

Pastoral as an Antithesis of Apocalypse in Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*

Dr.Hardevkaur.AmaniAkramYahya

UPM,Serdang,Selangor,Malaysia

Harevkaur@upm.edu.my

Amani.akram@duc.edu.iq

Abstract

This article examines Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*(2009) in the light of eco-criticism. The study focuses on apocalypse and pastoral depicted in the novel. On the one hand, the novel parades severe scenes of apocalyptic visions concerning the demise of environmental nature. On the other hand, it deals the pastoral landscapes representing the pure serenity of nature. Accordingly, there is a discrepant relationship between apocalypse and pastoral environmental categories in the course of the plot. Therefore, the study tackles Atwood's futuristic conceptualization of apocalypse which threatens the ideal nature and the possibility of avoiding it through pastoral. That is, pastoral aspects represent the optimal natural topography; while imminent apocalypse endangers its unique continuation. In this case, the study attempts to explore pastoral as a remedy for looming environmental calamity. The concept of pastoral will be used as an antithesis of apocalypse in order to identify Atwood's dissatisfaction with contemporary negative practices against environmental nature. By analyzing the contradiction between pastoral and apocalypse, I argue that regulatory ecological frameworks may exacerbate environmental awareness concerns by incentivizing readers and scholars to prioritize justification for their understanding the novel and avoiding misconception of nature through meaningfully engaging with natural circumferences. This finding leads me to call for more engagement with serious orientation toward community-led processes as a corrective to current non-regulatory systems regarding the decline of nature. Thus, this article expands on extant work in environmental communication by more thoroughly investigating the flaws in extant regulatory ecological frameworks and calling for a perspectival shift in environmental enlightenment.

Key Words: Apocalypse, Atwood, Eco-criticism, Environment, Nature, Pastoral

1. Introduction

Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* recounts the episodes of Oryx and Crake. They are perceived from a lower class position, pleeblands. The pleeblands are often referred to as "God's gardeners" in the plot. They hold the responsibility of protecting all God's animals and natural environment, including, plants, trees and the like. They expect and predict a natural catastrophe. Such catastrophe is described as "waterless flood" in the course of the events. This is the apocalyptic aspect of the novel, whereby future events are predicted by these lower class creatures since they are so devout to save God's environment and animals. As the plot goes on, pleeblands are known as "Gardeners" for the readers. Accordingly, they foresee "waterless flood" which will induce massive catastrophe that might change the Earth.

Ren and Toby are the plot's two main characters. Eachone tells a story, yet their stories intertwine at several narrative points. Their stories also intersect with some animal-like characters, such as Oryx and Crake. The bulk of the plot is narrated from flashback perspective that depends on events from Atwood's previous novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003). This is because the two characters survive a destructive disaster described in that novel. In the course of the plot, they talk about horrible sequences and scenes of a disaster which they truly experienced. For this reason, they decide to spend the rest of their lives in "God's gardeners"; which is a religious connotation of their fictional characterization in the novel.

Toby is presented as a young woman. She loses her family. She blames the official corporations for losing her family. By time, she is obliged to work at a burger shop. Being so, she becomes a victim of the notorious Blanco, but she is saved by the good Adam One who takes her to a rooftop sanctuary garden where she meets Ren as a member of the gardeners. Ren becomes a trapeze dancer. When a disease breaks out, he is locked in bio-containment quarantine unit in order not to spread contagious infection. Toby, likely, is blocked in a luxury spa which had been her safe work place of Blanco and his gangs who used to raid and terrorize people.

The purpose of this paper is to examine Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* through applying eco-criticism. The study will focus on two inextricable conceptual perspectives. First, it will apply the concept of apocalypse for the sake of interpreting the disastrous events in the novel. Such events threaten the existence of human beings on Earth. Second, the concept of pastoral will be applied to discuss the environmental scenes in the novel. These scenes are the characters' safe refuge from disasters. The novel's pastoral scenes provide wild implications of the setting to which the characters dedicate themselves. In doing so, they protect their dwelling places and avoid being victims of natural catastrophes. In this sense, they develop a sense of belonging to the surrounding environmental milieu. As such, the application of the concepts of apocalypse and pastoral reinforces the study's attempt to explore the lurking threat of nature and its possible avoidance through pastoral.

2. Literature Review

Atwood *The Year of the Flood* has been discussed in the light of number of critical frameworks. In *An Analysis of the Characters Crake and Jimmy/Snowman in Margaret Atwood's Dystopian Novel Oryx and Crake*, Joosep Jussi (2018) applies reader-response theory to explore Atwood's utilization of the characters' names as stylistic metonym of dystopian negligence of the environment. Jussi (2018) assert Atwood's meticulous choice of the names since they exemplify the very notion of dystopia and its pertinent influence on the lives of human beings. In doing so, characters, like Oryx and Carke, embody the live impulse of nature. They are authentic manifestation of vivid animal-like characters conveying the sense of anthropomorphism i.e., they hold human traits though they belong to animal milieu. Ren and Toby, who are major characters, impersonate denotative homonymy of the "Wren" and "Topi" creatures. These names are textual-based connotation of the vibrant symbiosis of living beings, including humans, in one environment.

Mahinur Uygur (2014) studies the binary opposition between utopia and dystopia in Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*. In "Utopia and Dystopia Intertwined: The Problem of Ecology in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood* and *MaddAddam*," Uygur (2014) argues that the novel dialectical depiction of desired utopia and its eradication by dystopian ecology. Uygur (2014) ascribes the inevitable appearance of ecological dystopia to humans' excessive augmentation of "modern mechanization of nature" (p.41). In other words, ecological disasters must be overcome by developing sufficient awareness of nature through literature and science. As such, the aim of gaining environmental utopia would be devastated at the expense of dystopian harness of nature for humanity's diverse purposes, such as deformation, urban expansion, desertification and overgrazing and so forth. These are lurking factors that might lead to impending dystopian nature where humans could no longer exist.

Mira Muurinen (2016), In *Depictions of Corporatocratic Dystopia*, analyzes the economic boom in recent decades that led to the environmental dystopia in Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*. Muurinen (2016) focuses on several factors that resulted in the deterioration of the natural environment. Economic completions among investing corporations is one of the most influential causes which distorted the ideal stereotype of environment. Muurinen (2016) claims that the spread of economic corporations on environmental lands belittled the ability of environmental nature provide human life with ample satisfaction with, for example, good health and reduction of harmful pollution. In this sense, Muurinen (2016) explores the novel as satire of economic exploitation of environmental nature for subjective interests. Thus, Muurinen (2016) concludes that economic "corporations renew and uphold their power by maintaining excessive consumerism" of the environment; which reduced the organic efficiency of nature and its benefit to people (p.1).

3. Apocalypse: Disastrous Insights

In *The Year of the Flood*, the apocalypse vision is represented in the disordered natural elements; such as the sun rise: "The sun brightens in the east, reddening the blue-grey haze that marks the distant ocean" (p.2). It also includes the depiction of birds, like vultures, which suffer from extinctions: "The vultures roosting on hydro poles fan out their wings to dry them, opening themselves like black umbrellas. One and then another lifts off on the thermals and spirals upwards. If they plummet suddenly, it means they've spotted carrion. *Vultures are our friends*, the Gardeners used to teach. *They purify the earth. They are God's necessary dark Angels of bodily dissolution. Imagine how terrible it would be if there were no death!*" (p.1). In addition, the birds are "Most likely the Corps wouldn't bother tracing her. There was nothing in it for them: one of the Corporation banks would get the house anyway" (p.6). Furthermore, "If her [a young woman] disappearance was of interest to anyone, such as maybe her college — where was she, was she ill, had she been in an accident — the Corps would spread it about that she'd been last seen with a cruising pimp on the lookout for fresh recruits, which is what you'd expect in the case of a young woman like her — a young woman in desperate financial straits, with no visible relations and no nest egg or trust fund or

fallback. People would shake their heads — a shame but what could you do, and at least she had something of marketable value, namely her young ass, and therefore she wouldn't starve to death, and nobody had to feel guilty" (p.6). For example, "the CorpSeCorps always substituted rumour for action, if action would cost them anything. They believed in the bottom line" (p.6). In fact, the apocalyptic visions are exemplified in natural scenes in literary works (Garrard, 2004).

The apocalyptic insights are also the spoiled water (Altizer,1985).This is evident in the novel: "The shelter was a football stadium with tents in it. There was a lot of trading going on: people would do anything for twenty dollars, Amanda said. Then her mother got sick from the drinking water, but Amanda didn't because she traded for sodas. And there was no medicine, so her mother died" (p.17). This makes people afraid of death: "A lot of people shat to death," said Amanda. "You should have smelled that place" (p.17). Furthermore, "On this day we mourn, but we also rejoice. We mourn the deaths of all those Creatures of the land that were destroyed in the First Flood of extinctions — whenever those occurred — but we rejoice that the Fishes and Whales, and the Corals, and the Sea Turtles and the Dolphins, and the Sea Urchins, yea, also the Sharks — we rejoice that they were spared, unless a change in ocean temperature and salinity caused by the great downpour of fresh waters did harm to some Species unknown to us" (p.38). Here dolphins, whales, and fish exemplify the animalistic elements of nature. The threat of their lives is the threat of human beings' lives. This is because the threat of nature means the threat of animals (Garrard, 2004).

Additionally, the serpent is an exemplification of an apocalyptic element in the novel, which adds further implied insights about the notion of the end of the world in an apocalyptic way: "The Serpent is a highly charged symbol throughout the Human Words of God (Collins,2015), though its guises are varied. Additionally, it symbolizes apocalypse in fiction (Garrard,2004). Sometimes it is shown as an evil enemy of Humankind — perhaps because, when our Primate ancestors slept in trees, the Constrictors were among their few nocturnal predators. And for these ancestors — shoeless as they were — to step on a Viper meant certain death. Yet the Serpent is also equated with Leviathan, that great water-beast God made to humble Mankind, and also named to Job as an awe inspiring example of His Inventiveness" (p.57). The serpent is also an incarnation of the natural elements in the novel (Goldman,2005). The celebrations on Saint Terry's Day is another embodiment of apocalyptic visions: "Saint Terry's Day is dedicated to all Wayfarers — prime among them Saint Terry Fox, who ran so far with one mortal and one metallic leg; who set a shining example of courage in the face of overwhelming odds; who showed what the human body can do in the way of locomotion without fossil fuels; who raced against Mortality, and in the end outran his own Death, and lives on in Memory" (p.123). Here, "On this day we remember, too, Saint Sojourner Truth, guide of escaping slaves two centuries ago, who walked so many miles with only the stars to guide her; and Saints Shackleton and Crozier, of Antarctic and Arctic fame; and Saint Laurence "Titus" Oates of the Scott Expedition, who hiked where no man had ever hiked before, and who sacrificed himself during a blizzard for the welfare of his companions. Let his immortal last words be an inspiration to us on our

journey: “I am just going outside and may be some time” (p.123). Moreover, the Saints of this day are all Wayfarers. They knew so well that it is better to journey than to arrive, as long as we journey in firm faith and for selfless ends. Let us hold that thought in our hearts, my Friends and fellow Voyagers” (p.199). Here, some characters celebrate to maintain their reverence to nature (Cherry,1992).

The celebration, which is accompanied by celebrating natural elements (Cherry, 1992), is relevant to the interpretations of the apocalyptic meanings of the novel: “For the new moon is rising, signalling the beginning of Saint Julian and All Souls. All Souls is not restricted to Human Souls: among us, it encompasses the Souls of all the living Creatures that have passed through Life, and have undergone the Great Transformation, and have entered that state sometimes called Death, but more rightly known as Renewed Life. For in this our World, and in the eye of God, not a single atom that has ever existed is truly lost” (p.203). The deterioration of natural settings is the indication of apocalypse (Garrard,2004).

The enjoyment of the God’s Creature is the embodiment of enhancing apocalyptic (Cherry, 1992) meanings in the novel: “But let our going out be brave and joyous! Let us end with a prayer for All Souls. Among these are the Souls of those who have persecuted us; those who have murdered God’s Creatures, and extinguished His Species; those who have tortured in the name of Law; who have worshipped nothing but riches; and who, to gain wealth and worldly power, have inflicted pain and death” (p.206). These creatures and species are going to be explained in terms of pastoral elements. Accordingly, the loss of nature leads to the loss of its components as an apocalyptic phenomenon (Garrard,2004).

The apocalyptic phenomenon is the natural elements in fictional works (Garrard, 2004). It is the natural features of land s and geographical components in fiction. They mainly involve environmental elements; such as trees in *The Year of the Flood*: “As the first heat hits, mist rises from among the swath of trees between her and the derelict city. The air smells faintly of burning, a smell of caramel and tar and rancid barbecues, and the ashy but greasy smell of a garbage-dump fire after it’s been raining. The abandoned towers in the distance are like the coral of an ancient reef — bleached and colourless, devoid of life” (p.1). In the course of the novel, some people take care of such trees in order to maintain their love to nature. Trees are the works of gardeners in the novel: “Or the voices of the Gardeners, murmuring or singing; or the children laughing together, up on the Edencliff Garden. Adam One, and Nuala, and Burt. Old Pilar, surrounded by her bees. And Zeb. If any one of them is still alive, it must be Zeb: any day now he’ll come walking along the roadway or appear from among the trees” (p.3). The gardeners are the human agents which keep nature safe of deteriorating (Garrard, 2004).

The landscape features are also a depiction of apocalyptic elements in the novel. In ecocriticism, landscapes are considered natural elements representing the environmental sides of literary works. The literary secularities of the fictional landscapes are primarily attributed to the authorial concern with the significance of nature to human beings. Additionally, they

are the natural descriptions made by the author to convey a certain message about the environment (Borlik,2011). In *The Year of The Flood*, Atwood carries out the landscapes features in the natural elements in the countryside: “They’d been living in the semi-country, before the sprawl had rolled over that stretch of landscape. Their white frame house had ten acres of trees around it, and there were squirrels, and the first green rabbits. No rakunks, those hadn’t been put together yet” (p.6). They also encompass animals; as in *The Year of the Flood*: “There were a lot of deer; they’d get into her mother’s vegetable garden. Toby had shot a couple, and helped to dress them; she can still remember the smell, and the slither of shining viscera. They’d eaten deer stew, and her mother had made soup with the bones. But mostly Toby and her father shot tin cans, and rats at the dump — there’d still been a dump. She’d practised a lot, which had pleased her dad” (p.6). The negligence of nature is a negative omen of nature (Garrard, 2004).

Furthermore, trees and woodlands are the physical embodiment of the natural elements of apocalyptic environment. These elements are tackled in *The Year of the Flood*: “In the afternoon she takes a nap. An old moon draws the past, said Pilar: whatever arrives from the shadows you must greet as a blessing. And the past does come back to her: the white frame house of her childhood, the ordinary trees, the woodland in the background, tinged with blue as if there’s haze” (p.132). Additionally, some animals; like deers, incarnate the sense of pastoral elements in the novel: “A deer is outlined against it, standing rigid as a lawn ornament, ears pricked. Her father’s digging with a shovel, over by the pile of picket fencing; her mother’s a momentary glimpse at the kitchen window. Perhaps she’s making soup. Everything tranquil, as if it would never end. But where is Toby in this picture? For it is a picture. It’s flat, like a picture on a wall. She’s not there” (pp.132-33). Together, the disregard of woods and gardens symbolizes the natural apocalypse (Garrard,2004).

The gardens on the Saint Terry’s Day are another element of apocalypse: “How long it has been since our last Saint Terry’s Day on our beloved Edencliff Rooftop Garden! We did not realize then how much better those times were, compared with the dark days we are living through now. Then, we enjoyed the prospect from our peaceful Garden, and though that prospect was one of slums and crime, yet we viewed it from a space of restoration and renewal, flourishing with innocent Plants and industrious Bees” (p.209). Furthermore, there are some methods taken to keep such gardens: “We raised our voices in song, sure that we would prevail, for our aims were worthy and our methods without malice. So we believed, in our innocence. Many woeful things have happened since, but the Spirit that moved us then is present still” (209). Such gardens are the essence of apocalyptic forthcoming vision. One this apocalyptic vision occurs, the issue of eco-phobia comes out (Garrard, 2004).

The animals depicted in *The Year of the Flood* convey the apocalyptic elements (Wright 1984); e.g., “Even when she sleeps, she’s listening, as animals do — for a break in the pattern, for an unknown sound, for a silence opening like a crack in rock. When the small creatures hush their singing, said Adam One, it’s because they’re afraid. You must listen for the sound of their fear” (p.2). the animals are the natural God-created elements to be

harnessed by human beings: “We are told that, on the fifth day of God’s Creating activities, the waters brought forth Creatures, and on the sixth day the dry land was populated with Animals, and with Plants and Trees; and all were blessed, and told to multiply; and finally Adam — that is to say, Mankind — was created. According to Science, this is the same order in which the species did in fact appear on the Planet, Man last of all. Or more or less the same order. Or close enough” (p.15).

The hunting of these animals leads to their apocalyptic extinction (Garrard, 2004), which might threaten the lives of people: “The rifle is a primitive weapon - a Ruger 44/99 Deerfield. It had been her father’s. He was the one who’d taught her to shoot, when she was twelve, back in those days that seem now like some mushroom-induced Technicolour brain vacation. Aim for the centre of the body, he’d said. Don’t waste your time with heads. He said he just meant animals” (p.22). Roger participates in killing animals which are important pastoral elements in the novel:

On the floor below her there was an endangered-species luxury couture operation called Slink. They sold Halloween costumes over the counter to fool the animal-righter extremists and cured the skins in the backrooms. The fumes came up through the ventilation system: though Toby tried stuffing pillows into the vent, her cubicle stank of chemicals and rancid fat. Sometimes there was roaring and bleating as well — they killed the animals on the premises because the customers didn’t want goat dressed up as Oryx or dyed wolf instead of wolverine. They wanted their bragging rights to be genuine. (p.25)

This kind of hunting destructs nature and, consequently, arouses feelings of eco-phobia. Here, animals, like oryx are the apocalyptic components which are disregarded in the novel (Garrard, 2004). As for the flotation devices in which they would ride out this flood, they themselves would be their own Arks, stored with their own collections of inner animals, or at least the names of those animals. Thus they would survive to replenish the Earth. Or something like that” (p.35). Moreover, they are endangered by hunting: “True, we - like the other Animals - were blessed, and ordered to increase and multiply, and to replenish the Earth. But by what humiliating and aggressive and painful means this replenishing frequently takes place! No wonder we are born to a sense of guilt and disgrace! Why did He not make us pure Spirit, like Himself? Why did he embed us in perishable matter, and a matter so unfortunately Monkey-like? So goes the ancient cry” (p.37). The animals are an integral part of the hunters’ environment. They are sometimes kept safely, but they do not live long: “Therefore the Animals are not senseless matter, not mere chunks of meat. No; they have living Souls, or God could not have made a Covenant with them. The Human Words of God affirm this: “But ask now the beasts,” says Job, “and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee ... and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee” (p.60). The killing of animals of hunting purpose is an indication of environmental apocalypse. Because it involves human beings, it might endanger the lives of people who hunt animals (Garrard, 2004).

4. Pastoral

In *The Year of the Flood*, scenes of wilderness, deserts, oceans, and uninhabited continents are the representation of pastoral: “By the time she reached the Park’s outer edge, it was pitch-dark. She moved from tree to tree along the verge, hugging the shadows. The boulevard was jammed with cars, trucks, solarbikes,” and “buses, their drivers honking and shouting. Some of the vehicles had been overturned and were burning. In the shops, the looting was in full swing. There were no CorpSeCorpsMen in sight. They must have been the first to desert, heading for their gated Corporation strongholds to save their skins, and carrying — Toby certainly hoped — the lethal virus with them” (p.20).

In addition, gardens are representations of pastoral (Wall,1994): “Since she was accepting Gardener hospitality, and under false pretenses at that - she wasn’t really a convert - she felt she should pay by working very hard. To the violet biolet cleaning she added other tasks. She carted fresh soil up to the rooftop via the fire escape - the Gardeners” had “a supply of it, gathered from deserted building sites and vacant lots - to be mixed with compost, and with violet biolet by-products. She melted down soap ends and decanted and labelled vinegar.” She “packaged worms for the Tree of Life Natural Materials Exchange, she mopped the floor of the Run-For-Your-Light Treadmills gym, she swept out the dormitory cubicles on the level below the Rooftop where the single members of the group slept every night on futons stuffed with dried plant materials (p.34).

The pastoral features are natural elements in fictional works (Wall, 1994); this is similar to *The Year of the Flood*: “From time to time she thought of deserting. For one thing, she was swept with periodic but shameful cravings for animal protein. “You ever feel like eating a SecretBurger?” she “asked Rebecca. Rebecca was from her former world: such things could be discussed with her. “I must admit it,” said Rebecca. “I do have those thoughts. They put something in them - it has to be.” Some addictive “thing.” The food was pleasant enough - Rebecca did her best with the limited materials available - but it was repetitious. In addition to that, the prayers were tedious,” the theology “scrambled - why be so picky about lifestyle details if you believed everyone would soon be wiped off the face of the planet? The Gardeners were convinced of impending disaster, through no solid evidence that Toby could see. Maybe they were reading bird entrails” (p.34).

Pastoral has a close affinity with apocalyptic destruction (Wall, 1994): in *The Year of the Flood*, “A massive die-off of the human race was impending, due to overpopulation and wickedness, but the Gardeners exempted themselves: they intended to float above the Waterless Flood, with the aid of the food they were stashing” away “in the hidden store places they called Ararats. As for the flotation devices in which they would ride out this flood, they themselves would be their own Arks, stored with their own collections of inner animals, or at least the names of those animals. Thus they would survive to replenish the Earth. Or something like that” (pp.34-35).

Pastoral has also desert scenes (Wall, 1994): Atwood describes this in the novel: “Amanda was in the Wisconsin desert, putting together one of the Bioart installations she’s been doing now that she’s into what she calls the art caper.” It “was cow bones this time. Wisconsin’s covered with cow bones, ever since the big drought ten years ago when they’d found it cheaper to butcher the cows there rather than shipping them out — the ones that hadn’t died on their own. She had a couple of fuel-cell frontend loaders and two illegal Tex-Mexican refugees she’d hired, and she was dragging the cow bones” into “a pattern so big it could only be seen from above: huge capital letters, spelling out a word. Later she’d cover it in pancake syrup and wait until the insect life was all over it, and then take videos of it from the air, to put into galleries. She liked to watch things move and grow and then disappear” (p.40). Pastoral involves animals, this is true to *The Year of the Flood*: “The project was going fine, she said: it had rained, the desert flowers were in bloom, there were a lot of insects, which was good for when she’d pour on the syrup. She already had the K done, and she was halfway through the A. But the Tex-Mexicans were getting bored” (p.41).

Oceans relate also to pastoral (Waage,1985). In *The Year of the Flood*, oceanic creatures reflect this argument: “The Fish was an apt symbol, for Jesus first called as his Apostles two fishermen, surely chosen by him to help conserve the Fish population. They were told to be fishers of men *instead of* being fishers of Fish,” thus “neutralizing two destroyers of Fish! That Jesus was mindful of the Birds, the Animals, and the Plants is clear from his remarks on Sparrows, Hens, Lambs, and Lilies; but he understood that most of God’s Garden was under water and that it, too, needed tending.” Saint Francis “of Assisi preached a sermon to the Fish, not realizing that the Fish commune directly with God. Still, the Saint was affirming the respect due to them. How prophetic does this appear, now that the world’s Oceans are being laid waste!” Others “may take the Specist view that we Humans are smarter than Fish, and thus an April Fish is being marked as mute and foolish.” But the “life of the Spirit always seems foolish to those who do not share it: therefore we must accept and wear the label of God’s Fools gladly, for in relation to God we are all fools, no matter how wise we may think we are. To be an April Fish is to humbly accept our own silliness, and to cheerfully admit the absurdity - from a materialist view - of every Spiritual truth we profess” (p.118).

Seas, additionally, are pastoral elements(Waage, 1985). In *The Year of the Flood*, this quite similar sea creatures, like fish: “On this day we mourn, but we also rejoice. We mourn the deaths of all those Creatures of the land that were destroyed in the First Flood of extinctions - whenever those occurred - but we rejoice that the Fishes and Whales, and the Corals, and the Sea Turtles and the Dolphins,” and “the Sea Urchins, yea, also the Sharks - we rejoice that they were spared, unless a change in ocean temperature and salinity caused by the great downpour of fresh waters did harm to some Species unknown to us” (p.59).

The scenic sublimas are also reflections of pastoral (Rainey,1994). *The Year of the Flood* exemplifies that: “scenic sublime forests, lakes, mountains, cliffs, waterfalls her skin prickles. She doesn’t relish the thought of one of those creatures leaping on her from behind a shrub. If it’s her fate to be mangled and devoured, she’d prefer” a more “conventional beast

of prey. Still, they are astounding. She watches them while they gambol together, then sniff the air and saunter away to the edge of the forest, vanishing into dappled shade” (p.62). Furthermore, “Toby had heard about Painball. It was a facility for condemned criminals, both political ones and the other kind: they had a choice of being spraygunned to death or doing time in the Painball Arena,” which “wasn’t an arena at all, but more like an enclosed forest. You got enough food for two weeks, plus the Painball gun — it shot paint, like a regular paintball gun, but a hit in the eyes would blind you, and if you got the paint on your skin you’d start to corrode, and then you’d be an easy target for the throat-slitters on the other team. For everyone who went in was assigned to one of two teams: the Red, the Gold” (p.62).

Natural places like lakes are explicit peculiarities of pastoral (Rainey, 1994). Atwood, in *The Year of the Flood*, conveys this pastoral peculiarity: “Left foot, right foot, quietly along. The faint sounds of her feet on the fallen leaves hit her ears like shouts. How visible, how audible I [Toby] am,” she “thinks. Everything in the forest is watching. They’re waiting for blood, they can smell it, they can hear it running through my veins, *katoush*. Above her head, clustering in the treetops, the crows are treacherous: *Hawhawhaw!* They want her eyes, those crows” (p.242). Furthermore, “lake Watch, he [Ren] wrote on her pad. He entered a site advertising Mo’Hair transplants, skipped through a pixel gateway on the eye of a magenta-haired sheep, entered the blue percolating stomach of an ad for a HelthWyzer antacid, which led to the avid open mouth of a SecretBurger customer caught in mid-chomp.” Then a “wide green landscape unfolded — trees in the distance, a lake in the foreground, a rhino and three lions drinking. A scene from the past” (p.158).

Additionally, mountains are indications of pastoral scenes in literary works (Barillas,2006). In *The Year of the Flood*, mountains are mentioned in different episodes, for example “Mountains Take comfort in the thought that this history will soon be swept away by the Waterless Flood. Nothing will remain of the Exfernal World but decaying wood and rusting metal implements; and over these the Kudzu” and “other vines will climb; and Birds and Animals will nest in them, as we are told in the Human Words of God: “They shall be left together unto the Fowls of the mountains, and to the Beasts of the Earth; and the Fowls shall summer upon them, and all the Beasts of the Earth shall winter upon them.” For all works of Man will be as words written on water” (p.181).

The countryside is connected with pastoral (Barillas,2006). In *The Year of the Flood*, Atwood offers several countryside scenes: “She’d climbed up to the rooftop before they left, scanned the fields. No pigs, no Mo’Hairs, no liobams. Or none in plain view. How little I’ve ever been able to see, she thinks. The meadow, the driveway,” the “swimming pool, the garden. The edge of the forest. She’d like to avoid going in there, among the trees. Nature may be dumb” as “a sack of hammers, Zeb used to say, but it’s smarter than you. Look, she thinks at the forest, with its hidden pigs and liobams. And Painballers too, for all she knows. Don’t push me. I may be pink, but I’ve got a rifle. Bullets too. Longer range than a spraygun. So back off, assholes” (p.213).

The concept of pastoral involves woods (Barillas,2006). Woods are mentioned many times in *The Year of the Flood*: “After ditching the solarcar she’d walked for a while and then lifted another solar, a bike this time - easier to get through the metal snarls. When in doubt she’d kept to the urban fringes, or else the woods.” Toby “had a couple of close calls because other people must’ve had the same idea - she’d almost tripped over a few bodies. Good thing she hadn’t actually touched them” (p.188). Zeb says “That’s not such a good idea.” Toby pauses, then says it’s the best idea she can come up with because she can’t let me wander off into the woods by myself: it would be like murder.” And Zeb nods and says, “Be very careful.” So it’s settled. The MaddAddams hang up some duct-tape hammocks in the main room for Toby and me. Toby’s still talking with Zeb and the rest of them, so I go to bed first. With a Mo’Hair rug the hammock’s quite comfortable; and though I’m worrying a lot about how to find Amanda and what will happen then, I finally manage to sleep (pp.233-34).

Parks, like woods, represent pastoral domestic picturesque (Barillas,2006). In *The Year of the Flood*, parks are depicted as integral natural elements: “We thought we were being really careful. We couldn’t see anybody anywhere. We went into the Heritage Park and headed towards the Spa’s west gatehouse, staying on the forest pathway, under the trees - we felt less visible that way” (p.199). Moreover, “The Spa grounds and its woodland perimeter are separated from the surrounding Heritage Park by a chainlink fence topped with electrified barbed wire, though the electricity won’t be functional now. Four gates, east, west, north, and south, with winding driveways connecting them” (p.213). It’s Toby’s “plan to spend the night at the eastern gatehouse. That’s not too far for Ren to walk: she’s still not strong enough for heroic trekking. The next morning they can begin to make their way gradually towards the sea” (p.213). This is because “It is shadier under the trees, but not cooler. It’s dank, and there’s no breeze, and the air is thick, as if it has more air stuffed into it than other air does. But at least we’re out of the sun, so we take off our top-to-toes and walk along the pathway.” There’s that “rich deep smell of rotting wood, the mushroomy smell I remember from the Gardeners, when we’d go to the Park for Saint Euell’s. The vines have been moving in over the gravel, but a lot of the branches are broken back and stepped on, and Toby says that someone else has come this way; not today though, because the leaves have wilted” (p.218). The threat of this pastoral component results in eco-phobia (Raine, 1994).

In addition to woods and parks, gardens are pastoral features (Barillas,2006). Atwood’s *The Year of the Flood* provides garden scenes: “Or the voices of the Gardeners, murmuring or singing; or the children laughing together, up on the Edencliff Garden. Adam One, and Nuala, and Burt. Old Pilar, surrounded by her bees. And Zeb. If any one of them is still alive, it must be Zeb: any day now he’ll come walking along the roadway or appear from among the trees” (p.10). Furthermore, “this Edencliff Rooftop Garden of ours was a sizzling wasteland, hemmed in by festering city slums and dens of wickedness; but now it has blossomed as the rose” (p.14).

The concept of pastoral is an all-inclusive of the natural elements treated in the context of fictional plots. Meadow gardens are similarly related to pastoral domestic

picturesque (Barillas,2006). Atwood, in *The Year of the Flood*, portrays such kind of pastoral meadows: “They’re a quarter of the way across the meadow when it occurs to her they’ll be back. They’ll dig under at night and root up her garden in no time flat, and that will be the end of her [Toby’s] long-term food supply. She’ll have to shoot them, it’s self-defence.” She “squeezes off a round, misses, tries again. The boar falls down. The two sows keep running. Only when they’ve reached the forest rim do they turn and look back. Then they meld with the foliage and are gone” (p.18).

Meadows are representations of pastoral elements in *The Year of the Flood*: “As she’s drying her hair she hears an odd sound. She goes cautiously to the rooftop railing. Three huge pigs are nosing around the swimming pool — two sows and a boar. The morning light shines on their plump pinky-grey forms; they glisten like wrestlers. They seem too large and bulbous to be normal. She’s spotted pigs like this before, in the meadow, but they’ve never come this close. Escapees, they must be, from some experimental farm or other” (p.18).

Such meadows appeal to the novel’s characters: “They’re a quarter of the way across the meadow when it occurs to her they’ll be back. They’ll dig under at night and root up her garden in no time flat, and that will be the end of her long-term food supply. She’ll have to shoot them, it’s self-defence. She squeezes off a round, misses, tries again. The boar falls down. The two sows keep running. Only when they’ve reached the forest rim do they turn and look back. Then they meld with the foliage and are gone” (p.18).

Meadows are connected with outdoors life: “Sometimes we went into that vacant lot with Zeb on our Outdoor Classroom days: he said it was the closest thing to a meadow we’d ever find in our pleeb. When he was with us, the pleebland kids didn’t bother us. Zeb was like having your own private tiger: tame to you, savage to everyone else. Once, we found a dead girl there. She didn’t have any hair or clothes: she only had a few green scales left clinging to her. *Pasted on*, I thought. *Or something. Anyway, not growing. So I was right*” (p.51).

Meadows are depicted together with animals in *The Year of the Flood*: “In the northern meadow the dead boar is still lying. The vultures have been at it, though they can’t get through the tough hide: they’re limited to eyes and tongue. They’ll have to wait until it rots and bursts before they can really dig in. Toby turns her binoculars skyward, at the crows racketing around. When she looks back, two liobams are crossing the meadow. A male, a female, strolling along as if they own the place. They stop at the boar, sniff briefly. Then they continue their walk. Toby stares at them, fascinated: she’s never seen a liobam in the flesh, only pictures. Am I imagining things? she wonders. No, the liobams are actual. They must be zoo animals freed by one of the more fanatical sects in those last desperate days” (p.62).

Animals formulate a part of ecological meadows: “They don’t look dangerous, although they are. The lion-sheep splice was commissioned by the Lion Isaiahists in order to force the advent of the Peaceable Kingdom. They’d reasoned that the only way to fulfil the

lion/lamb friendship prophecy without the first eating the second would be to meld the two of them together. But the result hadn't been strictly vegetarian. Still, the liobams seem gentle enough, with their curly golden hair and twirling tails" (p.62).

Both, flowers and animals are associated with nature in the novel: "They're nibbling flower heads, they don't look up; yet she has the sense that they're perfectly aware of her. Then the male opens its mouth, displaying its long, sharp canines, and calls. It's an odd combination of baa and roar: a bloat, thinks Toby. Her skin prickles. She doesn't relish the thought of one of those creatures leaping on her from behind a shrub. If it's her fate to be mangled and devoured, she'd prefer a more conventional beast of prey. Still, they are astounding. She watches them while they gambol together, then sniff the air and saunter away to the edge of the forest, vanishing into dappled shade" (p.62).

In *The Year of the Flood*, Atwood portrays ecological features with people in the same natural scenes: "Toby turns her binoculars skyward, at the crows racketing around. When she looks back, two liobams are crossing the meadow. A male, a female, strolling along as if they own the place. They stop at the boar, sniff briefly. Then they continue their walk" (p.62). These scenes are incarnations of pastoral: "Toby stares at them, fascinated: she's never seen a liobam in the flesh, only pictures. Am I imagining things? she wonders. No, the liobams are actual. They must be zoo animals freed by one of the more fanatical sects in those last desperate days. They don't look dangerous, although they are. The lion-sheep splice was commissioned by the Lion Isaiahists in order to force the advent of the Peaceable Kingdom. They'd reasoned that the only way to fulfil the lion/lamb friendship prophecy without the first eating the second would be to meld the two of them together" (p.62).

Pastoral meadows, consequently, comprise scenes of wild natural paths (Barillas,2006). Such natural paths are depicted in Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*: "Path Pilar's composting took place that afternoon. Pilar travelled to the site by truck, in a burlap sack labeled Mulch, with the Elderberry and a five-gallon water tank beside her." Nuala and Adam One "marched the Buds and Blooms Choir through the Park, right past the burial spot, so anyone in the vicinity would be looking at them rather than at Zeb and Toby and their shrub planting. They were singing the "Mole Day Hymn" at the top of their lungs." When "they came to the final verse, Shackleton and Crozier in their pleebat T-shirt disguises jeered at them from the pathside. When Crozier tossed a bottle, the Buds and Blooms yelled and broke ranks and ran down the pathway. All the pleeblanders watched the chase with interest, hoping for violence." Zeb "deftly slotted Pilar into the hole, still in her burlap sack, and positioned the Elderberry shrub on top of her. Toby shovelled and tamped; then they watered" (p.114). As such, destructing path as natural elements brings about eco-phobic reactions (Oppermann,2009).

The natural elements of pastoral include meadows: "If she were a cryer, she'd cry. She lifts her binoculars, scans the meadow. At first she doesn't see them, but then she spots two pinkish-grey heads — no, three — no, five — lifting above the weedy flowers. Beady

eyes, one per pig: they're looking at her sideways. They've been watching for her: it's as if they want to witness her dismay. Moreover, they're out of range: if she shoots at them she'll waste the bullets. She wouldn't put it past them to have figured that out" (p.186).

Animals are inseparable parts of pastoral in *The Year of the Flood*: "You fucking pigs!" she yells at them, "Fuck-pigs! Pig-faces!" Of course, for them none of these names would be insults. What now? Her supply of dried greens is tiny, her goji berries and chia are almost gone, her plant protein is finished. She was counting on the garden for all of that. Worst of all, she's out of fats: she's already eaten the last of the Shea and Avocado Body Butter. There's fat in Joltbars — she still has some of those — but not enough to last for long. Without lipids your body eats your fat and then your muscles, and the brain is pure fat and the heart is a muscle. You become a feedback loop, and then you fall over. She'll have to resort to foraging. Go out into the meadow, the forest: find protein and lipids. The boar will be putrid by now, she can't eat that. She could shoot a green rabbit, maybe; but no, it's a fellow mammal and she isn't up to that kind of slaughter. Ant larvae and eggs, or grubs of any kind, for starters" (p.186).

The novel's characters enjoy these meadows: "In the meadow the dead boar is entering the afterlife. Gases are rising from it, fluids are seeping away. The vultures have been at it; the crows are hanging around on the perimeter like runts at a street fight, grabbing what they can. Whatever's going on out there, maggots are a part of it. When in extreme need, Adam One used to say, begin at the bottom of the food chain. Those without central nervous systems must surely suffer less" (p.190). Toby gathers the necessary items — her pink top-to-toe, her sunhat, her sunglasses, a water bottle, a pair of surgical gloves. The binoculars, the rifle. Her mop-handle cane, for balance" (p.190).

This enjoyment is preferred by the characters that tend to be in ecological-dominated places: "She finds a plastic snap-top and punches some holes in the lid, adds a spoon, and stows everything in a plastic gift bag with the winkyeeyeAnooYoo Spa logo on it. A packsack would be better, it would leave her hands free. There used to be some packsacks around here — the ladies took them on strolls, with picnic sandwiches in them — but she can't remember where she put them" (p.190).

There's still some AnooYoo All-Natural SolarNix in stock. It's stale-dated and smells rancid, but she spreads it on her face anyway, then sprays her ankles and wrists with Super D in case of mosquitoes. She has a good long drink of water, then visits the violet biolet: if panic arises, at least she won't piss herself. Nothing worse than sprinting in a wet top-to-toe. She hangs the binoculars around her neck, then goes up to the roof for a last double-check. No ears in the meadow, no snouts. No furry golden tails. "Quit stalling," she tells herself. She has to leave immediately so she can get back before the afternoon rainstorm. Stupid to get struck by lightning. Any death is stupid from the viewpoint of whoever is undergoing it, Adam One used to say, because no matter how much you've been warned, Death always comes without knocking. Why now? is the cry. Why so soon? It's the cry of a child being

called home at dusk, it's the universal protest against Time. Just remember, dear Friends: What am I living for and what am I dying for are the same question" (p.190).

Atwood, in *The Year of the Flood*, depicts the typical components of pastoral scenery that involves persons and animals in the same places where these persons have close affinity to them: "It's been a long time since she's been this far away from the Spa buildings. Now she's in the meadow: it's a big space. The light is dazzling, even though she has the broad hat and the sunglasses on. Don't panic, she tells herself. This is how mice feel when they venture onto the open floor, but you aren't a mouse. The weeds catch at her top-to-toe and tangle her feet as if to hold her back and keep her with them. There are little thorns in them somewhere, little claws and traps. It's like pushing through a giant piece of knitting: knitting done with barbed wire" (p.190).

Trees, like fern, are indications of pastoral in Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*: "There are fronds scattered about, on top of the boar's carcass and beside it. Fern fronds. Such ferns don't grow in the meadow. Some are old and dry and brown, some quite fresh. Also flowers. Are those rose petals, from the roses by the driveway? She'd heard of something like this; no, she read it as a child, in a kid's book about elephants. The elephants would stand around their dead ones, sombrely, as if meditating. Then they'd scatter branches and earth" (p.191).

Such pastoral are appreciated by the novel's characters that become intimate with natural places: "In the morning Ren feels cooler. Her pulse is stronger, and she can even hold the cup of warm water in her own two trembling hands. Toby's put mint in it this morning, as well as the honey and salt. Once Ren has gone to sleep again, Toby hauls the dirty sheets and towels up to the roof to wash them. She's brought her binoculars, and while the sheets and towels are soaking she scans the Spa grounds. Pigs far away, over in the southwest corner of the meadow. Two Mo'Hairs, a blue one and a silver one, grazing quietly together. No liobams. Dogs barking somewhere. Vultures flapping around the pig funeral site" (p.210).

Atwood, in *The Year of the Flood*, depicts the characters' reactions towards nature which become completely part of their lives: "Her homicidal impulse of the night before is gone: she will not drag dead Ren out into the meadow for the pigs and vultures. Now she'd like to cure her, cherish her, for isn't it miraculous that Ren is here? That she's come through the Waterless Flood with only minor damage? Or fairly minor. Just to have a second person on the premises — even a feeble person, even a sick person who sleeps most of the time — just this makes the Spa seem like a cozy domestic dwelling rather than a haunted house" (p.210). In the long run, these pastoral elements are threatened by disaster in Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*. In essence, when pastoral elements are threatened, they embody the issue of eco-phobia (Oppermann, 2009).

Eco-phobia is, ultimately, contiguous with intimidating pastoral settings (Oppermann, 2009). Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* incarnates this claim: "So we went online," said Croze, "The news was still working. Big disaster coverage, so we figured we

shouldn't go out and mingle. We locked ourselves into one of the guardhouses — they had some food in there.” And “Problem was, the Golds were in the guardhouse on the other side of the gate. We kept thinking they'd whack us when we were sleeping.” Furthermore, “Then we ran out of food and we had to leave too,” said Shackie. “We thought maybe they'd be waiting for us, but they weren't.” He shrugged. “End of story” (p.195). This is the eco-phobic dénouement of Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*.

5. Conclusion

This article focused on the issue of environmental deterioration in Atwood's *The Year of The Flood*. The analytical discussion of such issue has been implemented by applying two concepts, namely, apocalypse and pastoral. By using the concept of apocalypse, I have examined the threatening meanings inherent in the novel's context. There are a number of textual descriptions of natural phenomenon which hold a warning against the death of nature which, indirectly, indicates the death of human beings. On the other hand, the concept of pastoral has been used to analyze the novels natural elements, such as trees, woods, and gardens which exemplify the environmental places depicted in the novel. Thus, the article concluded that pastoral is an antithesis of apocalypse depicted in the novel.

The significance of this study, therefore, is to explore the remedial responses to natural apocalypse as a destructive phenomenon. Atwood perceives nature on the verge of apocalyptic retardation caused by human reckless and harmful practice against nature. In this sense, she creates a comprehensive view of the environmental nature devoid of safety and peaceful living conditions. Consequently, the study has accentuated the way by which Atwood implicitly indicts human negative parties against nature and the possibility reconstructing nature. That is, people do not take care of their environmental nature, and, therefore, they affect it severely. In the long run, they gradually lose its safety and sustainable continuation. Being so, the novel parades typical natural elements, especially pastoral that could be harnessed for the mitigation of this apocalyptic harm. The discussion of pastoral results in the proper understanding natural apocalypse and the way it could be hindered before it gets more possible. Thus, Atwood's portrayal of natural pastoral has been explored as an environmental remedial antithesis of natural apocalypse described in the selected novel.

REFERENCES

1. Altizer, T. (1985). *History as apocalypse*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
2. Atwood, M. (2009). *The Year of the Flood*. New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday.
3. Barillas, W. D. (2006). *The midwestern pastoral: Place and landscape in literature of the American heartland*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.
4. Borlik, T. A. (2011). *Ecocriticism and early modern English literature: Green pastures*. New York: Routledge.
5. Cherry, L. (1992). *A river ran wild: An environmental history*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
6. Collins, J.J. (2015). *Apocalypse, prophecy, and pseudepigraphy: On Jewish apocalyptic literature*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
7. Garrard, G. (2004). *Ecocriticism*. London: Routledge.

8. Goldman, M. (2005). *Rewriting apocalypse in Canadian fiction*. Montreal [Que.]: McGill-Queen's University Press.
9. Jussi, J. (2018). *An analysis of the characters Crake and Jimmy/Snowman in Margaret Atwood's Dystopian Novel Oryx and Crake*. Diss. University of Tartu. Web. 14 January. 2019.
10. Muurinen, M. (2016). *Depictions of corporatocratic dystopia: Margaret Atwood's The Year of the Flood, Dave Eggers' The Circle, and Gary Shteyngart's Super Sad True Love Story*. Diss. University of Helsinki. Web. 20 January. 2019.
11. Oppermann, S. (2009). *The future of ecocriticism: New horizons*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publication.
12. Rainey, S. (1994). *Creating picturesque America: Monument to the natural and cultural landscape*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
13. Uygur, M. (2014). Utopia and dystopia intertwined: The problem of ecology in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood* and *MaddAddam*. *The Journal of International Social Research*, 7(31), 41-48.
14. Waage, F. O. (1985). *Teaching environmental literature: Materials, methods, resources*. New York: Modern Language Association of America.
15. Wall, D. (1994). *Green history: A reader in environmental literature, philosophy, and politics*. London: Routledge.
16. Wright, J. (1984). *Architecture of the picturesque in Canada*. Ottawa, Ont: National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, Parks Canada, Environment Canada.