

Analyzing Ecological Crisis in the Selected Dystopian Fiction: An Eco-Imperial Study



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Abstract: *Environmental crisis has become one of the most serious concerns in the present time world. Whereas such issues have discussed by environmentalists, biologists and other scientists they have also appealed to literary authors. The present research discusses Canadian author, Margret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and South Asian author, Khalid Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The study analyzes environmental crisis in the wake of pandemic virus and war. Both bring huge destruction and leave notorious impact in the selected texts. The current study utilizes the notions of eco-imperialism and ecofeminism within the broader framework of eco-criticism. The study concludes that both; land and women have been manipulated and environmental crisis resulted due to negligent practices of men.*

Keywords: Environmental Crisis, Eco-Fiction, Pandemic, War

Introduction

Nature has consistently served as a profound source of inspiration for writers. In the contemporary world, where ecological concerns have garnered the interest of scientists, environmentalists, biologists, and others, literary authors have also been called upon to express these topics through their writing. The origins of environmental writings, also known as eco-literature, can be attributed to the works of William Wordsworth and Coleridge in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They perceived the magnificence of nature, encompassing flowers and mountains, as an immensely potent and inspirational force capable of elevating humanity. Ecocriticism encompasses the study of the interconnectedness between the natural world and human society. Ecocriticism is the utilization of ecological principles and concepts in the analysis of literature. Ecocriticism, also

referred to as Green Studies, is a philosophy that has been devised by critics to address ecological concerns. The present research discusses Canadian author, Margret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and South Asian author, Khalid Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The study has employed the framework of postcolonial ecocriticism to analyze the problem of ecological imperialism and address ecofeminist concerns.

Objectives of the Study

To analyze Margret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* in the light of eco-criticism

To discuss Khalid Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* in the light of Eco-imperial theory

Significance of the Study

The researcher anticipates that this research will enhance the diversity of literary work studies, both in practical and theoretical terms. Readers

can enhance their knowledge by reading this research, specifically on environmental matters, and heighten their understanding and concern on the significance of conserving the ecosystem. This research has the potential to enrich the understanding and sources of ecocriticism in future studies within the Faculty of Humanities, particularly for individuals who have a fondness for and value literary works from ecological viewpoints.

Literature Review

The rise of eco-fiction in the 1970s, in tandem with the emergence of various environmental movements, gave birth to a novel field of literary inquiry that forged a connection between the humanities and the natural world. Washington Press released editor John Stadler's anthology *Eco-fiction* in 1971. This collection of environmental science fiction featured renowned authors such as Ray Bradbury, John Steinbeck, Edgar Allen Poe, A.E. Coppard, James Agee, Robert M. Coates, Daphne du Maurier, Robley Wilson Jr., E.B. White, J.F. Powers, Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Sarah Orne Jewett, Frank Herbert, H.H. Munro, J.G. Ballard, Steven Scharder, Isaac Asmiov, and William Saroyan. The chapter titled "Contemporary ecofiction" in *The Cambridge History of the American Novel* defines ecofiction as a broad word that encompasses many fictional works exploring the interplay between natural environments and the human societies inhabiting them. The word arose shortly after ecology gained prominence as a widely accepted scientific framework and a pervasive cultural mindset in the 1960s and 1970s. Eco-fiction, also known as environmentally focused fiction, encompasses subjects such as the influence of humans on the environment, such as climate change, and literature centered on nature. The book *Where the Wild Books Are: A Field Guide to Eco-Fiction* by Jim Dwyer states that eco-fiction encompasses various artistic forms, including film, art, and poetry. However, this website mostly emphasizes novels and short stories.

Various literary works have undertaken a literary investigation of environmental issues. For example, the *Ecological Crisis in Into the Forest* by Jean Hegland, authored by Budi and

Mustofa (2018), demonstrates how the degradation of the earth influences humans and how they respond to it. A thesis titled "An Ecocritical Analysis of Young Adult Dystopian Novel in Veronica Rossi's *Under the Never Sky*" by Azizah (2017) seeks to examine the portrayal of nature and the protagonists' relationship with nature in Veronica Rossi's *Under the Never Sky*. An additional investigation centers on the analysis of metaphor and rhetorical usage (see to Austin, 2020; Masiero, 2020). This study explores the portrayal of trees as entities that transcend the human realm in the novel. In addition, Masiero (2020) examines the two female protagonists through the lens of ecofeminism.

A prior investigation conducted in the field of ecocriticism examines the *Ecological Crisis* portrayed in the novel "Into the Forest" by Jean Hegland. This study was authored by Budi and Mustofa in 2018. The objective of this study is to examine the correlation between the portrayals of the human-nature relationship in Jean Hegland's novel, *Into the Forest*. Concretely, this study puts forth three primary inquiries; 10 (1) How is nature depicted? (2) What is the magnitude of the impact of disaster on human beings? (3) What is the main character's response to the ecological crisis? This study utilizes ecocriticism to examine the relationship between the destruction of the world and its impact on humanity, as well as the corresponding human response. The analysis of this study is structured into three primary sections, each addressing a certain aspect related to the topic at hand. The initial section explores the portrayal of nature in the novel, while the second section examines the influence of the ecological catastrophe. Lastly, the third section delves into the major characters' reactions to the ecological crisis. The study's findings indicate that human desires have a significant impact on the occurrence of ecological crises. The city, with its captivating aesthetics and bustling activity, serves as a prime illustration of environmental exploitation, resulting in detrimental effects on the ozone layer, deforestation, and the depletion of fertile land. Human beings, which generate such problems,

are the ones to overcome the condition. The subsequent scholarly investigation in the field of ecocriticism is a research article titled "An Ecocritical Analysis of the Young Adult Dystopian Novel in Veronica Rossi's *Under the Never Sky*" authored by Azizah et al. in 2017. The researcher utilizes Garrard's theory of ecocriticism to portray Garrard's viewpoint on ecocriticism and the representation of nature through three key concepts: pastoral, wilderness, and apocalyptic.

Deep Ecology posits that the ecosystem takes precedence over all living beings, including humans. Deep Ecologists want to cultivate a type of awareness that places the Ecosystem at the forefront, giving it greater importance than all living beings, including humans. Deep Ecology upholds this principle by elevating itself. It rejects anthropocentric ideology and refutes any claims that view Nature as a sort of human ownership. Social Ecologists maintain that environmental issues are inherently intertwined with social concerns and cannot be isolated from one another. Given that human behavior is primarily influenced by social interactions and cultural elements, it is necessary to examine environmental problems from a socio-cultural standpoint.

Research Methodology

The current study utilizes the notions of eco-imperialism and ecofeminism within the broader framework of eco-criticism. Ecological Imperialism posits that colonialism encompassed not only cultural and political subjugation, but also constituted a manifestation of environmental terrorism. Ecofeminism posits that women and the land are symbolically portrayed as "the other" inside a culture controlled by men. It asserts that women and the environment have endured prolonged oppression and are currently grappling with significant global challenges, including overpopulation and environmental degradation. Ecofeminism posits that women bear the obligation of recognizing the perils associated with the environment and their role in it. The essence and purpose of eco-feminism lie in uncovering the true instigator of the global problem, striving to safeguard oneself, and

preserving the environment. The referential concepts have been used to analyze the selected content of the primary texts.

Discussion

This paper discusses Canadian author, Margret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and South Asian author, Khalid Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns

A Thousand Splendid Suns by Hosseini explores the dynamics of gender interactions, the influence of society cultural institutions, and the historical context of Afghanistan. The story depicts the lives of two women, Mariam and Laila, in a traditional Afghan society that restricts the opportunities and freedoms of women. The novel articulates the story of two stunning and very strong Afghan women- Mariam and Laila who are time and again oppressed by male patriarchal society and they find solace in the lap of nature. In the novel, wars constantly happen in Afghanistan, the fights for power bring disastrous consequences to nature and the land. In the novel, the world changes everything greatly: Russia invades Afghanistan first, and then there are constant civil wars, when finally Taliban takes the ruling charge, the American troop arrives and another war begins.

Throughout the narrative, dominant international and local forces contend to instigate turmoil and devastation in the lives of women, as well as in the nation of Afghanistan. Hosseini's fictional novels demonstrate his preoccupation with ecological matters. By addressing these concerns, he aims to enlighten individuals on the significance of environmental conservation. His primary focus is on documenting the extensive history of Afghanistan, which has been characterized by numerous conflicts. By depicting these conflicts, he effectively illustrates the environmental devastation that occurred in Afghanistan. In addition, he also emphasizes the aesthetic aspects of Afghanistan's natural ecology prior to the wars, which resulted in environmental contamination and destruction. The era preceding Soviet administration in Afghanistan was commonly referred to as the country's

golden age. Hosseini also highlights the condition of people brought about by droughts in Afghanistan. Drought persists throughout Afghanistan, and Laila and Mariam dig a hole in their yard in an attempt to reach water. The Kabul River is dry, and farmers and villagers regularly abandon their homes to try to find a better life in the city. Mariam is now 40 years old, her missing teeth and rough skin attest to a life of beatings and hard work.

Nana served as a domestic worker for Jalil, a wealthy entrepreneur residing in Herat. Jalil impregnates Nana, and upon learning of this, his family insists that he expel her. Nana is even rejected by her own father. She is compelled to go from the town and coerced to reside in a diminutive Kolba, isolated from the remainder of the city. Mariam was raised in a secluded environment, with minimal contact with society. Until the age of fifteen, she would eagerly listen to her father Jalil's captivating tales about Herat, eagerly awaiting his visits on Thursdays. She found it highly improbable to traverse the distance to Herat on foot, observe the renowned minarets from a close proximity, and harvest fruit from the orchards or leisurely wander through the wheat fields of Herat. Nana asserts that she and her daughter are regarded as insignificant and unwanted, much like weeds, by Jalil and his wives. She was a mugwort, a plant considered undesirable and discarded. Mariam's ability to lead a typical life is hindered since her desire to attend school is seen as inconsequential due to her social standing. Mariam exhibits a profound affinity with Nature, as evidenced by numerous moments in the novel where she draws parallels between human experiences and natural phenomena. An instance of this is the act of kissing the hands of Mullah Faizullah. "Mariam tenderly pressed her lips against Mullah Faizullah's hand, which had the texture of delicate branches coated with a thin membrane of flesh" (P.17).

Margret's *Oryx and Crake*

Oryx and Crake predicts a bleak future for humanity as it narrates the actions that have led to this situation. The work delineates the dynamic between Crake and Jimmy, two acquaintances with starkly contrasting

dispositions. Crake is an eccentric yet highly intelligent scientist. He believes that humanity is not only causing severe damage to the ecosystem, but also approaching its own demise. Consequently, he disseminates a pandemic that nearly eradicates the human population. Simultaneously, he produces the Crakers, a novel genetically-enhanced species intended to supplant humanity in the aftermath of the apocalypse. Contrarily, Jimmy places greater importance on culture and art rather than science. Consequently, he depends on the efficacy of language to navigate through life. He is among the few remaining individuals who survived the pandemic and has the duty of caring for the Crakers, a group of newly created beings that find themselves in a disorderly world created by humans. Oryx and Crake suggests that a fundamental alteration of certain human behaviors is essential to counteract the ecological devastation of the earth. Several opponents have cautioned against the ecological repercussions of activities that are basically human in nature. The novel demonstrates the uncontrollability in these words, "The whole world is now one vast uncontrolled experiment...and the doctrine of unintended consequences is in full spate" (P, 275).

Evidently, the current state of ecological imbalance has reached a critical juncture, necessitating crucial decisions to ensure the survival of the living world. The novel *Oryx and Crake* effectively portrays the grim state of the ecosystem right from the outset. According to Jimmy, during his childhood, the coastal aquifers became saline, the northern permafrost thawed, and the extensive tundra emitted methane. Additionally, there was a prolonged drought in the midcontinental plains regions, the Asian steppes transformed into sand dunes, and obtaining meat became more challenging. Undoubtedly, the current situation of the world is primarily attributable to human actions, as Jimmy infers from the correlation between these incidents and the occurrence of new technical advancements in various organizations. Moreover, the following lines reveals the ecological disaster, "The city was a chaos, filled with people and cars and noise and bad smells

and a language that was hard to understand...rolling them up neatly was the first thing the new children had to learn” (P. 155). In the novel, ecological imperialism works through genetic modification, division of society and scientific development.

Conclusion

The study reveals that the modern world seems to be paradoxical; progressing and declining. The study shows impact of war and pandemic causing environmental crisis. Moreover, the study demonstrates that ecology is the most sensitive issue: result of collective negligence and to be resolved the same way. The study also exposes ecological imperialism; environmental colonization which works as a modern form of subjugation. Moreover, due to unchecked negligent practices, those causing environmental issues, of men women are being double marginalized; by men and by the environment men created.

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