



World on the Brink of Apocalypse: A Text Linguistic Analysis of *How Close to Savage the Soul* by John Atcheson

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Abstract

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In recent decades, the world has encountered numerous environmental challenges. Deforestation continues at an alarming rate, fossil fuel consumption remains high, and carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere are rising daily. Alongside the overconsumption of natural resources, the stability of ecological systems is increasingly disrupted, giving rise to the concept of "climate change." The reckless use of natural resources is contributing to the degradation of the environment's delicate balance. Concerned ecologists, environmental activists, and scholars are advocating for action across all sectors to promote environmental awareness and mitigate future consequences. As one of the fields, Eco fiction plays a crucial role in addressing the environmental challenges faced by society in literary works. In this regard, John Atcheson's short story *How Close to Savage the Soul* portrays a future world that conflicts with societal expectations, as reflected in the journey undertaken by an elderly man and his grandson to the Outer Banks. This study aims to analyse this short story from an ecocritical point of view within the framework of text linguistics, as it depicts environmental destruction and concerns about the future.

Kıyametin Eşiğindeki Dünya: John Atcheson'un *How Close to Savage the Soul*

Öyküsünün Metin Dilbilimsel Analizi

Özet

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Ekokurmaca, İklim
Değişikliği, Metin
Dilbilim, How Close
to Savage the Soul,
John Atcheson

Son yıllarda dünya çok sayıda çevresel sorunla karşı karşıya kalmıştır. Ormansızlaşma endişe verici bir hızla devam etmekte, fosil yakıt tüketimi yüksek seyretmekte ve atmosferdeki karbondioksit seviyeleri her geçen gün yükselmektedir. Doğal kaynakların aşırı tüketiminin yanı sıra, ekolojik sistemlerin istikrarı da giderek bozulmakta ve 'iklim değişikliği' kavramının ortaya çıkmasına neden olmaktadır. Doğal kaynakların pervasızca kullanımı çevrenin hassas dengesinin bozulmasına sebep olmaktadır. Ekolojistler, çevre aktivistleri ve akademisyenler, çevre bilincini teşvik etmek ve gelecekteki sonuçları hafifletmek için tüm sektörlerde harekete geçilmesini savunuyor. Bu alanlardan biri olarak Eko-kurgu, toplumun karşılaştığı çevresel zorlukların ele alınmasında önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, John Atcheson'un *How Close to Savage the Soul* adlı kısa öyküsü, yaşlı bir adam ve torununun Outer Banks'e yaptıkları yolculukta yansıtıldığı gibi, toplumsal beklentilerle çatışan gelecekteki bir dünyayı tasvir etmektedir. Bu makale, çevresel yıkımı ve geleceğe dair endişeleri betimleyen bu kısa öyküyü metin dilbilim çerçevesinde, eko eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

1. INTRODUCTION

Text linguistics is a branch of Linguistics that deals with texts as communication systems. Although the text was analyzed through the sentence structure and grammatical units till 1970's, today the analysis under this branch has started to move to larger units beyond the sentence grammar and the relations between words and sentences. In order to comprehend what the implications of text linguistics are, the definition of text is of importance. In a conventional sense, the text is perceived as a written or spoken linguistic product that has a communicative aim. As of today, the text has a wider definition and covers much more area such as literature, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics. According to Halliday and Hasan:

A text is best regarded as a semantic unit: a unit not of form but of meaning. Thus, it is related to a clause or sentence not by size but by realization, the coding of one symbolic system in another. A text does not consist of sentences; it is realized by, or encoded in, sentences. If we understand it in this way, we shall not expect to find the same kind of structural integration among the parts of a text as we find among the parts of a sentence or clause. The unity of a text is a unity of a different kind. (Halliday & Hasan, 1976: 2)

From a slightly different point of view, a text appears to be "...a set of mutually relevant communicative functions, structured in such a way as to achieve an overall rhetorical purpose." (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 178). Rhetorical purposes of a text could be to inform, to persuade, or simply to entertain. Applying various techniques, writers reach such goals in their texts. These techniques show themselves in the language used by the writer and serve mostly not to one purpose but more. Thus, the writer plays with the language to deliver his or her message in the most influential way. For this reason, Beaugrande and Dressler define text as a naturally occurring manifestation of language, i.e. as a communicative language event in a context. The surface text is the set of expressions actually used; these expressions make some knowledge explicit, while other knowledge remains implicit, though still applied during processing (1981: 63).

Beaugrande suggests that there are 7 standards to determine whether to call a piece of work a text or not. These standards are cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity and situationality. When these standards are met, a textual work is considered as a text. In the light of this information, the thematic word repetitions in the *How Close to Savage the Soul*, which are related to environment, nature, and devastation, led us to analyze the text from an ecocritical perspective. A brief mention of the ecocritical perspective will be useful in terms of understanding the purpose of writing the story and the implicit message or messages it contains.

From this point of view, ecocriticism emerges in the 1960's along with the start of the environmental movement. The term is coined by William Rueckert in his essay *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*, and it aims to use literature and criticism to draw attention to ecological problems that are growing and causing more problems for all living things. On the other hand, Jim Dwyer explains ecocriticism in his book as "a critical perspective on the relationship between literature and the natural world, and the place of humanity within -- not separate from -- nature." (Dwyer, 2010: 1). This definition lays a deeper look on how peoples, communities, cultures, societies, and individuals engage, interact, react, or perceive nature in literary works. Another definition put by Cheryl Glotfelty implies that ecocritical approach "...examines the relations between writers, texts, and the world. In most literary theory "the world" is synonymous with society-the social sphere. Ecocriticism expands the notion of "the world" to include the entire ecosphere." (Glotfelty, 1996: xix).

Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which was published in 1962, may be seen as the first emergence of this genre. However, the ecocritical movement does not gain momentum until the 1980's. When looked from a bigger perspective, it is seen that Lawrence Buell specifies two waves directly affecting the movement in his book *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. The first one emerges in 1980's and its focus is on nature as a field of study and a means of finding meaning in nature. Human and nature are dealt as two separate phenomena, and nature is perceived as a sacred place where human touch cannot reach, as something that needs to be protected. For that reason, the early writers in ecocriticism pay their attention to desolate places as Nuri put his view about early writers into these words: "Inspired by a tendency of depicting the uninhabited place they often neglected urban, degraded and heavily populated places in their writings" (Nuri, 2020: 5).

According to the first wave, it is believed that the responsibility of humanities and natural sciences is to raise awareness and find solutions to rising environmental problems. However, the first wave's focus scope is mostly confined to the local environmental issues not the global ones. When it comes to the second wave, it is mainly built upon the notions of the first one. Evidently, the crucial difference between them is that the second wave

tries to broaden the concepts of human and nature by merging them and carries it one step further from the local scale to the global extent. It somehow rejects any distinction defined between human and nature. Additionally, it puts a special emphasis on social ecocriticism by setting sight on not only uninhabited places but also urban landscapes as natural ones. As clearly stated by Buell Lawrence, first-wave studies resonate with its preservationist edge as traditionally understood both by historians and by activists: environmentalism equals nature protection in thinly populated remote areas. Second-wave ecocriticism, by contrast, affiliates itself more closely with the other main historical strand of environmentalist thinking: public health environmentalism, whose geographic gaze is directed more at landscapes of urban and/or industrial transformation rather than at country or wilderness, and whose environmental ethics and politics are sociocentric rather than ecocentric. (Lawrence, 2011: 94).

As a result of the second wave, the term ecojustice is brought in front of the public eye, which is in an effort to be the voice of the unspoken victim of this climate crisis. As Buell defines, ecojustice "...recognizes how social issues and environmental degradation are inextricably linked and sees literature as an effective tool in voicing multiple perspectives and concerns that are not restricted by place, time or reality." (Buell, 2005: 8). Ecojustice suggests that the poorest and the weakest of a population are the most widely affected group by the effects of climate change. While advocating these two ends of the human life spectrum, ecojustice which is generated by the second wave also suggests that the value of life forms except for humans is independent from their practicality for human purposes. All living forms have inherent worth and thus deserve to be valued in the same way in the ecological system.

Since the beginning of the movement in the 1960's three main types of ecocriticism have emerged. They are named as pastoral ecocriticism, wilderness, and ecofeminism. Pastoral ecocriticism puts an emphasis on the idealization of nature. The idea behind is that nature is superior to urban life, which means that while nature is good for human beings, urban life is not. This theme is mainly seen in British and American literature. Wilderness ecocriticism, which is the second one, sees nature as wild phenomena. This wilderness of nature is either scary and should be feared or it is a place for one to find himself or herself in a spiritual way. The last type of ecocriticism is ecofeminism. It investigates and questions the domination of men on both nature and woman, which both are seen as fertile and feminine.

William Howarth defines an ecocritic as "... a person who judges the merits and faults of writings that depict the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrating nature, berating its despoilers and reversing their harm through political action." (Howarth, 1996: 69). In his work, *Some Principles of Ecocriticism*, he also proposes some basic ground rules for the ecocritics. He identifies them as ecology, ethics, language and criticism. Ecology supposes more equal world for both human and nature. Ethics, on the other hand, concerns with the actions that will have a negative impact on the ecosphere in the end. Language requires using scientific information that enhance the through description of the landscape and the last principle, criticism, has advocates from different fields such as gender critics, structuralists etc.

In the light of these developments, one may put forward that ecocriticism is rather newly emerged field of study and approach to literary works. However, it poses significant questions to be answered, and it puts an effort to reflect human's destruction on environment and its effect on future generations. William Rueckert states that "The first law of ecology is everything is connected to everything else." (Rueckert, 1938: 110). Yet, human beings waste no chance to break the very first law. In this regard, literature stands as a significant tool as Glotfelty expresses in the introduction of *The Ecocriticism Reader* "Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature. As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman." (Glotfelty, 1996: xix).

As a result, text linguistic analysis requires the analysis of motifs, images, themes, figures of speech and implicit structures that emerge with collocated word repetitions, and the determination of the actions that the author aims to perform through the text. In this short story environmental situations are displayed between euphoric memories in the past and possible dysphoric events in the future through flash-backs and flash-forwards. Because the story presents reflections of environmental destruction through its plot, this paper aims to analyse *How Close to Savage the Soul* within an ecological point of view in the frame of text linguistics.

2. A TEXT LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS ON *HOW CLOSE TO SAVAGE THE SOUL*: ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS

'I believe now, and I have always believed, that humans are possessed with an inherent

wisdom, and that, given the right information, they will make the right choices.’

(Atcheson, *Our Aversion to Doom and Gloom Is Dooming Us*)

John Atcheson (1948-2020) is an environmental activist and a political writer. During his lifetime, he not only contributes online websites with his opinions on climate change but also produces literary fictions. One of his works, *How Close to Savage the Soul* is a short story and it is published as an honorable mention in an anthology named *Winds of Change: Short Stories about Our Climate*. He is a climate activist through and through, so with what it tells this short story can be regarded under the category of ecofiction. The story is to be analysed in terms of its surface and deep structures to reveal semantic layers. In this analysis method, the most repetitive words around the motifs and themes on the surface of the text, as well as the author’s stylistic features are examined.

To start with, in order to understand the story as a whole, its literary components should be analysed in the first place. Short stories have five significant elements: character, setting, plot, conflict, point of view and theme. Upon examination of the surface structure, the main story person appears as an old male who is often referred by general words, to illustrate, he is mentioned 18 times as ‘the old man’, 3 times as ‘grandpa’ and more recurrently as ‘he’. By not giving the story person a name, the reader gets an opportunity to observe things from the character’s eyes as the curtain between the fictional story and reality is subtly taken out. The reader becomes the insider than the outsider which means he or she gets one step further in the story without being restrained by the name tag of the story person by placing oneself in the story person’s shoes. Herewith, as Wolfgang Iser expresses “...ideas are thought out by the author, but the reader becomes the subject that does the thinking” whereby the text “takes [...] full existence in the reader” (Iser, 2007: 1001-1014). The other story person appears to be his grandson where he is referred as Will 12 times and as the boy for 44 times. The use of ‘Will’ or ‘the boy’ is mostly collocated with ‘little’. Along with these main story persons, there are some other characters: a gang referred as bangers, the old man’s father and brother, and Will’s father (Tim) and mother. The old man is nearly at his sixties. He is a caring man, yet he feels helpless against the changing time. He is not content with the current time due to the effects of climate change on present and future. He constantly goes back to past in his memories. By clinging on memories, he struggles to find some faith in forthcoming future. On the other side, Will is a curious and an insistent child who wants to explore the world around him. He is just like any child, ‘twitching with energy and enthusiasm’. However, for all the trouble he manages to keep himself hopeful.

This story takes place in Outer Banks which is situated in North Carolina, USA. Outer Banks has a significant role for this story since most of the events are quite similar to the ones people in Outer Banks today face even though the story is a fiction. As for the plot, it possesses a bit complex structure. However, the main events can be reflected in this order: first, the old man, and Will, his grandson, goes to the beach. After they spend some time, some bangers arrive. The old man and Will try to hide from their savage. The part which can be regarded as climax just starts after the banger’s leave. The old man shows signs that he is going to die. Upon these signs this story person confesses what he has thought and how he has felt so far. The conclusion part ends with his death on the beach leaving his grandson, Will, on his own. The main theme of ecological degradation is based on the facts of nature versus human, past versus present, illusion versus reality.

When it comes to the stylistic features of the writer, the story is narrated using a post-modern language of short, even incomplete sentences with slangs. The inclusion of current issues in a literary work is one of the reflections of postmodernism. In the text, current environmental problems arise due to the main theme of ecological degradation and climate change, additionally, global warming, time and technological development support the main theme as sub-themes. *How Close to Savage the Soul* depicts these themes through such motifs as power-cuts, rising temperatures, rip-currents because of rising-sea levels, and no prospect of fishing due to the acid in water, and apocalypse. To illustrate:

“The electricity was off again, so the damn cottage would be 100 degrees anyway.” (Atcheson, 2015: 34).

“...feeling the water close around him, feeling its pull like the grip of a python, implacable, inescapable, ...” (Atcheson, 2015: 32).

“Fishing. It had been years since he’d seen anyone catch anything. Dead seas. Again, what to say?” (Atcheson, 2015: 35).

“Time enough, he'd always assumed. Time enough for solutions. But Armageddon had arrived early here.” (Atcheson, 2015: 36).

“It was the pH, he knew. Acid. They'd turned the oceans from a font of life to an acidic crypt.” (Atcheson, 2015: 38).

All these ecologic devastations cannot be seen as a separate circumstance from society. These ecological ravages give rise to social impairment as well. Breakdown in society, outside protected communities, is depicted in these lines:

Funny what he found in the grocery stores. Anything canned was gone. Freezers and refrigerators were smashed in, their shelves empty. Meat cases were empty. The little pharmacies had been looted. But in the sundry aisles, shampoos, rinses and deodorants, and such still lined the shelves in orderly rows. The only thing missing here was hairspray. The gangs used them to fuel crude cannons made of PVC pipes. Potato guns, he'd called them as a kid. Back in the city, the hiss of burning hairspray often preceded the smash of glass late at night. Back there, riot squads still patrolled the streets and a few grocery stores remained open and moderately well-stocked. At least in the wealthy areas. Here? The whole place was a ghost town. A ghost coast. (Atcheson, 2015: 35).

It is clearly seen that not only the nature itself, but also social structure loses its power to function properly due to ecological devastation. As emphasized in *Silent Spring*

‘... in nature nothing exists alone.’ (Carson, 1962: 51); human world and nature are not separately situated at both ends of the spectrum; in contrast, both worlds are entwined, thus, sensible to any potential change in each other.

The presence of these words such as ‘perspiration beaded up’, ‘flushed face’, and ‘stopped sweating’ in the surface structure has revealed that the critical change in the environment inevitably causes some health problems by virtue of climate change. In the story Will’s face becomes flushed and he ceases to sweat. As soon as the old man realizes it, he passes some water to Will, who is going to drink that water ‘greedily’ later. In another part of the story, that Will uses some pills for stress shows the fact that problems in human health does not only occur physically but also psychologically. Like this line “He thought bringing the boy here would help somehow. Maybe give a sense of normalcy.” (Atcheson, 2015: 37) and many more evidently point out that the daily life we know of today does not exist in the story’s time. This dystopian future in the story echoes possible upcoming destruction for the modern world laying stress on the fact that we are on the brink of environmental collapse.

Along with these, another theme is time. The given emphasis on time starts with the old man’s memories. These memories: to put it technically, flashbacks perpetually shift among the recollections. There is no timeline. That is to say, the events do not follow a linear timeline. In the beginning of the story, the actual story time is not given. The old man’s childhood memory goes back to 1985 when he was 5 years old. Inking that he was born in 1980, it can be fathomed out through the analysis of the surface structure that the story person is older than forty or fifty, which is enabled by the narrator’s point of view “He would have thought it weakness in his forties and fifties. Different things mattered then.” (Atcheson, 2015: 34). Not only non-linear timeline but also euphoric and dysphoric words collocated around the enveloping stories contribute the story’s mood to alter. In one part, one may feel peaceful for the beautiful descriptions of the ‘corking’ waves, yet in another uptight due to unfortunate, heart-breaking events such as the water’s ripping the old man’s son away and depictions of society, looted markets, and pharmacies. For that reason, this short story requires an attentive reading in order the characters, events as well as the time-period to be comprehended. There are recurrent uses of some phrases and sentences to advocate the theme such as ‘time to...’, ‘time for...’ and ‘it goes.’ To exemplify:

“Yeah. There had been time back then. Time to believe in things that couldn’t be.

But it goes. It goes. How quickly it goes.” (Atcheson, 2015: 34).

“So much time, then. Time for life. Time for mistakes. Time for corrections. Time to right wrongs.” (Atcheson, 2015: 29).

“Time enough, he'd always assumed.” (Atcheson, 2015: 36).

These reiterations support the theme unfolding the message that time is passing fast without our notice. There’s not enough time left to fix mistakes. As it is said before, rapidly changing time is mirrored throughout the story

not only through the administration of repetitions but also stylistics. With the integration of narrative point, stream of consciousness, and elliptical clauses the story gains a rapid reading pace just as the pace of the time, in a way forcing reader to proceed faster.

This representation of time comes along with the developments in technology, which constitutes another theme in the story. Much as progression in technology is not depicted explicitly, the reader may perceive the position of it on relating each characteristic of the story. There is one part where the reader is made to ponder about it. In fact, this line implies to what extent technology has invaded our lives: “No, not catalogue cards you old geezer – Google listings.” (Atcheson, 2015: 29). Our very own thoughts are under the influence of technology. That is, we are not free users of these tools, but slaves of which we are attaching credence to make us free. The belief that improvements in technology and science will bring peace and solutions to the world is shattered by the reality clash: ecological and social destruction and all the things mentioned earlier. The story person’s grasp of this reality shines in these lines “God, how quickly things had dissembled. All that science, all the predictions. The doom and gloom. What they’d missed was how thin a veneer civilization was. How tenuous. How close to savage the soul.” (Atcheson, 2015: 36). As a result, this short story painstakingly exhibits the comparison between illusions and reality leaving the place of faith to disappointment.

Second, the implementation of language in a post-modern literary work is demonstrated through a lot of self-posed questions and the application of elliptic sentences. This is achieved by the use of narrator. There is an omniscient narrator who knows everything, and the narrator sometimes leaves the scene to the story person. Lines such as “What was he supposed to say?” and “No, not catalogue cards you old geezer – Google listings.” (Atcheson, 2015: 29) show that the existence of the omniscient narrator achieved via third person point of view with a hybrid representation of thoughts. For that reason, all along the story it is easy for the reader to be in two minds about whether the narrator or the story person speaks. In parts where we read about the story person’s thoughts the existence of stream of consciousness enables reader to level with the story person, the old man, to illustrate, “Jesus. How little it takes to kindle joy, these days. Poor kid.” (Atcheson, 2015: 34) and “Too much. Too much for a little boy. Not fair.” (Atcheson, 2015: 38).

Apart from the characteristics of post-modern literary work, there are some other explicit uses of stylistic features in this story. First of all, there are many implementations of interior monologue. Interior monologue is a technique that is used to reflect story person’s thoughts and feelings. Its use enables the reader to get deeper into the character’s mind and obtain sense of the story person’s personality in a broad sense. These lines below imply the story person’s intention of making Will, the grandson, feel happy. In addition to that, from the surface structure it is understood that the story person is a caring grandfather. Hereby, readers acquire an opportunity to keep themselves with this person. Following sentences describes the feelings of the story person, grandfather:

“No. We’ve already given him enough of a bumner. Maybe happy stuff. Like first love.” (Atcheson, 2015: 30).

“One word. No smile. Bad.” (Atcheson, 2015: 39).

Such linguistic devices clearly reveal the story person’s sentimental fluctuations against the situations, and applying this stylistic feature meanwhile assists the fluency of the narrative. Inner monologue does not only focus on the story person’s thoughts but also represents other people, events, and concerns from his or her point of view, for example, “Again the downcast eyes, but the disappointment was greater this time. He had to say something. His heart ached, knowing how much more the boy would face by the time he was old enough to have memories.” (Atcheson, 2015: 31). It can be deduced that he has concerns about the future of all humanity before his grandchild.

Another stylistic feature administered is semantic cataphor. It gives the reader an early clue about the major theme or conflict. There are two types of foreshadowing: direct and indirect. By clearly suggesting an impending problem this short story starts with direct foreshadowing, which is “The aromas hit him like a fist, poised there over five decades, waiting until now, triggered by this foolish trip.” (Atcheson, 2015: 29). In a text-linguistic perspective the use of demonstrative adjective -this- creates a suspense by which a sense that things might not be as they seem is pointed. The use of adjective ‘foolish’, implies unexpected things and gives a hint through which the reader makes guesses about what to come next. Further, the descriptions of the smell in the air signals the pessimistic tone which dominates throughout the text in which the death of nature, therefore human is depicted:

Fresh and fertile, seaweedy and salty, they ignited electric jolts from somewhere deep inside his soul, firing off images, conjuring up a thousand snapshots covering his long life. Like coming home again, he thought. But now he noticed another odor, an overlay—fetid and coppery—the smell of death? (Atcheson, 2015: 29).

In addition to semantic cataphor of the setting, the embedment of the title in the text is also used as a method to solidify the primary message of the text keeping the whole text in unity. It can be overtly inferred that hungry people become savages, which is frequently underlined, as in this line “Men who couldn’t feed their children were a dangerous breed. And adolescents without hope were turning the whole country into a real-world Lord of the Flies” (Atcheson, 2015: 36). Man could not protect nature and could not be fed. On starving, he came very close to becoming wild which is shown through both his actions and spirits. Despite ‘all that science and all the predictions’, the old man thinks “...how thin a veneer civilization was. How tenuous. How close to savage the soul.” (Atcheson, 2015: 36).

As the story depicts an environmental devastation in the future, it is not surprising to see the use of imagery. Imagery is a technique in which authors are in an attempt to create very strong images in readers’ minds. By using carefully chosen words, authors ensure readers to invoke as many senses as they can. There are two types of imagery that authors benefit from: Literary imagery and figurative imagery. Literary imagery describes things exactly how they are. Thus, everything delineated is explicitly presented. Per contra, figurative imagery presents hidden meaning. That’s why, the imagery created by using figurative language is implicit. Some certain types of literary imagery, namely visually, auditory, and olfactory, are applied in the story. Phrases such as ‘like a fist’ and ‘like catalogue cards’ show the use of visual imagery whereas the application of onomatopoeia as ‘buzz’ points out the use of auditory imagery. In addition to these, the use of olfactory imagery for the aromas in the air ‘fresh and fertile, seaweedy and salty...’ is quite clear in the beginning of the story. When it comes to figurative imagery, it is commonly related with figure of speech- literary methods that purposefully depart from the literal meaning of words in order to accentuate the language. One of them is simile which means comparing two things by using words like and as. The story person feels uneasy about time passing quickly and he likens this process to the extinction of water on earth. He thinks “How it tricks you so at the end; it seems to vanish all at once, like the last suck of water down a drain?” (Atcheson, 2015: 30). The other one is metaphor which is an expression for comparing two things and alluding that both have similar characteristics. The use of metaphor in this story are especially centered around the part where bangers appear. First of all, the bangers are represented as ‘killer bees’ and ‘malevolent hoard of bees’. As to their in-group talking, it is described as ‘cacophony’, ‘the mindless rumbling of the new apex predator’. Their conversation expressed as ‘the universal sound of impotent grousing’ manifests itself as a metaphor for their ‘indistinguishable babble’. As the author is a political writer, this metaphor can also be regarded as an implication of the author that world countries do not take sufficient precautions for climate change. When these metaphors are analyzed, it is clearly seen that the author utilizes certain words to invoke powerful images, and by using those the author aims to make the reader to ponder about the probable underlined meanings by relating all the components of the story to each other. Another figure of speech is personification. ‘Derelict cars’ are personified in terms of their capability to scream. Alongside with personification of the cars, oxymoron is implemented in the continuation of the line ‘their hoods up in silent screams’. The use of oxymoron studiously indicates the ineffectiveness of industrial developments under such circumstances.

One of the most salient stylistic features applied in *How Close to Savage the Soul*, intertextuality was first coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966, though the definitions, notably the concepts of it have undergone various changes. Nevertheless, its basic implementation can be regarded as the relation of one text to the another, especially literary ones. Any writer who refers the elements of the other text or texts on purpose, in fact, deploys intertextuality in their own work. In this story some intertextual references appear, two of which are quite blatant: *Lord of the Flies* and *Brave New World*. These words are written only for once and they do not form a complete sentence. That those collocated words imply other texts can be deduced from their capitalized first letters, which as a result reminds the reader *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding and *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley. Thus, the reading act “...plunges us into a network of textual relations. To interpret a text, to discover its meaning, or meanings, is to trace those relations. Reading thus becomes a process of moving between texts.” (Allen, 2022: 1).

By taking the first step of realizing what is on the surface, the reader proceeds to the next step to discover its implied or hidden meaning and their relation to the story itself. This step includes exophoric references that are meant to be deciphered by the reader. *Lord of the Flies* tells a story of a group of young boys somehow end up on a desolated island and their process of constructing a new organization system. Unluckily, they can’t develop a civilized system and as a result of their different values on the system they viciously turn against

each other. Their barbaric and wild act throughout the story resembles the societal turmoil and ecological devastation in *How Close to Savage the Soul*. The destruction in nature inevitably leads to the one in society. Individuals become violent, not being able to keep civilized, when they are not thoroughly directed. In Atcheson's words, they become 'killer bees' when they no longer have a valid control mechanism. Additionally, just like in *Lord of Flies*, it is the existence of these individuals that brings the end of society and the environment creating a vicious circle. Bufkin's statements overtly demonstrates "Evil, the beast exists within men, and it is kept within by the authoritative restraints of laws, rules, and knowledge. ... When released, the beast turns man into a savage, and reason is destroyed ..." (Bufkin, 1965: 55). Neither more nor less, *How Close to Savage the Soul* exhibits how repressed savagery comes to light as a result of environmental and societal deterioration. The repetition of 'vener' with a collocation of 'thin' solidifies that the society becomes 'tenuous'.

As for society another intertextual reference is 'Ptomekin village'. Once again, the reader should infer that capitalized first letter must imply something deeper. Upon searching about the word compound, it becomes evident that the word is either mistyped or deliberately written in that way. The search findings culminate in that 'Potemkin Village' describes a false settlement built to impress or to hide something undesirable. The origin of the word goes back to 1700's when Russian governor Grigory Aleksandrovich Potemkin erected false facades to hide the dilapidated situation of the town and to impress Empress Catherine II. during her visit. (Lehtinen, cnn.com- 2018). The meaning and the history of the word urges to relate to the narration in terms of the fact that the story person, grandpa, calls his town as 'Ptomekin village'. Much as the story person's thoughts on the word and why he preferred specifically that word is not explicitly stated, the exophoric references suggest the story person believe the society he is a part of has become a counterfeit union. His constant uses of 'tenuous', 'vener', 'thin' clearly demonstrate the artificiality behind and within the society.

When it comes to *Brave New World*, it describes a dystopian society where people are in the pursuit of happiness through drugs, have no control over their individual life standards and are, literally, created through machines and medicine in advanced technologies. In this overly advanced technological society, it is seen that people have lost their connection to nature and even to society. For *How Close to Savage the Soul*, the destruction of the environment as a result of the deterioration of the society order causes inevitable negative feelings on individuals, to exemplify, "Probably some form of PTSD.

The nightmares would be back, now. Brave New World." (Atcheson, 2015: 38) which implies that society lend itself to disaster just like in *Brave New World*. "God, how quickly things had dissembled. All that science, all the predictions. The doom and gloom." (Atcheson, 2015: 36) ponders the old man. He wakes up to the failure to take actions against the current environmental catastrophe will entail a world like *Brave New World* -

mechanical, conditioned, and devoid of consciousness. Huxley (1950) argues, "[i]f we [...] continue to live on our planet like a swarm of destructive parasites—we condemn ourselves and our children to misery and deepening squalor and the despair that finds expression in the frenzies of collective violence." (As quoted from Slagel, 2021: 60). As Huxley warned, it can be inferred that Atcheson calls for awareness for the exigent environmental devastation. The references attributed to dystopias also support another motif 'apocalypse' the extent of which is clearly demonstrated by the use of the word Armageddon that was first mentioned in New Testament, Revelation 16:16 to refer the last battle between good and evil before the Day of Judgement. However, it is commonly known as "a catastrophic and extremely destructive conflict" (Collinsdictionary, n.d., para.2). The story person deduces that the society comes up against a situation in which there is no retrieval, and he associates it with Armageddon.

As Glen Love stated that "the most important function of literature today is to redirect human consciousness to a full consideration of its place in a threatened natural world." (Love, 1996: 237), Atcheson's short story must be considered as a warning or a glimpse of an apocalyptic future. He aimed to activate the readers' awareness of the current situation by simply and deftly placing the titles of the dystopian works. Readers are supposed to step beyond the surface structure and to grasp the severity of environmental disaster through layers of meaning. As a conclusion, it is seen that the text requires deep reading in order to uncover hidden meanings. Messages such as 'Save some for later!' and 'Don't fight it!' become apparent after a detailed reading process. That's why, *How Close to Savage the Soul* functions as a warning for an apocalyptic future in which a catastrophic environment and society are set. The author of the text aims to make the readers realize that every generation has thought the same way, but nothing has changed. In contrast, it changed to the worst. In the text, the fact that 3 generations are clearly shown indicates that time passes quickly. Each generation assumes that they have time and delays taking precautions, and as a result, the future depicted in the story is the endpoint. In the end of the

story, John Atcheson put a very wit remark on the story by saying the young boy has time. What makes the ending divergent is that it makes the reader think about whether the same actions would be taken, or the ultimate result would be the same even the generations pass through. In this sense, Atcheson succeeds to touch upon readers' real worlds. It is possible to reconcile the thoughts and beliefs of the main story person with the beliefs of the author, John Atcheson. John is also hopeful at the beginning, he believes that something can be stopped or slowed down once action is taken, but at the same time he clearly states in his article that 'For the record, I was—and am—a doom and gloomer.' (Atcheson, commondreams.com -2017). Similarly, the story person puts an effort to be optimist now and then by repeatedly saying 'We're going to be OK.'. Nevertheless, he ends up with losing his faith by saying 'It wouldn't be all right.'. The action that the author wants to achieve with this text is to spread the belief that nature and humans cannot be separated from each other. Additionally, he intends to create eco-consciousness in the reader and to raise awareness about ecological disasters. He shows that technology develops, time passes, but the use of resources without thinking about the end will bring the collapse of nature and humanity.

3. CONCLUSION

Ecocritical point of view suggests man and nature are not separate from each other. Nature is a system a part of which is people. For that reason, people's actions cannot be thought apart from their effects on the environment. To make it visible and prevalent, short stories have great functions because they provide concise information quickly. Analysing various linguistic devices and stylistic features applied in the work, the messages hidden under the surface structure are revealed. The messages are of importance as they form the society. Since there is a relationship between texts and social structure and they mutually shape each other. Within this perspective *How Close to Savage the Soul* stands as an alarming work that enlightens the socio-economic and environmental problems faced in today's world due to ecological havoc. Analyzed through the lenses of text linguistics, the story also meets the standards of textuality. As a result of the text linguistic analysis, the author's intention could be regarded as to create ecological awareness or consciousness, and to inform the readers about imminent devastating effects of global warming using literature. In other words, the ultimate aim in this ecological and dystopian short story culminates in directing readers to act upon the messages hidden under surface level.

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