As an Ecodystopia, Water Crisis in “Susuz Çağın Çocukları”

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ABSTRACT
While Ecodystopia tries to reveal how ecological destruction will affect the world and humans, it brings scientific facts - which are difficult to understand at first glance - about environmental problems into fiction in different ways and on the other hand, it draws attention on how the ecological crises will change people's daily lives and habits. In this research, it is aimed to reveal the reflections of climate change and water crisis in literature through the work called Susuz Çağın Çocukları, which is an ecodystopian fiction. In the research, whose theoretical framework is based on ecodystopia definitions, the data obtained from the work are divided into certain headings/themes through content analysis and interpreted with a focus on the water crisis. The work titled Susuz Çağın Çocukları, which is based on how life in the world will be shaped when no precautions are taken against the water crisis, tells the struggle for survival of people who have to establish a new civilization due to water scarcity. The author, who draws attention to the thought provoking consequences of climate disasters via children struggling to survive in the Dry Age Civilization, tries to reveal the possible consequences of the water crisis in the context of the foundations of dystopian fiction. Selda Yaşar who tries to bring ecological sensitivity to the reader, reminds the importance of values such as "sacrifice, determination, optimism, diligence and justice" to the child/young reader by constructing a solution-oriented optimistic world instead of creating a pessimistic perception of the future.

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1. Introduction
The ecological crisis, which emerged as a result of humans’ unconscious intervention in nature and extended to global dimensions over time, indicates the necessity for people to review the causes and consequences of their actions. Ecocriticism, which focuses on the relationship between the environment and literature and examines literary texts within this framework, emphasizes that nature is a whole with humans by trying to show the consequences of these actions to human beings who harm nature (Oppermann, 1996, p. 580). Among eco-fictions, one of the types that can best reveal the possible terrible dimensions of the ecological crisis is dystopias. In order to define ecodystopia, the conceptual framework of dystopia must first be drawn well. Dystopias, defined as "satires written to criticize the failing aspects of the existing social and political order" (Coşkuner, 2019, p. 37), try to draw attention to different problems in the fictional world. Dystopias, also known as anti-utopias, "attack utopia by first fictionally showing a historically valid validity that emerges from the utopia, and then arguing how terrible the world would become if it became real" (Yalçınkaya, 2004, p. 65). Dystopia, which is tried to be defined

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with different meanings such as critical utopia, anti-utopia, catopodia, negative utopia, reflects a perspective that arises from utopia and is completely opposite to it. Dystopian literature “focuses on the transformation of utopian dreams into nightmares and therefore, rather than refuting utopian activity, takes a cautious stance against possible innocent evils within utopian perfection” (Neydim & Polatel, 2020, p. 57). Utopias and dystopias, which can be considered as an expression of social criticism and the search for change, are the narrative of a social order that is "desired to be" or "undesirable to be" in the future of the fictional world created, and they bear some distinctions on an intellectual basis. When focused on the emotion behind the writing of the genres, it will be seen that "while a utopia emphasizes the need for harmony for happiness, a counter-utopia describes the fear and pain caused in the name of harmony” (Bezel, 1984, p. 17). In particular, these two types differ in their emphasis on opposing political and sociological structures. While “Utopia creates a community society that is egalitarian, democratic, optimistic, based on common property, and prioritizes religion; dystopias emphasize inegalitarian, totalitarian, pessimistic, private property-based, secular, statist social structures” (Jameson, 2009, p. 203). Dystopias, which have the potential to provide foresight and awareness of possible problems accompanied by pessimistic scenarios, can also transform fiction into a critical tool within the scope of the literature. The texts of dystopian literature, the first examples of which appeared in the early 1900s, were nourished by the social, political, economic and technological changes of the period in which they were written. The aim of dystopian writers is to present the current time with a critical discourse by building a gloomy model of the future world. Therefore, dystopian fiction in literature is the product of an intellectual attitude striving for a bright future (Durmaz, 2022, p. 15). Dystopias, which focus on different issues such as government control, totalitarian rule, technological control, hostile society, social isolation, and the erosion of personal identity, vary in emotional attitudes depending on social changes over time. “The real task of dystopias is to make a man realize that it is impossible for a man to build an ideal society, and therefore he must be committed to building a better society. Especially the dystopias published over the last thirty years are trying to clearly show their readers that there is still a chance for humanity to escape, and at the end of the story they often offer a glow of hope” (Vierra, 2017, p. 23). Dystopian genres, which essentially try to give messages to humanity by raising awareness and looking at the future from different time periods, can also diversify according to the way they give the message. The term dystopia, which originates from the Greek and means 'dis-topos' or 'produced from a bad place', was used by Henry Lewis Younge in 1747, and writers such as Cadigan, Robinson, Butler, Piercy and Le Guin transformed it into a 'critical dystopia' narrative (Baccolini & Moylan, 2003, p. 7; Milner, 2014, p. 89-90). Critical dystopias, which build the conceptual framework of their genre with a new perception according to the conditions of the age, bring a flexible perspective to fiction with an attitude that breaks the static and changeless structure of classical dystopia. With the changes experienced in the 1960s and 1970s, the changing nature of utopia, which was approached from a critical perspective, played an important role in the emergence of critical dystopia. During this time period, the concepts of optimism and hope were re-evaluated in the dream worlds of the writers, leading to the emergence of terms such as 'critical utopia', 'ambiguous utopia' and 'critical eutopias'. These terms were used to describe works in which the utopia was dealt with a critical perspective but still contained hope. This approach has enabled authors to focus on real-world problems and shortcomings rather than idealized social models. With this change, in 1980s, critical utopia concepts gave a new spirit to dystopia. With this transformation, dystopia has taken a form that points to social problems from a critical perspective and contains hope, instead of just depicting a pessimistic future. Unlike classical dystopia, where pessimism comes to the fore, 'critical dystopia', which emphasizes hope, has turned into a concept that has the potential to criticize the system by drawing attention to the problems in society (Atasoy, 2020, p. 1139-1143). Critical dystopia, which can provide an opportunity for a critical view of problems, moves dystopia beyond depicting a pessimistic future by addressing the issue from a broader perspective. This type, which evolved from dystopia, has positive features that focuses on current problems and offers the reader a way out and contributes to positive changes. Dystopian fiction, which is often seen as social criticism but also offers a commentary on scientific progress, is a way of thinking about how humans affect nature (Erer, 2022, p. 27). In particular, ecodystopian works offer the opportunity to reveal the possible future consequences of humans' impact on nature through negative scenarios, emotionally and intellectually. The ecodystopias deal with a number of current and future disasters including ozone depletion, global warming, lack of drinking water, and famine, which are consequences caused due to the domination of the world by humans. "Ecodystopia, which reminds us that a negative future awaits humanity; “It is a literary genre that describes the world in which ecosystems collapse and natural creatures disappear, or in other words, it is an apocalyptic literature due to containing various stories about the end of the world” (Durmaz Aksu, 2019, p. 1.3). Ecodystopian works, which draw attention to a bad future awaiting humanity by highlighting ecological problems, depict the destructive effects of humans on nature, covering themes such as the collapse of ecosystems, the destruction of natural assets and environmental degradation. In this context, ecodystopian works that encourage their readers to take responsibility at the individual and social level to prevent negative consequences are important due to aiming to raise awareness about environmental problems. The industrial revolution, the cold war period and the environmental disasters in the 1960s and 1970s had a great impact on the shaping of the ecodystopia genre. The concept of environmental apocalypse
forms the basis of ecodystopias, which emerged in an environment full of concerns such as ideological conflict, nuclear arms race, risks brought by technological developments, and environmental degradation during the Cold War period. These types of works, which aim to help people learn more about environmental issues, establish an emotional bond with readers and encourage them to join the environmental fight (Garrard, 2017, p. 154; Toska, 2017, p. 107). In the study titled “An Introduction to Eco-dystopias: Nature and the Dystopian Imagination” it is stated that “In many contemporary ecodystopias, technological progress is both a movement away from nature and at the same time a movement towards nature.” It is also noted that nature is still considered to be essential for our definitions of urban space or technological utopia” (Hughes & Wheeler, 2013, p. 3). As Hughes states, in contemporary ecodystopian works, technology and nature are an intertwined whole. The main point that determines the future of nature in this two-way relationship is how human beings perceive nature and how they approach it.

Selda Yaşar's *Susuz Çağın Çocukları* is an ecodystopy that deals with various ecological problems such as climate change, extinction of species, thirst, hunger, and depletion of resources. In the work, where the water crisis is placed at the center, it is aimed to increase environmental awareness in the reader while trying to explain the importance and value of water. Drawing attention to social problems with an approach that includes elements of hope and optimism, the author also offers possible solutions and hopeful scenarios while criticizing. *Susuz Çağın Çocukları* has the appearance of a “critical dystopia” as it depicts possible negative scenarios in the future and emphasizes the potential to overcome these scenarios and positive changes at the social level. This work, written with ecological sensitivity, is about a deep-rooted struggle that resonates with environmental problems from a dystopian perspective. The author, who prepares her readers for the bad scenarios of the future by writing *Susuz Çağın Çocukları* regardless of age, sets out to demonstrate the threats that may arise in sociological and psychological terms.

2. The Value of Water for Human Beings and its Importance for Nature

Water, which plays an important role in the functioning of ecosystems, is the habitat of many living species. Water is vital for the protection of its resources, the maintenance of biodiversity and the functioning of ecosystems in balance. Water, whose importance for human beings is indisputable, also has many meanings for all living things. In *Susuz Çağın Çocukları*, the author tries to explain the value of water through its absence, emphasizing the importance of water in the ecosystem with the following words: “Without water, nature could not wake up: Seeds did not grow, flowers did not bloom, rain did not fall. The cycle was broken, the seasons disappeared. "The days seemed to repeat each other" (Yaşar, 2022, p. 99). In *Susuz Çağın Çocukları*, the water crisis that occurs due to the climate crisis is an important reality that has the power to change borders and establish new civilizations. In the work, in a new world order based on water with ancient names, the five main regions named “Patara, Petra, Pergamon, Ainos, Zeugma” struggle with drought and hunger at different degrees. In “Dry Age Civilizations”, which takes its name from the resource it needs most, the borders are surrounded by huge walls and passage between regions is prohibited in order to preserve the limited water required for life. At a time when water shortage is increasing and threatening human life, hope for water is revived with a mysterious flower appearing in the forest. Selected children from different regions try to reach the source of water hidden from people to reach the mysterious flower:

“Arkaida means unspoiled countryside. It is both real and imaginary, it exists but cannot be found. It houses the largest water resource on earth. The waterfall in Arkaida cannot be found by anyone except the five children chosen by the flower. The tunnel is the gate of Arkaida. Only five children can enter through this door. If one day the living creatures’ water supply runs out, the flower will find them and call them to Arkaida. "At that time, when the first bud of spring blooms, five children must remove the Buried Rock from its place” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 80).

Arkaida, the mysterious place that starts the fantastic journey in the work, is the real source of water. Five children, who have the power to move the Buried Rock in Arkadia, place their hands on the marks on the rock and bring the water back to the people. Arkadia, depicted as a symbolic place untouched by human hands, is also the place where the utopian knot is untied in the work. By keeping Arkadia, which children have access to, secret from people, the author implicitly points out the identity of the one who actually harms nature. With the water crisis solved by Fırat's determination, Aras' justice, Göksu's optimism, Meriç's hard work and Dicle's sacrifice, it gives the message that the solution lies in children and intact values.

Water, a basic requirement for sustainable life, plays an important role in many areas, especially health, agriculture and food security, and forms the basis of economic activities in different sectors. Water, which is valuable in spiritual life as well as material life, is an essential resource for the sustaining of life with its properties such as cleansing, renewal and spiritual purification. It is explained in the following words that human beings who do not have this awareness, who do not pay attention to nature and who do not use water properly, prepare their own disaster: "Humans have destroyed nature and misused it for centuries. Finally, it became arid and fell into
disaster. Arkaida's water will provide the opportunity for a brand new beginning. But I'm not sure whether people will understand the value of water and nature” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 106). In the work, which was designed to emphasize the importance of water for nature and humans, the story of the transition from Dry Age to the Civilization of the Age of Nature is told, while it is also tried to draw attention to the meaning and value of water for both nature and humanity under different headings. The work, which makes us think about the causes of the water crisis, emphasizes the importance of acting in unity and solidarity by reminding us that water should not be wasted:

“Every person on earth has realized the value of nature. Differences of opinion during the establishment of the Dry Age Civilizations became insignificant. Everyone promised to protect nature. Since that day, not a single tree has been cut down. The soil was not polluted. Water was not wasted. People never forgot what happened” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 109).

Drawing attention to how future generations may be affected by the water crisis in Susuz Çağın Çocukları, Yaşar reminds us of our responsibilities for the sustainable use and protection of water resources and makes us think about the long-term effects of the water crisis. In this context, the work reveals the need for a holistic assessment that includes issues such as restoration of ecosystems, review of water use policies and cultural changes.

3. Degradation of Ecosystem and Water Crisis

In Selda Yaşar's work titled Susuz Çağın Çocukları which is one of the examples of ecological dystopia, global problems such as "climate change and water crisis" are based on the criticism of the mentality that disrupts the balance of the ecosystem. The novel focuses on the effects of the water crisis that has arisen with the collapse of the ecosystem in a dark and chaotic space. Focusing on human-environmental relationships with an ecological approach, Yaşar discusses the relationship between man and nature in his work on environmental issues from a nature-centred perspective. In the work, the author describes the alienation of the individual to himself and to nature, the damage caused to nature and the disruptions that occur in this process, and creates a pessimistic atmosphere with social satire. The project, which uses distopic elements, criticizes the current situation, but also gives hope for possible future solutions. The fictional scene, which initially resembles a catastrophic scenario, evolves into an optimistic future fiction with a soft slide. In this context, the work is built on a theme that tries to activate ecological awareness and emphasizes the "unifying power of nature": Explaining in different ways how nature unites people under one roof through heroes, Selda Yaşar emphasizes the holistic power of nature within itself and the justice of nature:

“The way of life in Petra does not seem fair to me. I often throw myself into the lap of nature because there are no such distinctions in nature. All beings are intertwined like the ring of a chain, and every living thing is valuable here. A tiny insect, a worm digging in the soil, a rabbit whose feces become fertilizer for the soil... Even a dead tree leaves its legacy to all living things. It becomes a home for the animals around it and medicine for the soil for years until its body rots and disappears completely” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 67).

As the author states, this balance chain includes various elements, from plants to animals, from animals to humans, from the food chain to the climate factor. Each change affects a delicate balance on these rings. This shows that balance is of great importance in the sustainability of the ecosystem, that every being is intrinsically valuable and that this diversity plays a critical role in natural balance.

Another element discussed in Susuz Çağın Çocukları is the damage done to the nature. The author describes the predicament of human beings who consume resources recklessly, and describes the world that is thrown into chaos as water resources gradually decrease. Focusing on the water crisis, one of the major global problems, Susuz Çağın Çocukları reveals the dimensions of the crisis that started with the depletion of water resources in the world. In the work, the leaders of an utopian place are forced to divide the world into five main parts according to the remaining water resources. In the social order, established with a few items in order to survive, transitions between regions will not be allowed, borders will be determined by huge walls and each region will have the authority to manage its resources. While it is stated in the work that the seeds of a new civilization were laid with these great borders, important forgotten details are also reminded. The most important point, which Yaşar also emphasized is that the walls set for the borders disrupt the cyclical balance of the ecosystem and cause the loss of many species:

“Water resources were now completely wiping out due to the huge walls that disrupted the ecosystem and centuries of nature destruction. Man had already broken down walls in other regions in pursuit of the same quest. Eventually, all mankind gathered desperately on dry, dried land” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 98).

The creation of a new world order is the first step in the emergence of the Dry Age Civilizations. People have late realized that their end will come, that all natural resources will be depleted and that they will witness this exhaustion. In the author's eyes, humanity, which desires to find a place for itself within the gigantic borders of the new world, is once again trapped in those walls they had built. “The water in our spring was slowly drying up. In Zeugma, we were faced with such a
serious crisis for the first time in two centuries. Scientists said that one of the reasons why the source dried out could be huge walls. Interventions in nature disrupted the balance after a while” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 85). Pointing to a cyclical chaos in Susuz Çağın Çocukları, Yaşar tries to explain the basis of many global problems is humanity's anxiety and ambition to dominate nature, and that these interventions shake the balance of nature and cause new problems.

Describing the complexity of environmental problems, Susuz Çağın Çocukları reveals the profound effects of human interaction on the natural world. When this situation is looked from an ecocritical perspective, it is seen that the water crisis is not only an environmental problem, as emphasized in the novel, but also a factor that changes the social order and shapes the socioeconomic structure.

3.1. The Emergence of "Dry Age Civilizations" / Water Wars Between Civilizations

The novel, Susuz Çağın Çocukları, tells about the global problems that arise with the decrease in water in a new world order that emerges with changing climates. In the novel, the attitude of human beings, who prefer to have the right to dominate nature rather than finding a place for themselves in nature, is criticized sometimes frankly and sometimes implicitly. According to a consumption-oriented point of view, humans, who aim to benefit from every bit of nature, conflict with nature beyond alienation from it. In the novel based on this focal point, the adventure of human beings who started water wars by consuming water resources and building a new civilization and its aftermath are told. In the new order, which is divided into five different regions such as Petra, Zeugma, Ainos, Pergamon and Patara, civilizations are surrounded by huge walls and separated by sharp borders, and transitions between regions are completely banned. In the novel, the establishment process of the civilization called Dry Age, in which the foundations of the new world order were laid with the water crisis and which also gave its name to the novel, is depicted as follows:

“According to the last remaining water sources, the world is divided into five parts. The regions have defined their management styles and priorities. People have chosen the region they want to live in once and for all. They agreed that no transit would be carried out under any circumstances after the zones were identified. Each region would manage its own resources, there would be no transit, no shopping, no travel between regions. The borders were surrounded by huge walls to prevent chaos again. This is how the Civilizations of the Dry Age were formed” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 9).

In the dystopian novel Susuz Çağın Çocukları, the author points out that the tensions arising in the political, social and economic fields are an inevitable result of the water crisis. In the novel, which describes in detail how Dry Age Civilizations emerged, it is tried to show that the main phenomenon that determines the boundaries is the ecosystem.

Describing the dangerous dimensions of the inter-civilization water war, the author states that the discovery of water resources is a sign of a separate danger. “Don’t you know what happened in the past? If humans discover the source, it is inevitable that the water wars will begin again” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 39), emphasizing that water wars depend on this discovery.

In the book Susuz Çağın Çocukları, another issue that needs to be emphasized is the attitude of the administrators who realize the threat of water crisis. Leaders who realize the consequences of the climate crisis, which started with the deterioration of the balance in the ecosystem, drought and the threat posed by rapidly depleting resources, try to hide the problem in order to prevent the increasing of tension in the environment. It is explained in these words that hiding the problem instead of solving it feeds the chaos even more: “First the water decreased. Administrators hid the problems for a while to avoid causing panic in the public. This caused the drought to worsen. Climates have changed. ‘Thirst, famine and the gradual decrease in resources have plunged the world into chaos’ (Yaşar, 2022, p. 9). Approaching the water crisis with a critical perspective in the shadow of global problems, Yaşar tries to explain how environmental threats drag the world into an unknown future.

In Selda Yaşar's Susuz Çağın Çocukları, the distopic world is divided into five different regions and these regions are represented by selected special children. These children appear to be ambassadors of hope to revitalize the era of drought, with solutions they have found to address the problems caused by factors such as the water crisis and climate change. These five children, named Firat, Göksu, Dicle, Aras and Meriç, whose names are inspired by the rivers, make a great effort and endeavour to have water resources. The children who embark on an adventure in order to save nature, set out with a white flower they discovered in their area. In this exciting adventure, each child undertakes the task of finding the source of the flower of hope through their resistance in their own region. Selda Yaşar, who tries to instill hope in the reader through cooperation and solidarity between children, also attributes a symbolic value to children. In the novel, where each child represents a different value, Aras symbolizes justice, Göksu symbolizes optimism, Meriç symbolizes diligence, Dicle symbolizes sacrifice and Firat symbolizes determination. The author, who tries to show that each value has a different importance, expresses that all values are needed for the hope of salvation with the following words: "On the paper it is written that, 'Sacrifices, determination, optimism, diligence and justice must touch the rock. 'Only they can save nature" (Yaşar, 2022, p. 94). All of these values are the properties that the children
will need to decipher when they reach Buried Rock. Symbolically, the fingerprints that children leave on the world represent a source of hope, on the other hand they are a criticism of the unity and solidarity that previous generations could not achieve. The necessity for children to come together and fight against the values assigned to them in order to get rid of the water crisis and chaos is a result of the sense of sharing and selfishness that is the reason for the water wars that started in various parts of the world. The author describes the difficulties that began with the decrease in resources and its essential consequences as follows: “People could not share the diminishing resources. Wars started all over the world, and the unity of countries was broken. Even as the world was destroyed, the differences of opinion did not end” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 9).

The decrease in natural resources weakens unity and solidarity by causing increased competition and conflicts among people. People tend to fight with each other to protect their own interests and survive due to the scarcity of resources and the tensions brought by competition. While this situation damages the ability of societies to work together and cooperate, it creates environments of separation, division and conflict. It is clear that the decrease in the amount of water worldwide will have devastating consequences in all cultural, social and economic areas. First of all, this decrease endangers living creatures and restricts their habitats. This restriction will affect the world's social, economic and political systems, and increasing water problems will lead to international tension (Kılıç, 2008, p. 162). Therefore, it is important to ensure cooperation and understanding regarding the sharing and management of resources, because without these values, it will not be possible for societies to develop and build a sustainable future. These five children, who are shown as the solution to similar problems in the novel, are the salvation of the Dry Age. Although these children, who are ambassadors of hope in the eyes of the author, draw a positive picture with their struggle against difficulties, the efforts made for the ecosystem to repair itself are not enough and many years are needed for this:

“They were talking about how it would take years for the ecosystem to repair itself. There was an atmosphere of complete panic in the region. Everybody was worried. The administration immediately shut down the access to water to prevent water wars and prevent people from trying to stockpile water. Now each household was given a certain amount of water by calculating the number of people” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 86).

stated in this quote, the author states that it may take many years for the ecosystem to repair itself and reminds that the time spent during the crisis will create panic and anxiety. The decisions taken in the novel are a reflection of urgent measures taken to ensure the sustainable use of water resources. As the narrator emphasises, the measures taken by the administration in order to control water consumption and meet the water needs of the society in a fair way in a period when water resources are limited, although inadequate, are a temporary solution.

### 3.2. The Water Crisis and Changes in the Political Map

Water crisis, which has become an increasing problem worldwide in our age, is an important problem that can lead to changes in the political map. Decreasing water resources and difficulty in accessing water can cause conflicts and tensions between countries. In particular, as water gains value as a strategic resource, countries with water resources can have a decisive role in the balance of power. Today, in developing countries where water shortage is most common, the proposed water management system is likely to create far more problems than solving them (Kılıç, 2018, p. 162). Disputes between countries regarding the sharing of water resources have a feature that can affect political relations and regional balances of power. In this context, the work entitled Susuz Çağın Çocukları which touches on the relationship between the water crisis and the borders of the political map, is of particular importance. Drawing attention to the decisive aspect of water in determining the new world order, the author emphasizes that water is an important factor that can lead to changes in the political map. Among the other issues implicitly mentioned in the fictional theme is that water access problems arising from the decrease in water resources affect the relations and power dynamics between countries. In the novel, where the borders of dystopian civilizations are determined by water, the importance of water is also reflected in the names given to children: “Although the rivers are dry now, thousands of years ago they took their source from this very point and flowed in different directions. Most importantly, the children who found the source, named after those rivers: Aras, Tigris, Meriç, Göksu and Fırat” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 50). Giving the children the names of the drying river in the novel is a symbolic reflection of the author's view of "water and the child" as the determinants of his future vision. In fostering hope for the future, water is a marker of “material boundaries”; children are a definer of “spiritual bounds.” With this perspective, it is desired to make the reader feel the importance of sustainable management of water resources and social cooperation, sometimes through explicit and sometimes implicit messages.

### 3.3. Decline in Biodiversity and Extinction of Species

All ecological processes are based on biodiversity, which can be defined as intra-species diversity or genetic diversity, ecosystem diversity and diversity of eco-system services. When the biodiversity that maintains ecosystems decreases, ecosystems can collapse unexpectedly. Extinction of "keystone species" in ecosystems could lead to the collapse of ecological relationships (Özdemir, 2016, p. 32).
Unfortunately, biodiversity has been declining in recent years and many species are at risk of extinction. Damage to ecosystems and biodiversity may cause some species to disappear, some species to migrate or change their habitats, and some species to increase their population (Demir, 2009, p. 43). The decrease in biological diversity or the extinction of some species is an important environmental problem that affects human life by disrupting the food chain and ecological balance.

In her novel Susuz Çağın Çocukları, the author also touches upon the issue of species extinction along with the water crisis, and tells the change that nature is experiencing due to the climate change and water crisis without drawing a terrible picture. With the presence of a white flower along with the water crisis, she tries to lead the children to the water source:

“For as long as I can remember, I have seen nature as a school and studied it. I learned the names of animals and plants. This curiosity led me to the mysterious white flower. Once I found it, the rest came crashing down. I followed the flower to the source.” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 67).

This white flower is an indicator of water, the future and the hope of life, discovered through the initiatives of special children sent to the regions. In the discovery made by children through difficult paths, the white flower also represents the power of nature to repair itself. Reaching the water at the point where the flower is located, the children discover both the source of life and that the solution is to eliminate human intervention on nature:

“So this resource, which is not within the borders of any civilization, did not exist at that time and most likely dried up centuries ago. When I found the source, I thought that when people left it, nature repaired itself and this extraordinary source started to flow with enthusiasm as it did thousands of years ago. If the greedy people in Petra discovered the source, the end would be the same: drying and disappearing...” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 68)

In the novel, it is once again reminded that human beings, who intervene in nature from outside, undermines the balance of the ecosystem, with the huge walls built between civilizations and the boundaries drawn with sharp lines. Stating that the measures taken are a factor that exacerbates the threat, the author wants to give the message that unconscious initiatives reduce biodiversity by increasing species losses in nature.

3.4. Inevitable Consequences of the Water Crisis: Drought, Famine and Hunger

If water consumption cannot be controlled, water resources may decrease and a water crisis may occur. According to UN estimates, half of the world will experience water stress or water scarcity by 2050, and cities will experience drought due to population growth and rapid urbanization (WEF, 2022, p. 10). According to the predictions, it is expected that one in every four people will face water scarcity by 2050 (WEF, 2022, p. 10). For the agricultural sector, which is dependent on water, the decrease in water resources means that plant cultivation and livestock farming are negatively affected, and accordingly, various problems such as drought, famine and hunger can be observed. Water crisis negatively affects food supply, especially in regions with water-based agricultural systems.

In Susuz Çağın Çocukları, famine and hunger, which are the expected consequences of the water crisis, are one of the issues described in a critical, but not hopeless way. According to the description in Susuz Çağın Çocukları, Pergamon is the region where the water crisis is most severe, and it is presented as a “land of thirst” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 69), emphasizing that the drought has reached its peak. The main cause of drought and hunger in the region is the inefficient use of agricultural land, and the people in the administration of the region are responsible for the disaster. In the work, where the disaster is evaluated from different perspectives, it is emphasized that the people are as guilty as the leaders:

“People in the regional administration spent years without caring about resources. The people had trusted them so much that they never questioned what was happening. That's why step by step we're getting closer, to the inevitable end. The water supply in our region has been shrinking every day. We started to suffer from food shortages because we couldn't use our agricultural land efficiently” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 69).

In this section, where the ignorance of the water crisis is criticized, carelessness and negligence are among the main causes of this water crisis. In this ecodystopian work, where hunger is explained without taking it to a catastrophic level, the difficulties of hunger and drought are expressed and the importance of the situation is emphasized: “After a while, the search for food and water became a priority for all of us. “Most of the time, the food we find is just enough to save the day” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 69). Therefore, measures such as sustainable management of water resources, effective use of water, increasing the water efficiency of agriculture, protecting water resources and developing renewable water resources play an important role in reducing the risks of drought, famine and hunger, which are the inevitable consequences of the water crisis. Furthermore, factors such as climate change need to be taken into account and integrated into solution processes.

3.5. The Psychological Impact of the Water Crisis

The water crisis is not only limited to physical effects, it can also cause psychological effects. Water is a vital need for people, and when water resources are reduced or restricted, feelings of uncertainty and anxiety about access to water may
arise. Water crisis can affect people's daily lives, increasing stress and anxiety levels. Particularly in areas where water is insufficient, difficulty in obtaining water and conflicts over water sharing can negatively affect people's psychological well-being. Fear of not having access to clean drinking water due to insufficient water resources can lead to health problems, while concern about water pollution can increase people's stress and anxiety levels. In addition, difficulties in the agricultural sector along with the water crisis can also cause economic difficulties such as loss of income and unemployment. This can lead people to struggle with psychological problems such as hopelessness, helplessness and depression. Citizens living in the Civilisations of the Thirsty Age become very pessimistic with the water crisis and begin to use water resources only for certain needs. In the work, the human psychology on the verge of a water crisis is depicted as follows:

“The situation was getting worse as water resources decreased. (...) Even people's expressions, steps, and postures were different; The fact that they acted with the instinct of protecting themselves and their loved ones inevitably created tension in the region. Everyone used the water only for drinking; they never spent it on cleaning and other needs” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 97).

The psychological effects of water crisis cannot be ignored. The water crisis, which can also affect social balances, can cause tensions and conflicts between societies, conflicts over the reduction of water resources or the sharing of water resources. This can lead to psychological effects such as people's feelings of insecurity, weakened social ties, and social unrest. Sustainable management of water resources, fair and equitable distribution of water, awareness-raising and educational activities can improve people's psychological well-being by reducing concerns about the water crisis. In addition, providing psychological support services can help people cope with their stress and anxiety levels.

4. Conclusion

Selda Yaşar, who deals with the deterioration of ecological balance in a dystopian framework with her work titled Susuz Çağın Çocukları, has brought the global problems that concern our world to the forefront of children's literature with a profound sensitivity. In the ecodystopic narrative where the human-nature struggle comes to the fore, children are given the task of savior in the arid civilization divided into five regions. In Dry Age Civilization, the author, who gave the names of the dried rivers to children and concealed the dream of water and hope for the future in these names, gave a subtle message to the reader by choosing the main characters of his work from children. According to the author, the future that will be shaped by children who are environmental protectors is built on two foundations: These are “ecological awareness and the preservation of self-worth”. As stated in ecofiction, struggling child souls with self worth will be able to serve as role models for humanity with ecocritical consciousness.

As an ecodystopian work, Susuz Çağın Çocukları: focusing on the water crisis, it examines the value, meaning, importance and impact of water on human psychology while examining important ecological problems such as ecosystem degradation, loss of biodiversity and species, the emergence of new civilizations, water wars, drought, famine and hunger. Yaşar, who tried to draw attention to the loss of species on a symbolic basis, emphasized that human beings, who set up barriers between regions with the metaphor of a "giant wall", imprisons her own future by interfering with the functioning of the ecosystem. In addition, it is symbolically stated in the work that “children” are the source of salvation, in other words, those who will overcome the walls and ensure natural balance. With the discovery of the "mysterious flower" behind the walls by the combative ambassadors of hope, not only the water crisis but also many ecological crises have been resolved. In Susuz Çağın Çocukları, where it is reminded that nature has an endless cycle, it is aimed to create an ecological sensitivity in all readers by making the reader understand the aesthetic power of literature. Addressing the reader through nature finding its own balance, the author tried to create an environmental awareness in the reader while making them question the main source of many problems. Approaching the book from this perspective, it is stated that despite pessimistic scenarios such as water crisis, hunger, famine and thirst, it is necessary to have an environmental consciousness and nature mentality in order to build a good future, and the book ends with the establishment of “Natural Age Civilisations.” The author, who ends Susuz Çağın Çocukları with a message covering all humanity, closed one civilization and opened the doors of another. She completed her work with a perspective that states that every being within the ecosystem is valuable:

“Every person on earth has realized the value of nature. Differences of opinion during the establishment of Dry Age Civilizations became irrelevant. Everyone promised to protect nature. Since that day, not a single tree has been cut down. The soil was not polluted. Water was not wasted. “People have never forgotten what happened” (Yaşar, 2022, p. 109).

In Susuz Çağın Çocukları, Yaşar not only focused on the protection of nature, but also emphasized the responsibilities of people to understand nature, respect nature, and manage their relationship with nature in a sustainable way. At this point, it is once again reminded that the reader, who is expected to develop a more sensitive attitude towards his environment with an ecocritical approach, carries within him the potential to exist in harmony with nature from birth.
Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

References


