

---

# Technological Progress And Its Effect In Silent Spring Novel

## The Sacred Obligation: A Call to Action of Humans and Our Environment

Humans are the species that reign superior to this planet. Mankind has developed the power of our minds which has separated us from other species, thus creating our power and solidifying our rule. Our greatest advance forward was the industrial revolution, and since that time, we have been building our comfort and destroying our home: the ecosystem. In the novel *Silent Spring*—namely chapter 2 entitled *The Obligation to Endure*—Rachel Carson discusses just that: how something as insignificant as pesticides have begun to deteriorate and kill plants, animals, and ourselves. Carson's zeal and sentiment towards this cause has since inspired other literary works such as David Suzuki's *The Sacred Balance*. Suzuki talks about his personal perspective on the issues of man and his environment and how it has led him to want to do more to fix this issue. *The Obligation to Endure* and *The Sacred Balance* were written in 1962 and 1997, respectively, and since then environmental issues have not changed, but worsened. Although these novels were written years apart, they bear similarities, not only in the topics they discuss, but in their findings and their own personal views on the issue and mankind as a whole. Suzuki and Carson use different forms of diction to connote the same motif of an ignorance and insatiability of mankind to endlessly use their power.

Carson and Suzuki have the same desire to educate mankind about the detriments of exuding their power without proper education or consideration about the long-term effects of their decisions. Suzuki discusses his perspectives and his actions on the issue, but not before explaining the background of the topic, his reaction to Carson's *Silent Spring*, and his experience interviewing others in Haida Gwaii about their own personal issues within their community. Suzuki intentionally has his story divided into subheadings, alluding to the steps necessary to repair our environment: "From Naked Ape to Superspecies" is realizing our power; "A Shattered World" is recognizing the issue; "The Growth of Environmentalism" is understanding the issue; "A Way Out" is using our resources to help better our understanding; and "Changing our Perspective" is putting our new knowledge and resources into action (428-33). Carson does not use allusion, but rather a cynical and condescending tone to show how ignorance is detrimental to the environment. While discussing the effects of using pesticides without knowledge of their impact upon the ecosystem, Carson criticizes those who have the most power above the powerful. Carson writes, "When the public protests, confronted with some obvious evidence of damaging results of pesticide applications, it is fed little tranquilizing pills of half truth" (Carson 425). Carson discussing this issue throughout this chapter has addressed mankind as a whole. As Carson explains more into the knowledge of the pesticide use, she addresses specifically the specialists who make and use the pesticides. As the public are the ones who are being affected by the use of pesticides, as well as witnessing firsthand the effects on the environment, it appears that the ones who are ignorant to the effects or choose to ignore them are the ones causing the death and disease. Carson and Suzuki have made it clear that ignorance is destructive to humans as well as our surroundings, and power is something that can also be malicious. Carson and Suzuki also describes humans and their rise

---

to power similarly.

In both texts, Carson and Suzuki introduce their topic of environmental disaster by first introducing humans and their rise to power. Carson describes humans and their ascension with only a short paragraph, while Suzuki uses an entire subsection. Both do so in an interesting way, acknowledging what we used to be and showing where we are now. Carson writes, "Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species—man—acquired significant power to alter the nature of his world. /During the past quarter century, this power has not only increased to one of disturbing magnitude but it has changed in character" (Carson 420). Suzuki writes "As we have shifted status to a superspecies, our ancient understanding of the exquisite interconnectivity of all life has been shattered" (Suzuki 429). Both authors have initially described humans as great people with great power. People who came from a simple start, and progress rapidly into their newfound power. However, immediately following the idea that humans are great. Carson and Suzuki destroy that idea and simultaneously introduce their topics. In Suzuki's writing, he uses abstract diction, describing the ruin that humans and technology have brought our environment. Carson uses concrete diction and visual imagery, creating an image in the reader's head of how heavily humans have impacted the environment. Carson uses words that dehumanize human actions which demonstrate her passion for the subject and create the sense of urgency. Carson's work has influenced Suzuki, and his passion for the subject is shown through his urgency to learn more after reading Carson's work. Both authors have set up the construct of time in their work and have made that time stand still. They have created the realities of the present and produced a picture of the future. Time, apparently, is a luxury that we cannot afford as both Carson and Suzuki warn about the danger of allowing such dangerous human actions to continue.

The *Obligation to Endure* and *The Sacred Balance* are call to action texts. Carson and Suzuki tell just how mankind's use of power has created a world where ignorance is bliss and reality is a social construct. Although these works were written years 35 years apart, they have an impact on our environment now. A recent study published in May 2017 by Elena Saratovskikh has shown the effects of pesticides and their effect on the substances they are presented on. The results showed not only the effects of the pesticides on their surface, but how the chemical compounds effected other things around them. In the conclusion of her study, Saratovskikh writes, "Pesticides inhibit the biological activity of oxidizing enzymes...The sum of these effects is the cause of almost all diseases of modern man, including cancer" (Saratovskikh 2017). 55 years after the original works *Silent Spring* was published a study shows the same effects that Carson and Suzuki informed about in their work. Because there has been no change in the habits of humanity since 1962, obvious signs are continuing to be ignored and there are new developments being made to existing pesticides, without knowing their effects. It is evident that from ignoring the issue and not acquiring proper knowledge surrounding all aspects of the issue, that the predictions and worries of Carson and Suzuki have become real. An era of those with power are creating a future that makes everyone and everything weak. In a world where knowledge is no longer power, how long is it before humans lose control?