hardly anybody wore hats, least of all Bertha Dill, who spent too much on her high-rise hairdos to risk mashing them down. But the expression lingered from the old days of weather" (57). The city's artificial environment highlights the loss of the natural world, which has been replaced by a sterile and controlled existence. Furthermore, the sight of a gold figure in its mirrored helmet evokes a sense of discomfort and alienation: "The sight of a gold figure in its mirrored helmet riding the pedbels or gliding overhead in a shuttle made him break into a sweat" (58). These futuristic yet dehumanized symbols reflect the dystopian world that Sanders constructs, where technology has further estranged humanity from its natural roots.

Mooch's antics, Humphrey and Grace's junk hoarding, and her final denial of the Society Against Gravity's request for another prank are all examples of resistance to the artificial order. These defiant behaviors point to a desire to escape the confines of a culture that has sacrificed the environment for the sake of 'development'. Orlando's carelessness at the start of the narrative causes an almost deadly confrontation with alligators. The first split between humans and the natural world is symbolized by this episode. Orlando shows everlasting allegiance to Mooch, a figure that epitomizes the dual aspirations to both belong to and exploit the natural environment for human interests, even if the accident is directly related to his acts. Mooch's conflict with her conscience over realizing that only humans are thought to have souls in a world where humans rule emphasizes this tension.

Orlando's journey home from the hospital serves as a metaphor for how hard it is for humans to make peace with nature after doing harm to it. When he gets back, he finds Mooch waiting for him, regretting and feeling guilty about the injuries he had. Sanders criticizes the human tendency to rule and control nature via the story, which is reflected in her wish to tame the creatures she changed. Orlando's

determination that these animals should stay in the wild emphasizes the major point of the book, which is that humans should not rule nature. The tension increases as Orlando heals and Mooch surreptitiously alters the artificial monsters to make them more lethal. This act of rebellion emphasizes how the novel criticizes humanity's arrogance in believing it can manipulate nature without suffering repercussions. Orlando is always concerned about Mooch's changes, which make the animals unpredictable, even after taking precautions. This unpredictable nature causes a disastrous episode in which a gang of teens break into Monkey Island, taking advantage of the creatures' seeming tameness and resulting in significant injuries.

Orlando is faced with a moral and ethical dilemma as he tries to put an end to the mayhem brought about by Mooch's manipulations: should he risk further harm by allowing the animals to stay wild or should he strive to tame them despite Mooch's wishes? This question raises other questions about how humans should relate to nature and the dangers of trying to control it. The animals' final rebellion and annihilation, which marks the culmination of the events, serves as a striking metaphor for the ecological disaster. The tale highlights the terrible results of humanity's disregard for nature as Mooch leads the creatures in one last act of resistance only to witness their destruction. Orlando's frantic efforts to lessen the devastation are representative of humanity's larger battle to address environmental damage after it has already occurred rather than averting it from the start. Sanders also uses Mooch's experiences to examine themes of imprisonment and alienation from the natural world. The separation between the natural world and human society is emphasized by her incarceration and her later interactions at the prison farm.

The farm represents society's industrialization and exploitation of the environment in little ways, as seen by the dehumanizing and automated treatment of its cattle. This environment reflects the novel's condemnation of anthropocentrism by standing in sharp contrast to Mooch's fundamental yearning for independence and a connection to the natural world. Following the mayhem, Orlando discovers a new calling as a 'machine medic', providing the locals with free repairs. His creations turn into rays of optimism, signifying humanity's capacity to repair the harm it has inflicted. He learns the lesson of Leopold: "a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it" (1987:204). The novel's plea for a return to a more harmonious connection with the environment, one in which humans function as stewards rather than conquerors is emphasized by the people's admiration of Orlando's abilities.

Humphrey and Grace's goal to fill Mount Hexxon with trash gathered from New Boston's streets lies at the core of the book. This mission is a symbolic protest against society's inclination to discard individuals, sentiments, and memories in addition to trying to clean up the actual debris that the city has accumulated. Sanders uses this project to demonstrate the negative effects of excessive consumption and waste on the environment and to criticize consumer society. The characters' dedication to their goal emphasizes the concept that the past is not so simply forgotten without having serious aftermaths, and it serves as an urgent appeal to acknowledge the connection between human existence and the environment. As the son of a coal miner in Kentucky, Humphrey's part highlights the historical connection between environmental deterioration and economic exploitation. The story indicates the catastrophic history of mine and other extractive industries, which have long contributed to ecological catastrophes, as he goes into the mountain's ventilation shaft to evaluate its capacity. The ever-growing pile of trash and physical waste represent the unsustainable consuming habits and the pressing need for reform.

Mooch navigates through the harsh reality of the Farm and gets into more details to show the effects of humanity's alienation from the natural world. "The whole menagerie of mechs had been nothing more than clumsy imitations of nature, mere playthings, toys" (225) and throughout the novel, humanity's failure to imitate nature is depicted as grotesque. The human battle against the catastrophic forces released by environmental degradation is mirrored in her struggle for survival in a violent and manipulative world. Mooch's interactions with figures such as Konga Rue and Dr. Bob underscore the conflict between uniqueness and conformity, reflecting the perils of losing one's identity in a society that values harmony above control. A turning moment in Mooch's life was her travel to work with scientist Hae Won Gilbert-Chang on Cape Island which gave her the chance to rediscover nature and discover independence from the constraints of society norms. Described as somewhat of an 'eco-freak', Hae Won personifies the novel's demand for a deeper appreciation and comprehension of the environment. In stark contrast to the regulated and man-made setting of the Farm, her work on the island serves as a reminder of the complexity and beauty of the natural world. True growth in the novel rests on embracing the wild and untamed features of the environment rather than trying to control them, as demonstrated by Mooch's experiences on the island, which challenge her preconceptions and provide her an opportunity to interact with nature on its terms.

Humphrey and Grace's mission is joined by a young computer whiz named Garrison Ratbone, who adds another level to the narrative's examination of ecological problems. Garrison's young enthusiasm and technical expertise invigorate the initiative, signifying the possibility of creativity and cooperation in tackling environmental issues. His ultimate choice to accept accountability for the explosion at Mount Hexxon, giving up his independence in order to keep his friends safe, emphasizes the novel's themes of selflessness and the unbreakable ties that unite people despite their differences. In the struggle against ecological devastation, this act of sacrifice emphasizes the value of teamwork and the willingness to give up personal interests in order to further the common good.

"He wouldn't have been surprised to learn that she had liberated the cows and pigs, leading them away into the woods. He liked to imagine her living outside, red hair in defiant pigtails, hunting in the forest with bow and arrow, breathing air there was no longer poisoned, sipping from creeks that were no longer foul, her bare feet dancing over soil that was no longer radioactive" (230).

The motif of returning to nature is most vividly depicted, the longing of people to return to nature, which they see as their home, even after the apocalypse, is emphasized. Considering the current climate crisis, there is still hope that the efforts made will restore the damaged environment and that people will eventually return to nature. The beauty of both living and non-living entities in nature is now obvious. The author aims to depict the admirable beauty found in even a single beam of light in nature.

The novel's dramatic finale, the explosion at Mount Hexxon, forces the city of New Boston to face the turmoil and uncertainty brought on by the outpouring of rubbish. This incident serves as a sobering reminder of how the ecological catastrophe affects human civilization and emphasizes the connection between societal stability and environmental health. The novel's fundamental message that introspection and accountability are necessary in the face of environmental degradation is revealed via Humphrey and Grace's observations on the actual cost of their actions. They learn important lessons about trust, loyalty, and the value of selflessness from their voyage with Garrison, which inspires readers to think about the larger effects of their activities on the environment. Mooch states: "If I study hard and keep my eyes open" she said, "maybe I'll learn to see. It is what I want more than anything. To glimpse the power that drives the universe. To understand some bit of creation even a Mouse, even a mustard seed" (245). Her words emphasize the importance of every particle in nature. They suggest that

understanding the significance of creation is equivalent to understanding nature itself. It highlights that every being, regardless of its size, has a purpose in creation, and our character hopes to grasp this purpose.

Conclusion

The Engineer of Beasts intricately weaves together the themes of nature and humanity, using apocalyptic imagery and 'the mad scientist' depiction burning with hubris to explore the consequences of humanity's detachment from the natural world. It underscores the resilience of nature, even when scarred by human actions, and the deep-seated human longing to return to it. The depiction of grotesque imitations of nature serves as a critique of humanity's failure to truly understand and preserve the natural world, while the recurring motif of returning to nature highlights a fundamental truth: despite the damage inflicted, both nature and humanity possess an enduring capacity for renewal and hope. The text ultimately serves as a reminder of the vital connection between humans and the natural environment, emphasizing that the survival and well-being of both are inextricably linked. The book is a paraenetic story as well as a call to action, asking readers to reconsider how they relate to the environment and adopt a more morally and sustainably conscious way of coexisting with it. It prescribes to act with compassion and wisdom to nature.

Sanders emphasizes that genuine development rests not in dominance and unlimited science but in cohabitation and stewardship, using his story to push for a greater understanding of and respect for the natural environment, which includes human beings and all living and non-living creatures. Sanders urges readers to consider how human behavior affects nature and look for a more peaceful and sustainable way forward. He demands people to ethically acknowledge the intrinsic value of all living things and the significance of protecting the earth for future generations. This is the ultimate test of development rather than being able to manipulate and exploit it.

References

- "Apocalypse" (2024) <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/apocalypse> 28 November 2024
- Ball, Eric L. (2008) "The Place Within: Scott Russell Sanders on Literature and Art of Place". *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*. (Summer) Vol. 15, No. 2 pp. 137-155 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44086726> 9 February 2025.
- Kiehne, Liam (2018) "Defining the Genre of Environmental Literature". Honors Capstone Projects. 9 <https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=honorsAccess> date: 15 June 2024
- Leopold, Aldo (1987) *A Sand County Almanac*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rensburg, Janse van H. (2019) 'All the Apocalypse a stage: The ritual function of apocalyptic Literature'. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75(4), a5822. Access date: 12 April 2024
- Sanders, Scott Russell (2009) "Simplicity and Sanity" *The Georgia Review*. (Spring) Vol. 63, No. 1 pp. 13-29 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41403478> Access date: 9 February 2025
- Sanders, Scott Russell (2022) *The Engineer of Beasts*. <https://archive.org/details/engineerofbeasts0000sand> New York: Orchard Books. Access date: 13 May 2024