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A COMPARATIVE READING OF SAMUEL BECKETT'S *ENDGAME* AND T. S. ELIOT'S "THE WASTE LAND" IN THE LIGHT OF ECOCRITICISM[*]

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how Samuel Beckett's absurd drama *Endgame* (1957) and T. S. Eliot's poem "The Waste Land" (1922) present a chaotic and pessimistic world through their apocalyptic setting and allusions. The paper juxtaposes the two texts composed in the aftermath of a world war that consistently use an analogous ecocritical perception. Both works reflect the despair and miseries caused by the destruction of nature. Beckett depicts a prominent world of extermination for everything that was once alive. The whole ecosystem has been consummated, and the characters mourn for their present-day sufferings while reminiscing about the past's splendid times. Through his play, Beckett portrays the inevitable reality that humans bring their own destruction and suffer from the devastating consequences of the life cycle they have damaged. Beckett's drama mirrors Eliot's poem "The Waste Land" due to the ominous setting, the desperate characters, and the pessimistic vision for the future of humanity. The hopelessness of the main character, Hamm, in *Endgame*, is an allusion to the myth of the Fisher King, whose infertility leaves no promise for the resurrection of the land and the preservation of human existence, as similarly depicted in "The Waste Land". From an ecocritical perspective, the paper analyzes how Beckett's play and Eliot's poem reflect the suffering of humanity in the horrid nihility of natural reproduction and the impossibility of finding any cure for this suffering on Earth. The study concludes that Beckett's play *Endgame* and Eliot's poem "The Waste Land" portray human nature denying responsibility till the last moment of the apocalypse, and the ecocritical analysis of the texts reveals that they serve as

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cautionary narratives with this pessimistic vision by alerting humanity about the environmental destruction of the natural world.

Key Words: *Endgame*, Beckett, The Waste Land, Eliot, Apocalypse, Environmental Destruction

SAMUEL BECKETT'İN *ENDGAME*'İ İLE T. S. ELIOT'IN "THE WASTE LAND" ININ EKOELEŞTİRİNİN IŞIĞINDA KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR OKUMASI

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Samuel Beckett'in absürd draması *Endgame* (1957) ve T. S. Eliot'ın "The Waste Land" (1922) şiirinin, kaotik ve karamsar bir dünyayı, kıyamet kurgusu ve atıflarıyla nasıl sunduğunu incelemektedir. Makale, bir dünya savaşının ardından yazılan tutarlı bir şekilde benzer bir ekoeleştirel algı kullanan iki metni yan yana getirmektedir. Her iki eser de doğanın yıkımının yol açtığı çaresizliği ve sefaleti yansıtmaktadır. Beckett, bir zamanlar hayatta olan her şeyin yok edildiği bir dünyayı tasvir etmektedir. Tüm ekosistem yok olmuştur ve karakterler geçmişin muhteşem zamanlarını özlemle anımsarken bugünkü acılarının yasını tutmaktadırlar. Beckett oyunu aracılığıyla, insanların kendi yıkımlarını getirdikleri ve zarar verdikleri yaşam döngüsünün yıkıcı sonuçlarının acısını çektikleri kaçınılmaz gerçeği tasvir etmektedir. Beckett'in draması, meşum bir ortam, çaresiz karakterler ve insanlığın geleceğine dair karamsar vizyon nedeniyle Eliot'ın "The Waste Land" şiirini yansıtmaktadır. *Endgame'*deki ana karakter Hamm'in umutsuzluğu, "The Waste Land" de benzer şekilde tasvir edildiği gibi, kısırlığı toprağın dirilişi ve insan varlığının korunması için hiçbir umut bırakmayan Balıkçı Kral efsanesine bir gönderme yapmaktadır. Makale, ekoeleştirel bir bakış açısıyla, Beckett'in oyununun ve Eliot'ın şiirinin, doğal üremenin korkunç hiçliği içinde insanlığın çektiği ıstırabı ve dünyada bu ıstıraba herhangi bir çare bulmanın imkansızlığını nasıl yansıttığını analiz etmektedir. Çalışma, Beckett'in *Endgame* oyunu ile Eliot'ın "The Waste Land" şiirinin, kıyametin son anına kadar sorumluluğu reddeden insan doğasını sergilediği, ve metinlerin ekoeleştirel analizinin bunların doğal dünyanın çevresel yıkımı hakkında insanlığı teyakkuza geçirerek bu karamsar vizyonla ikaz anlatıları işlevi gördüklerini ortaya çıkardığı sonucuna varmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Endgame*, Beckett, The Waste Land, Eliot, Kıyamet, Çevresel Yıkım

1. INTRODUCTION

The 20th century was one of the harshest times throughout human history due to the two world wars with devastating consequences. The modern era came with some promises like new technology, new science, new philosophical paradigms, and new geo-political borders as well. Large-scales production brought greater mobility and choices, together with some side effects for both humanity and nature. Through the dynamic industrial and urban growth

distancing modern people from nature, they began suffering due to alienation, social and psychological fragmentation, and depression. The two world wars changed the natural structure of the world with the new technology used for unpredictable destruction. Neither the physical world nor the psychology of people were the same after the wars. As reflected in literature, the demolition of human and natural realms was at such a grand scale that a pessimistic vision of the world prevailed. William Butler Yeats (1939/1991) perfectly depicts the troublesome world in his poem "The Second Coming":

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned. (p. 158)

Like many other 20th-century poets, Yeats reflects the nightmarish vision of the world as fragmented, falling apart into pieces. He ends his poem with a hopeless tone that indicates the impossibility of being rescued. After all the horrors, a savior is expected, but a monster comes to Earth instead, emphasizing the idea that there is no hope for the future.

From the ecocritical aspect, humans are responsible for the destruction of nature, and therefore, they have to suffer as a result of their thoughtless actions. The uncontrolled usage of science and technology by humans, who assume themselves as the masters of the whole universe, has destroyed the natural cycle of the non-human world by causing the death of nature at a grand scale. Onur Ekler (2015) observes the suffering of nature at the hands of humans who "categorized, classified, and anatomized the nature by dismembering each part of nature just like King Pentheus being torn into pieces in Euripides's play Bacchae" (p. 60). He further implies that this violent torture resembling the old myth of cruel killing by naked hands is an unconscious one as humankind is mesmerized by the illusion of science; nevertheless, he receives the punishment for his destructive activities as the only one responsible for this tragedy. Like the unconscious crowd tearing Pentheus's body with their bare hands, humans have tortured nature for centuries, and nature has lost its regenerative power.

The broken balance in the natural order by the pride of humankind has been observed in many works for centuries. Samuel Beckett, the pioneering dramatist of this horrendous century, portrays the human condition in his theatre of the absurd in a humorous and mostly pessimistic but thought-provoking way. Beckett's absurdist drama *Endgame* (1957) presents a chaotic and gloomy world to the audience with the annihilation of countless items. It reflects the despair of modern life and miseries brought to the world through human actions. Beckett states, "The confusion is not my invention" (1961, as

cited in Juez, 2008). It is a world full of confusion, and the play is the product of Beckett's observations in the environment of this sociocultural situation, which is a "chaotic, unstable, and constantly changing field of force" (Mundhenk, 1981, p. 228). Chris Ackerley (2005) remarks, "Whenever Beckett refers to 'nature' a wry jest unfolds" (p. 87). Beckett (1957) depicts the outside vision of the characters as "zero": "One window opens on the earth, the other on the sea; both are desolate" (p. 87). We are informed about these desolate places through the observations of Beckett's character, Clov. He has a telescope and looks outside the window of the house where they live together with his master, Hamm, who does not go out but hopelessly waits for his end. Besides Hamm, his old parents, Nagg and Nell, stuck in their ashbins, have similar fates of desperate waiting without the possibility of moving from their places. The outside scene is no more than a wasteland. Beckett depicts a world of ends for everything alive, prominently; the annihilation of nature is apparent in the characters' dialogues. Nature has come to an irreversible end, and the characters are mourning for their present sufferings besides remembering their memories of the past days. As Kevser Ateş (2018) observes: "Once nature becomes barren, gloomy, dreary wasteland with depressing smoke-coloured grey overcoming refreshing green, human beings will have to face the detrimental effects of their reckless affiliations with nature" (p. 5977). Beckett displays a dramatic picture of this desolate world in which the characters find it quite burdensome to be alive.

Beckett's 1957 play is reminiscent of T. S. Eliot's 1922 poem "The Waste Land" in many ways: the setting, the characters' hopelessness, and a pessimistic future for human life. As both works were written after the world wars, Beckett and Eliot, having experienced the horrible scenes of the war, questioned the meaning of life, considering what could be worse than this. The reason for this despair is not only the death of millions of people over the years but also the destruction of nature as a result of the careless actions of humanity. Ecocriticism evaluates the connection between human and nature and observes the disastrous consequences of the interference with the natural world by thoughtless human actions. Bill McKibben (2006) claims that we are approaching the end of the world as a result of natural destruction because "The planet on which our civilization evolved no longer exists. The stability that produced that civilization has vanished; epic changes have begun" (p. 34). The end of the world is intimately connected to the end of nature as the primary life source. Greg Garrard (2004) asserts that this loss reflected in the texts has many dimensions: "the end – of nature 'in the vicinity,' of comfort, of kindness, of some semblance of peace or equality" (p. 395). Humans have tortured nature for centuries by killing themselves unconsciously at the same time as Ekler (2015) illustrates, there are "no more leeches in nature" as it has lost the healing power already, and Beckett and Eliot present this decaying corpse like the torn body of King Pentheus (p. 63). This paper analyzes the

loss of life, the disharmony with nature, and the outcomes of the destruction of nature by human causes in both Beckett's *Endgame* (1957) and Eliott's "The Waste Land" (1922/1963) through ecocritical considerations.

Among many other texts, Beckett's *Endgame* (1957) and Eliott's "The Waste Land" (1922/1963) outshine with their vivid imagery of environmental destruction, which brings the apocalypse to the whole world. In fact, there is a mutual correlation; humanity brings about the end of nature, and nature that comes to an end brings about the end of humanity. The two texts have been studied mainly from the existentialist aspects, which question the modern collapse of humankind due to the horrors of the wars and the drastic changes of the 20th century in many areas. However, there has not been much emphasis on the comparative analysis of both texts from the ecocritical perspective. This study claims that *Endgame* and "The Waste Land" basically tell the same story: damaged nature conveys no life for humanity. This article aims to change the focus from human to nature in analyzing both apocalyptic narratives. Therefore, an ecocritical analysis combining the two texts under the same roof is vital to apprehending the urgent message underlying Beckett and Eliot's narrations.

2. The Apocalyptic World in *Endgame* and "The Waste Land" from An Ecocritical Perspective

Beckett and Eliot's worlds are no more than vivid visions of a humanmade apocalypse corrupting the world's natural order. People could do no more than watch the disastrous environment and wait for their end as well. Ecological destruction, the corrupted human body, and psychology are the driving forces behind this pessimistic vision. In Beckett's *Endgame* (1957), one of the two main characters of the play, Clov, describes the outside world to the blind protagonist, Hamm, by evoking the imagery of a wasteland: "Zero…it won't rain…Outside of here it's death…There's no more pap…Nature has forgotten us. There's no more nature...Zero…Zero…Corpsed…Gray…Gray…" (p. 2). These phrases are repeated many times in the play by emphasizing the apocalyptic scenery. From an ecocritical perspective, Garrard (2012) writes that: "The obvious conclusion for an ecocritic might be that *Endgame* is Beckett's apocalypse, which foreshadows the ecological catastrophe to come" (p. 394). This pessimistic vision of the world will be the realm of humanity in the future if reconciliation with nature is not sustained. The situation in Beckett's play is like the infertility of the Fisher King, in which there is no hope for the resurrection of the land and for the continuation of human life in a better way. The myth of the Fisher King is basically about a king who loses everything after the wound he has received from his genitals. His kingdom turns infertile as himself as a man. Eliot ends his poem "The Waste Land" (1922/1963) with his image sitting upon the shore fishing and hoping for his land to be set in order again out of the scattered fragments. Beckett's

characters also wait hopelessly to be saved from the miserable world, as the legend of the Fisher King portrays. In Beckett's desolate world, the protagonist, Hamm, asks about the seeds, but again, there is no hope for the bloom of flowers or the growth of plants:

> HAMM: Did your seeds come up?
> CLOV: No.
> HAMM: Did you scratch round them to see if they had sprouted?
> CLOV: They haven't sprouted.
> HAMM: Perhaps it's still too early.
> CLOV: If they were going to sprout they would have sprouted.
> (Violently.)
> They'll never sprout! (p. 5)

The seeds will never sprout, the flowers will never bloom, and the whole ecosystem is approaching an end. Theodore Adorno (1961/1982) observes that these lifeless images started to appear in the broken vision of humankind just after the world wars, "everything, including a resurrected culture, has been destroyed without realizing it; humankind continues to vegetate, creeping along after events that even the survivors cannot really survive, on a rubbish heap that has made even reflection on one's own damaged state useless" (p. 43). Eliot (1922/1963) asks in his poem: "What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow/Out of this stony rubbish?" (p. 56). Nothing alive will come out of this "stony rubbish". Like the Fisher King's infertile land, there is no hope for the resurrection of living organisms in nature, actually "there is no more nature" in this world. Clov takes his telescope and reflects his observations to Hamm, the blind character like Eliot's old and wrinkled prophet Tiresias in "The Waste Land":

> CLOV: Let's see. (He looks, moving the telescope.) Zero...
> (he looks) ...zero... (he looks) ...and zero.
> HAMM: Nothing stirs. All is—
> CLOV: Zer—
> HAMM (violently): Wait till you're spoken to!
> (Normal voice.)
> All is... all is... all is what?
> (Violently.)
> All is what?
> CLOV: Corpsed.
> (Pause.)
> Well? Content?
> HAMM: Look at the sea.
> CLOV: It's the same.

HAMM: Look at the ocean!
CLOV: Never seen anything like that! (Beckett, 1957, p. 10)

Tiresias is a mythological figure famous for his prophecies, while Hamm has no such apparent spiritual power. But still, Hamm foreshadows the apocalypse for humanity in this desolate world. The "corpsed" vision of our witness, Clov, recalls the barren land in Eliot's poem, out of which corpses sprout instead of flowers. Eliot (1922/1963) metaphorically refers to the hellish land after the bloodshed and massacres in the war: "That corpse you planted last year in your garden, / Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?" (p. 54). The dead bodies lying under the snow are uncovered in springtime like the newly blooming flowers in this nightmarish world without any color. The ecocritical analysis of Beckett's and Eliot's usage of a similar metaphor demonstrates that humanmade disasters kill the natural fields for inconsiderate capitalist purposes. As McKibben (2006) elucidates: "We have built a greenhouse, a human creation, where once there bloomed a sweet and wild garden" (p. 78). The ecological crises the whole world has faced are the consequences of breaking the harmonious existence with nature.

In Beckett's play *Endgame* (1957), Clov witnesses a similar colorless world with the dead nature through his telescope: all is the same "zero". There are no more bright colors; the color of the sea and the land is entirely "gray". Garrard (2012) claims that Clov's observations are probably intentional to harm his master Hamm: "Clov's apocalyptic reports may be read as vengeful fabrications of a mind in thrall to a cruel master. More to the point, the stage windows are not dressed to imply any prospect that might contradict or corroborate him" (p. 391). It is possible as there is no more proof of the outside reality but just Clov's description. Garrard (2012) concludes this by comparing Hamm's story about a mad painter who thinks that the end of the world has come:

HAMM:
I once knew a madman who thought the end of the world had come. He was a painter—and engraver. I had a great fondness for him. I used to go and see him, in the asylum. I'd take him by the hand and drag him to the window. Look! There! All that rising corn! And there! Look! The sails of the herring fleet! All that loveliness!
(Pause.)
He'd snatch away his hand and go back into his corner. Appalled. All he had seen was ashes.
(Pause.) He alone had been spared. (Pause.) Forgotten. (Pause.) It appears the case is... was not so... so unusual. (Beckett, 1957, p. 15)

He identifies himself with this mad painter in the asylum, and he is suspicious

of the story Clov tells him, as he knows how he deceives the painter with his false depictions of the world. Nevertheless, he believes in this apocalyptic description of the world.

This disappearance into nothingness is also quite visible in Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922/1963). Derya Biderci Dinç (2023) explains the physical destruction and decay in the poem with the concept of entropy as "energy's turning into inertia" (p. 720). She analyzes how the metaphorical representation of the Sibyl of Cumae is "the personification of the spiritual, cultural, social and environmental aging", which refers to "the entropic movement of the western civilization to loss of energy, disorder, degradation and inertia" (Biderci Dinç, 2023, p. 720). The Sibyl of Cumae's hopeless story is initially narrated in *The Satyricon* by Petronius (n.d.), who appears as a wretched old body desiring death. Eliot uses a part of the dialogue taken from the myth in his epigraph to the poem "The Waste Land": "Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent: Σιβυλλα τι θελεις; respondebat illa: αποθανειν θελω.", which roughly translates as "For once I myself once saw with my own eyes the Sibyl at Cumae hanging in a cage, and when the boys said to her 'Sibyl, what do you want?' she replied, 'I want to die.'" (Petronius, n. d., Ch. 48). Due to her curse granted by Apollo, Sibyl cannot die, but she suffers by observing all the horrors of life. Her desolate image echoes Beckett's characters living in misery. In Beckett's *Endgame* (1957), Clov inspects the same entropy told through Sibyl's story; he looks at the ashes in the outside world and describes this disorder to his blind master. The world is a wasteland, as in Eliot's poem, and even imagining this drags Hamm into despair as he still cannot believe such devastation:

> CLOV (looking): All gone.
> HAMM: No gulls?
> CLOV (looking): Gulls!
> HAMM: And the horizon? Nothing on the horizon?
> CLOV (lowering the telescope, turning towards Hamm, exasperated):
> What in God's name could there be on the horizon?
> (Pause.)
> HAMM: The waves, how are the waves?
> CLOV: The waves? (He turns the telescope on the waves.) Lead.
> HAMM: And the sun?
> CLOV (looking): Zero.
> HAMM: But it should be sinking. Look again.
> CLOV (looking): Damn the sun.
> HAMM: Is it night already then?
> CLOV (looking): No.

HAMM: Then what is it?
CLOV (looking): Gray.
(Lowering the telescope, turning towards Hamm, louder.)
Gray! (Pause. Still louder.) GRRAY! (Pause. He gets down, approaches Hamm from
behind, whispers in his ear.)
HAMM (starting): Gray! Did I hear you say gray? (Beckett, 1957, p. 11)

Hamm has no prophetic power like the mythological character, Tiresias, but he predicts their doomed future upon Clov's observations. Hamm's shocked reactions and asking for confirmation are pretty typical for a blind person towards such unbelievable depictions, and he desperately listens to the story of how the world has turned into a gray, infertile wasteland. Besides his physical analogy to Tiresias, despite their differences in prophetic power, Hamm's miserable condition is similar to the old woman in the first part of Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922/1963). Like that woman sitting on her chair, incapable of doing anything but recalling the old memories and mourning for the present grief, Hamm carries identical miseries. He is blind, aged, and powerless to change anything, but he suffers the agony of this "ending". He is also like the Sibyl of Cumae, symbolizing a living body in sorrow. Both Sibyl and Hamm age, but they cannot die like a punishment of eternal suffering. Sibyl continues living while her aged body shrivels and she gets smaller day by day until only her sound is left. Death is an unattainable desire for Sibyl; she has no ambitions left in life, and she wants to end this hellish survival. Hamm has a similar fate; he is powerless while waiting for his own decay like other living bodies around him. Hamm keeps asking Clov, "Is it not time for my pain-killer?" which suggests the termination of all his pains like other endings in the play. Ruby Cohn (1979) argues that Hamm is waiting for the time of death, which is symbolized as a pain-killer: "Though Hamm mentions a pain-killer in 'the little round box', repetition suggests the universal pain-killer, death" (p. 191). He is waiting for that time and wants Clov to be with him. Clov always attempts to leave Hamm, but both know very well the impossibility of a better life outside:

HAMM: Why do you stay with me?
CLOV: Why do you keep me?
HAMM: There's no one else.
CLOV: There's nowhere else. (Beckett, 1957, p. 3)

Geoff Hamilton (2002) analyzes *Endgame* as an anti-pastoral elegy in which "the imaginative connection of human suffering, perceptions of loss, and songs of hope and consolation with natural cycles of creation and destruction" is quite apparent (p. 611) He further reflects that together with the other poets and writers having described the wasteland of the modern world, Beckett's

"nature is degraded far enough in our real and imaginary worlds to make savage irony the last keynote of pastoral themes" as in the ghastly mood throughout *Endgame*, "Elegiac concerns are front and center in the play, and nature's destruction one of the principal subjects of Hamm and Clov's well-harrowed conversation" (Hamilton, 2002, p. 612). They state their sorrows on the absence of many things and feel repentance for not being capable of changing their present situations. Hamilton (2002) suggests that the outside description of the desolate environment in the play is closely related to the character's inner psychology: "The ruined landscape, or what we hear about what is left of it, suggests the projection of mental desolation, and the stage set itself which contains Hamm and Clov, Nagg and Nell, has been likened to the inside of a skull" (p. 612). The barren land with no life traces metaphorically alludes to the dull minds of the characters without any lively thoughts or dreams. The mutual reactions of nature and human feelings to each other are present in the form of a pathetic fallacy. Nature and human beings are interconnected as victims of infertile cycles of regeneration; Hamm declares: "I am taking my course" (Beckett, 1957, p. 14) like nature is taking its course in the play. The characters' suffering also reflects the predicament of all sources of life. Likewise, Eliot's (1922/1963) land is deprived of any signs of life and energy:

> Here is no water but only rock
> Rock and no water and the sandy road
> The road winding above among the mountains
> Which are mountains of rock without water (p. 85)

The repetitions of the expressions like "no water", "rock", "road", and "mountain" in negating combinations evoke a sense of void. It gives the impression that humanity cannot escape from such an oxymoronically nihilistic geography surrounded by a vicious cycle. The present world is emphasized as just rock and dust without water, which strengthens the idea that there is no life indeed. Hamilton (2002) examines that memories of a better past still exist in the characters' minds although the landscape of the play is a wasteland: "Flora and fauna seem to be extinct in this (suggestively post-nuclear) landscape, but memories of more vital, more pastoral worlds remain" (p. 615). Hamm's parents, Nagg and Nell, remember some nostalgia of their trips belonging to the disappearing past in their minds:

> NAGG: Do you remember-
> NELL: No.
> NAGG: When we crashed on our tandem and lost our shanks.
> (*They laugh heartily.)*
> NELL: It was in the Ardennes. *(They laugh less heartily.)*
> NAGG: On the road to Sedan. *(They laugh still less heartily.*
> (Beckett, 1957, p. 6)

Through the memories of the couple, Nagg and Nell, there is another reminder of Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922/1963). Eliot's opening line "April is the cruelest month of the year" is alluded to in *Endgame* with the phrase: "One April afternoon" (Beckett, 1957, p. 7) when they spent rowing on Lake Como, which Hamilton (2002) describes as "itself indebted to the pastoral convention of placing elegiac expressions during springtime so that nature's resurgence forms an ironic counterpoint to human loss" (p. 615). April is the reminder of a long-lost past with blooming flowers of the spring, as in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* that starts with the line: "[when] April with his showers sweet with fruit" (n. d., p. 1). This month of regeneration and renewal no longer exists. Eliot plants corpses instead of flowers in his wasteland world, and the smell of corpses covers the universe in Beckett's *Endgame* (1957) as well:

> HAMM: You stink already. The whole place stinks of corpses.
> CLOV: The whole universe.
> HAMM (angrily): To hell with the universe. (p. 16)

In addition to the influence of the war on the environment, the destruction of nature by the side-effects of industrial society is another aspect criticized in both works as the environment is polluted and ruined on a massive scale. It is the consequence of rapid and uncontrolled technological, scientific, and industrial progress by capitalist intentions. Fikret Güven (2015) echoes that the misery of humankind surrounded by the gloom of the destructed environment has a haunting effect on their inner peace, and he explains the primary force behind that: "thwarted expectation with both the liberal and social hypotheses about financial and social advancement brought an absence of good confirmation and decrease in religious confidence" (p. 2). Disappointment in the modern era, accompanied by the destruction of the environment, breaks the harmony between human and nature, and this damage inflicts in every cycle. People's present moments, memories, and dreams are disturbed by the horrendous vision of this apocalyptic world. Hamilton declares, "The memory is negated by invoking its terrestrial inversion" (2002, p. 615) on Nell's last word: "Desert!" and Clov reports that, "She told me to go away, into the desert" (Beckett, 1957, p. 8). Unfortunately, there are no more pleasing memories in the characters' minds; when they recall something existing in the past, it sounds like a dream. Almost at the beginning of the play, Hamm recollects a vision of nature with hesitations:

> What dreams! Those forests!
> (Pause.)
> Enough, it's time it ended, in the shelter too.
> (Pause.)

> And yet I hesitate, I hesitate to ... to end. Yes, there it is, it's time it ended and yet I hesitate to – (Beckett, 1957, p. 2)

He calls out for Clov; however, he does not reply, and Hamm begins to dream about those sad memories. He feels miserable as he has nothing else to do but accept the ending for everything. Hamilton (2002) argues: "Those forests, wherever they are, interrupt the universal 'ending' Hamm says he seeks and suggests the desire he still maintains for more life on better terms. They must be razed if total desolation (mental and material) is to be achieved, and yet he hesitates to end them" (p. 618). In their conversation, there are references to nature as something extinct. They always try to remember their memories about nature, which are the moments left in the past:

> HAMM: That here we're down in a hole.
> (Pause.)
> But beyond the hills? Eh? Perhaps it's still green. Eh?
> (Pause.)
> Flora! Pomona!
> (Ecstatically.)
> Ceres!
> (Pause.)
> Perhaps you won't need to go very far. (Beckett, 1957, p. 13)

Hamilton (2002) writes that "these nymphs - the goddesses of flowers, fruit, and agriculture, respectively - have evidently departed", but the characters in the play, especially Hamm, keep asking if these natural beauties have disappeared forever (p. 618). Hamilton mentions everybody's wondering and fear of the idea of witnessing the "zero", "This is the temptation of the all-too-human, would-be terminator, to clutch at fantasies of a revitalized world when the potential for such a turn-around is plainly, thuddingly 'zero'" (p. 618). These memories and concerns about remembering nature are substantial in their world:

> HAMM: Nature has forgotten us.
> CLOV: There's no more nature.
> HAMM: No more nature! You exaggerate.
> CLOV: In the vicinity.
> HAMM: But we breathe, we change! We lose our hair, our teeth! Our bloom! Our ideals!
> CLOV: Then she hasn't forgotten us.
> HAMM: But you say there is none.
> CLOV (sadly): No one that ever lived ever thought so crooked as we.
> HAMM: We do what we can.
> CLOV: We shouldn't. (Beckett, 1957, p. 4)

Zoran Milutinovic (2006) analyzes this nothingness where "there's no more nature" on a metadramatic level by claiming that "there is nothing outside the stage" (p. 348). There is no representation of the world outside the stage, but there are only the characters onstage with "no social relations, no story, no meaning that are supposed to embody" (Milutinovic, 2006, p. 349). Even though there is no more nature in the present world of the characters, it still lives in the memories. Similar to the pastoral nostalgias of Nagg and Nell, Hamm also tries to get away from his world to dreams of sex and nature:

> HAMM (wearily): Quiet, quiet, you're keeping me awake.
> (Pause.)
> Talk softer.
> (Pause.)
> If I could sleep I might make love. I'd go into the woods. My eyes would see... the sky, the earth. I'd run, run, they wouldn't catch me.
> (Pause.)
> Nature!
> (Pause.)
> There's something dripping in my head.
> (Pause.)
> A heart, a heart in my head.
> (Pause). (Beckett, 1957, pp. 6-7)

Hamm wishes to live his desires in his mind as it is impossible in the real world, but he cannot due to Nagg's disruptions. Another time, Hamm wishes to be somewhere else in nature: "If I could drag myself down to the sea! I'd make a pillow of sand for my head and the tide would come" (Beckett, 1957, p. 21), but Clov's reminder is enough for ending his dreams: "There's no more tide" (Beckett, 1957, p. 21). Hamm asks while sitting in front of the window: "That's what I call light! (Pause.) Feels like a ray of sunshine. (Pause.) No?... It isn't a ray of sunshine I feel on my face?", but Clov repeats his answer harshly: "No!" (Beckett, 1957, p. 21). Hamm requests Clov to open the window to hear the sea, but again, Clov replies that he cannot hear even if he opens the window (Beckett, 1957, pp. 21-22). Later, Hamm asks Clov if it is time for his painkiller, and he confirms, but he says, "There is no more painkiller… No more pain-killer. You'll never get any more pain-killer" (Beckett, 1957, p. 24). Clov adds that the once full box is empty now, and he won't get any more. Through the interpretation of the painkiller as a representative of death, the play suggests that the time for it has not come for Hamm yet, as he cannot die like Sibyl. He further wishes to be "Put […] in [his] coffin", but Clov's response is the same: "There are no more coffins" (Beckett, 1957, p. 26). Hamm cannot die and cannot even lie in a coffin.

Besides this world of absences, there is an obvious concern for "the

natural cycles of decay and, more problematically, regeneration" (Hamilton, 2002, p. 618). Hamm is concerned about the regeneration of living things; he shows an alarming reaction when Clov finds out he has a flea:

> CLOV (anguished, scratching himself): I have a flea!
> HAMM: A flea! Are there still fleas?
> CLOV: On me there's one. (Scratching.)
> Unless it's a crab louse.
> HAMM (very perturbed): But humanity might start from there all over again! Catch him, for the love of God!
> CLOV: I'll go and get the powder.
> (Exit Clov.)
> HAMM: A flea! This is awful! What a day! (Beckett, 1957, pp. 11-12)

Hamm is worried that this destructed life will continue in decline, which will create a miserable and horrible future. Clov comes back with the insecticide, shakes the powder into his trousers, and kills "the bastard!" (Beckett, 1957, p. 12). Garrard (2012) finds this unwanted visitor and the characters' anguish to be funny: "If the end of nature prompts a comical hyperbolic grief, the potential survival of humanity - or even of a single flea that might (somehow, on its own) beget a new human race – prompts Hamm's rage" (p. 389). Similarly, when Clov yells that he has seen a rat, Hamm is surprised by its existence:

> CLOV: There's a rat in the kitchen!
> HAMM: A rat! Are there still rats?
> CLOV: In the kitchen there's one.
> HAMM: And you haven't exterminated him? (Beckett, 1957, p. 18)

Exterminating all these animals, promising the continuation of life on Earth, is the best option for them. No healthy life is left on Earth; living means suffering more, and living organisms are scary for that reason. Therefore, it is better to put an end to this torture. Hamm also accuses his father of causing his existence in this world and calls him "Accursed progenitor!" (Beckett, 1957, p. 4). He questions him: "Scoundrel! Why did you engender me?" (Beckett, 1957, p. 17), but Nagg does not know the answer. Therefore, nature begets a new meaning, not a holder of beauty anymore but a defective enemy of humankind's future. Urban decadence and natural cycles of regeneration are the main concerns in Beckett's writing:

> In Beckett's versions of pastoral, however, human limitations are hyperbolized: escape is barred, Arcadia a grim joke, the difference between insides and outsides a stupefying dilemma, and regeneration simply a form of prolonging pain.

> The desire to transcend one's limiting circumstances still exists [...] but attempts to get beyond the here and now [...] habitually end in frustration. (Hamilton, 2005, as cited in Giles 2008, p. 181)

Nature reflects the suffering of human existence as natural reproduction becomes a horrible issue. When they see a small boy outside the window in the wasteland, Clov calls him "A potential procreator?" (Beckett, 1957, p. 26), ironically threatening the continuation of human life. This fear of the characters in the play is firmly related to the Malthusian logic, which suggests the regulation of the human population considering the diminishing natural resources. More people mean more suffering for the rest of the living bodies on Earth; therefore, Beckett emphasizes the horrifying future waiting for them. In Hamm's story, when a peasant comes and begs for some food, Hamm forces the man to think realistically:

> Corn, yes, I have corn, it's true, in my granaries.
> But use your head. I give you some corn, a pound, a pound and a half, you bring it back to your child and you make him—if he's still alive—a nice pot of porridge.
> (Nagg reacts.)
> a nice pot and a half of porridge, full of nourishment. Good. The colors come back into his little cheeks—perhaps. And then?
> (Pause.)
> I lost patience.
> (Violently.)
> Use your head, can't you, use your head. You're on earth, there's no cure for that! (Beckett, 1957, p. 18)

Giving food to this child will cause his survival, which will cause more suffering in this world, as Garrard (2012) argues: "Hamm's ruthless logic is identical to that of Thomas Malthus, who argued that food for the poor would only deepen and prolong their misery by adding unsustainably to their numbers" (p. 390). Hamm acknowledges that there is no cure on Earth, so ending human life is better than struggling to stay alive in suffering. Garrard (2012) claims that the play is ecological because of "the intractable war of attrition Malthus perceived between population growth and limited resources" (p. 390). Hamm carries these concerns about the future of human and natural life on Earth, and he adds: "But what in God's name do you imagine? That the earth will awake in the spring? That the rivers and seas will run with fish again? That there's manna in heaven still for imbeciles like you?" (Beckett, 1957, p. 18). He does not believe in an optimistic resurrection of nature, so ending is the best option for him. He lives with dilemmas between hope and despair. A few minutes ago, he exclaimed the existence of some natural

beauties: “But beyond the hills? Eh? Perhaps it’s still green. Eh? (Pause.) Flora! Pomona! (Ecstatically.) Ceres!” (Beckett, 1957, p. 13), but now he is hopeless for the continuation of nature. In his last soliloquy, he reacts to the father who wants to have his child with him in this wasteland: “You don’t want to abandon him? You want him to bloom while you are withering? Be there to solace your last million last moments?” (Beckett, 1957, p. 28). Hamm knows the catastrophe that will follow them, so he warns the father: “He doesn’t realize, all he knows is hunger, and cold, and death to crown it all. But you! You ought to know what the earth is like, nowadays. Oh I put him before his responsibilities!” (Beckett, 1957, p. 28).

Eliot (1922/1963) and Beckett (1957) emphasize the world’s desolateness into nothingness as the prevailing feeling of many people in the century of the two global wars. People believed they had come to the end of everything after all the experiences of terror and despair. Throughout the play, many repetitions refer to humans’ routine actions and dull lives in this wasteland world. Beckett intentionally uses these repetitive words to stress the existentialist questioning in this meaningless life. For instance, the word “finished” is used many times to emphasize the message of “ending” in the play:

> CLOV (fixed gaze, tonelessly): Finished, it’s finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished.
> (Pause.)
> Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there’s a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap. (p. 1)
> […]
> HAMM (exasperated): Have you not finished?
> Will you never finish? (With sudden fury.)
> Will this never finish? (p. 8)
> […]
> HAMM: Why don’t you finish us? (Pause.)
> I'll tell you the combination of the cupboard if you promise to finish me.
> CLOV: I couldn’t finish you.
> HAMM: Then you won’t finish me. (p. 13)
> […]
> HAMM: You’ve forgotten the sex.
> CLOV (vexed): But he isn’t finished. The sex goes on at the end.
> (Pause.)
> HAMM: You haven’t put on his ribbon.
> CLOV (angrily): But he isn’t finished, I tell you! First you finish your dog and then you put on his ribbon! (p. 14)
> […]

> HAMM: It's finished, we're finished.
> (Pause.) Nearly finished.
> (Pause.) There'll be no more speech. (p. 17)
> […]
> HAMM: I'll soon have finished with this story. (Beckett, 1957, p. 18)

Beginning from the first page, "finished" means something "ended", as revealed in Hamm and Clov's dialogues. "Finished" suggests the ending of many things, from crops in nature to sex and speech, briefly ending everything in human life. Furthermore, the characters repeat some phrases, sometimes out of mistrust, curiosity, hesitation, or for emphasis. They frequently respond to each other by repeating each other's sentences. They also use the same expressions for different purposes. For example, Hamm repeats his phrase: "Use your head, can't you, use your head, you're on earth, there's no cure for that!" (Beckett, 1957, p. 23) once more, after the discussion on the rat. The world inevitably has ended, and Hamm reminds us that repeatedly. They do not have any strength to stop the approaching apocalypse as their curse has already started with their arrival on Earth. Beckett (1957) mentions the phrase: "Outside of here it's death" (pp. 3, 23) both at the beginning and end of the play to emphasize the end of life on Earth.

After all the catastrophic language, style, and descriptions throughout *Endgame*, it is not easy to observe the existence of something hope-giving considering the end of the play. In this respect, Hans-Peter Hasselbach (1976) compares Beckett's two plays, *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, regarding the character's expectations of some outside help in their present situations. While in *Waiting for Godot*, the characters focus on Godot's arrival,

> In *Endgame*, on the other hand, there can be no help from outside: "Outside of here it's death" (p. 9), everything is "zero" (p. 29) and "corpsed" (p. 30). The center of interest is not an expected arrival, but an expected departure. The dramatic occurrences in *Endgame* draw their vitality and developing interest from the conflict between Clov and Hamm, which may be summarized with the simple question, will Clov leave Hamm? (Hasselbach, 1976, p. 30)

In the end, Clov attempts to leave Hamm finally, and Hamm utters these words while begging him not to go or at least cover him with a sheet while going: "Old endgame lost of old, play and lose and have done with losing" (Beckett, 1957, p. 27). That is a metatheatrical device; Hamm reminds us that the play is coming to an end. Clov has prepared himself for departure without answering him anymore after his last words: "This is what we call making an exit" (Beckett, 1957, p. 27). That is another metatheatrical speech. Hamm is struggling in his room with the chair, handkerchief, whistle, and memories of

the child with the father. He knows that he has come to his end alone in darkness: "Moments for nothing, now as always, time was never and time is over, reckoning closed and story ended" (Beckett, 1957, p. 28). Like the beginning of the play, the ending is unfinished without a resolution. The play depicts Clov watching Hamm from the entrance after being prepared to leave. The end of the story comes as Hamm exclaims but in Beckett's absurd way. Hasselbach (1976) states:

> With these considerations we encounter the most notable problem of Beckett's dramatic art: how to end. In *Endgame*, this question becomes both thematically and structurally relevant, and since the play implies a metaphorically consistent world-view (the human condition as absurd – "Hamm: It all happened without me", it cannot have a real resolution. Beckett carries out his rejection of goal-directed action and finished plot with absolute consistency. (p. 30)

The absurd ending signifies the vicious cycle in which humanity and nature are stuck. There is neither a hope-giving message for the welfare of humankind nor a promise for ecological revival. Hamm, representing humanity, rejects the responsibility for this destruction and ultimate apocalypse.

3. CONCLUSION

The paper has analyzed the two apocalyptic texts, Beckett's *Endgame* (1957) and Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922/1963), in the light of ecocritical considerations. The analysis indicates many similarities between the two texts referring to the apocalyptic ending of the world because of the ecological crises driven by humanity. The study concludes that the reason behind the ecologic catastrophe is indeed the destruction of nature through greedy capitalist intentions and thoughtless human actions; however, both texts focus more on the results as a reference to humanity that does not accept any responsibility for the consequences of their actions. The pessimistic vision of the world that prevailed in both works is marked by the devastating consequences of the two world wars. Both works reflect the suffering of humanity in the modern world of the 20th century's cruel applications. As *Endgame* constantly emphasizes, repeated actions and words like "finished" attribute to the vicious cycle and dull routines in this wasteland world, which suggests the termination of numerous entities from crops in fields to sex and speech in human life. *Endgame* promises an end in Beckett's way: cruel without hopes for survival or any redemption for the actions to make it better. However, this study suggests that *Endgame* serves as a warning narrative together with Eliot's "The Waste Land" for humanity to shake them before the literal end of the world as an outcome of the destruction of nature. Both texts foreshadow the future catastrophe waiting for all of us. As the narrations

suggest, there might be a time when all humans will live in misery in a similar wasteland world, doing nothing but waiting to die like Eliot's Sibyl and Beckett's Hamm. The absurdity of human life suggests that people may deny their contribution to this game of ending everything like Hamm as indicated in the play: "Absent, always. It all happened without me. I don't know what's happened. (Pause.) Do you know what's happened? (Pause.) Clov!" (Beckett, 1957, p. 25). Beckett knows human nature, which denies responsibility till the last moment, and his play, as a recall of Eliot's "The Waste Land", can be interpreted as a last call to stop the ecological destruction and to mend the broken harmony between humanity and nature.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding this research.

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL / PARTICIPANT CONSENT

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