



Myth And Fantasy in Margaret Atwood's Maddaddam Trilogy Margaret Atwood'un Maddaddam Üçlemesinde Mit ve Fantastik

Canan ŞAVKAY*

Abstract

This paper discusses the use of myth and fantasy in Margaret Atwood's apocalyptic science fiction trilogy Maddaddam. While the plot of the first novel in this trilogy unremittingly moves in a linear direction towards total destruction, the final novel reconnects the end with the beginning of human origins and as such, the trilogy reveals also a cyclic structure. It is especially in the connection between the apocalyptic future and the past of human origins that elements of myth and fantasy are foregrounded. Just like science, myth is a mode of understanding and making sense of the world and the way Atwood employs myth and fantasy underscores her engagement with the question pertaining to the nature of what it means to be human. Referring to Mircea Eliade's concept of humanity as a species marked by a desire to distinguish the sacred from the profane, Atwood, in the last novel of her trilogy, Maddaddam, increasingly draws parallels between biblical beginnings and her post-apocalyptic fictional world, as the narrative places the fate of the human survivors within the context of the Old Testament. Sharing postmodernism's anti-humanist stance, mainly revealed in the relentless direction humanity takes towards total annihilation, Maddaddam simultaneously advocates humanist values such as self-determination and the ability to consciously opt for the good. The humanist ideals are significantly connected with elements of myth and fantasy and thus with transcendence. Through the use of myth and fantasy, Atwood advocates humanist values, because in view of increasing global violence and exploitation, responsible moral action becomes the only alternative to ward off the dangers of a disastrous future awaiting humanity

Keywords: Margaret Atwood, science fiction, apocalyptic fiction, myth, fantasy, Maddaddam

Öz

Bu makale, Margaret Atwood'un Maddaddam adlı apokaliptik bilim kurgu üçlemesindeki mitsel ve fantastik öğelerin kullanımını tartışır. Üçlemenin birinci romanındaki kurgu, insanlığın yok oluşunu çizgisel bir biçimde gösterirken, son romanı, insanlığın sonunu başlangıcıyla bağdaştırarak, üçlemenin aynı zamanda bir döngüsel bir yapısının oluşmasını sağlar. Mit ve fantastiğe ait öğeler özellikle apokaliptik bir gelecek zamanla, insanlığın ortaya çıkışı arasındaki ilişkide ortaya çıkmaktadır. Mitler de, bilim kurgu gibi dünyayı anlama ve anlamlandırma çabasından doğmaktadır ve Atwood'un mitsel ve fantastik öğeler kullanması, insanın asli doğasını irdeleme arzusundan kaynaklanmaktadır. Üçlemenin Maddaddam adlı son romanı, Kutsal Kitap'ta anlatılan insanlığın başlangıcıyla, romanda anlatılan insanlığın yok oluşu sonrasındaki dünya ile gittikçe daha netleşen bir paralellik kurmakta; büyük felaketten sonra hayatta kalmayı başaran bir avuç insanın kaderi Tevrat bağlamına yerleştirilmekte. İnsanlığın gözü kapalı doğrudan bir biçimde yıkıma doğru yol almasını göstererek, Atwood postmodernizmin birçok kez takındığı hümanist karşıtı tutumu sergilemekte, ancak Maddaddam aynı zamanda da kendini anlamlandırma ve bilinçli bir biçimde iyiyi seçme yeteneği gibi hümanist değerleri de savunmaktadır. Bu hümanist idealler ise romanda kullanılan mitsel ve fantastik öğelerle ve dolayısıyla da maddi dünyanın ötesiyle ilişkilendirilmektedirler. Atwood, mitsel ve fantastik öğeleri kullanarak hümanist değerleri savunmaktadır, çünkü globalleşen dünyamızda gittikçe artan şiddet ve sömürü olayları karşısında, bireyin sorumluluk alarak ahlaki eylemler sergilemesi, ileride insanlığın başına gelebilecek felaketleri önlemenin tek çaresi gibi görünmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Margaret Atwood, bilim kurgu, apokaliptik kurgu, mit, fantastik, Maddaddam

* Doç. Dr. İstanbul Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, e-posta: savkay@istanbul.edu.tr,

ORCID: 0000-0002-1171-0222

Introduction

In view of the dangers of global warming, the obdurate persistence in the nuclear arms race along with the increasing number of local wars waged throughout the world, it is no surprise that fiction writers increasingly tend towards drawing conjectures of a disastrous future. A concurrent theme often found in science fiction is the impending apocalypse which, as Aris Mousoutzanis observes, “might seem paradoxical for a genre originally associated with ideas of scientific progress and technological utopianism” (2009, p. 458). However, this tendency to engage with apocalyptic patterns does not necessarily denote a growing sense of pessimism. As Frank Kermode points out, “It seems doubtful that our crisis, our relation to the future and to the past, is one of the important differences between us and our predecessors,” for we cannot presume “that nuclear bombs are more real and make one experience more authentic crisis-feelings than armies in the sky” (2000, p. 95).

Whether we actually live on the brink of total annihilation or not, the truth remains that contemporary writers’ willingness to envision alternative blueprints for a better world “died in the course of the twentieth century, extinguished by the horrors of total war, of genocide and of totalitarianism” (James, 2003, p. 219). Yet despite all the atrocities of the past decades, contemporary apocalyptic fiction is not a hopeless mode of pessimism for the simple reason that its primary purpose is not to predict, but rather warn the public of impending disasters. However, as attempts to warn may easily turn into “routine” and thus “become cliché” (Palmer, 2014, p. 159), alternative visions to the images of death and destruction are crucial. Teresa Heffernan underscores the often problematic use of the term ‘apocalypse,’ pointing out that “Catastrophic narrations... that are bereft of redemption and revelation are not apocalyptic in the traditional sense” (2008, p. 6). According to Heffernan’s definition, the man-made destruction often depicted in narratives of disaster is not strictly apocalyptic.

Margaret Atwood’s *Maddaddam* trilogy clearly corresponds to Heffernan’s description of apocalyptic narratives, as its plot revolves around the theme of man-made destruction, yet simultaneously engages with themes such as redemption. As Frank Kermode notes, “apocalyptic thought belongs to rectilinear rather than cyclical views of the world” (2000, p. 5) and human history in Atwood’s *Maddaddam* trilogy is actually portrayed along a rectilinear timeline, yet it is also true that its plot simultaneously contains a cyclic structure.

The novel’s rectilinear direction is mostly evident in the way our present world is connected to the future, as the future appears to be frighteningly close to our time. In this way, Atwood endows the present with a sense of history, which is, according to Fredric Jameson, one of the major distinguishing qualities of science fiction. Jameson points out that science fiction “restructure(s) our experience of our *present*” in ways that are “distinct from all other forms of defamiliarization” (1982, p. 151). “Transforming our own present into the determinate past of something yet to come” (1982, p. 152), the *Maddaddam* trilogy certainly conforms to Jameson’s description. Jameson contends that the present world cannot be grasped in its totality by the individual, because “the sheer quantitative immensity of objects and individual lives it comprises is untotalizable and hence unimaginable” (1982, p. 152).

Atwood’s trilogy clearly portrays the present as the past of a future yet to come, while it also links the future with the beginning and thereby draws a full circle. The way the future is connected with the past is intricately related with the novel’s use of myth and fantasy. Critics such as Darko Suvin believe that science fiction should be purged of all elements of fantasy, claiming, “It is intrinsically or by definition impossible for SF to acknowledge any metaphysical agency” (1979, p. 66). Adam Roberts likewise contends that the “grounding of science fiction in the material rather than the supernatural is one of its key features” (2006, p. 5), yet despite objections to the use of non-scientific material, the fact remains that many writers of science fiction actually make ample use of phenomena which are not scientifically verifiable.

Although “there have been any number of attempts at a definition” of science fiction, there is still no “agreed definition” (Pohl, 1997, p. 11) and in the absence of a common denominator, it may seem wise to describe science fiction as a form of narrative which, according to Eric S. Rabkin, “claims plausibility against a background of science” (2004, 459). Suvin and Roberts are certainly right when they claim that the distinguishing feature of science fiction is the foregrounding of scientifically explainable phenomena. A critical approach towards science fiction should therefore engage itself with the question *to what extent*

a novel is implicated in the material and scientific mode. As writers of science fiction frequently resort to myth and fantasy, an out of hand rejection of non-verifiable material seems rather pointless.

One reason why many science fiction writers resort to myth is the fact that myth is a mode of understanding and making sense of the world, just like science. Tatiana Chernyshova regards the myth-making activities of ancient people as actually not so distinctive from the construction of scientific theories, maintaining that “The emergence of science does not... eliminate this myth-creating mode of thought” (2004, p. 349). In other words, “both myth and science reflect man’s irrepressible curiosity about his origins and his destiny” (Sutton, 1969, p. 231). This is also an aspect Ursula Le Guin foregrounds when she describes myth as “an expression of one of the several ways the human being, body/psyche, perceives, understands and relates to the world. Like science, it is a product of a basic human mode of apprehension” (1993, p. 69).

As Atwood’s trilogy obviously foregrounds the scientific mode, it can be indisputably categorized within the genre of science fiction. The narrative’s use of myth and fantasy, however, plays, at times, such a vital part, that the mythic and fantastic modes almost begin to vie with the scientific mode for domination. The reason why the narrative resorts to myth and fantasy is its desire to reach out beyond a purely materialist perspective.

The Problem of Humanist Ideals

Mircea Eliade, a historian of religions, points out that “the *completely* profane world, the wholly desacralized cosmos, is a recent discovery in the history of the human spirit” (1987, p. 13, emphasis in original). According to Eliade, the mythic mode survives in the unconscious, yet “modern man’s ‘private mythologies’ - his dreams, reveries, fantasies and so on - never rise to the ontological status of myths, precisely because they are not experienced by the *whole man*” (1987, p. 211, emphasis in original). Eliade’s characterization of modern life reflects one of the basic aspects of the three works in question, namely modern man’s problematic position in a world which has increasingly become materialistic. Identifying the cause for the catastrophic events in a materialist and exploitative attitude, all three works explore alternative visions for a non-materialist, transcendent concept in order to relate to the world in a more peaceful way. This search for alternative perspectives is undertaken through the use of myth and fantasy in order to reinstate humanistic values without reiterating the mistakes of the past.

To speak of humanism in our postmodern world is naturally highly problematic, as during the last few decades much of the violence and discrimination of the past has been attributed to the profound belief in the superiority of man’s intellectual powers advocated by humanism. Rosi Braidotti, for instance, identifies the cause for humanism’s recent decline in its “Eurocentric core and imperial tendencies” (2013, p. 16), while Michel Foucault exposes how the humanist concept of man as an autonomous, sovereign subject has been a socio-historical construct, which, however, is “nearing its end” (2002, p. 422).

In her trilogy, Atwood obviously seeks for ways to maintain the traditional humanist belief in the “moral powers of human reason” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 13), because humanism has never lost its lure and is still being “saluted as the philosophical champion of human freedom and dignity” (Davies, 2001, p. 5). Tzvetan Todorov is likewise unwilling to abandon the concept of Humanism altogether. Exploring the legacy of humanism in our contemporary world, he contends that modern man’s pact with the devil has been his attainment of free will, in return for which he had to pay by being separate from God, his neighbor and himself (2002, p. 3). According to Todorov, Humanism is a mode of thought which has since refused to pay the devil his prize by constantly emphasizing the significance of “shared values” and a concept of the “self that is held responsible for its actions” (2002, p. 5). Even the atrocities of the twentieth century have not been able to extinguish the values of its ideals, for, as Todorov claims, “Modern humanism, far from ignoring Auschwitz and Kolyma, takes them as a starting point” (2002, p. 233).

The *Maddaddam* trilogy clearly advocates humanist ideals, while simultaneously seeking for ways to avoid those aspects of traditional humanism which have given rise to its aggressive and exploitative tendencies. Adam Roberts claims that science fiction often playfully elaborates on religious themes within the framework of a “non-religious religion” (2006, p. 146), implying that science fiction does not operate through dogma, but through an aesthetic play of possibilities (2006, 147). Mythopoeic narratives may be regarded as examples of aesthetic play which “infuse readers with the sense of the transcendent which is no longer accessible, for many people, in religion” (Brawley, 2014, p. 9).

The theme of moral action is therefore intricately connected with the question pertaining to the essential nature of man. Atwood interrogates the qualities which make us really 'human' and as such, she critically engages with humanist concepts within a science fictional framework, aiming to unsettle the reader's established beliefs. Because science fiction "is based on the premise... that reality itself has been warped" (Fishburn, 1988, p. 51), it lends itself especially well to interrogate the intrinsic nature of man, for it is, after all, human beings who endow their reality with meaning.

In the *Maddaddam* trilogy, it is precisely the focus on free will and the belief in individual responsibility which disengages the plot from a mere rectilinear movement which inevitably leads towards destruction. Instead, the narrative connects the end with the beginning, thereby drawing a full circle. Warren Wagar contends that even though the structure of the Bible is indisputably linear, "the Christian world view retained certain features of archaic cyclicism." Wagar points out that the Bible consists of "a single grand cycle originating and culminating in holy bliss" (1983, p. 76). While the first book of the trilogy, *Oryx and Crake* outlines, through flashbacks, the various stages leading towards the final disaster, the last book, *Maddaddam*, connects the ending again with biblical origins.

Oryx and Crake revolves around the events leading to the almost total extinction of the human race due to a genetically modified deadly virus. Through flashbacks, the protagonist Jimmy comes to acknowledge his own complicity in the events, because he himself has written the commercials for the pills containing the deadly virus. Only after the events, when he believes to be the last man on earth, does Jimmy face his previously irresponsible behavior and understand that his friend Crake, the designer of the deadly virus, had continuously given him signs pertaining to his horrific plans, yet Jimmy had preferred to turn a blind eye to his friend's intimations.

Now, after the catastrophe, Jimmy finds himself obliged to take care of the Crakers, a new human species genetically engineered by Crake. In the Crakers, Crake has eliminated all those traits which have been, for centuries, responsible for human violence. As a result, the Crakers are all vegetarian, non-violent and programmed to mate in groups of five. Thus it will be impossible to identify the father of the child and consequently, the Craker community will never turn into a patriarchy. Crake creates the Crakers with the purpose to replace them with the human species and he has designated Jimmy as the Crakers' guardian once everybody has been killed. Having unknowingly received a vaccination against the deadly virus, Jimmy at the beginning of the novel faces his new responsibility and this task now turns into an opportunity for his redemption.

The Use of Myth and Fantasy

The *Maddaddam* trilogy belongs to a long tradition of science fiction novels in which a mad scientist claims God-like power over creation, yet significantly, Margaret Atwood herself decisively rejects the label 'science fiction' and has since incurred the anger of many science fiction readers for making this statement (Atwood, 2004, p. 513). In her defense, Atwood explains that she prefers to use the term speculative fiction rather than science fiction, because speculative fiction "implies the means already more or less to hand, and takes place on Planet Earth", whereas science fiction "denotes books with things in them we can't yet do or begin to do, talking beings we can never meet, and places we can't go" (Atwood, 2004, p. 513). Considering Atwood's emphasis on the realist mode of her writing, it seems even more remarkable that she resorts to myth and scientifically inexplicable phenomena in her last book of the trilogy, *Maddaddam* which, it should be noted, was written nine years after Atwood made the statement above. The first two books, *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* both conform to Atwood's description of speculative fiction and portray a world quite similar to ours, except that the effects of global capitalism are even more persistent; powerful corporations rule the world, violence and social injustice have escalated and the skills in genetic engineering have been further developed. Atwood's fictional world in these two novels rather resembles ours, but at the close of the trilogy, when the survivors have to find ways for a new beginning, the narrative evidently adopts a mythical character.

In *Oryx and Crake* Jimmy tells the Crakers about their origins in the manner of "a genesis-like creation story" (Bouson, 2009, p. 106). The first time Jimmy tells a story, he asks the Crakers, "What part would you like to hear tonight?" and in return, one of them replies "In the beginning" (Atwood, 2003, p. 102). Consequently, Jimmy shows them a pail of water, drops some sand into it, stirs the water and shows

them the chaos inside. In order to visualize the whole process, he pours out the water in the pail and explains that this is how Crake decided to make room for his children, the Crakers.

In *Maddaddam*, however, the references to myth cease to be a parody and instead underscore both the significance and the timelessness of the fight between good and evil. Parallel to the main plot, *Maddaddam* contains two further strands of narrative: one is the story of Zeb which Toby writes down in the realistic mode, according to the facts she is told by Zeb himself. The other is the story of Zeb which Toby relates to the Crakers through the use of myth. The contrast between these two modes of narrative is most evident when Toby describes how Zeb killed a bear and ate it in order to survive after a helicopter crash in the mountains. The facts pertaining to the killing of the bear are very simple. Toby writes: “At the next washed-out bridge a bear congealed from the low shrubs flanking the river. It was not there and then it was there, and it reared up, startled, offering itself. Was there growling, a roar, a stench? No doubt, but Zeb can’t remember. He must have sprayed its eyes with the bear spray and shot” (2013, p. 80). The version offered to the Crakers, however, is very different. Toby tells them,

After Zeb came back from the high and tall mountains with snow on top, and after he had taken off the skin of the bear and put it on himself, he said Thank You to the bear. To the spirit of the bear.

Because the bear didn’t eat him, but allowed him to eat it instead, and also because it gave him its fur skin to put on. (Atwood, 2013, p. 84)

The significant difference in the story told to the Crakers is the way Zeb is described to have a spiritual connection with the bear and this association with the spiritual is one of the most characteristic qualities of the Crakers. The human survivors who have gathered by now get, for example, irritated with the Crakers who start singing each time they feel emotionally overwhelmed. One of the survivors asks Manatee, who had belonged to the group of top scientists forced by Crake to work on the Crakers, why they had not inserted a “Cancel button for the singing” and Manatee replies “We couldn’t erase it without turning them into zucchinis” (2013, p. 43). The Crakers’ singing is, in fact, a manifestation of their connection with transcendence, because they start singing each time they are told about how Crake dispelled the chaos and created them. Manatee’s answer pertaining to the fact that they were reduced to a non-human vegetative state once their singing was removed emphasizes their distinguishing feature, the part that makes them human. Their desire to repeatedly listen to the stories concerning their origin defines them as representatives of what Mircea Eliade calls *homo religiosus* (1987, p. 15, emphasis in original). According to Eliade, religious man lives in two distinct temporal modes: on one level, humans experience time as profane, marked by the absence of religious significance. On another level, however, they experience time as sacred, as “a sort of eternal mythical present that is periodically reintegrated by means of rites” (1987, p. 70). In the same manner, Jimmy’s stories about the Crakers’ origins bring the Crakers continuously back to the time which Eliade calls *in illo tempore* (1987, p. 70, emphasis in original), the time of the beginning which bears religious significance.

The narrative’s mythical mode is especially foregrounded towards the end of the trilogy when the survivors, who are all former members of the God’s Gardeners activist movement, now called Maddaddamites by Toby, form an alliance with Jimmy against the two Painballers who represent the impersonation of evil in the novel. Before the great catastrophe, Painball had been a popular game in which criminals were forced to fight for their lives; those who survived were granted their liberty. As a result of the game’s extreme violence, the survivors were known to have lost all traits of humanity and the two Painballers the Maddaddamites have to fight, are significantly three time survivors. Having lost all capacity for mercy and love, they kill a young male member of the Maddaddamites, eat his kidneys and mercilessly rape and beat the girl Amanda. Hiding from the group of survivors, they are waiting to attack any of the members of the group, including the Crakers.

It is specifically in the fight against evil that the narrative increasingly adopts mythical features. The Crakers are told stories in the mythical mode, because they are incapable of comprehending the real world with its evils, but now the narrative itself takes on a mythopoeic mode. When Toby, for instance, worries about Amanda’s mental state, she decides to go to Pilar’s grave and ask the former God’s Gardener member for advice. In order to hear Pilar’s message from the other side, Toby takes a meditation enhancing drug

and at the exact moment when Toby asks Pilar to send her some kind of message, a pigoon sow appears with her five piglets. Apart from the appearance of this genetically spliced species of huge pigs with “human neocortex tissue” in their brains (Atwood, 2013, p. 56), nothing happens and thus the attempt to contact the dead Pilar at first appears like a failure. However, Toby later admits that she had the feeling the sow was speaking to her, telling her that she knew Toby had killed her husband and that she was sad about it. Toby describes the non-verbal communication with the animal as a sort of “current. A current of water, a current of electricity. A long, subsonic wavelength. A brain chemistry mashup” (Atwood, 2013, p. 262).

The theme of extrasensory perception is further developed when the Maddaddamites are approached by a group of approximately fifty pigoons the day following Toby’s meditation. Their purpose is to ask the Maddaddamites for an alliance against the two Painballers who have been slaughtering their young. In return, the pigoons propose to never again attack any of the humans or to plunder their vegetable gardens if they, in turn, agree to stop killing and eating them. This peace offering is proposed through telepathic communication and the little Craker boy Blackbeard acts as a translator between the Maddaddamites and the pigoons. Considering the fact that Atwood prefers to categorize her work within the genre of speculative fiction, because speculative fiction remains more faithful to the realist mode, it seems even more remarkable that in *Maddaddam* she portrays ways of perception impossible to scientifically verify. Although research on extrasensory perception has been extensively undertaken at Duke University during the 1970’s (Slonczewski, 2003, p. 176), it is still not possible to absolutely prove its existence. As such, it seems worthwhile to have a closer look at Atwood’s representation of the relation between the humans, the pigoons and the Crakers.

In order to fight the Painballers, the Maddaddamites, accompanied by the Crakers and two pigoons, set out towards the AnooYoo Spa, where the other pigoons are awaiting them. Their departure from their present habitat is described as “an exodus” (Atwood, 2013, p. 278) and the pigoons are represented in no way inferior to the humans in terms of applying strategies. Once at the AnooYoo Spa, the pigoons inform the humans that the Painballers are moving in the direction of the Paradise Dome and consequently, all those armed with guns and able to fight head out in that direction. The final battle takes place inside the Paradise Dome and when they exit the building with the two Painballers as their captives, they leave behind a place in flame and ruins.

The journey towards the Paradise Dome and the ensuing battle are described by the Craker boy Blackbeard, who adopts the role of story teller to the Crakers and afterwards starts to write down their history. The events pertaining to the final battle are narrated in terms of myth. Even Toby prefers the mythical version she tells to the Crakers to the real version, because the mythical version enhances the heroism and self-sacrifice of those involved in the battle.

When reciting the story in later years, Toby liked to say that the Pigoon carrying Snowman-the-Jimmy flew like the wind. It was the sort of thing that should be said of a fallen comrade-in-arms, and especially one that performed such an important service – a service that resulted, not incidentally, in the saving of Toby’s own life. For if Snowman-the-Jimmy had not been transported by the Pigoon, would Toby be sitting here among them tonight...

So, in her story, the Pigoon in question flew like the wind (Atwood, 2013, p. 350).

Blackbeard’s narration also underscores the relation between realism and myth, for in the Paradise Dome he, for the first time, comes face to face with the pure facts concerning Oryx and Crake. He still vaguely remembers the beautiful Paradise Dome they all once inhabited, before Jimmy had to lead them out to save their lives. Due to the absence of electricity, however, the place has by now lost its Eden-like quality. Bluebeard experiences deep grief when he overhears that the two skeletons lying in front of him actually belong to Oryx and Crake. When he later relates this experience to the Crakers, he does not hide those facts, but transforms them into an acceptable form. After describing his shock after confronting the skeletons, he remarks,

Toby said the bone piles were not the real Oryx and Crake any more, they were only husks, like an eggshell.

And the Egg wasn't the real Egg, the way it is in the stories. It was only an eggshell, like the shells that are broken and left behind when the birds hatch out of them. And we ourselves were like the birds, so we did not need the broken eggshell any more, did we? (Atwood, 2013, p. 360)

It is certainly possible to regard Bluebeard's version as a form of solace, as unreal and therefore not valid, a story made up by those too weak to face reality. However, a close look at the ending of the trilogy illustrates how the mythical mode exceeds, in fact, the function of pure solace. This feature is mainly evident in the way the end of the narrative is linked with the beginning of human history. The link between the end and the beginning is foregrounded when Bluebeard grows into a young man and takes over Toby's writing. He remembers how Toby told him that they should copy Toby's book, "so that we might know all of the Words about Crake, and Oryx, and our Defender, Zeb, and his brother, Adam, and Toby, and Pilar, and the three Beloved Oryx Mothers. And about ourselves also, and about the Egg, where we came from in the beginning" (Atwood, 2013, p. 387).

As such, Bluebeard's account of the events after Toby's death indicates the birth of a new culture. In the first book of the trilogy, in *Oryx and Crake*, the Crakers appear to "personify the end of history," because "They live in a frozen and unchanging moment" (Hollinger, 2006, p. 458), yet in the third book, they have evolved and bear the seeds of a future civilization. Ren, Amanda and Swift Fox all give birth to Craker children, who are taught by Bluebeard to read and write in order to take up and continue the recording of their history. It is significant to note that the way Bluebeard talks about the act of writing suggests a close link with religious scripture, such as the Old Testament. When Bluebeard says, "this is the Book that Toby made when she lived among us," (Atwood, 2013, p. 383), the similarity between his phrase "the Book that Toby made" and the biblical form which names each chapter according to its author is evident. Bluebeard's words evidently foreshadow the beginning of a new culture which, through its references to scripture, such as the departure from the Eden-like Paradise Dome, the exodus towards the AnooYoo Spa or the common agreement not to eat pork, obviously refer to the Old Testament and thus to the early stages of human history. Atwood states that "Ancient myths precede histories and were once thought to *be* histories. They were thought to be true accounts of important matters" (Atwood, 2014, p. 50). In *MaddAddam*, Atwood ironically interweaves myth and history when she makes the story of the Crakers' and the Maddaddamites resemble the readers' religious stories, thereby suggesting that our own past may have originated in a similar manner. Atwood appeals to the readers' imagination and invites them to focus on the essence of the stories rather than the actual facts, implying that they should rather focus on the human qualities discussed. As Atwood states, "As a story, the scientific mythos is not very comforting. Probably that's why it hasn't become wildly popular: we human beings prefer stories that have a central role in them for us, that preserve some of our mystery and thus some of our dignity... The scientific version of our existence on this planet may very well be physically true, but we don't like it much" (Atwood, 2014, p. 50).

It should also be noted that despite the existing parallel between biblical myth and the novels' events, the ending does not suggest that the future is going to identically repeat human history. As Lucy Rowland points out, the survivors create a new form of heterarchy by refusing to apply the pre-apocalyptic world's dualism which divides the human from the non-human (2015, p. 59). According to Rowland, the Maddaddamites' stance towards the Crakers underscores that they "celebrate a cultural (or genetic) difference without ignoring or suppressing that difference" (2015, p. 65).

The Maddaddamites are thus represented as an alternative. While the first two books in the trilogy, *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* emphasize how "the human is reduced by hypercapitalism to become inhuman" (Schmeink, 2016, p. 75), *Maddaddam* foregrounds those qualities which elevate human beings and actually make them human. As Farah Mendlesohn points out, "Extrasensory perception, increased intelligence and increased ethical awareness has, in sf, formed the basic elements in the process of transcendence, of becoming more than human" (2003, p. 272) and this feature is plainly evident in the God's Gardeners who have been devising forms of resistance against an aggressive system intent on turning everything into a commodity. However, as Zeb's story also underlines, the God's Gardeners' activities have

been largely undertaken in secret and although they have been keeping a low profile, they were eventually outlawed. Consequently, their potential to change the system drastically decreased. Carlos Gutierrez-Jones draws attention to the fact that it is ironically the God's Gardeners who provide Crake with the lethal virus which inspires him to annihilate the human race. Pointing out that the God's Gardeners are committed to non-violence, Gutierrez-Jones contends that "the decision to relinquish control of the virus might seem contrary to the extreme" (2015, p. 133). The answer to this puzzle lies in their belief that any form of resistance to this overly controlling system is, in reality, futile. This is also the reason why Crake decides point-blank to replace humanity with an 'improved' non-violent version, as he also seems to have lost his hope in change. Crake's deadly act, however, creates a space for the God's Gardeners to express their full potential for heroism and goodness. As Lucy Rowland points out, through the God's Gardeners, Atwood "emphasizes the importance of maintaining a sense of considered morality in the face of evil" (2015, p. 63). Within this context, it can be said that post-apocalyptic fiction is indeed an appropriate means to provide space for "heroic action that is constrained in the corporate, technological world that we know." Once the old world is destroyed, "true 'values' of individual effort and courage are allowed to emerge once again" (Wolfe, 1983, p. 4).

Conclusion

The *Maddaddam* trilogy thus advocates humanistic ideals in the form of reason and self-determination. The fight with the dangerous Painballers grants the Maddaddamites the chance to express virtues such as courage, loyalty, self-sacrifice, friendship and love and even Jimmy, who had been an irresponsible person throughout his life, sacrifices himself at the end to save Toby's life. The mythical mode of narration may not be faithful to each fact, but it foregrounds the essential qualities of goodness and underscores the timelessness of the clash between good and evil. The trilogy therefore appeals to those qualities which may save mankind from a future destruction, yet considering the world described before the catastrophe, Crake's despair over the commodification of all forms of life seems all too realistic.

Consequently, Margaret Atwood's *Maddaddam* trilogy pleads for the need for a new mindset and hold on to a humanist vision which has been purged of its discriminatory and hence, destructive potential. The trilogy unremittingly moves in a linear direction towards total destruction, yet simultaneously also contains a cyclic structure, as the apocalypse is reconnected with the beginning of human origins. Myth and fantasy are foregrounded in the interlinking of the apocalyptic future with the past of human origins. While the narrative indisputably shares postmodernism's anti-humanist stance, mainly revealed in the relentless direction humanity takes towards total annihilation, it simultaneously advocates humanist values such as self-determination and the moral powers of the human intellect. The work evidently contains a hopeful vision and, as Tom Moylan points out, hope in dystopian fiction empowers readers to escape "to a very different way of thinking about, and possibly about being in, the world" (2000, p. 17). Hope, therefore, is found in humanist ideals as a means of remedy to the bleak future awaiting humanity in view of growing global violence and exploitation.

References

- Atwood, M. (2003). *Oryx and Crake*. New York: Nan A. Talese.
- Atwood, M. (2004). The Handmaid's Tale and oryx and crake "in context". *PMLA*, 119(3), 513-17.
- Atwood, M. (2013). *Maddaddam*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Atwood, M. (2014). *In other worlds: SF and the human imagination*. New York: Virago.
- Bouson, J. B. (2009). It's game over forever: Atwood's Satiric vision of a bioengineered posthuman future in *Oryx and Crake*. In H. Bloom (Ed.), *Margaret Atwood* (pp. 93-110). New York: Infobase Publishing.
- Braidotti, R. (2013). *The posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Brawley, C. (2014). *Nature and the numinous in mythopoeic fantasy literature*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc.
- Chernyshova, T. (2004). Science fiction and myth creation in our age. *Science Fiction Studies*, 31(3), 345-57.
- Davies, T. (2001). *Humanism*. London: Routledge.
- Eliade, Mircea. (1987). *The sacred and the profane: The nature of religion* (W. R. Trask, Trans.). New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.
- Fahim, S. S. (1994). *Doris Lessing: Sufi equilibrium and the form of the novel*. London: Macmillan.
- Fishburn, K. (1988). Doris Lessing's "briefing for a descent into hell": Science fiction or psycho-drama? *Science Fiction Studies*, 15(1), 48-60.
- Foucault, M. (2002). *The order of things: An archeology of the human sciences*. London: Routledge.
- Gray, S. and Lessing, D. (1986). An interview with Doris Lessing. *Research in African Literatures*, 17(3), 329-340.
- Gutierrez-Jones, C. (2015). *Suicide and contemporary science fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Heffernan, T. (2008). *Post-apocalyptic culture: Modernism, postmodernism, and the twentieth-century novel*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Hollinger, V. (2006). Stories about the future: From patterns of expectation to patterns of recognition. *Science Fiction Studies*, 33(3), 452-472.
- James, E. (2003). Utopias and anti-utopias. In E. James et al. (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to science fiction* (pp. 219-29). Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Jameson, F. (1982). Progress versus utopia; or, can we imagine the future? *Science Fiction Studies*, 9(2), 147-158.
- Kermode, F. (2000). *The sense of an ending: Studies in the theory of fiction*. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Le Guin, U. K. (1993). *The language of the night: Essays on fantasy and science fiction*. New York: HarperPerennial.
- Mendlesohn, F. (2003). Religion and science fiction. In E. James et al. (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to science fiction* (pp. 264-275). Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Mousoutzanis, A. (2009). Apocalyptic sf. M. Bould et al. (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to science fiction* (pp. 458-462). London: Routledge.
- Moylan, T. (2000). *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science fiction, utopia, dystopia*. Oxford: Westview Press.
- Palmer, Ch. (2014). Ordinary catastrophes: Paradoxes and problems in some recent post-apocalyptic fictions. In G. Canavan et al. (Eds.), *Green planets: Ecology and science fiction* (pp. 158-175). Middletown: Wesleyan UP.
- Pohl, F. (1997). The study of science fiction: A modest proposal. *Science Fiction Studies*, 2(1), 11-16
- Rabkin, E. S. (2004). Science fiction and the future of criticism. *PMLA*, 119(3), 457-473.
- Roberts, A. (2006). *Science fiction*. London: Routledge.
- Rowland, L. (2015). Speculative solutions: The development of environmental and ecofeminist discourse in Margaret Atwood's *Maddaddam*. *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 40(2), 46-68.
- Schmeink, L. (2016). *Biopunk Dystopias: Genetic engineering, society, and science fiction*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP.
- Slonczewski, J. and Levy, M. (2003). Science fiction and the life sciences. In E. James et al. (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to science fiction* (pp. 174-185). Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Sutton, Th. C. and Sutton M. (1969). Science fiction as mythology. *Western Folklore*, 28(4), 230-237.
- Suvin, D. (1979). *Metamorphoses of science fiction: On the poetics and history of a literary genre*. New Haven: Yale UP.
- Todorov, T. (2002). *Imperfect garden: The legacy of humanism*. Princeton: Princeton UP.
- Wagar, W. W. (1983). Round trips to doomsday. In E. S. Rabkin et al. (Eds.), *The end of the world* (pp. 73-96). Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP.
- Wolfe, G. K. (1983). The remaking of zero: Beginning at the end. In E. S. Rabkin et al. (Eds.), *The end of the world* (pp.1-19). Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP.