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Disasters and Epidemic Literature: An Analytical Study of Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*

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Abstract:

Literature is a representation of society. Literature reflects the cultural, socio-economic and scientific life of human beings. In literature, The science fiction is a genre of fiction that encompasses imaginative concepts like futuristic scientific-technological settings, faster than light. According to the post-apocalyptic era the entire cosmos is on the periphery of obliteration, and human beings have been completely eradicated and substituted for an innovative, and bioengineered. The epidemic began to spread in a Chinese city in early 2020, no one anticipated the scope of the epidemic that will affect the whole world in a very short period. From Wuhan (China) to New York (USA) through Africa, South America, Asia, and Europe. An outbreak of epidemic Covid-19 caused by a novel acute respiratory syndrome of corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV) occurred in China. The outbreak was declared as a public health emergenc through out the world in different phases. In the period of epidemic, literature plays a vital role and apocalyptic literature has shown the unforeseen disastrous. But human hardly stopped their behaviour and attitude towards the world and their responsibility. The present research paper is an analysis on Margaret Atwood's 'The Oryx' and 'Crake' in the light of the COVID-19 epidemic and pointed a convincing glimpse of the future. These two novels explore an apocalypse triggered by biotechnological and chemical experiments that destroy the rhythm of nature and produces unforeseen disasters and epidemics and create the questions about the moral and ethical responsibilities of the scientists when they begin deploying the natural processes for material gains. In the novel the future of scientific development of early 21st century are effectively depicted by her.

Keywords: Epidemic, genetic, chemical, rhythm, nature, unforeseen



Introduction

Unforeseen disaster and epidemics (COVID-19) destroyed and has paused the entire world. This epidemic is one of the lethal in history, placing the advancement of research and technology in hazard. The human beings are infringement the rules and regulations of environment. The retribution from the biosphere arises in the form of extinction of species, hole in the ozone layer, global warming, acid rain, famines, droughts, hurricanes, tsunamis, COVID-19 etc. In ecology, man's tragic flaw in his anthropocentric vision. The present scenario witness's man's compulsion to conquer, violate, exploit and domesticate every natural thing. The development of infectious diseases, germs and antibiotics continue to instill fear the human community. The pandemic has been experimented with in literature since the early days. Health issues, such as cholera, typhus, measles, plague, tuberculosis, among others, have had their effects on personal as well as socio-economic relations. Today, the whole world is ready to battle COVID-19, people can't avoid learning about the history of epidemics, as well as portrayed in literature.

The present research work will analyze Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake*, which is the first book of the epidemic *MaddAddam* trilogy, which include the above-mentioned *Oryx and Crake* (2003), together with *The Year of The Flood* (2009) and *MaddAddam* (2013).

The steps made in biotechnology, such as genesplicing, help scientists create new species, such as wolvogs, liobams and pigeons with human brain tissue added for intelligence. At that time the epidemic product begins is known as the waterless flood, it is a counter medicine known as Blyss Plus Pill. These are the Blyss Plus Pills used for increase carnal desire, fortification from the sexually transmitted diseases and to sustain longer youth. But the human killer virus that will spread like Coronavirus, plague and wipe out the entire islands overall.

News of the spreading pandemic fade of radio and television stations go dead and cities cease to exist. Minimum number of people survive with the bioengineered Crakers. Which are the mild anthropological species and whose skins have natural creature repellants and whose requirement is to create minimum protein. Among the survivors are Toby, Ren, Amandas, Zeb, Jimmy and other Maddaddammities who are a group of bioterrorists who were bought by Crake in exchange for the protection of their identities. The narrator is awaited for the conclusion of the *Maddaddam* trilogy, Toby, who belonged to the green cult its known as God's Gardeners.



Epidemic Traces in Margaret Atwood's select novels

Oryx and Crake novels are set in the twenty-first century. these address traditional ecological issues such as global warming, pollution, overpopulation, societal inequalities in relation to the environment, natural resource modification and exhaustion, and bio-engineering in a world ruled by technocrats and dominated by capitalistic interests. This work of fiction serves as a warning against the currents of modern culture and the choices it is making in terms of the environment. Writing, in this view, is used as a tool to warn readers about potentially dangerous deviations. Nonetheless, Atwood's dissatisfaction with environmental concerns isn't exactly new. Almost all of her writing examines man's relationship to his surroundings, as well as the consequences of his survival or extinction. This ecological concern has never been so central, so clearly expressed in any other of Atwood's novels. The impact of environmental irresponsibility and the requirement for moral values on social order and humanity is examined in depth. Oryx and Crake is set in the current era of Ecocriticism, which has sought to understand how literature may affect ecosystems in very real ways. As S.B. Hartman points out, Atwood has clearly progressed from a Survival theory, i.e. horror of the natural world in an antagonistic atmosphere, which characterises Canadian thinking, to current ecological preoccupations, pointing out that the current sense of danger stems from man's individual productions. Oryx and Crake, Atwood's dystopian novel, conveys her concern about widening disparities, rising poverty and shortages, deformation of the assets of developing and weak states, and massive ecological devastation caused by commercial globalism. She expresses particular concern about the dangers posed by the "gene rush" and the brunt of biotechnology as it wreaks havoc on the environment. The book makes a compelling case for the future of the modern social order, elaborating on the author's insight that the misuse of science and technology, as well as man's egotistical brainpower, has just spawned newer traditions to enslave and eventually destroy mankind.

According to Margaret Atwood the Crakers and the human being reciprocally generate the innovative set of test-tube babies such as Rhizomes, Kannon, Medulla, Jimadam, Oblongata and Pilaren, such species features are yet to progress. But the wonder of all wonders is that Blackbeard, a Craker youth, learns how to write arecordthe history of life after the Waterless Flood and the formation of innovative species. In the history the formation of pioneering hybrid species created from humans and Crakers.



Jimmy and Crake are friends and spent their childhood together in the same compound and later both to attend the higher education. Crake an intense scholar, studied bio engineering at Watson Crick. Jimmy studied humanities at Martha Graham but Jimmy as an average student. Crake developed his career and finally generates humanoids. Crakers are superior creatures who are herbivorous and polyandrous and they show interest in only sex through the breeding period. Perhaps, he is endeavor to purify the materialistic world and make life easy. Crake makes a tablet, Blyssplus which gives pleasure and vigor but after that spread epidemic. Secretly, Jimmy has been created resistant to the fatal effects of this pill, by Crake. Jimmy and Crake have number of references to existential questions, in the discussion and debates. Perhaps Crake is too distressed with the circumstances of humanity.

Jimmy was disturbed due to the offensive matter happened around him, Crake may be a part of these, perhaps more intensely. Jimmy's distress and loneliness reflect on his past life, on the questions of life and death, on the philosophy of irrationality and futility.

Oryx and Crake has the apocalyptic and the post-apocalyptic stories. Snowman of the Post-Apocalyptic world is Jimmy of the misplaced world. Various themes are conveyed through the story of the novel. Such themes are concerns to the human : the ethical consideration of the bio engineering projects, the natural evolution vs the synthetic evolution, immortality and disease. In the present research work ethical consideration of the bioengineering projects is a vital theme of this novel. Fortunately, the bioengineering projects intendedly to support human being, for example, the pigoon project. But at the initial stage the behavior of the company staff is quite immoral. Jimmy's parents argue about the humanitarian aims of these projects. Jimmy's father and workers have had good intentions but the greed and competitions had taken superiority over the sympathy and a wish to help people.

She expresses herself undoubtedly in Chapter 4, Rakunk:

"... Its wrong, the whole organization is wrong, it's a moral cesspool and you know it" (*Oryx and Crake* 64)

The natural evolution theme is presented in *Oryx and Crake* number of times. The pharmaceutical companies mentioned in the novel have gone beyond manufacturing pills to fight sickness and physical disfunction. Their genetically development customized animals



create questions about how to compromise nature. Their typical food habits, an inability to read and write, a lack of expectations to worship an advanced life, not interested in art and ignorance of death were the most important ones to achieving Crake's utmost expected immortality. Number of pharmaceutical companies tracking the goal through modification of human life through organ transplant and drugs to revitalize aging bodies.

"But with the Paradise method, there would be ninety-nine percent accuracy. Whole populations could be created that would have pre-selected characteristics. Beauty, of course; that would be in high demand. And docility: several world leaders had expressed interest in that. Paradise had already developed a UV-resistant skin, a built-in insect repellent, an unprecedented ability to digest unrefined plant material. As for immunity from microbes, what had until now been done with drugs would soon be innate." (*Oryx and Crake* 358)

Disease is a weapon of mass destruction used in *Oryx and Crake*. Crake's widespread distribution of his masked virus results in the death of the whole human population. Crake is not only one who uses disease as a weapon, rather the pharmacological firms are not exceptions to it. The Pharmaceutical industries are discovering viruses and creating antidotes immediately in order to maintain a high demand for their products. In this way the use of disease is nothing but sort of cheating and also a powerful weapon of capitalistic society. Paradoxically, disease would be used as a medicine to the problems of human being. Crake hope that to remove war, hunger, crime, and human glitches.

Conclusion

The gloomy image that Atwood skillfully presents in *Oryx and Crake* forewarns man about the human race's impending doom if it is not prepared to change its ways. She makes an impassioned plea to humanity to draw strength from the visionary forewarning the book provides, namely, to establish a strict code of behaviour, reject artificial joy and unethical pleasures proposed by science, and prevent technology from plundering the natural environment and society. Atwood's novel is based on the premise that "everything is connected to everything else." A farsighted gleam sparkles through her inscription's bright portrayals of humanity, a clear evidence of her fervent hopefulness. Her strong expectation and authoritative phrases expressing her love for this world speak well of her work of fiction for innovative ecocritical researches. The novel undoubtedly, induces upon the swift and unhindered advances in biological and genetic engineering. And create the questions about



the moral and ethical responsibilities of the scientists. When and how they begin deploying the natural process for materialist achievement. In this situation the rejection of humankind and art has directed to the complete dehumanization of human species.

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