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Zásady pro vypracování

Práce se bude zabývat současnou dystopickou prózou kanadské provenience s důrazem na enviromentální tematiku. V úvodu autorka představí okruh témat z oblasti enviromentalismu, který bude stěžejní pro následné rozbory (např. antropocentrismus, biocentrismus, udržitelnost, genetické inženýrství apod.). Tato kapitola vytvoří základ pro následující části práce, které budou obsahovat detailní rozbory zvolených románů současných kanadských spisovatelek, např. *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009) a *MaddAddam* (2013) Margaret Atwood a *A Diary in the Age of Water* (2020) Niny Munteanu. Autorka bude sledovat zejména otázky týkající se vztahu člověka k životnímu prostředí s cílem přispět k diskusi o současných trendech a vývoji dystopického žánru. Práci uzavře kapitola, která z dílčích zjištění vyvodí obecnější závěry.

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ANNOTATION

This bachelor thesis deals predominantly with the concepts of anthropocentrism and ecofeminism, alongside the connected concepts of ecocriticism and androcentrism in the contemporary Canadian selected novels – Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy, which consists of *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood* and *MaddAddam* and Nina Munteanu’s *A Diary in the Age of Water*. With support from academic sources, the thesis consists of a theoretical background introducing the concepts used for the analysis of the novels. Namely, the concepts are used to compare the contrasts and similarities in the depiction of the dystopian future envisioned by Atwood and Munteanu.

KEYWORDS

anthropocentrism, ecocriticism, ecofeminism, biocentrism, androcentrism, Margaret Atwood, Nina Munteanu

ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá převážně koncepty antropocentrismu a ekofeminismu, spolu se souvisejícími koncepty ekokritiky a androcentrismu ve vybraných současných kanadských románech – trilogii *MaddAddam* od Margaret Atwood, která zahrnuje romány *Oryx a Crake*, *The Year of the Flood* a *MaddAddam*, a v díle *A Diary in the Age of Water* od Niny Munteanu. S oporou v akademických zdrojích práce obsahuje teoretický základ, který představuje koncepty použité pro analýzu těchto románů. Tyto koncepty jsou využity k porovnání vybraných románů, v rámci toho v čem si jsou podobné a kde se rozdělují.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

antropocentrismus, ekokritika, ekofeminismus, biocentrismus, androcentrismus, Margaret Atwood, Nina Munteanu

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Introduction

Human position within the environment was one of the earliest stories of humanity. First with God created a man for him to control the other creatures on the planet. However, nowadays, thanks to the field of ecocriticism, humans are able to discuss their influence, whether it is positive or negative, on the planet and on the other creatures. Now more than ever, environmental concerns are becoming one of the most pressing issues of the twenty-first century. This bachelor thesis explores the themes of ecological concerns through concepts of ecocriticism, anthropocentrism or ecofeminism with an analysis conducted on the selected Canadian contemporary novels – the *MaddAddam* trilogy (consisting of *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood* and *MaddAddam*) by Margaret Atwood and *A Diary in the Age of Water* by Nina Munteanu. These texts are full of anthropocentric elements meddling with dystopian features, describing possible future visions for the Anthropocene epoch and humanity's place within nature.

The first chapter of this thesis introduces the relevant concepts for the analysis of the selected novels, providing a theoretical background essential for understanding the further parts of the thesis. The works of Charles Darwin, Greg Garrard, Lawrence Buell and Cheryll Glotfelty were used for the theoretical background, among other relevant sources.

The analytical part of the thesis consists of two chapters. As mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, it focuses on novels written by two contemporary Canadian female authors – Margaret Atwood and Nina Munteanu. The first analytical chapter explores the anthropocentric elements found in the novels, providing concrete examples from them and describing how the characters are perceived in the environment of the Anthropocene epoch. Since the dystopian features are also in the novels, the concrete setting of Atwood's trilogy is not clear from the story, but it can be assumed that the story takes place in the near future. Munteanu's novel takes place in Canada. The Diary part of the book is from 2045 until 2066, and the after-apocalyptic scenario takes place in 125.5.2 AW – 125 years, 5 months and 2 days after water – probably meaning after the end of the Anthropocene epoch.

The second analytical chapter focuses on the ecofeminist elements found in the novels. Since both authors are women, it may have influenced how they have written their female characters and male characters. Atwood, as well as Munteanu, write their female

characters as conscious characters – being the ones who are the first to denounce the detrimental actions made by men in power.

The purpose of this thesis is to show how both Atwood and Munteanu use their fiction to criticise the human feeling of superiority over every other non-human entity in nature and how they depict the concepts of anthropocentrism and ecofeminism in their literary works while at the same time, they explore other concepts in their novels – such as biocentrism and ecofeminism. Atwood and Munteanu's stories thematically overlay, both being a sort of a call for action, writing about humans' exploitation of nature and the environment, although their visions for the future differ slightly. All the novels essentially may be seen as cautionary tales, depicting how dominance or feeling of superiority over others might lead to destructive consequences.

1. On the Relevant Concepts

The aim of this chapter is to present the theoretical concepts for the following parts of this paper. The focus is on the concepts of ecocriticism, anthropocentrism, androcentrism and ecofeminism. Defining these concepts is crucial for understanding further parts of this paper.

Since all of the novels to be analysed in the analytical chapters of this paper could be identified as ecocritical novels, it is essential to define the concept of ecocriticism. This concept can be seen as relatively young since the field of environmental literary studies was established in the mid-eighties of the twentieth century. The term was used for the first time in the essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” by William Rueckert. The definition can vary slightly based on different scholars. The definition provided by Cheryll Glotfelty is “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment.”¹ In addition, ecocriticism includes the whole ecosystem rather than solely human society when analysing literary texts.² Although the concept is named ecocriticism in this paper, scholars are still not united since each scholar understands the term differently. They use various different terms that might be more appropriate for what they want to convey, such as “*ecopoetics, environmental literary criticism, and green cultural studies*.”³ However, the name of the concept is irrelevant since all these terms share a common idea, which, according to Glotfelty, is to raise awareness that humans are close to the end of the geological epoch, which might result in detrimental consequences for humans and the Earth, being it people themselves who are responsible for it.⁴ The end of an epoch, particularly the Anthropocene epoch, is also one of the themes in the analysed novels mentioned in the first analytical chapter of this paper. Garrard defines ecocriticism quite similarly to Glotfelty. He claims that ecocriticism studies the relationship between humans and non-humans from the viewpoint of human cultural history.⁵ Garrard also writes that ecocriticism may help illustrate and delve into ecological problems. In addition, reading ecocritical texts, whether fiction or nonfiction, can spark environmental discussions that readers might not have considered otherwise.⁶ Although

¹ Cheryll Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996), xvii-xx.

² Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, xx.

³ Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, xx.

⁴ Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, xx.

⁵ Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2004), 5.

⁶ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 6.

ecocriticism is quite a new concept, humans have always been intrigued by the evolution and the position of humans in nature. Buell writes in his book, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, that the Earth and creation were among the earliest stories owing to religious narratives.⁷ Various religious narratives may have influenced the development of other concepts, such as anthropocentrism and its opposite, biocentrism. Since the first analytical chapter mentions both of these concepts, it is only logical to proceed with their definitions.

Firstly, given that anthropocentrism is the prevailing concept in the first analytical chapter, this section will focus on it. Buell explains anthropocentrism as humans being above everything else in nature. However, he also acknowledges two types of anthropocentrism – strong and weak. Strong anthropocentrism is precisely written above: human needs and desires are above everything else in nature. Weak anthropocentrism limits prioritising humans to a certain degree. It recognises the value of other non-human beings and humans being part of the ecosystem, but in practice, human self-interest should always be considered.⁸ He also writes about how Christianity may be responsible for the anthropocentric view of the world, claiming that God created man to master or “subdue” other creatures.⁹ Lynn White, Jr.’s claim that man naming animals gives him power over them, making him superior, essentially supports this.¹⁰ Minter claims that anthropocentrism is about non-humans being valuable only if they bring satisfaction to humans or them being useful to humans in any way. He also adds that if the last man was to destroy all nonhuman life on Earth, Western moral philosophy offers no compelling justification for why this reckless destruction would be considered wrong.¹¹ Minter’s definition of anthropocentrism can be seen in the first analytical chapter, which provides an example from one of the novels. Concerning anthropocentrism, the Anthropocene also needs to be addressed in this chapter, as the events in all the novels selected for analyses are occurring during the Anthropocene epoch.

⁷ Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 1-2.

⁸ Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, 134.

⁹ Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, 2.

¹⁰ Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty, and Harold Fromm (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 9.

¹¹ Ben A. Minter, “Anthropocentrism,” in *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, ed. J. Baird Callicott and Robert Frodeman (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008), 59-60.

Similarly to the term ecocriticism, scholars cannot agree, in this case, on when exactly the Anthropocene epoch started or even whether it has already started. Crutzen characterises the Anthropocene as a human-dominated geological epoch which replaced the Holocene epoch. He claims that the Anthropocene could have started with the invention of James Watt's steam engine design at the end of the eighteenth century.¹² National Geographic encyclopaedic entry also adds to the uncertainty of the commencement of the Anthropocene, stating that it is

an unofficial unit of geologic time, used to describe the most recent period in Earth's history, when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet's climate and ecosystems.¹³

According to the article on the National Geographic website, the geological epoch that is still ongoing is the Holocene, which began almost twelve thousand years ago. However, there are a few different scenarios of when the Anthropocene could have begun. First, with the Industrial Revolution around the nineteenth century. Second, that it started around nineteen forty-five with the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Third, and the last mentioned in the article, the Anthropocene began around nineteen fifty with the Great Acceleration, which marked a significant rise in human activities impacting the planet.¹⁴ The first analytical chapter focuses on, among other things, showing the impacts of human actions on Earth, which both authors describe in their novels quite detrimentally. Although there are discrepancies about the commencement or even the current existence of the Anthropocene, Glenn Albrecht states that the Anthropocene socially has evolved now for over the last three hundred years, causing pollution and extinction and presenting people with his idea of the Symbiocene. He describes his hopes for the new epoch, "where humans symbiotically reintegrate themselves, emotionally, psychologically and technologically, into nature and natural systems."¹⁵ Symbiocene might seem, at least from this citation, to promote the biocentric approach and try to instal it into people, or at the very least, commence the debate about sustainability and being respectful and mindful towards other entities existing in the environment. However, there might be very little to no probability that human beings will survive long enough to see the new geological

¹² Paul J. Crutzen, "Geology of Mankind," *Nature* 415, no. 3 (January 2002): 23.
<https://doi.org/10.1038/415023a>

¹³ "Anthropocene," National Geographic Society, last modified October 19, 2023,
<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/anthropocene/>

¹⁴ "Anthropocene," National Geographic Society, last modified October 19, 2023.

¹⁵ "An Invitation to the Symbiocene," Symbioscene, Accessed on March 1, 2025,
<https://symbioscene.com/invitation-to-the-symbiocene/>

epoch, as Munteanu suggests in her novel *A Diary in the Age of Water* – the specific example from the book can be found in the next chapter concerned with the anthropocentric aspects in the novels.

Even though humans may currently live in the Anthropocene epoch, some writers try to remind people that they are not superior, as anthropocentrism suggests. On the contrary, humans are just as part of nature as any other creature – non-humans. This concept is called biocentrism, sometimes used interchangeably with ecocentrism, which might derive from the works of Charles Darwin, or at least he played a significant role in shaping the foundation of biocentrism. The proof for this claim may be found in Darwin's *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, in which he describes the similarities and connections between humans and non-humans. He claims that humans not only carry evident signs in their physical structures that indicate their evolution from an earlier "lower form" but also that humans share their basic instincts and impulses with animals. Those instincts might be, for instance, self-preservation, sexual attraction or maternal care.¹⁶ The example from Darwin's book is used to present clearly the biocentric approach. Paul W. Taylor claims that equality between humans and non-humans should be based on intrinsic value. Any being on the Earth has an inherent good that is valuable in itself, regardless of its other characteristics. When recognising the inherent worth of any being, it should never be treated only as an object, tool, or instrument for human satisfaction – as anthropocentrism suggests.¹⁷ The simplest definition might be given by Sueellen Campbell, who wrote that biocentrism challenges traditional hierarchies in nature.¹⁸ Hierarchy enforced, for instance, during the Renaissance of Enlightenment, that humans are beneath God but above animals and nature. Campbell specifically writes that biocentrism is "the conviction that humans are neither better nor worse than other creatures (animals, plants, bacteria, rocks, rivers) but simply equal [...]."¹⁹ The novels selected for analysis are predominantly anthropocentric. However, a few biocentric elements can be found that probably show the reader the apparent opposite between these two approaches and how they reflect the position of humans in nature, which is described later in the analytical chapter. Biocentrism, as well as anthropocentrism, is about the

¹⁶ Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 34-36.

¹⁷ Paul W. Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature," *Environmental Ethics* 3, no. 3 (Fall 1981): 200.

¹⁸ Sueellen Campbell, "The Land and Language of Desire," in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty, and Harold Fromm (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 128.

¹⁹ Campbell, "The Land and Language of Desire," 128.

difference in perception of humans and non-humans, one putting the superiority onto humans and the other trying to show the connection between humans and non-humans trying to eliminate this superiority over the “inferior.” However, when analysing ecocritical texts, there is a possibility to come across texts which describe women to be seen by men as inferior in the same or similar way as they perceive nature and other non-human beings – ecofeminism.

Anthropocentrism can be seen as a dualism between humanity and nature. On the other hand, ecofeminism recognises an androcentric dualism between man and woman. As mentioned earlier, anthropocentrism assumes that humans are superior to non-humans thanks to their rationality. However, ecofeminism perceives women as being closely tied to nature and associated with it, and in addition, they can show empathy towards nature rather than men, who are associated with rationality and culture.²⁰ According to *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, varieties of ecological feminism emerged between nineteen eightieths and nineteen ninetieths. Ecofeminism emerged, claiming that nature may be perceived as a feminist issue. “[D]eforestation, desertification, and water pollution are feminist issues because understanding them helps one understand both the subordination of (many) women.”²¹ Ecofeminism presents the connection in oppression. Women have historically had the experience of being oppressed by men, dominated by men, so they notice when similar or identical oppression is happening – men trying to dominate nature.²² Ecofeminism, stemming from other forms of feminist activism, calls for liberation. When analysing oppression in ecofeminist texts, there is a clear distinction between the privileged groups – usually men who are involved with technology – and the oppressed groups – the non-humans and women seen as inferior.²³ Owing to the close connection between women and nature, women characters in the selected novels for analysis in this paper are usually the ones who are the first to speak out when they see men mistreating non-humans or trying to modify nature in any way, refusing men’s perception of nature as a tool they can use however they want. Collard and Contrucci claim that woman and nature's identity and even destiny are united. They even write an example of this unity by comparing women to Mother Nature, since

²⁰ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 23.

²¹ Karen J. Warren “Ecological Feminism,” in *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, ed. J. Baird Callicott and Robert Frodeman (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008), 228.

²² Karen J. Warren “Ecological Feminism,” 228.

²³ Greta Gaard, “Living Interconnections with Animals and Nature,” in *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*, ed. Greta Gaard (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 1.

eco means house in Greek and women were the ones who traditionally managed their homes.²⁴ Ecocriticism is inevitably linked also to the concept of androcentrism.

Mentioning Mother Nature, it is only appropriate to at least briefly introduce the concept before proceeding to closely connected androcentrism. The link between females and nature has already been discussed – women perceive themselves as being closer to nature, while men perceive themselves as being closer to culture. However, how does this association actually affect the perception of women? Catherine Roach, in her article “Loving Your Mother: On the Woman-Nature Relation”, claims that there might be negative comments thanks to men seeing women “on an equal and lowly plane quite outside the properly human” – the properly human being a man. She then proceeds with an interesting thought that this link between women and nature makes women seen as under-personified and nature as over-personified.²⁵ This lessens the humanity of women, making them probably just an object, not seen as human beings at all.

Androcentrism is based on the power dynamic inclined to men since the world is set as a patriarchal society. Therefore, similar rules of exclusion that apply to non-human entities also apply to women.²⁶ According to the book *Rape of the Wild*, in patriarchy, the oppressor, in this case, a man, keeps his illusion of control by objectifying, “colonising” women as well as nature.²⁷ As mentioned earlier, ecocritical texts are analyses from the viewpoint of human cultural history. Androcentrism is even more specific because “[i]n the case of androcentrism, identity and experience is represented in masculinist terms as that of elite males.²⁸ Androcentrism establishes a dualistic distinction between men and women, often women being the ones oppressed, exploited and marginalised together with non-human entities.

However, it is also essential not to omit that there are writers who do not acknowledge the androcentric dualism and the ecofeminist belief that women may be closer to nature. Catherine Roach claims that the question of which biological sex is closer to nature is quite misleading²⁹ – this probably derives from biocentrism. She writes that

²⁴ Andrée Collard, Joyce Contrucci, *Rape of the Wild: Man's Violence against Animals and the Earth* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 137.

²⁵ Catherine Roach, “Loving Your Mother: On the Woman-Nature Relation,” *Hypatia* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 51.

²⁶ Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The ecological crisis of reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), 32.

²⁷ Collard, Contrucci, *Rape of the Wild: Man's Violence against Animals and the Earth*, 1.

²⁸ Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The ecological crisis of reason*, 99.

²⁹ Roach, “Loving Your Mother: On the Woman-Nature Relation,” 53.

no being can be in any way closer to nature than any other being. She also admits that some ecofeminist writers might even emphasise the hierarchical dualism between men and women, them also being guilty of making men usually as only bad characters while women as good characters – again creating a sort of prejudice. She acknowledges that ecofeminist writings are important for reminding humans of the importance of equality between all creatures in nature³⁰ – appreciating probably more biocentric texts rather than solely ecofeminist.

For the purpose of this thesis, the definitions and ideas of androcentrism and ecofeminism applied in the analysis of the novels were taken from, for instance, the book *Rape of the Wild* and other sources mentioned in this chapter, where there is described an obvious link between women and nature through similar oppression, exploitation and inferiority. The second analytical chapter in this paper explores this dualistic perspective and ecofeminist elements found in the selected novels, providing examples of how they are depicted by Atwood and Muentanu.

³⁰ Roach, “Loving Your Mother: On the Woman-Nature Relation,” 53-54.

2. Anthropocentric aspects in the novels

This chapter focuses on the anthropocentric elements in the novels selected for analysis in this paper. It explores different characters and their attitudes towards nature. This chapter shows the differences and similarities in depicting certain scenarios by both authors.

It is necessary to begin with a brief introduction of the characters. Beginning with the *MaddAddam* trilogy by Margaret Atwood, the dystopic world in these books is divided into two major groups. Scientists and their families living in the Compounds, separated from ordinary people living in cities, here called Pleeblands, which recalls the word “pleb,” which means “a person of a low social class.”³¹ Scientists greatly influence the lives of ordinary people in Pleeblands. However, they do not visit the cities and people there, but if they must, they never go alone since Pleeblands is described as quite a dangerous place, full of criminals and addicts.³²

From the novels of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, it is clear that Compound people mainly represent the anthropocentric approach towards nature.

“It’s the neuro-regeneration project. We now have genuine human neo-cortex tissue growing in a pigoon. Finally, after all those duds! Think of the possibilities for stroke victims, and ...”³³

This example from the first novel *Oryx and Crake*, among other things, proves Minter’s claim mentioned earlier that non-humans are valuable only in cases that are beneficial to human beings.³⁴ This citation from the novel is the direct speech of one of the scientists talking to his wife about the great achievement of growing human organs in artificially created animals, presumably only for human benefit. There is no mention of how this might be helpful for any other species. The scientists in the trilogy only see nature as something they can modify and use, excusing this exploitation with the argument of human benefit and proving human selfishness and indifference towards any other creatures they perceive to be not rational beings.

³¹ “pleb,” The Cambridge Dictionary, Accessed on December 22, 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pleb>

³² Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003), 27.

³³ Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 56.

³⁴ Minter, “Anthropocentrism” 58-59.

On the other hand, the Pleeblands people display a biocentric approach towards nature.

He made us “a little lower than the Angels,” but in other ways – and Science bears this out – we are closely related to our fellow Primates, a fact that the haughty ones of this world do not find pleasant to their self-esteem. Our appetites, our desires, our more uncontrollable emotions – all are Primate!³⁵

In this case, “He” refers to God. It can be seen from the citation that the group from Pleeblands, called God’s Gardeners, preach the view that human beings should not feel superior to non-human beings since there are so many similarities between humans and non-humans. In addition, the God’s Gardeners are against any violence towards animals, in fact against any being or entity existing in the natural environment. Similarly, Darwin, in his *The Descent of Man*, states:

As man possesses the same senses with the lower animals, his fundamental intuitions must be the same. Man has also some few instincts in common, as that of self-preservation, sexual love, the love of the mother for her new-born offspring, the power possessed by the latter of sucking and so forth.³⁶

From this Darwin claim and the preaching made by the God’s Gardeners, it is clear that humans probably have forgotten about their evolution, which inevitably makes them close and linked to fellow animals and other non-humans. This probably stems from the rise of rationalism during the Enlightenment period, which perceived intellectual and scientific progress as a way of improving human lives.

The rise of the new science progressively undermines not only the ancient geocentric conception of the cosmos, but also the set of presuppositions that had served to constrain and guide philosophical inquiry in the earlier times. The dramatic success of the new science in explaining the natural world promotes philosophy [...], constrained by its purposes and methods, to an independent force with the power and authority to challenge the old and construct the new, in the realms of theory and practice.³⁷

The rise of rationalism probably helped to construct in human minds the idea of being superior to other creatures, essentially developing the anthropocentric approach towards

³⁵ Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood* (New York: Anchor Books, 2009), 52.

³⁶ Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 36.

³⁷ William, Bristow, "Enlightenment," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2023/entries/enlightenment>

nature. However, there were and still are those who challenge this approach, joining Darwin and his claim that humans have instincts in common. The ethicist Paul Taylor is one of them, supporting the biocentric view of equality of human and non-human beings.

The principle of intrinsic value states that, regardless of what kind of entity it is in other respects, it is a member of the Earth's community of life, the realization of its good is something intrinsically valuable. [...] Insofar as we regard any organism, species population, or life community as an entity having inherent worth, we believe that it must never be treated as if it were a mere object or thing whose entire value lies in being instrumental to the good of some other entity.³⁸

Therefore, the citation from *The Year of the Flood* by Atwood suggests that biocentrism is heavily based on equality. Although God created humans above other earthly beings, it does not mean humans should see non-humans only as instruments, as there are still similarities in specific innate patterns of behaviour. In the *MaddAddam* trilogy, the equality between humans and everything else in nature is a profound topic on which Atwood focuses. One of the main themes is the consciousness of the God's Gardeners and their biocentric views and the human chauvinism of scientists in *Compounds*.

The novel *A Diary in the Age of Water* cannot be omitted from this brief introduction of characters important for understanding the way both authors depict the anthropocentric or biocentric views of them. This novel by Munteanu is anthropocentric mainly through the description of the situation happening in futuristic Canada from 2045 up until 2066, where the civilisation is set in the Anthropocene. The description occurs in a diary written by Lynna, who could be identified as a conscious character.

That was all before they put in the national water quota—the first one, that is, in '29. When they implemented the quota, it shocked the population. [...] People had to rethink their daily activities, everything from staying hydrated to flushing their toilets. [...] Soon, all the water will be gone.³⁹

The diary is later found by one of the mutant girls, Kyo, and her mentor, Nam, who explain what has happened with the population and what consequences global warming has had. That will be analysed later in this chapter. The diary entries allow readers to understand the flaws of the anthropocentric attitude to nature since Lynna is not only describing what is happening at the moment, but also, she is explaining what

³⁸ Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature," 4.

³⁹ Nina Munteanu, *A Diary in the Age of Water* (Toronto: Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2020), 35-36.

consequences this, at first sight, small action taken by the government might have on civilisation and the Earth. This can be seen in the example above with water quotas—an example of an action that, at first sight, seems like a form of saving the planet. However, Lynna presumes that the water will be gone anyway. The reason for this presumption might be that the Anthropocene epoch has been happening for too long to be able to change the inevitable.

As mentioned earlier, the commencement of the Anthropocene epoch has not been strictly set. For instance, Zylinska writes in her book *Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene* that not all geologists accepted that the Anthropocene epoch had already started, but it is yet to come.⁴⁰ Lynna, in Munteanu's novel, in one of her diary entries about the Anthropocene, writes this:

Scholars suggest that we are now in a new geological epoch. The Anthropocene epoch. [...] While I agree [...] that naming an entire age after us rings hubristic, there is no question that humanity has been a major driver of planetary change for some time: from tipping the Earth's axis through the creation of massive water reservoirs in the northern regions—and diverting a third of Earth's available freshwater in the process—to increasing carbon dioxide to levels found 800,000 years ago and consequently changing the global climate. The Anthropocene succeeded the relatively stable natural variability of the Holocene epoch, which had endured for 11,700 years. Some say that the Anthropocene began in the 1700s with the Industrial Revolution—the steam engine and fossil fuel economy. Others say it started with the time of the Great Acceleration, the economic boom following World War II. [...] But something else happened in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, something that suggests to me that this so-called epoch of man started centuries ago: it started with a new way of seeing and manipulating nature. It started with the writings and teachings of philosophers—all men—like Descartes, Bacon, Leibnitz, Smith, Locke, and Hobbes. Nature was a “witch” to be captured and subdued, to be tortured for her secrets and manipulated. [...] It started with treating land as “energy” for a growing population to plug into.⁴¹

This citation shares similarities with Crutzen's “Geology of Mankind.” Crutzen claims the Anthropocene began in the late eighteenth century, specifically in 1784, when James Watt's steam engine was designed.⁴² He also writes, “[t]he rapid expansion of mankind in numbers and per capita exploitation of Earth's resources has continued apace.”⁴³ As

⁴⁰ Joanna Zylinska, *Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene* (Michigan: Open Humanities Press, 2014), 19.

⁴¹ Munteanu, *A Diary in the Age of Water*, 182-183.

⁴² Crutzen, “Geology of Mankind,” 23.

⁴³ Crutzen, “Geology of Mankind,” 23.

proposed earlier, Lynna's presumption that water will eventually be gone might stem from the duration of the Anthropocene epoch. Considering that humans have been exploiting Earth's resources since the late eighteenth century, the catastrophic scenarios presented in the novels analysed in this paper might seem inevitable. The Anthropocene is a human-dominated geological epoch that cannot be everlasting and will eventually end. In Munteanu's novel, Lynna writes, "Naming an age after humanity suggests the end of humanity, as all ages must end—that is what makes an age an age."⁴⁴ This end of humanity, as it is known today, is essentially the topic linking Munteanu and Atwood. Crutzen states one of the possibilities, how the Anthropocene epoch might end, which became Atwood's frame narrative for her trilogy, which is: "Unless there is a global catastrophe — a meteorite impact, a world war or a pandemic — mankind will remain a major environmental force for many millennia."⁴⁵ The pandemic is exactly how Atwood envisions the end of the Anthropocene epoch in the *MaddAddam* trilogy.

Apocalypse, as Buell claims, "is the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal."⁴⁶ Atwood describes the pandemic, which was caused by a pill called BlyssPluss Pill. This seems like a verbal irony since "Blyss" recalls the word bliss, suggesting happiness and "Pluss" recalls the word plus, suggesting addition. The pill is marketed in the novel as a benefit for humans:

The first – the BlyssPluss Pill – was prophylactic in nature, and the logic behind it was simple: eliminate the external causes of death and you were halfway there. [...] The BlyssPluss Pill was designed to take a set of givens, namely the nature of human nature, and steer these givens in a more beneficial direction than the ones hitherto taken. [...] The aim was to produce a single pill, that, at one and the same time:

- a) would protect the user against all known sexually transmitted diseases, fatal, inconvenient, or merely unsightly;
- b) would provide an unlimited supply of libido and sexual prowess coupled with a generalized sense of energy and well-being, thus reducing the frustration and blocked testosterone that led to jealousy and violence, and eliminating feelings of low-self-worth;
- c) would prolong youth

[...] With the BlyssPluss Pill the human race will have a better chance of swimming.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Munteanu, *A Diary in the Age of Water*, 185.

⁴⁵ Crutzen, "Geology of Mankind," 23.

⁴⁶ Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), 285.

⁴⁷ Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 293-295.

The irony of the BlyssPluss Pill is hidden in the name itself. The revelation of the pill carrying a deadly disease happened too late since most people had already taken it, causing an international pandemic. The creator of this pill, Crake, one of the main characters and one of the scientists in the Compound, is not hiding his intentions with creating the pandemic. Throughout the first novel, there are many cases of foreshadowing. The readers know Crake's hatred towards humans and their recklessness, which might be his driving force. "Monkey brains, had been Crake's opinion. [...] Crake had no very high opinion of human ingenuity, despite the large amount of it he himself possessed."⁴⁸ Even though Crake is described throughout the novel as a genius, he may not be seen as conscious as his friend Jimmy.

Jimmy, or Snowman, as he is known after the pandemic, is described more as an emotional character; however, he is more conscious of his surroundings than Crake is. Crake believes that he is saving the planet, maybe even humanity, with the BlyssPluss Pill, reducing the quick rise of population. Crake believes that emotions are what draw people to start wars and commit other atrocities. "Extreme emotions could be lethal."⁴⁹ However, in the end, his extreme emotions led to an apocalyptic scenario. This is another irony which may be found in the story. Although Crake could be seen on paper as a hero of the story, saving the planet from overpopulation, he lacks an essential quality for being considered a biocentric character — as may be deduced from this citation: "Those who have retained an unblunted moral sensibility find it natural to share concern with the fate of all living creatures."⁵⁰ Therefore, the human quality Crake lacks is empathy, and that is probably what makes him so indifferent not only to non-human beings but, as the citation above proposes, to all living creatures, even humans, since he acts without considering the long-term consequences on all creatures.

As has already been mentioned, the scientists in the trilogy feel superior to everything else in nature. Crake is no exception. The contrast between conscious, empathetic Jimmy/Snowman and Crake can be seen in their stance on the artificial non-humans.

"What the hell is it?" said Jimmy

⁴⁸ Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 99.

⁴⁹ Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 166.

⁵⁰ Albert Schweitzer, *The Teaching of Reverence for Life* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965), 22.

“Those are chickens,” said Crake. “Chicken parts. Just the breasts, on this one. [...]”

“But there aren’t any heads,” said Jimmy. He grasped the concept – he’d grown up with sus multiorganifer, after all – but this thing was going too far. [...]

“That’s the head in the middle.” said the woman. “[...] No eyes or beak or anything, they don’t need those.”

“This is horrible,” said Jimmy.

The woman gave her jocular woodpecker yodel, and explained that they’d removed all the brain functions that had nothing to do with digestion, assimilations, and growth.⁵¹

The dialogue shows that even though Crake hates a few human characteristics, he still sees human superiority, and everything else in nature is open to being modified and employed for humans' benefit. The slogan “No Brain, No Pain”⁵² further in the novel suggests that Crake and other scientists perceive animals only as things or walking bodies. Garrard, in his *Ecocriticism, the New Critical Idiom*, claims:

Descartes hyperseparated mind and body, and denied to animals not only the faculty of reason, but the whole range of feelings and sensations that he had associated with thought. As a result, he saw animals as radically different from, and inferior to, humans. They were bodies without minds, effectively machines.⁵³

The perception of animals being only bodies without minds is even amplified in the novels through the artificially created animals, which are literally bodies without minds. Despite this, Jimmy still empathises even with these artificial species. “This is horrible,” said Jimmy. [...] It was like an animal-protein tuber.⁵⁴ This proves Jimmy’s/Snowman’s consciousness towards other beings.

Atwood, through Crake, shows one of the forms of anthropocentrism called ethical egoism. According to Burchett, “it condones selfish behavior that would be beneficial to individuals in the short-term but disastrous to humanity’s long-term viability.”⁵⁵ Crake perceives humans as the detrimental element of the Earth. Wars and hierarchical society – he wants to end and replace the existing problem – humans – with the genetically engineered humanoids, which he called Crakers. In the short term, this may sound ideal.

⁵¹ Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 202-203.

⁵² Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 209.

⁵³ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 25.

⁵⁴ Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 202.

⁵⁵ Kyle Burchett, “Anthropocentrism and Nature. An Attempt at Reconciliation,” *Teoria* 34, no. 2 (January 2014): 127.

However, this may be perceived as a short-term benefit since long-term this leads to the extinction of humans – no human viability. Crake perceives the human self-extinction as an ethical action.

Crakers were created to be part of nature without the negative human features.

[...] by means of re-engineering and mixing human/animal genes in a new colorful and handsome species, he expects to change and expel from the Earth (destructive?) humanist thinking forever.⁵⁶

Crake has seen the many flaws in human nature. The way humans did not deal with overpopulation created the problem of food and overall resource scarcity because they could not fight the reproduction urges. “[...] *Homo sapiens* [...] He’s one of the few species that doesn’t limit reproduction in the face of dwindling resources.”⁵⁷ Crake solves this within Crakers by creating their own patterns of reproduction.

[...] mating [...] a rare-enough occasion among the people: Crake had worked out the numbers, and had decreed that once every three years per female was more than enough. There’ll be standard quintuplet, four men and the woman in heat. Her condition will be obvious to all from the bright-blue colour of her buttocks and abdomen. [...] Courtship begins at first whiff, the first faint blush of azure, with the males presenting flowers to the females – just as male penguins present round stones, said Crake, [...] female chooses four flowers, and the sexual ardour of the unsuccessful candidates dissipates immediately, with no hard feelings left.⁵⁸

By this, Crake wants to eliminate detrimental feelings which lead humans to act irrationally, such as unrequited love or non-consensual acts. “No more prostitution, no sexual abuse of children, [...] no pimps, no sex slaves. No more rape.”⁵⁹ However, can irrational acts really be prevented or genetically engineered? Crake believes so and probably wants to eliminate this urge because of a girl called Oryx. Oryx was the girlfriend of both Jimmy/Snowman and Crake. Officially, she was with Crake since he had a leading role in the Compound, while she led the secret relationship with Jimmy/Snowman, who was creating slogans for BlyssPluss Pill in the Compound – of course, Jimmy/Snowman also did not know what the pill will cause. Oryx was sold as a

⁵⁶ Esther Muñoz-González, “Posthuman Cure, Biological and Cultural Motherhood in Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam*,” in *Transhumanism and Posthumanism in Twenty-First Century Narrative*, ed. Sonia Baelo-Allué, and Mónica Calvo-Pascual (New York: Routledge, 2021), 194-195.

⁵⁷ Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 120.

⁵⁸ Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 164-165.

⁵⁹ Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 165.

child to a pimp who was selling her to different men. Oryx finds herself eventually in the Compound, being the one who sells the pill to sex workers. Crake finds out about the secret relationship between Jimmy/Snowman and Oryx, and feeling left out, it drives him to kill Oryx amidst the, at the moment, ongoing pandemic. When Jimmy/Snowman finds Crake with dead Oryx, he kills him. Before that, Crake explains the real intention behind the pill to Jimmy/Snowman and that he injected him with the antidote. This is how Jimmy finds himself believing he is the only surviving human, now caring for the new population – Crakers. This shows that even though Crake denounced human feelings, which can take over rational thinking, he eventually started a pandemic, which almost resulted in humans going extinct, probably just because he was jealous and envious, proving that the link between how humans and animals act exists.

Even though Crake believed he left behind a perfect population – Crakers – he did not think that there might be more people who would survive the pandemic. In the second novel from the trilogy, *The Year of the Flood*, it is revealed that there are more survivors. Survivors from the previously mentioned Pleebland group God’s Gardeners did not take the pill since they did not want to take anything artificial. However, they find themselves isolated and believe they are the last people on Earth. They don’t know about Crakers until all the narrators find each other at the end of the second novel – Jimmy/Snowman with Crakers, Toby, Ren, Amanda and Zeb. The third book, *MaddAddam* is about how humans and the engineered humanoids learn to live together. Paul W. Taylor claims that

[...] to view the place of humans in the natural world from the perspective of the biocentric outlook is to reject the idea of human superiority over other living things. Humans are not thought of as carrying on a higher grade of existence when compared with the so-called “lower” orders of life. The biocentric outlook precludes a hierarchical view of nature. [...] No bias in favor of some over others is acceptable.⁶⁰

This approach cannot be seen in society depicted before. Society living in the Anthropocene. However, the co-existence of surviving humans and the new Crakers may be described as more biocentric.

It is when the human survivors learn that Crake/human reproductive abilities are still possible and they start to share their

⁶⁰ Paul W. Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 45.

memories and culture that the bonds between the posthuman and the human are created.⁶¹

At the end of the *MaddAddam* novel are diary entries written by one of the Crakers children, who learnt how to write from one of the survivors, Toby. These entries imply that the population begins to restore, and humans and non-humans adapt and learn from each other, creating a balance and suggesting the possibility of restoring and reshaping the world, giving humans probably a chance for redemption – Crakers being those who teach the human survivors how to live in harmony with nature and environment and human survivor being those who teach Crakers, for example how to write and other skills.

The linking topics for Atwood and Munteanu are primarily the vision of the end of the Anthropocene and the new race replacing humans in their near extinction. “[...] Climate change-related adaptations appear stacked heavily for female and intersex humans. Males might go extinct with climate change.”⁶² With this citation, Munteanu anticipates the extinction of the males rather than the extinction of humans in general. The citation might also be understood as foreshadowing events happening later in the novel – the virgin births. “Water symbolizes purity and fertility.”⁶³ The offsprings of the virgin births are “mutant girls”⁶⁴ with electric blue skin, which might symbolise the sole importance of water, emphasised throughout the whole novel. These girls preserve the water on Earth that has been left, and since they might be perceived as natural creatures, they are biocentric. However, even before these offsprings became numerous, Lynna, in her diary, reminds readers of the importance of human consciousness toward nature – “We are more part of Nature than we admit.”⁶⁵ To realise this is to relinquish the idea of a hierarchical system in nature, which promotes human superiority over everything else. Paul Taylor supports the biocentric ideas of humans realising they are part of Nature in his book *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*:

The biocentric outlook precludes a hierarchical view of nature. To accept that outlook and view the living world in its terms is to commit oneself to the principle of species-impartiality. No bias in favor of some over others is acceptable. This impartiality applies to human species just

⁶¹ Muñoz-González, “Posthuman Cure, Biological and Cultural Motherhood in Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam*,” in *Transhumanism and Posthumanism in Twenty-First Century Narrative*, 197.

⁶² Munteanu, *A Diary in the Age of Water*, 98-99.

⁶³ Munteanu, *A Diary in the Age of Water*, 165.

⁶⁴ Munteanu, *A Diary in the Age of Water*, 290.

⁶⁵ Munteanu, *A Diary in the Age of Water*, 44.

as it does to nonhuman species. [...] All are then judged to be equally deserving of moral concern and consideration.⁶⁶

Both authors agree that this ignorance of humans being part of nature leads to their demise. Unlike Atwood, Munteanu does not see the creation of new humans in genetic engineering. As mentioned earlier, Munteanu suggests male extinction in the novel. Kyo, one of the virgin births' offspring, finds Lynna's diary in 125.5.2 AW – their present, which could mean 125 years, 5 months and 2 days after water since Lynna writes her diary during the Age of Water, which probably refers to the Anthropocene. In addition, Munteanu's story implies that human extinction was way more radical, with men probably completely extinct while a few women remained. However, the offspring of virgin births probably are those who mainly occupy the new world. This suggests that Munteanu may not have as much hope for human redemption as Atwood.

To conclude, this chapter is concerned with anthropocentric elements in Atwood's trilogy and Munteanu's novel. Both authors in their stories criticise the human tendencies of superiority over other creatures in nature, describing a sort of human arrogance and selfishness culminating in the Apocalyptic scenarios. Through the group called God's Gardeners, Atwood tries to suggest a more sustainable alternative to living within nature, essentially describing an idea close to biocentrism. Atwood's depiction of a form of extreme anthropocentrism is described through the actions of scientists, men in power, who scientifically modify nature and non-humans for their own benefit. On the other hand, Munteanu's novel shows a world in which water scarcity is the direct consequence of greedy men in power, showing that even without genetic engineering, an anthropocentric patriarchal society is perfectly able to lead itself to an ultimate downfall. Both novels can be seen as warnings against perceiving nature only as a resource rather than a living system with its intrinsic value, full of non-human entities also having their intrinsic value. Both novels also suggest an end of the geological epoch called the Anthropocene, which might be seen as the end of human civilisation as it is known, being replaced with a new race which will be conscious enough to be part of nature and not be blinded by their selfishness. Atwood, as proposed earlier, visions this replacement in genetic engineering, while Munteanu sees it as probably more natural – through virgin births. However, their vision is alike – the end of the Anthropocene epoch equals the end of humans, encouraging readers to imagine these alternative futures, where humans are

⁶⁶ Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, 45.

not seen as important for nature preservation. On the contrary, to live in balance, nature is forced to take action to prevent itself.

3. Representation of Ecofeminism in the novels

This chapter will focus on the way men and women are depicted in the novels and what might be the hidden symbolisms in their depiction of their behaviour towards nature.

Firstly, it is necessary to reintroduce the difference between anthropocentric dualism and androcentric dualism, which is connected to ecofeminism. As was already mentioned in the theoretical chapter, Garrard introduces the difference like this:

Deep ecology identifies the anthropocentric dualism humanity/nature as the ultimate source of anti-ecological beliefs and practices, but ecofeminism also blames the androcentric dualism man/woman. The first distinguishes humans from nature on the grounds of some alleged quality such as possession of an immortal soul or rationality, and then assumes that this distinction confers superiority upon humans. The second distinguishes men from women on the grounds of some alleged quality such as larger brain size, and then assumes that this distinction confers superiority upon men.⁶⁷

Both authors assign rationality to men, giving them power over nature, while emotions and intuition are assigned to women. Atwood and Munteanu use their female characters symbolically – the men in the novels treat women the same way they treat nature – exploiting, using, and neglecting.

She complained about the tight security at the HealthWyzer gates – the guards were ruder, they were suspicious of everyone, they liked to strip search people, women especially. [...] Jimmy's mother said that didn't change the fact that she felt like a prisoner.⁶⁸

From this excerpt from the book, it can be seen that Jimmy's mother felt oppressed in a way. She couldn't leave the Compound and had to do only what her husband told her to do.

Immediately from the beginning of the first novel, Atwood sets the connection and similarities of nature and women, for instance, in this excerpt from the first novel *Oryx and Crake*:

“Women, and what went on under their collars. Hotness and coldness, coming and going in the strange musky flowery variable-

⁶⁷ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 23.

⁶⁸ Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 53.

weather country inside their clothes – mysterious, important, uncontrollable.”⁶⁹

Throughout the story, the simile of women, like the weather/nature, occurs subtly or namely. These similes and the way women talk about nature make female characters the conscious ones. However, from men’s [scientists] perception, they are perceived as inferior and excluded, thinking that since scientists in *Compounds* are in power, they are entitled to dominate women the same way as they dominate, use and modify non-humans.

According to *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* by Val Plumwood:

Thus it is also exclusion from the mater category of reason which in liberation struggles provides and explains the conceptual links between different categories of domination, and links the domination of humans to the domination of nature. The category of nature is a field of multiple exclusion and control, not only of non-humans, but of various groups of humans and aspects of human life which are cast as nature. [...] partly formed from a necessity inherent in the dynamic and logic of domination between self and other, reason and nature. To be defined as ‘nature’ in this context is to be defined as passive, as non-agent and non-subject [...].⁷⁰

In the previous chapter, it was mentioned that the rise of rationalism during the period of the Enlightenment might have created a sense of superiority in humans over non-human entities. However, it is essential to say that according to the androcentric duality introduced by Garrard at the beginning of this chapter, this rationality was only assigned to men, essentially underestimating women’s consciousness and action-taking since men perceive them as they perceive nature – as passive. However, it is women who take action in all the novels, in Atwood’s story as well as in Munteanu’s story.

Women being conscious of their environment and seeing how men are oppressing and hurting nature as well as they oppress and hurt them is implied when Jimmy’s mother escapes from the Compound. Readers learn later in another novel from the trilogy that she joined the God’s Gardeners, although later she was killed by the Compound people because they did not want her to reveal what was happening in the Compound and how they manipulated natural order. In a note to Jimmy/Snowman, she writes: “*Dear Jimmy, [...], suffered with conscience long enough, [...] no longer participate in a lifestyle that is not only meaningless in itself [...]*”⁷¹ From this note left by Jimmy/Snowman’s mother

⁶⁹ Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 17.

⁷⁰ Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993), 4.

⁷¹ Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 61.

it is clear that she is one of the first conscious characters, as she herself writes about conscience being like curse to her. Actually, she is the first conscious female character readers meet until the next novel out of the trilogy, *The Year of the Flood*. She used to be a scientist, just like her husband. However, in opposition to her husband, she later starts to express her disapproval of genetic engineering and other modifications of nature scientists do since she sees it as immoral. As Martín writes in the article “Dystopia, Feminism and Phallogocentrism in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*,” “the first person to denounce bio-experiments as ‘immoral and sacrilegious’ is a woman.”⁷² For instance, after Jimmy/Snowman’s father comes one day with, as he puts it, great news of officially having human neocortex tissue growing in pigoon, Jimmy/Snowman’s mother does not express happiness, approval or enthusiasm. Her immediate reaction is, “You’re interfering with the building block of life. It’s immoral.”⁷³ At the beginning of the novel *Oryx and Crake*, it is even mentioned that Jimmy/Snowman’s mother wanted him to probably grow up with a similar, or in the best scenario, the same empathy towards nature as she has as Atwood writes: “She often tried to explain things to him; then she got discouraged.”⁷⁴ This empathy with nature, which Jimmy/Snowman’s mother certainly has, correlates with Buell’s claim about ecofeminism that

[a]n ecofeminist might claim that the analogy between “woman” and “nature” is inherent, or (increasingly) that it is historically contingent. One might assert, or might disclaim, that environmental ethics properly hinges on an “ethics of care,” which women are culturally if not also biologically constructed to undertake more readily than men.⁷⁵

This “ethics of care” might be interpreted differently or in various ways. Firstly, as women are being born as nurturers who take care of the family and are responsible for preparing food, that may support the narrative of women belonging to the kitchen, coming from misogynist ideas. As it is written in the article “Reconceptualising the Gendered Space of Kitchen,”

Kitchen [...] is the sacred space in a house that ensures growth and development of all its dwellers. It is the space where women of the house [...] ensure wellbeing of their family members. Yet this is the

⁷² Javier Martín, “Dystopia, Feminism and Phallogocentrism in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*,” *Open Cultural Studies* 3, no. 1 (2019): 177. <https://doi.org/10.1515/culture-2019-0015>

⁷³ Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 57.

⁷⁴ Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 21.

⁷⁵ Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, 20.

space that silences them, subjugates them and cuts them off from outside world.⁷⁶

This narrative obviously holds a negative connotation; however, in Atwood's trilogy, this helps to show the link between women and nature/environment and how women, being those who usually are in charge of food making, traditionally, at home, give them at least some power. This can be seen in the chapter "An Ecofeminist Treatment of Nourishment and Feeding in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy" of the book *Dystopian and Utopias on Earth and Beyond*, where Debra Wain claims that:

[...] *MaddAddam* trilogy highlights these impacts as they pertain to women's traditional domestic roles, which are aligned with ecofeminist principles relating to the ways that women and the environment are connected. Women's responsibility for food preparation is not only a means of oppression; food choices can also be linked to autonomy and power, resistance, and may even be seen as political acts. When women prepare food, they wield power over food choices.⁷⁷

There might be a connection between women having power over food and their survival after the pandemic found in the trilogy. In the first novel, *Oryx and Crake*, Jimmy/Snowman is helpless in the world after the pandemic, or some sort of Apocalypse. He cannot find almost any food source and only relies on one fish a week that the Crakers give him, the same way as he relied on his mother or, later, his stepmother to provide him with food. On the other hand, when the second novel, *The Year of the Flood*, introduces a female main character, Toby, there is a clear difference in this matter between her and Jimmy/Snowman. Toby can grow her own food in the garden despite complications due to the severe consequences of global warming.

Luckily, everything in the garden is doing well: the chickenpeas have begun to pod, the beananas are in flower, the polyberry bushes are covered with small brown nubbins of different shapes and sizes.⁷⁸

From this contrast between Jimmy/Snowman and Toby, it can be seen that even though women may have been seen as inferior before the detrimental pandemic, they are

⁷⁶ Dr. Mayurakshi Mitra, "Reconceptualising the Gendered Space of Kitchen: A Peep into Ambai's *A Kitchen in the Corner of the House* and Jeo Baby's *The Great Indian Kitchen*," *Journal of Software Engineering and Simulation* 8, no. 4 (2022): 5.

⁷⁷ Debra Wain, "An Ecofeminist Treatment of Nourishment and Feeding in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy," in *Dystopias and Utopias on Earth and Beyond: Feminist Ecocriticism of Science Fiction*, ed. Douglas A. Vakoch (New York: Routledge, 2021), 25.

⁷⁸ Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 16.

probably more prone to survival rather than men, showing the power women have thanks to their link to nature. Toby being able to grow her own food and Jimmy/Snowman being only alive thanks to one fish a week given by the Crakers implies one of a few connections between women and the environment.

Another example of the close connection between the same abuse and exploitation of nature and women, in the case of *MaddAddam* trilogy by male scientists, can be seen with a character named Oryx. Oryx is the sole embodiment of nature, to which men in the novel are cruel, abusive and exploitative. As written in the article “Feminism and Phallogocentrism in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*” by Martín

Oryx is a very different character. Sold as a child slave at a very young age, she was forced into prostitution and victimised in countless acts of cruelty and humiliation. [...] As she matured, men kept abusing her, but she was able to find a way to use these very same abuses as tools to escape her role as a subaltern [...].”⁷⁹

Oryx may be seen metaphorically as the embodiment of nature, not only in the sense of being abused and exploited, as seen in the citation from the article above. The difference in perception of her between the main male characters, Crake and Jimmy/Snowman, may be seen as symbolic, too. In the *Oryx and Crake*, it is written that “There was Crake’s story about her, and Jimmy’s story about her as well, a more romantic version; and then there was her own story about herself, which was different from both, and not very romantic at all.”⁸⁰ These perceptions of Oryx, who was also physically abused and exploited as a child, might also reflect the different perceptions of nature by different literary movements, for instance, Romantics being nostalgic, romanticising nature – “the sentimental and safe retrospect, the pleasing melancholy, the whitewashing of less loveable aspect of history, past and present alike.”⁸¹ On the other hand, one of the perspectives of realism and naturalism is “feeling that the lifecycle was far harsher than political rhetoric or literary sentimentalism admitted; [...]”⁸² Jimmy/Snowman sees Oryx idealistically, romanticises her, finds in her a sort of nostalgia, and tries to protect and

⁷⁹ Martín, “Dystopia, Feminism and Phallogocentrism in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*,” 179.

⁸⁰ Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 114.

⁸¹ Kevis Goodman, “Romantic poetry and the science of nostalgia,” in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romantic Poetry*, ed. James Chandler, and Maureen N. McLane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 195.

⁸² Louis J. Budd, “The American Background,” in *The Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism: From Howells to London*, ed. Donald Pizer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 23.

preserve her. However, Crake perceives her as something he can exploit, abuse, and use for his benefit, behaving rather rationally about her, trying not to involve any emotions, even though it is obvious from the novel that he is at least intrigued by her. Crake uses Oryx, for instance, as a salesperson for the BlyssPluss pill. She is told, as well as Jimmy is told, that the pill benefits humans, so she distributes the pill as far as she can get. That means Crake perceives Oryx only as a tool he may use in the same way he perceives and exploits nature. In addition, the first book from the trilogy *Oryx and Crake* also provides probably relatively hidden hints to readers that women are considered inferior to men.

One of these hints, which may be the most prominent for readers to notice the inequality between men and women, is the universities Crake and Jimmy/Snowman attended. Atwood's use of irony was mentioned already in a previous chapter; therefore, it is unsurprising that Atwood proceeded to use it when naming the universities.

Atwood's irony is far from obvious. And subtle is her naming of the universities Jimmy and Crake attend. Crake, a numbers guy, goes to top university, Watson Crick, whereas Jimmy, a words person, joins the low rate Martha Graham, respectively a male and a female name. Numbers equal profit; words equal problems. Such dystopic choices show once more Atwood's use of irony to expose cultural imbalances most of us may be blind to.⁸³

The irony in naming the universities is evident to readers acquainted with the concept of androcentrism. As mentioned earlier, Garrard writes about the dualism of men and women, assigning rationality to men and women being less rational, making them inferior.⁸⁴ Crake, as the one attending the top university, perceives Martha Graham University as impractical and useless since the study programmes are about literature and art in general, in which Crake does not see any utility or future.

The Martha Graham Academy was named after some gory old dance goddess of the twentieth century [...]. She represented life, or art, or something [...]. The Academy had been set up [...] as an Arts-and-Humanities college at some time in the last third of the twentieth century [...].⁸⁵

⁸³ Izabel F. O. Brandão, Ildney Cavalcanti, "Margaret Atwood's Ecodystopic SF: Approaching Ethics, Gender, and Ecology," in *Dystopias and Utopias on Earth and Beyond: Feminist Ecocriticism of Science Fiction*, ed. Douglas A. Vakoch (New York: Routledge, 2021), 42.

⁸⁴ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 23.

⁸⁵ Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 186.

This citation shows that another woman, or in this case, a female role model/mascot (as mentioned in the novel), is described as someone who represents life, which might be understood as the connection between women and nature – closely linked to the concept of Mother Nature. As written in the theoretical chapter of this thesis, in the book *Rape of the Wild*, since ecology can be seen as a house, which connects all the creatures, non-humans and humans, there is a need for balance, which would look after all of these entities equally.⁸⁶ In the book, Collard and Contrucci claim that

Good women have kept good houses on the model of Mother Nature for as long as there have been mothers. They have seen to it that their children were fed, clothed, sheltered and safe. They have kept the budget (eco/nomics) delicately balanced between extravagance and thrift, often at incredible cost to themselves. Starvation and squalor have occurred only under extreme patriarchal control of the production of the land and children. Even then, as under less stringent degrees of oppression, many women have weathered abuse just as many creatures of the earth, air and water have survived man-made cataclysm, with resilience and regeneration. Like weeds and pests that have become immune to chemical poisoning, they have kept their wildness, that is, their strength and insubordination to outside control by maintaining their ties to each other.⁸⁷

Women were traditionally always the nurturers, taking care of the family, being those who tried to keep their household together and maintained, sometimes even though they had to endure any sort of abuse from their husbands. As the citation above mentioned, the – incredible cost to themselves, again, the women from the trilogy, may be mentioned as an example of this. Jimmy/Snowman's mother is the first who had to endure being locked in the Compound, not being able to do anything there, only expressing her disagreement with the men's behaviour toward non-human entities, until she escaped the Compound eventually becoming an activist as was mentioned earlier in the chapter. However, it then cost her life. Same with Oryx, after freeing herself from the abusers who would sell her her whole childhood, she then ends up again in the vicinity of a man who only uses her as a mule for his destructive plans and in the end, it also costs her life. Concisely, men are seen as abusing their power and influence to drastically modify nature even though women are warning them about the detrimental consequences it may and eventually did have.

⁸⁶ Collard, Contrucci, *Rape of the Wild: Man's Violence against Animals and the Earth*, 137.

⁸⁷ Collard, Contrucci, *Rape of the Wild: Man's Violence against Animals and the Earth*, 137-138.

Men in high positions abusing their power are also seen in *A Diary in the Age of Water*. In this novel, Munteanu shamelessly names and calls out the cause of the Earth's climate problems, actual men in power – politicians such as Trump or Trudeau – and is not hiding behind the scientists like Atwood does in the trilogy. Many examples in the novel suggest that men in power are the ones mainly responsible for the water scarcity, in the case of this particular novel. “Trump, then president of the U.S., accused the Chinese of creating the concept of climate change to destroy America's competitive capacity.”⁸⁸ This is the first example of a man, in particular, being responsible for making a detrimental decision for the world in the novel. Women in this novel are, as well as in the trilogy by Atwood, the conscious characters; however, since women are perceived as inferior, no one takes their forewarnings seriously.

They didn't understand that *no one* owned the water; on the contrary, we were—like good hosts—responsible for taking care of that fifth of the planet's water while it was in Canada. [...], as Descartes proclaimed four hundred years before, we were destined with technology to become “lords and possessors of Nature.” [...] Great hubris comes from great ignorance, Una once said to me. “Mankind,” she said (and she meant the *men* of humanity), “will continue to flounder when he underestimates Nature and sees himself as separate from Her.” Man is having his way with Her now, Una said. But eventually She will have her way with him.⁸⁹

This citation from the novel is what Una, the mother of the main character Lynna, who writes the diary, tells her to present her prediction of what will probably happen if men will still behave indifferently towards nature. She proposes that men behave indifferently towards nature because they probably do not realise that they are not the owners of the planet. That is maybe exaggerated. However, from the citation above, it may be implied. But these selfish, rational ideas of men being the possessors of Nature come again from the period of Enlightenment and as also written in the citation above, particularly from Descartes, who wrote:

For by them I perceived it to be possible to arrive at knowledge highly useful in life; and in room of the speculative philosophy usually taught in the schools, to discover a practical, by means of which, knowing the force and action of fire, water, air, the stars, the heavens, and all the other bodies that surround us, as distinctly as we know the various crafts of our artisans, we might also apply them in the same way

⁸⁸ Munteanu, *A Diary in the Age of Water*, 23.

⁸⁹ Munteanu, *A Diary in the Age of Water*, 77.

to all the uses to which they are adapted, and thus render ourselves the lords and possessors of nature. And this is a result to be desired, not only in order to the invention of an infinity of arts, by which we might be enabled to enjoy without any trouble the fruits of the earth, and all its comforts [...].⁹⁰

This is what Una probably meant by ignorance, which will only continue to flaw the Earth until humans, particularly men, realise Nature's autonomy, independence and power. Descartes's claim only proves selfishness, writing about desired results for men, enjoying the fruits of the earth and other things. However, Una's claim in the novel that Nature will have her way with him turns out to be true at the end of the novel. Similarly to women, who stood up against male oppression and inequality, forming feminist activism and suffragettes, Nature will also run out of patience – this is a slight difference from Atwood's trilogy. In Atwood's trilogy, the main cause of the near human extinction was Crake creating the destructive pandemic; in *A Diary in the Age of Water*, the planet and the environment are destroyed progressively during the whole Anthropocene epoch, culminating in the destruction and near extinction in around twenty-sixty-six.

In contrast to Atwood's trilogy, the duality of androcentrism is probably more apparent in *A Diary in the Age of Novel* by Munteanu than the trilogy since Atwood is more subtle with her references, hints or suggestions and irony. On the other hand, Munteanu, in this novel, is rather direct, providing facts mixed with fiction. However, they both arrive at the same conclusion, which is the ultimate link between women and nature. Collard and Contrucci, in their book *Rape of the Wild*, explain this link like this:

Women's experience with oppression and abuse, as well as their experience of mothering, can make them more sensitive to the oppression and abuse of nature, as well as better situated to remedy it.⁹¹

As seen earlier in the citation from the novel above, Munteanu uses a feminine pronoun for nature and a masculine pronoun for the abuser, emphasising the argument presented by Collard and Contrucci. Again, here can be seen a slight difference in depiction between Atwood and Munteanu. Atwood does not expressively personify nature by talking about it with a female pronoun. However, Atwood probably uses one of her female characters, Oryx, as an embodiment of nature, being abused, exploited and mistreated, as discussed

⁹⁰ Rene Descartes, Benedict de Spinoza, Gottfried Wilhelm Von Leibniz, *The Rationalists* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 84.

⁹¹ Collard, Contrucci, *Rape of the Wild: Man's Violence against Animals and the Earth*, 138.

earlier in this chapter. The theoretical chapter has already discussed the link between women and nature. Similarly to Munteanu, who uses a feminine pronoun for nature, showing the inevitable link between women and nature, Susan Griffin, in her book *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*, demonstrates that this practice is not unusual.

As I go into her, she [nature] pierces my heart. [...] I have known her all my life, yet she reveals stories to me, and these stories are revelations and I am transformed. Each time I go to her I am born like this. [...] She is as delicate as I am; I know her sentience; I feel her pain and my own pain comes into me, and my own pain grows large [...] This earth is my sister; I love her daily grace, her silent daring, and how loved I am *how we admire this strength in each other, all that we have lost, all that we have suffered, all that we know: we are stunned by this beauty*, and I do not forget: what she is to me, what I am to her.⁹²

This feminisation of land/nature certainly is not a new concept. According to Annette Kolodny, referring to landscape with the female pronoun in early promotional writings encouraged settlers to conquer.⁹³ Again, this shows how men perceive themselves as more powerful and entitled to possess, probably anything, just because it has a female pronoun, which they perceive as weaker – probably that is implied by settlers being welcomed to conquer a land just because it was feminised. The novels demonstrate a similar cause, which is to show men who excuse their behaviour towards women and nature, whether because they are the ones who are in power or because they think they are entitled to do that, and women are the ones addressing and denouncing men's indifference to other natural entities. It seems like an ultimate fate, for women go almost completely unheard by men who only want to enjoy the fruits of the Earth they probably feel like they have a right to. At least, that is how men in the novels behave within nature and the environment.

Towards the end of the novel, Munteanu, or rather the main character Lynna, narrates the story of *The Giving Tree*, probably trying to send a message that would be understandable even to children – that is probably why she narrated it as a fairytale with a moral lesson, to convey a message as simply as possible.

The Giving Tree eventually ends up a stump. This is because the tree faithfully gives limb by limb to a disrespectful self-serving boy who

⁹² Susan Griffin, *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1978), 219.

⁹³ Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 4.

evolves into a disrespectful self-serving man. The boy-man never sees the tree as more than something he can use for himself. Such a deliberate view permits him to rape and mutilate this magnificent and beautiful tree with impunity and absolutely no regret. This represents the current relationship of virtually all cultures with Nature: one of dominance and disrespect. [...] Our inability—our unwillingness—to participate respectfully with our “giving tree” is at the root of our amnesia. How can we expect our children to understand or appreciate our despair over the diminishing quality of our fresh air when we smoke in front of them?⁹⁴

Here, Munteanu is less direct; however, the metaphor of the Giving Tree being abused and used by the “boy-man” is still relatively straightforward. To avoid being solely anti-men, since, as written in the theoretical chapter, there are writers who refuse the division of women being linked to nature and men not, the author also suggests a little further in the book that we all, as human beings, are “the selfish, ungrateful boy” because no one or at least the majority of the population, did not do enough for nature, in consequence accepting our extinction. The last sentence in the citation above does not, for instance, expressively refer to men; nevertheless, it refers to a never-ending cycle of humanity destroying the Earth. Nonetheless, as well as in the Atwood’s trilogy, the novel shows that men are ostracised and responsible for environmental harm, specifically those in power. “When will men with power stop all this treachery? When will we learn to live together with one another and with the Earth in respect?”⁹⁵ This seems almost like a rhetorical question because Atwood’s novel does not suggest a similar ending to Atwood’s story in the trilogy. Atwood, in the end, writes about the co-existence of artificial Crakers with human survivors, breeding and creating new populations together, possibly reshaping the world and also maybe living in a new geological epoch – maybe even the Symbiocene, presented by Albrecht, discussed in the theoretical chapter. On the other hand, Munteanu’s ending does not seem as positive in the end. The life of the new virgin offspring mutants seems balanced and content. However, it is implied from not mentioning any men in the after-apocalyptic world that even though they have been in power, in the end, as the abusers, they essentially went extinct. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the *MaddAddam* trilogy and *A Diary in the Age of Water* escalate into an Apocalyptic scenario, suggesting that both authors probably do not see any scenario in which humans will learn to live together with each other (meaning without any genetically engineered

⁹⁴ Munteanu, *A Diary in the Age of Water*, 209-210.

⁹⁵ Munteanu, *A Diary in the Age of Water*, 280.

or any other different human species) and the Earth in balance, living long enough to see Albrecht's vision of the Symbiocene, mentioned in the theoretical chapter – possibly Atwood's story might be opened to Symbiocene in some way. However, that is only implied from the story and is not at all explicitly written by the author herself.

In fact, in the case of *A Diary in the Age of Water*, it is heavily implied that the only humans who remained on the planet are women – together with the new biocentric species mentioned in the previous chapter. The first note that women are the only ones who are still occupying the planet is at the beginning of the novel: “eliminating humanity from the planet; [...] until only a handful of females remained.”⁹⁶ It can be argued that there was an intention to eliminate the whole of humanity; however, Munteanu writing specifically that women remained is probably not by circumstance. The idea of men's extinction, even though them being the ones in power, thanks to patriarchal society, is even strengthened throughout the novel. “Males might go extinct with climate change.”⁹⁷ Then, she talks about possible female virgin births, which were discussed already in the previous chapter, creating only females or intersex offspring. This is a slight difference between Atwood's and Munteanu's vision of remaining humans since, in Atwood's trilogy, even a few men survived the Apocalypse, probably suggesting that there is a possibility for redemption in “the new world.”

To conclude this chapter, which explored the ecofeminist elements in Atwood's and Munteanu's novels, it is obvious that both authors write in a way that significantly points out the connection between environmental degradation and female oppression. Since both are females, even though it is not a rule, it probably helps to write in an empathic way about women being perceived as inferior and their opinions irrelevant, exploited characters by men in power who behave the same way towards nature – feeling entitled, exploitative, abusive, cruel and mistreating the essential symbol of life – Mother Nature. One of the main ideas, connecting the works by both authors is that women have been traditionally the nurturers and caretakers, and so they are more likely to understand and appreciate environmental preservation since Nature is also, through the concept of Mother Nature – the caretaker and nurturer, being responsible for not only humans but all the environmental participants. Even though women, due to the androcentric concept, are

⁹⁶ Munteanu, *A Diary in the Age of Water*, 8.

⁹⁷ Munteanu, *A Diary in the Age of Water*, 99.

deprived of the ability of reason, female characters are usually the ones who are conscious and, through their inherent connection to nature, also probably owing to the similar or even the same oppression they faced and have been facing for centuries also from men and are able to call out and warn readers against the mistreating behaviour of men. However, their warnings are ignored by the patriarchal society leading – in all the novels – to detrimental and destructive consequences. The future visions for humans probably differ slightly, Atwood probably being the one who sees at least a slightly positive chance for rebuilding and redemption, Munteanu being more radical, suggesting the probable all-men extinction, leaving the after-apocalyptic world filled only with a few remaining women and female and intersex mutant virgin birth offspring. In addition, Atwood, in her trilogy, predominantly uses more hidden symbolisms, irony and metaphors, requiring readers to infer the more profound implications. In contrast, Munteanu is more direct in her novel, occasionally mixing facts with fiction but remaining quite straightforward, which may help make the novel more transparent and accessible to readers.

Conclusion

This bachelor thesis explores the human position in nature through concepts of predominantly anthropocentrism and ecofeminism in two analytical chapters, each focusing on one of these concepts. Simultaneously, the concepts of biocentrism and androcentrism are discussed in these chapters. The theoretical chapter provides definitions of these concepts with the intention of making the analytical chapter understandable. The primary purpose of this thesis is to highlight the similarities and differences between ecocritical dystopic scenarios in the selected novels. These selected works, *MaddAddam* trilogy, consisting of three novels – *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood* and *MaddAddam* – by Margaret Atwood and *A Diary in the Age of Water* by Nina Munteanu, effectively highlight humanity's role in environmental degradation.

While Atwood envisions a world where scientific intervention is the primary cause of the destruction of the world, ending with an event resembling the Apocalypse, Munteanu's novel presents a future where human actions, predominantly destructive actions of men in power, have led to an irreversible environmental catastrophe, resulting in a natural and inevitable reshaping of the world. This reshaping of the world is something both authors might seem to agree on through their narration in the novels. Both authors also set the stories of their novels in the same geological epoch – the Anthropocene – questioning human superiority and the consequences of a hierarchical worldview that prioritises human need over the balance in nature.

One of the main themes in both works, explored in the first analytical chapter, is the concept of anthropocentrism, through which both authors describe characters who abuse nature for human benefit, often without thinking of the long-term consequences and sustainability. However, there can be differences in the depiction of narratives by both authors. Atwood's depiction of the scientists in the *MaddAddam* trilogy shows a form of human arrogance as they manipulate genetic material and create artificial species for human satisfaction, eventually leading to an apocalyptic collapse in the form of a global pandemic. The post-apocalyptic world, as Atwood envisions it, is still open to reconstruction and redemption, as the genetically engineered Crakers may represent a new, non-destructive way of life. Contrastingly, in her novel, Munteanu openly critiques politics and governance that prioritise human needs – creating a sense of human exceptionalism – over environmental responsibility, ending in severe water scarcity and climate catastrophe. Unlike Atwood, Munteanu does not explicitly write whether there is

any hope for redemption for humanity – implying that humanity, or in her vision, most to all men, is doomed to extinction. At the same time, nature reclaims its dominance and independence from any human intervention.

In all the novels, there might be found even elements of biocentrism, suggesting different ways of coexisting with nature. In one of the novels from Atwood's trilogy, *The Year of the Flood*, Atwood presents a group called the God's Gardeners, who seek a balance between human existence and the environment, warning before the "The Waterless Flood." They do not denounce humans. However, they advocate for a more ethical and sustainable way of living within society. In contrast, Munteanu's vision might seem more radical, suggesting that balance can only be possible if humanity goes extinct or, rather, men, in particular, go extinct. In *A Diary in the Age of Water*, among a few remaining women, there are their virgin birth offspring, who are born as modified close to nature's biocentric creatures, taking care of the remaining water – symbolising nature's reclamation of power. It may be implied that human presence is neither necessary nor beneficial for stability in nature.

Another crucial theme discussed in the second analytical chapter of this paper is the connection between environmental issues and gender dynamics through ecofeminism. Both female writers, Atwood and Munteanu, write parallels between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature, implying that patriarchal structures are responsible for both forms of oppression. Again, however, the way they present this theme differs slightly. Atwood's female characters are used in her trilogy as a metaphor for nature, being controlled but also being the ones who empathise with nature and try to warn others why it is wrong to meddle with the natural order. Also, one of the women surviving characters, Toby, is one of the few survivors who actively shape the post-apocalyptic world. Contrastingly, Munteanu in *A Diary in the Age of Water* depicts the extinction of men and the remaining women, together with the new species born out of virgin births, the offspring being females or intersex, aligning with nature. Similarly, survivors in all the novels try to rebuild or reshape the world with all the resources they have left without attempting to control nature again. It could probably be said that Atwood's ecofeminist perspective is more forgiving to men than Munteanu's since, in Atwood's story, there are also male survivors among Crakers and female survivors. However, in Munteanu's novel, no male survivors were mentioned, so the implication may be that for ecological survival, it was inevitable to eliminate men. The apocalyptic scenarios presented in these novels

might function as a call to action. In addition, the described futures by both authors emphasise the necessity of rethinking the human relationship with non-humans and the environment in general, but they suggest a very different path to balance.

In conclusion, while both *MaddAddam* and *A Diary in the Age of Water* provide profound insights into contemporary environmental crises, there are slight differences in their visions of the future of human civilisation and the natural environment. Atwood's speculative fiction leaves room for adaptation and evolution by describing how human survivors learn to live and try to reshape the world along with Crakers, while Munteanu's narrative serves more as a clear warning that the consequences of human recklessness may leave no possibility for survival. As climate change, global warming, and resource decrease continue to threaten the planet, these novels challenge readers and spark environmental discussions, which people probably wouldn't even consider. This contrast between the two narratives may add to the broader literary debate about whether humans and their position within nature is fated or if humans are doomed by their own destructive tendencies.

Resumé

Tato práce se věnuje environmentálními koncepty v současné kanadské dystopické literatuře. Vybranými romány pro analýzu, které je možno nalézt v této bakalářské práci jsou – *MaddAddam* trilogie od Margaret Atwood, která se skládá z románů *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood* a *MaddAddam*, která je dále v analýze porovnávána s dílem od Niny Munteanu *A Diary in the Age of Water*. Klíčovými teoretickými koncepty práce jsou ekokritika, antropocentrismus, ekofeminismus, androcentrismus a biocentrismus, které slouží jako rámec pro analytickou interpretaci těchto dystopických ekokritických literárních děl. Práce se snaží porozumět tomu, jak autorky přistupují k environmentálním otázkám současné společnosti, roli člověka v přírodě a spojitosti mezi patriarchátem a ničením přírody, a mezi ženami a přírodou.

V první kapitole jsou představeny klíčové teoretické koncepty – ekokritika, antropocentrismus, ekofeminismus, androcentrismus, biocentrismus – z důvodu, aby následující analytické kapitoly byly pochopitelné. Nejprve je definována ekokritika jako hlavní termín, pod který spadají ostatní souviselé koncepty. Zaměřuje se na způsoby, jak literární texty odrážejí otázky přírodního prostředí, ekologické problémy a vztah člověka k životnímu prostředí. Hlavním konceptem, kterému je věnována celá jedna analytická kapitola je antropocentrismus, tedy percepce člověka jako středobod přírody, který je nad všemi ostatními přírodními entitami. Dává mu dominantní roli, kterou bez výčitek využívá. Dále je část věnována ekofeminismu, na kterém je založena druhá analytická kapitola, který je založen na nerovnosti mezi muži a ženami a zároveň společnými elementy mezi ženami a přírodou a ukazuje souvislost mezi vykořisťováním přírody a útlakem žen v patriarchální společnosti. Androcentrismus je koncept, jehož cíl je poukázat na kontrast mezi dominantními, racionálními muži a pasivními, emocionálními ženami.

Analytická část se dělí na dvě hlavní kapitoly, které se každá věnují jednotlivým konceptům a jak se odrážejí ve vybraných románech. V první analytické kapitole, věnované antropocentrickým prvkům je pozornost zaměřena na právě tyto prvky a jak jsou popsány v románech. Margaret Atwood není žádným nováčkem ve psaní dystopických románů, tudíž její trilogie velmi realisticky a pro čtenáře občas i velmi děsivě vykresluje svět, kde vědecké manipulace s přírodou vedou k ekologické katastrofě, pandemii a téměř i k vyhynutí lidstva. Hlavní antagonistická postava, Crake, působí jako zobrazení antropocentrismus a až nebezpečně převládající racionality, která

ignoruje etické a morální důsledky. Munteanu se naopak soustředí na to, jak lidské bezohledné chování k přírodě může dospět k, zde například převážně vodní krizi, a nakonec až k ekologickému kolapsu – stejně jako v příběhu od Margaret Atwood. V této kapitole je také nastíněno, jak například právě Atwood, ještě před samotnou apokalyptickou událostí, ukazuje určitou alternativu k antropocentrismu, v podobě skupiny „God’s Gardeners“, která představuje koncept biocentrismu.

Druhá analytická kapitola se věnuje ekofeminismu, tedy vyobrazením žen v těchto textech – jak jsou vnímány v souvislosti s přírodou. Ve všech vybraných dílech jsou ženské postavy těmi, kdo si uvědomují hrozbu přírodní destrukce, zatímco muži, zejména ti ve vedoucích pozicích, protože přeci jen to jsou ti, kteří konají tato destruktivní rozhodnutí, jsou často zodpovědní právě za ničení přírody, ke které se chovají převážně lhostejně. Margaret Atwood používá postavu Oryx jako vyobrazení přírody skrze ženu, ke které se muži chovají naprosto lhostejně, autoritářsky, krutě a násilnicky, pouze aby z ní vytěžili své vlastní potěšení, nemyslí na následky, které to na ní může zanechat. Munteanu ve svém vyprávění používá ženská zájmena, když mluví o přírodě, naznačující určitou spojitost a blízkost mezi ženami a přírodou, zatímco o mužích právě mluví jako o někom, kdo ji [přírodu] pouze využívají a ničí bez toho, aniž by se zamysleli nad jejích uchováním. Ve všech románech se autorky shledávají v tom, že muže pravděpodobně oslepuje pouze krátkodobá vize, kdy chtějí co nejdříve dosáhnout zmíněného potěšení či čehokoliv, co se dá vytěžit z vykořisťování přírody. Ženy, naopak, jako postavy, které si uvědomují rozdíl mezi dobrým a špatným, si též uvědomují, jak tyto krátkodobé touhy ovlivňují přírodu dlouhodobě, a k jakým následkům můžou mířit. Ženy také mohou vnímat určitou spojitost s konceptem Matky Přírody, díky tomu, že ženy byli od nepaměti ty, které pečovali o svou domácnost, rodinu a nastolovali určitý balanc, kdy ale museli vždy něco obětovat, minimálně kousek své svobody, což je naznačeno ve vybraných románech. V případě Matky Přírody jde v podstatě o něco podobného, kdy pečuje o veškeré entity, které jsou součástí přírodního prostředí, bohužel toho musela také spoustu obětovat, aby chamtivý lidé (v rámci ekokritiky – muži) uspokojili své potřeby.

Otázky přírodního prostředí, a hlavně jeho zachování se objevují v dnešní době snad více než kdykoli předtím, a možná i proto se začínají odrážet i v literatuře. Tudíž i tyto romány, které přispívají do debaty jsou klíčovými díly současnosti, co se týče ekokritiky, jako stále poměrně nové metodologie, která ale neméně pomáhá analyzovat, jak umělecká tvorba ovlivňuje lidské chápání ekologických problémů a jak může

inspirovat ke změně myšlení a jednání, co se lidské lhostejnosti k přírodě týče, přispívat k důležitým otázkám o ochraně přírody a udržitelnosti.

V závěru práce je diskutováno, jak obě autorky prostřednictvím fiktivních románů kritizují současnou společnost založenou na antropocentrismu a patriarchální společnosti, která pouze přispívá k environmentálním krizím. Porovnává, kde se autorky tematicky překrývají a kde dochází k určitým odlišnostem v jejich vizi budoucnosti. Zatímco u trilogie u Margaret Atwood je možné vidět alespoň malou možnost určitého smíření mezi lidmi a nově společně s novými geneticky vytvořenými „lidmi“ s přírodou, v románu Niny Munteanu není podobně naznačena podobná možnost, a spíše zobrazuje nevyhnutelnou ekologickou katastrofu vedoucí ke změnám v lidské populaci – konkrétně pravděpodobně vyhnutí mužů, které zanechá na planetě – alespoň na té, co po ni zbylo, pouze ženy a nově ženské a intersex mutanty narozené z takzvaných panenských zrození. Všechny tato díla, ať už *MaddAddam* trilogii od Margaret Atwood či *A Diary in the Age of Water* od Niny Munteanu, lze považovat za varování před neudržitelným způsobem lidského chování k přírodě a souběžně jako výzvu k akci – výzvu k přehodnocení vztahu mezi člověkem a přírodou – místo člověka v přírodě jako takové. Opravdu je člověk nadřazený všemu ostatnímu v přírodě nebo je to pouze výmluva pro jeho lhostejné chování? I díky těmto dílům je toto něco, nad čím se lidé mohou zamýšlet, a i tato díla sama o sobě přispívají k environmentální diskusi, která v současné době je aktuální.

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