

Devastating Environmental Degradation and Genetic Engineering in Margaret Atwood's the Year of the Flood

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Abstract

Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* (2009) is a novel about extremism and confrontation in America more clearly than any of her earlier books. The scope of *Oryx and Crake* (2003) has been dramatically expanded by *The Year of the Flood*, which takes place in the same dismal future. *The Year of the Flood*, a “simultaneous” that builds on *Oryx and Crake*'s tale and offers a more comprehensive range of critical viewpoints on capitalism and collapse, develops the story by telling it from several points of view. This paper explores a dystopian world marked by rampant genetic engineering and devastating environmental degradation, portraying the consequences of humanity's manipulation of nature.

Keywords: biodiversity, ecosystem, bioengineering, Crake

Introduction

When one remembers that Atwood has softened the language of the internet while simultaneously making it cleverer by adding puns, one of the tricks she employs in her book is to use the phonetic shorthand of text messages appropriately. As she enters this atmosphere of anti-utopian pessimism, Atwood is aware that she is an inscription in a genre with a rich history. The dystopian settings of these two books read like a tribute album, with overt allusions to Orwell and Huxley and hint at *Soylent Green* (1973) and *Dr. Strangelove* (1964). *The Bible* and *Blake* are also frequently referenced by Atwood, and her more traditional literary allusions support the enclosure of speculative fiction within the ranks of high literature if such a case still needs to be made in the twenty-first century.

Finally, although winning the Booker in 2000 for *The Blind Assassin*, Atwood has long been fascinated with dystopia. Her book, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), is her most well-known work. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* deliver something different than *The Handmaid's Tale*, even though books may belong to the same genre. The books give a more profound socioeconomic and technological critique of modern society. The scope of Atwood's books spans the entire planet, but they are primarily American. The final remnants of the public sphere have been privatized, strangled, and then replaced by the government as it shrivels in her futuristic vision.

Margaret Atwood's second novel, MaddAddam is a trilogy, following “Oryx and Crake,” is “The Year of the Flood.” It was released in 2009 and takes place in the same dystopian setting but from a

different viewpoint and with a different cast of characters. Through the eyes of Toby and Ren's two principal characters, *The Year of the Flood* tells its tale. It takes place around the same period as *Oryx and Crake* but focuses on the experiences of two women who were part of a sect known as God's Gardeners, which is committed to protecting nature and worshipping the Earth. As they recall their involvement with God's Gardeners and the events that brought them to the present, the story alternates between their pasts and present-day battles to survive in the chaos that followed civilization's fall. The dystopian world's history is explored in greater detail in *The Year of the Flood*, providing additional information about the people and things first presented in *Oryx and Crake*. The themes covered include environmentalism, animal rights, corporate power, and the effects of unrestricted scientific experimentation. In her books, Atwood vividly depicts a society in ruins, torn apart by social injustice, brutality, and environmental degradation. The world-building and concepts from *Oryx and Crake* are further developed in this book while introducing fresh viewpoints and characters. The series' concluding book, *MaddAddam*, comes after it and ties the plots of *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* together in a dramatic way. Margaret Atwood's novel *The Year of the Flood* features genetic engineering and environmental degradation as significant themes that significantly impact how the dystopian society is shaped. These interrelated topics influence the story's depiction of society's decline.

Corporations and genetic engineering

The novel depicts a future in which genetic engineering has reached extremes, leading to the development of hybrid animals and genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Businesses use bioengineering to generate novel species for various uses, such as medications and food production. The genetically modified human-like creatures Crakers, the fictional figure Crake constructed in *Oryx and Crake*, also appear in *The Year of the Flood*. Although their genetic alterations have eliminated negative features like aggression and overwhelming sexual inclinations, they can still not fully comprehend human history and emotions. Corporations use extensive genetic engineering in the novel to produce unique species that serve various functions. These include breeding animals to produce meat, creating bioengineered animals for novelty and fun, and even developing new species resembling humans called Crakers to eradicate humanity.

Throughout the narrative, there are references to bioengineered animals produced through genetic engineering. These creatures, such as pigoons (pigs with human organs for transplantation), rakunks (a cross between raccoons and skunks), and wolvogs (a hybrid of wolves and dogs), have been modified to fit human wants or desires. A notable genetic engineering invention is The Crakers. They are a brand-new species of human-like creatures created by the fictional character Crake. Crake made them submissive, herbivorous, and devoid of many undesirable characteristics that contributed to the collapse of the former human society. The Crakers' knowledge of global history is limited, and their ideas and actions are shaped by the instructions they receive from their makers.

The novel explores the moral conundrums raised by genetic engineering. Characters raise moral concerns about designing organisms for specific goals, interfering with evolution, and playing "God" with the natural world. Concerns about unbridled scientific progress and the potential for unexpected repercussions are sparked by the ability to modify genes.

Environmental degradation

Environmental deterioration and genetic engineering are closely related. According to the novel, extensive gene engineering is to blame for the loss of biodiversity, ecosystem disruption, and general environmental imbalance. *The Year of the Flood* explores genetic engineering and poses challenging queries about the limits of technology, the duties of scientists and corporations, and the potential repercussions of changing the natural environment. The book explores the conflict between environmental protection and technological progression and how these changes affect individuals and their society.

The novel presents a grim picture of the environmental damage brought on by people's irresponsible behaviour. Extreme climate change, pollution, deforestation, and biodiversity loss result from unbridled corporate expansion and disdain for the environment. The environment is shown as being harmed by dangerous chemicals, widespread urbanization, and a lack of resources. The characters' difficulties are set against this degradation, which adds to the overall feeling of hopelessness and vulnerability.

The novel's depiction of the God's Gardeners, an eco-religious movement, shows them staunch opponents of corporate-sponsored genetic engineering and environmental destruction. They stress the significance of protecting the environment, engaging in sustainable agriculture, and coexisting peacefully with the planet. Atwood's investigation of alternate approaches to the environment and one another in a world where these destructive forces have altered is reflected in the group's teachings and practices. The story also explores the difficulties of ethics and the effects of scientific progress. The story explores the moral implications of genetic engineering, the fallout from tampering with nature, and the hazy borders between humans and other forms of life.

Conclusion

Atwood's novel *The Year of the Flood* imagines a future in which many species have vanished due to habitat loss, pollution, and genetic engineering. The diversity of plant and animal life has decreased due to the erosion of the once-rich tapestry of nature. The characters remember extinct species while emphasizing the consequences of humanity's activities, which are unavoidable.

Corporate Dominance and Pollution: In the novel, businesses put their financial interests ahead of their environmental responsibilities. They participate in activities that contaminate the Earth, water, and air, creating poisonous environments and unsanitary living circumstances. The health of both the natural world and human populations, as well as the degradation of ecosystems, are impacted by these practices.

Environmental degradation-related extreme weather occurrences and climate change are both mentioned in the novel. Floods, droughts, and other natural disasters now affect the protagonists' lives since the climate has grown unpredictable and severe. It indicates how the climate system on the globe has been affected by human activity more generally.

Urban Desolation: The urban environments in the book are portrayed as desolate and lifeless, with vacant buildings and dirty streets. Urban surroundings are deteriorating at a similar rate as the natural world, highlighting the interdependence of human society and the environment.

God's Gardeners: God's Gardeners are a religious sect that offers an alternative viewpoint on the environment. They support a return to a more straightforward way of life, environmentally conscious

living, and respect for the environment. The group's teachings reflect the character's understanding of the necessity of repairing the bond between people and the environment.

The Year of the Flood is a cautionary tale on the effects of humanity's disdain for the natural world by presenting a world marred by environmental degradation. The book challenges readers to contemplate their contribution to environmental protection and the possible effects of unregulated industrialization, consumerism, and resource exploitation. In general, "The Year of the Flood" combines environmental destruction and genetic engineering as vehicles to comment on current events and warn about the possible repercussions of unrestrained technological and environmental manipulation. The novel's depiction of God's Gardeners, a religious eco-cult, suggests that God's Gardeners' beliefs and practices offer a potential answer to the problems caused by irreversible environmental deterioration and unrestrained genetic engineering. This group promotes environmentally friendly living, reverence for the natural world, and a return to customary methods of interacting with the environment. Their teachings strongly emphasize the ethical treatment of all living things, good stewardship of the planet, and coexistence with nature. By embracing these principles, society can work to reduce the harmful effects of genetic engineering and environmental deterioration, promoting a more harmonious and sustainable coexistence between people and the rest of nature.

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