

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The ecosystem on which our lives depend is experiencing a drastic decline due to human activities (Begum, 2019). Deforestation, habitat destruction, consumption of fossil fuels, greenhouse gas emissions, industrialization, air pollution, and even consumerism which cause resource depletion are some examples of human activities that destroy nature (Nizzoli, 2023). This change has negative impacts on the safety of the Earth's ecosystem. Disruption of the balance of an ecosystem can cause disaster for all living things that depend on it.

In literature, literary works sometimes represent objects (Young, 2011). It means that literary works that represent environmental conditions are called Ecocriticism. In Ecocriticism, authors of literary works sometimes express their own opinions experiences from what they see in the world into their writing. In England literature, the development of Ecocriticism began with romantic authors and thinkers.

Nature is a fundamental asset to our daily lives. Nature provides the air we need. But humans destroy it with pollution, smog, chemical waste, etc. Those unwanted substances can be very dangerous. Some pollutants are even toxic such as xenobiotics; chemicals that are "alien to living systems". Exploitation is the relentless depletion of species, threatening thousands of people with extinction. Plants and animals are regularly exploited for building materials, fur trade, exotic pets, and food (Covey, 2023). Due to overexploitation, the cultural and ecological landscape began to collapse. While the harvesting of plants and animals occurs for a benefit human industry, it is a

major driver of biodiversity loss. The importance of human awareness of their actions can reduce the negative impact that will occur in the future.

The twentieth century when the writer of the novel *Oryx and Crake*, Margaret Atwood was born was a unique period in human history, and therefore also in environmental history, because it liberated the human spirit and ingenuity, but at the same time caused enormous environmental changes in ideas and politics (Simeonov, 2019). Such pressure will usually lead someone to criticize the situation. Atwood, who is known as someone sensitive to environmental issues, has written several dystopian novels.

Margaret Atwood's writings were influential. She is the only Canadian writer whose 80th birthday in 2019 was celebrated by the global academic community. This is not surprising, as she is the most famous Canadian writer, also popular outside literary circles (Omaz Onic, 2020). This proves that Margaret Atwood's work in literature has been recognized by the environmentalist community.

Oryx and Crake is a dystopian fiction. This is environmental literature, that depicts how the future world loses its ecology, how disasters occur, and how humanity is headed for destruction (Ambika Bhalla, 2014). The story told in this novel is truly unique. A novel that has back and forth plot, the story begins with Snowman (Jimmy) who is lying on the beach waking up from his sleep, which the writer takes readers back to Jimmy's childhood to adulthood. The novel is set in a future after the world has been destroyed by humans. The story follows a character named Snowman, formerly known as Jimmy, who is now one of the last humans on Earth. In this post-apocalyptic world, Snowman lives alone while taking care of a group of genetically engineered creatures

called Crakers, new humans created to replace humans who are considered morally and ecologically corrupt.

In *Oryx and Crake*, due to inappropriate interactions between humans and the environment, many phenomena and changes emerge and appear every day on a wide scale. Earth's climate, geology, and biodiversity are all impacted by these changes (Mohamad, 2022). The literature itself deliberately warns of an impending ecological destruction, evoking a sense of ecological destruction, and ecological awareness, and requires concern for nature and human fate (Agir, 2022).

The people in the novel distance themselves from nature by making pornography a normalized entertainment consumption for students. Among these students, Crake is a science student who hopes to change the world. Crake looks at nature just like a zoo for animals. Nature is seen as something to be limited, and this is the wish of Crake, a corrupt scientist (Guezar, 2023). Crake develops a virus that spreads a global plague and wipes out humanity, leaving Jimmy alone with the Crakers. His rejection of art and ethics was responsible for his failure utopian vision.

Any kind of human activity is considered a significant threat to environment on the planet, because these activities contribute directly or indirectly to climate change and environmental degradation (Joshua, 2020). Climate change is a long-term change in the average weather patterns that determine the local, regional, and global climate of the earth. These changes have far-reaching impacts and are synonymous with the term. Observed changes in the Earth's climate since the mid-20th century have been driven by human activities, particularly the burning of fossil fuels, which have increased levels of

heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere, thereby increasing the average temperature of the Earth's surface (National Geographic Society, 2024).

J. Brooks Bouson explains how Atwood articulates a satirical vision speculates on the dangers of biotechnology in a post-human future (2004). In her “Human/Nature: Ecological Philosophy in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*”, Jayne Glover views this novel as an answer to the problems faced by ecological thinkers and wisely examine how we treat nature as something else (2009).

Unlike other novels that depict control coming from one government or corporations, in *Oryx and Crake* “control comes from science” (Glover, 2009). Atwood employs a kind of parodic discourse to speculate biotechnology crime. This means that scientific experts are to blame degradation and genetic manipulation affecting humans and ecosystems. Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* can be considered an attempt a warning about what could happen if humans continued to do what they were already doing (Bouson, 2004).

In conducting this research, researchers have not discovered anything before research on Margaret Atwood and her works at Universitas Andalas. Researcher chose *Oryx and Crake* as the object of his research because this work was considered a new literary work, and this research work has never been done before. Researcher believe that this work describes current environmental issues, namely environmental damage, especially ecology, and its impact on humans as a group of people who are very dependent on their environment and attitude shown in the novel.

1.2. Identification of the Problems

Basically, Margaret Atwood's work in *Oryx and Crake* is claimed to be ecocritic. The amount of research on ecology in her work is increasing, but not much has been studied about ecological values in *Oryx and Crake*, especially the exploitation of nature in the novel. The researcher found Margaret Atwood's depiction of the act of exploitation in her work *Oryx and Crake* that cause ecosystem destruction and disappear of human life, which the researcher discusses further in this study. Besides that, the researcher also discusses the after-effects of the global pandemic in the novel. The researcher assesses that *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood describes the issue of environmental damage and its impact on public. This activity, worrying about our future, also inspired this novel. This caused many crises for people. On the other hand, this change is also triggered by humans and can happen somewhere on Earth.

1.3. The Review of Previous Studies

The researcher has found several research with the same topic and theory in this research. The previous research provided assistance to the researcher in strengthening the arguments that the researcher wrote.

The article written by Nasreddine el Guezar (2023) was titled "Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*: An Ecocritical Reading" (*The Journal of Literary Criticism*, pp. 35-46). This journal article shows the narrative of *Oryx and Crake* and highlights the consequences of a society that ignores moral values and ethical considerations for the sake of scientific advancement. Snowman's survival symbolizes the potential of art to inspire ecological awareness and foster a sense of belonging to the environment. This paper advocates a collaborative approach between science and the humanities to address

global challenges. However, this research is only general in describing the novel with the morality of its characters, therefore the researcher is very helped in understanding the characters in the novel but finds different ideas in describing the issue.

Gregor W. Schuurman, etc. (2021) in their article titled “Navigating Ecological Transformation: Resist–Accept–Direct as a Path to a New Resource Management Paradigm” (BioScience, Vol. 72, Issue 1, pp. 16–29). This Journal provides the researcher with further understanding of ecology. The study also provides a discussion of how conceptual frameworks shape our understanding of management decisions, especially how these decisions are not only ecological but also social, and their implications for research and management. Even though this journal includes an explanation of ecology, the topic of ecosystem is also discussed much in this journal. So, the researcher needs their data to explain this research.

Monica G. Turner, etc. (2020) wrote an article titled “Climate Change, Ecosystems and Abrupt Change: Science Priorities” (Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B). The journal article provides a further understanding of what ecological is. The author highlights insights emerging from empirical studies of a community and ecosystem service in various ecosystem contingencies, such as ecological memory, frequency and sequence of disturbances, and spatial context. However this research only focus on reality aspects without include literary work. Many data of this research makes valuable input on research ecosystem understanding. So, the researcher can take a lot of data from this journal, and still helpful.

A book written by Ann B. Dobie titled “Theory into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism: third edition” which aims to the researcher to know more about the

theories, especially the theory of ecocriticism. The author also describes the following questions about ecocritism by several questions that match with the researcher's research question, so that the answers obtained are more focused, for example "How is nature affected by human beings in the text?". The book provides explanation of complex theoretical material in a way that does not undermine the original idea by oversimplifying it.

An article by Vasil Simeonov (2019) titled "Environmental History of the Twentieth Century. An Introductory Didactic Course" (Chemistry Didactics Ecology Metrology, 24, pp. 7-21) that declares the sustainability of current human practices is still uncertain. The potential for global ecological collapse is greater because the interconnectedness of modern society does not allow for adaptive strategies that occur on smaller scales. Transition to a more sustainable regime may be fraught with challenges, and the consequences of not taking action could be severe, highlighting the need for proactive action to address environmental issues. Although the development of society in the twentieth century is depicted here, it is not yet specific enough regarding the period and setting.

Tomaz Onic, etc. (2020) in his article titled "Margaret Atwood, World-Famous but Yet to Be Discovered by Many Slovene Readers" (Acta Neophilologica, pp. 33-47), explores Atwood's diverse literary genres. It discusses her contributions to environmentalism and social justice. Although, this journal has not much discussed Atwood's work in the world of literature, but her impact on society. Also, her biography is more dominant in this journal. So, the researcher can take a lot data about Margaret Atwood in their journal.

Ambika Bhalla, etc. (2014) in her writing titled “Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*: An Ecocritical Approach” (International Journal of Research Vol 1, Issue 10, pp. 765-773), applies an ecocritical lens to Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*, highlighting the environmental disasters stemming from human selfishness and Atwood’s concerns for the natural world. It addresses contemporary issues such as global warming, genetic engineering, and the decline of kindness, urging humanity to reform its relationship with nature and each other. Even though this topic has been discussed a lot, researchers found several different topic ideas in their use, such as the idea of exploiting nature which has not been discussed in this article.

Marwa Ahmad Soliman Mohamad (2022) writing titled “Ecocritical Reading of Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*” (Egyptian Journal of English Language and Literature Studies) 11(1), 101-116, aims to define the ecological crisis as presented in the fictional world of Margaret Atwood. Although, this journal only focuses on ecocriticism and its various derivatives. It would be nice if the author included messages in his journal.

Baris Agir’s research (2022) titled “Ecocatastrophe in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*” (Soylem Filoloji Dergisi) The study explores ecocatastrophe in Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*, examines themes of environmental apocalypticism and genetic engineering. The novel also critiques human avarice, consumerism, and population growth. Nevertheless, the explanation in this journal is not very specific on ecological but this journal opens up the researcher’s insight, especially in the theme of the apocalypse. However, this article only focuses on the form of the apocalypse and its causes, the researcher’s idea is to add the impact after the apocalypse from the novel.

An article written by Ariel Kroon (2016) titled “Reasonably Insane: Affect and Crake in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*” (Canadian Literature) pages 18-33, and analyses Affect in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*. It also explores Crake's character as a product of societal norms. However, the discussion in this journal discusses Crake too much, the researcher thinks it would be better if the author describes other characters that also do the treatment which causes natural destruction.

The article written by Jayne Glover (2009) titled “Human/Nature: Ecological Philosophy in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*” (English Studies in Africa 52(2), pp. 50–62), allows for an examination of the ethic of ecological care in the post-modern world that Atwood envisions. by questioning scientist Crake's utopian dreams in the novel. Moreover, the researcher believed the journal's author could convey more information about the relationship between humans and nature.

The researcher would like to take some data from the article who is written by J. Brooks Bouson (2004) titled “It’s Game Over Forever: Atwood’s Satiric Vision of a Bioengineered Posthuman Future in *Oryx and Crake*” (The Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 39(3), pages 139-156, calls attention to the transformative and potentially dangerous power of science and technology in the age in which biotechnology has been created. Even so, this journal has been published for a decade but still relates to the current situation. It's just that researchers need to update their data according to current developments.

1.4. Research Questions

The research questions of this study include:

1. How does the novel represent the exploitation of nature in the *Oryx and Crake*?

2. How does the novel represent after-effects of the global pandemic felt by the main character in the *Oryx and Crake*?

1.5. The Scope of the Research

The scope of this research only covers the study from a novel *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood uses an ecocritical approach to look at the representation of exploitation of nature and the after-effects of global pandemic experienced by the main character Jimmy (Snowman). In concluding the analysis, the researcher applied Ecocriticism to the discourse “apocalypse” by Greg Garrad also a mimetic approach by M. H. Abrams.

1.6. The Objectives of the Research

This research contains two objectives. This study mainly investigates the issue of human destruction due to the exploitation of nature in literary works. The discussion is related to human actions towards nature that can cause ecosystem destruction and its impact after the destruction occurs on the humans left behind.

Furthermore, the purpose of the study involving the formulation of the problem above is to analyze how the author describes human actions that cause environmental damage as described in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and analyze its after-effects on the humans left behind.