

**ENDLESS HOPE IN DAVID BRINE'S *THE POSTMAN* AND JOSÉ SARAMAGO'S *BLINDNESS*****DAVID BRİNE'İN *POSTACI* VE JOSÉ SARAMAGO'NUN *KÖRLÜK*  
ROMANLARINDAKİ SONSUZ UMUT****Sevcan KALE DEMİREL**

Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı, Van, Türkiye / e-posta: svcnkl@hotmail.com / ORCID ID: 0000-0001-9678-1160

**Prof. Dr. Bülent Cercis TANRITANIR**

Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, Van, Türkiye / e-posta: bctanritanir@gmail.com / ORCID ID: : 0000-0002-3276-7922

**Abstract**

Post-apocalyptic fiction is a literary subgenre that deals with the end of the world as a result of nuclear or biological warfare, as well as ecological, geological, or cosmological disasters, and what form of existence awaits those who survive such immense damage. Post-apocalyptic works include David Brin's *The Postman* and José Saramago's *Blindness*. In *The Postman*, Gordon Krantz, the protagonist of the novel wears a U.S. Postal Service uniform and he collects to convince people that the United States has survived the apocalypse. The novel describes the collapse of the Earth due to reasons such as epidemics, nuclear wars, famines, and climate change. *Blindness* is told while a man is waiting for the green light to come on in traffic, he suddenly becomes blind and an epidemic of blindness spreads through the city through this man. Although this blindness is not epidemic fatal, it is succeed in destroying all moral values. People trying to live in a world where there is no hope have come to the point of extinction. Brin's protagonist, Gordon Krantz, and Saramago's protagonist, the doctor's wife, are at the center of post-disaster events. The protagonists of both novels are leaders who give people hope that everything will be better in the future. The purpose of this study is to examine endless hope in David Brine's *The Postman* and José Saramago's *Blindness*.

**Key words:** Eco-fiction, Hope, Post-apocalyptic, *The Postman*, *Blindness*.**Öz**

Kıyamet sonrası kurgu, nükleer veya biyolojik savaşın yanı sıra ekolojik, jeolojik veya kozmolojik felaketlerin bir sonucu olarak dünyanın sonunu ve bu kadar büyük hasardan kurtulanları nasıl bir varoluşun beklediğini konu alan edebi bir alt türdür. Kıyamet sonrası eserler arasında David Brin'in *Postacı* ve José Saramago'nun *Körlük*'ü yer almaktadır. *Postacı*'da, romanın başkahramanı Gordon Krantz ABD Posta Servisi üniforması giyiyor ve insanları ABD'nin kıyametten sağ çıktığına ikna etmek için para topluyor. Roman, salgın hastalıklar, nükleer savaşlar, kıtlıklar ve iklim değişikliği gibi nedenlerle Dünya'nın çöküşünü anlatıyor. *Körlük* romanı, trafikte yeşil ışığın yanmasını bekleyen bir adamın aniden kör olmasından ve bu adam aracılığıyla bir körlük salgınının tüm şehre yayılmasından bahseder. Bu körlük salgın ölümcül olmasa da tüm manevi değerleri yok etmeyi başarır. Hiç umudun kalmadığı bir dünyada yaşamaya çalışan insanlar yok olma noktasına gelmiştir. Brin'in kahramanı Gordon Krantz ve Saramago'nun kahramanı, doktorun karısı, afet sonrası olayların merkezinde yer alıyor. Her iki romanın kahramanları insanlara gelecekte her şeyin daha güzel olacağı konusunda umut veren liderlerdir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, David Brine'in *Postacı* ve José Saramago'nun *Körlük* romanlarındaki sonsuz umudu incelemektir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Eko-kurgu, Sonsuz Umut, Post-apokaliptik, *Postacı*, *Körlük*.

## Introduction

The age we live in is the eve of humanity's transition to a brand-new era. While dizzying advances are being made in science and technology, things that seemed like science fiction a few generations ago are quickly finding a place in everyday life. The world population has exceeded seven billion, and cities have become the largest residential area. While journeys that used to take months now fit into a few hours, rocket technology has brought the “age of discovery” into space. With the discovery of the structure of the atom, energy production forms through fusion offer an unlimited energy potential to people. Information and communication technologies are developing rapidly and people can interact more quickly than in the past. The increasing use of robots and machines in industrial production and the development of nanotechnology are the harbingers of a new production revolution. Technical developments and discoveries such as developed lenses, electromagnetism, and radio waves provide new information on the formation and transformation of the macro and micro cosmos and transform traditional beliefs. Advances in health offer the opportunity to get to know the organisms of humans and other living things better, and the human lifespan is increasing on a regular basis (Boz and Takımcı, 2019: 378). All of this has made mankind think that the end of the world is approaching, and the effect of this has been seen in the literature as an increase in science fiction and post-apocalyptic novels.

The term apocalypse, which was translated into French from Greek, is defined in religious terminology as “doomsday”, in a broader sense as “the end of the world”, and as “the end” in the fullest sensation. Derived from the words apo- (distant) and calypsis (to hide, to hide), apocalypse means revealing what is invisible to the naked eye. The apocalypse points to the end, ending, and completion of an existing order. This expression is aimed to state that a process, a phenomenon, a state of being has been completed, and to bring a definition to this end (İmamoğlu, 2019: 13).

People’s apocalyptic ideas are shaped and fed by mythological and religious tales about the world's end, leading to conjecture about how the world will end. As a result, since the dawn of civilization, people’s perceptions of the term “apocalypse” have evolved. Although the term apocalypse refers to a terrible catastrophe that might cause the end of the world as it in the contemporary period and has gloomy connotations, the word apocalypse derives from the ancient Greek word “apokalyptein” which means “to expose” or “reveal”. It also implies “to reveal” as well as “a revelation of future events or the invisible regions of heaven and hell.” (Lisboa, 2011: 15). According to McGinn, the concept of apocalypse, means “revealing a divine secret,” and is closely related to divination and eschatology (McGinn, 1979: 1-3).

Post-apocalyptic works create a field of experience for living and keeping hope for the future alive. Hope, which is a human instinct, is difficult to define with certain lines. Because hope changes according to people, ages, cultures and societies. It cannot be said that researchers have reached a certain recognition and consensus on this issue (Miceli and Castelfranchi, 2010: 254; Webb, 2007: 80). However, it can be considered as an embracing statement about possible and unlikely desires in a broad sense (Miceli and Castelfranchi, 2010: 257). The existence and permanence of hope requires the possibility of its realization (Şen, 2016: 139). Kierkegaard (2007: 47) shows the relationship between probability and hope and states that in the absence of probability, every moment in human life will be hopeless.

There is a difference between hopeless and hopeful individuals. While the hopeful person is dependent on others and the world, the hopeless individual is completely opposite. Hope is an emotion that does not isolate the individual from others, that is, from those outside himself. It is an act and unity principle that is based on the individual being effectively with others (Koç, 2008: 179). Thus, hope plays a motivating role in the socialization of people and gaining a

sharing personality beyond their individual and private goals. The hope drive, which is based on intersubjective relations, is closely related to love. Where there is love, there is hope. Because love is formed in a reality. It is the existence of this reality that shapes love (Şen, 2016: 140).

### **1. Post-Apocalyptic Fiction**

Dystopian novels are generally novels that contain elements of contemporary society and are a warning against the drawbacks of some modern trends. They tell about the negative future or situation that awaits modern society. The emerging economic system since the 1970s, the emergence of international and monopolistic corporate structures, epidemics caused by biological experiments, and the increasing massification of information technology after the 1990s have created new environments in which dystopian novels can make references to real life (Çelik, 2015: 62).

Ecology and dystopia both depict the world for similar reasons since the fundamental theme of these genres is to describe the interaction between man and the environment, as well as man's endless exploitation (Tanrıtanır and Karaman, 2021: 43). One's risky actions must be displayed. Writing is one of the finest methods to reach a big audience. Ecology and dystopian fiction are the ideal literary products for this purpose since they are both about humans, animals, plants, and the earth itself (Tanrıtanır and Karaman, 2021: 46). If Ecofiction is likened to a giant tree, climate, apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic fiction are just a few of the branches of Ecofiction (Tanrıtanır and Sider, 2019: 46).

The word "post-apocalyptic" was first used to describe a subgenre of science fiction in the 1970 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (Harris, 2016: 30). Because post-apocalyptic fiction is well-suited to address the key issues of modernity, notably the sincere fear about technologically mediated widespread devastation, it became more popular in the 20th century. This species erupted immediately after the nuclear bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, making it very evident that humans now have the technical capacity to wipe out the majority of life on Earth, if not all of it, and that such a scenario is not improbable. Apocalyptic possibilities became more relevant and compelling as the years passed and the Cold War grew chillier. With the globalization processes as well as the technological and geopolitical developments of the Cold War, global plagues and cataclysmic disasters like a nuclear holocaust are becoming considerably more conceivable. Historically, pandemics have wreaked havoc on the world, but due to increasing global mobility, infectious illness propagation has accelerated significantly (Clasen, 2019: 6).

The term post-apocalyptic fiction refers to stories set in a world altered by a global catastrophe (Isomaa, 2020: 11). Post-apocalyptic fiction, according to critic Florian Mussgnug:

Journeys across the wasteland produced by the disaster; attempts to construct a new society; the reemergence of violence and struggle; and, sometimes but not always, a return to civilization (Voigts and Boller, 2015: 6).

The post-apocalyptic story follows or after an apocalyptic calamity, such as a nuclear holocaust, a plague that wipes out all species, a zombie outbreak, or an environmental collapse, and is frequently identified by its setting and theme. This story follows a small group of survivors who struggle to maintain their pre-apocalyptic identities while teaching the characters and the reader important truths about mankind (Hill, 2018: 215).

Many events caused the birth of this literature. Although post-apocalyptic literature is based on advanced brain mechanisms, societal influences have significantly impacted how people

envision the end of the world and create environments more or less conducive to such fantasies.

The fact that they portray the aftermath of a worldwide or near-global catastrophe and are especially suited to fulfill particular psychological tasks is what post-apocalyptic stories have in common. It is fiction, thus it makes use of brain processes including counterfactual situations, mental time travel, and post-apocalyptic narratives. These cognitive abilities can help us cope with worries about actual possible calamities like a nuclear holocaust, diseases, and environmental unrest, even fictitious ones like a zombie apocalypse (Clasen, 2019: 1-2).

Apocalypse and post-apocalyptic literature is a wild literary subgenre that uses works of fiction to illuminate doomsday and end-of-the-world prophecies. For this reason, following a catastrophe, the survival of the human species is a concern in post-apocalyptic literature. Such articles often shed light on the psychological aspects of mankind following a disaster, as well as the perspectives of individuals living in a wasteland surrounded by crumbling structures, a failing civilization, and a dreary atmosphere (Tanritanır and Adil, 2018: 77).

Post-apocalyptic fiction works include David Brin's *The Postman* and José Saramago's *Blindness*. Glen David Brin was born in 1950. He received a bachelor's degree in astronomy in 1973, a master's degree in electrical engineering in 1978, and a doctorate in astronomy in 1981. He is on the advisory committee of NASA's Innovative and Advanced Concepts group and frequently consults with companies and government agencies on future trends. David Brin is best recognized for casting a thoughtful and amusing light on technology, culture, and the numerous issues that our wandering civilisation faces. His best Works are considered to be *The Postman* and other novels have been translated into over 25 different languages. In addition, his short stories are filled with vivid speculative concepts (DB, 11 January 2023).

*The Postman* is a post-apocalyptic novel by David Brin about a guy named Gordon Krantz who discovers a mail carrier's uniform and accidentally restores a portion of the American West to its former glory. The time period described in the novel is the 16th year after the "Apocalypse". It tells the struggle for survival of post-apocalyptic survivors against tyrants and feudal warriors. Causes such as epidemics, nuclear wars, famines and climatic changes have caused the collapse of the Earth. Gordon Krantz stumbles upon a stagecoach while escaping from tyrants and, wearing the clothes of a postman who has died in it, begins to deliver the mail in the stagecoach.

Jose Saramago is a Portuguese-born, Nobel Prize-winning author. Among his best-known books are works such as *Blindness*, *Cain*, and *Seeing*. He comes from an impoverished family, so he even taught himself to read. His great struggle with poverty also affected his novels. When we look at his works, we see ordinary people struggling against brutal environmental conditions (Costa, 2013: 2).

*Blindness*, Saramago's best-known novel from 1995, is about how a sudden pandemic of blindness swept over the entire city and ultimately led to the downfall of society's ethical standards. In the novel, the events that begin with the sudden blindness of a man in the traffic in his car, and the spread of blindness to the car thief first, then to the ophthalmologist and his patients, are the subjects of the epidemic getting out of control and the quarantine process. The government takes action when the ophthalmologist reports this unprecedented and rapidly spreading case of 'white blindness' to the hospital. They begin to quarantine blinded people in an evacuated mental hospital. The doctor's wife says she is blind although she does not become blind, stays with her husband and goes with him to the hospital (Akpınar et al., 2021: 101). The epidemic, which has quite devastating effects in the novel *Blindness*, is defined as blindness that occurs with blinding light instead of pitch darkness. The fact that the city and country where the event took place are not known, the names of the characters are not

included, and the fact that the actors are chosen as members of various races and nationalities are presented as an indicator of the universality of these experiences and that they can happen.

## 2. Endless Hope in *The Postman* and *Blindness*

Ernst Bloch's two-volume book, *The Principle of Hope*, who is known as the philosopher of hope in the history of thought, begins with the following passage: "From the beginning, one searches. He is extremely angry, he shouts. He doesn't have what he wants." (Bloch, 2007: 41). The life of a person who tries to establish himself in political, social and cultural transmissions from the moment his consciousness begins to form, keeps drifting from hope to despair like a pendulum. On one side of the pendulum, there is always hope for the future, and on the other side, there is hopelessness in which the future is lost and time expands into an endless space of the present (Erdem, 2019: 1).

Post-apocalyptic literature is a genre of fiction that describes the struggle of individuals who survived disasters. *The Postman* and *Blindness* are post-apocalyptic novels. In both novels, all the efforts to bring order to the chaos that the surviving minority longed for in a developed society are told. When the novels were examined in depth, David Brin and José Saramago depicted this literature in their novels to cover all its aspects.

According to Erich Fromm, "hoping" is a way of being (Fromm, 2012: 26). However, despair is a defining feature of human existence (Fromm, 2012: 34). In *The Postman* and *Blindness* novels, hope is instilled in humanity's ability to return to the lives they longed for in their past lives.

*The Postman* expresses hope: "It's okay, he told himself. I am still alive. And if I can just go back to my backpack, I'll be OK. If it happens next year, I'm afraid my teeth may rot from the inside out." (Brin, 1197: 75) The following describes the hope in *Blindness*:

The blind man's wife began to meaningfully pick up the pieces of the vase and dry the floor, as she muttered with an undisguised anger, "As if you could have tidied up this mess on your own instead of falling asleep," she told her husband. The blind man said nothing, hiding his eyes from behind his tightly closed eyelids, with a sudden thought, and if I could open my eyes and see, he asked himself with anxious hope (Saramago, 1997: 16).

Brin's hero Gordon raises his hopes of survival by gathering an army to fight the gangs. Brin discussed hope in her study as follows. He shut his eyes. Within four months, he had created a powerful enough alliance to delay and confound the invaders. He'd partly made up for it with his storytelling ability, composure... A liar. Gordon had no illusions that he was a true leader. It was his image that held the Willamette Army together... His legendary authority as Inspector was a manifestation of the reborn nation (Brin, 1997: 206).

The woman, who is the doctor's wife in the book *Blindness* and is the only person who is not blind throughout the book, is hopeful that there will be no epidemic of blindness. Saramago describes this situation in the book as follows. First and foremost, notify the health authorities and the ministry; steps must be taken if there is an outbreak. But no one had heard of a blindness pandemic, his wife asserted, dying to endure. No one has ever encountered a blind guy with no apparent basis for his condition, and there are now at least two. His demeanor shifted as soon as he pronounced that final word (Saramago, 1997: 38).

Gordon had found his new survival plan strangely and by accident. But now, town by town, people believe what they believe, especially when he actually delivers letters from places he's visited before. People seemed to long for a lost, brilliant past—the age of cleanliness and order, and a magnificent nation now lost—even after all these years. Like a spring thaw

shattering the frozen frost of a stream, longing overpowered their hard-won doubt (Brin, 1997: 98).

*Blindness* is a portrait of humanity whose work shows how savage man can become when given the opportunity. Therefore, it paints a very pessimistic picture with a superficial reading. However, it shows that acting collectively is the only way to survive during chaos. Through the Doctor's wife, he instills hope that compassion will save humanity.

She thought about how to tell them, to get them all together and announce the news, perhaps it would be better to say it discreetly, without showing off, for instance, as though she didn't want to discuss the issue. Seriously, who would have believed that I would preserve my sight amongst so many blind people, or perhaps a smarter method of pretending that she was actually blind and suddenly able to see, and perhaps give others hope? If she sees it again, they say to each other, maybe we'll see it too,... (Saramago, 1997: 140)

There is great hope among the townspeople and farmers when they see Gordon. This situation is explained as follows. The townspeople and farmers all stood up when they saw Gordon enter. A few more daring people approached and shook his hand solemnly, with calloused, jagged clasps from work. In his low, respectful tones, there was hope and curiosity in his eyes. Gordon froze behind a smile and nodded pleasantly, wishing him and Aage could wait elsewhere (Brin, 1997: 145). In addition, the only record of enlightened people that they would survive the Dark Age was hope. "It provided a means of surviving the impending Dark Age. There was turmoil and uncertainty all around us. Our main source of strength as poor academics was a wobbly thing called Hope." (Brin, 1997: 167)

Despair is the only human phenomenon that dialectically determines hope, because the conditions that determine the existence of man in the world are the causes that give rise to hopelessness. In other words, despair is the only thing that gives hope. This dialectical relationship between hope and despair also gains value in the context of human consciousness's perception of it (Kacıroğlu, 2015: 46). Kierkegaard associates this consciousness with the state of being aware of one's own existence. Therefore, he sees hopelessness as a form of existence, just like hope. According to him, despair should only be considered as a great advantage when considered as an abstract idea. Having to suffer despair places man above the beast, and this is a development that distinguishes us very differently from vertical walking, which is the sign of the sublimity of our spirituality or of our infinite verticality (Kierkegaard, 2007: 23).

The girl with dark glasses, one of the characters in the novel *Blindness*, expresses that she will never lose hope and says that if there is no hope, she will give up on living long ago. "I'll keep trying to locate my parents, I'll keep hoping the boy's mother will arrive, you failed to mention the hope we all have, what's that, winning again," the girl with the black glasses added. It's crazy to hold on to such hopes, I swear, if it weren't for such hopes, I would say I would have given up long ago.

## Conclusion

In the study, the subject of endless hope in José Saramago's novel *Blindness* and David Brine's *The Postman* has been examined. *The Postman* and *Blindness* are dystopian works. *The Postman* talks about a man named Gordon Krantz, who discovered the uniform of the mail carrier in a world where civilization collapsed with the spread of post-apocalyptic epidemics, and how a part of the American West was restored to its former glory. People see Gordon as a savior after a great chaos and struggle for survival. This is why people have hopes that they will return to their pre-apocalyptic state. *Blindness* novel is about the

transformation of a blindness epidemic that started when a man suddenly became blind in traffic with his car and spread all over the world. At the end of this epidemic of blindness, people become selfish and lose their moral values. Similar to the *Postman* novel, in the novel *Blindness*, people have the hope of returning to the old days when they saw their eyes and had moral values. In both novels, one of the most important indicators is his ability to instill hope in the reader even in the most pessimistic environment and the criticisms made against the social order. In both *Blindness* and *The Postman*, hope and despair are handled as two forms of existence that create and nourish each other.

In conclusion, Saramago also tells us that hope can be preserved in only one way: People must despair of the Big Others of the Symbolic order, namely the state and God, to recognize and accept their own self, and to take strength from each other instead of the state. Therefore, in the event of possible chaos, humanity will only be able to survive when there is unity, as the novel puts it as a warning. Gordon, the protagonist of *The Postman* story, also shows that hope can never be lost, sometimes against their own kind, sometimes against problems not of their own kind. Because the struggle for survival requires hope, post-disaster hope has been a rising point of light amid people's darkness.

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