

Atwood's representation of lack of environmental ethics in the novel *The Year of the Flood*

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ABSTRACT

This work seeks to gather evidences of lack of environmental ethics in the novel *The Year of the Flood* of the Canadian writer Margaret Atwood. In this novel there is a presence of controlling power, which acts as the right hand of Corporations to manipulate humans and nature through the misuse of technology and other important aspects of the environmental ethics. This analysis has the task of recognizing and interpreting Atwood's perspective about the relationship between human beings and nature from an ecocritical approach. The analysis led us to highlight Atwood's conception of recovery of the Earth and the reflection of respect towards all beings of the world, as well as the understanding of the fact that between nature (including living and non-living beings) and human beings there is no superiority; however, Nature, the mother of all, is dying because of our hand. The results show that in Atwood's novel is a warning: She calls for attention in the name of the beings that cannot talk and the Earth itself, which is receiving the worst part of men's behavior: destruction and decay.

Introduction

Throughout the history of humanity, different cultures have spread apocalyptic visions of the end of the world. They represent it as an almost inescapable destiny that includes the disappearance of the human being and with him, all form of life that inhabits our planet. The great earthquakes, the great floods, the wars, the famine, the deaths by unknown diseases, the great droughts, etc., are only part of those visions that most of us, today, see as good arguments for science fiction movies. As the skeptics would say, the end of the world is far away; it is only sensationalist information to scare the unwary. Furthermore, it will have to wait, because the human being is very busy disappearing large areas of forests and jungles to build golf fields or thousands of houses to be occupied immediately by thousands of people who, simultaneously, are polluting soils and freshwater reservoirs and seas due to their industrial and domestic activities.

Nevertheless, we cannot “bury our head in the sand.” These apocalyptic scenarios are not far from being a reality, and not because it is the destiny of man as such and because an individual says so, but because it seems that the human being has strived to make this become a fact sooner than we think. Taking into account the unbridled pace we lead, the peculiar way of life we have, and the zillions of people already living on planet Earth, it is not difficult to infer what would happen in the near future if we do not change our way of life. Taking all this into consideration, our work analyzes one of the novels by Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*. Generally, this book is classified as an apocalyptic and

fiction novel; however, as Atwood herself clarifies, this novel is more a speculative-fiction novel, since it plays with the reality and the so-near future of society. Unquestionably, climate change and the increase in global temperature, which at the same time affects the hydrological cycles in our planet, are not prophecies. They are a reality documented in more than one scientific study of the effects that are already observed and are perceived today in our planet due to human activities. Moreover, these studies warn that this rate will continue to expand unless a solution is given.

Currently, there is a great concern for the care of the environment worldwide. A large number of people are beginning to become aware of the importance of caring for ecosystems. Atwood is considered one of the voices that are making people aware of the importance of having an environmental mentality. Hence, the aim of this literary analysis is to gather evidences of Atwood's representation of lack of environmental ethics in the novel *The Year of the Flood*, and to study how this lack of environmental ethics has led to human decline. From an ecocritical perspective we will analyze the objectives proposed. In order to carry out the tasks, some elements of Stylistics, Narratology, and Close Reading will be used as tools. Below we will explain how this work is organized.

First of all, there are chapter one and chapter two, which include the objectives of this work, and its methodology respectively. In chapter three, Margaret Atwood is described as a writer and an ecologist. Chapter four is a review of *The Year of The Flood* to put the reader into context. Chapter five contains the related work. In this section it is important to explain that

in the national context we only found a work about this writer; this situation may be may be because Atwood is not well-known in our country yet, and because this kind of literature is almost unexplored. On the contrary, in the international context, she is well known both in the academic and in the artistic fields. We found some theses and articles about environmental issues that are related to ours; nevertheless, the topic that we explore in this work has not been widely analyzed. In Chapter six we define the most important concepts that have direct relationship with the novel and with the analysis itself. Therein the reader can have a better understanding of different concepts such as: Speculative Fiction, Ecocriticism, Dystopian Literature, Stylistics, Narratology, Close reading, Ethics, and Eco-phenomenology.

Chapter seven is composed by the literary analysis that contains different segments of the novel, which have been analyzed in detail using different linguistics elements and mainly from the ecocritical approach. Those selections are divided into categories like the role of Corporations in the novel with its sub-categories, and the interpretation of the environment in relationship with society and its correspondent sub-categories. In chapter eight, the reader will be presented with the results found in the analysis according to the objectives of the study.

Finally, in chapter nine, the reader will find the conclusions of this work. This section contains a brief review of the findings of the work, as well as the contribution, then a dialogue between our work and the most relevant related work presented in its correspondent section, and finally the possible lines of research from the ecocritical approach to study Atwood's trilogy.

Justification

This work is carried out with the interest of exploring a new line of literary research, namely *ecocriticism*. In our immediate context, this branch of literary investigation has not been widely explored yet; this situation and the fact that there are no guidelines for this type of literary interpretation and analysis make this research a challenge for us. Furthermore, the importance of this monograph lies on the recognition of Margaret Atwood's intention to provide a reflection on men's behavior towards nature. Her voice is an authoritative one, given that currently she is the most recognized and awarded writer who has written about and from this environmental perspective. Now, surprisingly, this kind of literature and literary approach, which focuses on the environment, is considered by some writers, litterateurs, and scholars as "useless nonsense." Nevertheless, with this work, we want to show the richness and importance that this ecocritical approach gives to society by raising awareness of the importance of taking care of nature and, how, through literature, writers can accomplish this goal.

1. Objectives

1.1. General objective

To gather evidences of Atwood's representation of lack of environmental ethics in the novel *The Year of the Flood*.

1.2. Specific

- To analyze the role of corporations to the damage of the environment in Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*.
- To interpret the relationship of the human being with nature in Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*.

2. Methodology

This work aims to gather evidences of Atwood's representation of lack of environmental ethics in the novel *The Year of the Flood*. In order to achieve this goal, we designed a methodology that enabled us to interpret the novel mainly from the ecocritical perspective, but also to incorporate useful notions and principles from three traditional approaches: close reading, stylistics, and narratology.

Close reading, as a procedural approach, allowed us a detailed and critical analysis of the text. By reading and re-reading the novel, we selected the meaningful passages that were to compose the corpus.

After the corpus was constructed, we analyzed it following some aspects provided by Stylistics. They helped us to identify the most important elements of environmental ethics through the analysis of language in the novel. Some of the tools taken from Stylistics to analyze the passages are: metaphor, connotation, irony, and simile.

Additionally, some elements of Narratology were taken into account in order to address the analysis from the ecocritical perspective. Specifically, elements of fiction like Narrative Voice or Point of View, Setting, and Characterization were used to get the meaning of the writer's ideas in the analysis.

In brief, to choose the segments to build the corpus, the steps below were followed:

- 1) A general reading of the book to identify the characters and the plot.
- 2) Identification of the main categories that were relevant for this work.
- 3) A second reading to select the passages of the analysis.
- 4) Creation of a corpus that gathers the material collected.
- 5) Classification by the categories used for this work.
- 6) Analysis of each segment using some tools of Stylistics and Close Reading, and then the ecocritical perspective.

Finally, the categories we analyzed are:

- The role of Corporations related to the lack of environmental ethics:
 - Control of Corporations
 - Image of Corporation vs reality
 - Corporations attacking nature
 - Nature altered by technology
- Environmental elements in Atwood's novel:
 - A misunderstanding of the environment
 - The Gardeners Cult: An environmental mentality

It is important to clarify that the present work does not pretend to be a Narratological or Stylistic analysis. Rather, we used the tenets and basic elements of Narratology and Stylistics as tools to interpret in depth what the author seems to say about environmental ethics in the novel. Like any

novel, *The Year of the Flood* contains hidden messages between the lines; this is the reason why this work aims to “unpack” the perspective she wants to share with her readers through the analysis and interpretation of the language and the narrative universe in this novel mainly from an ecocritical approach. To summarize this, we propose the following figure:

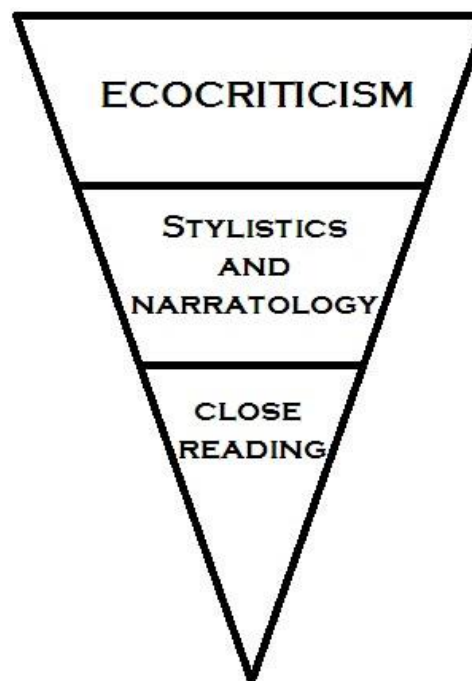


Figure 1.

How Stylistics, Narratology, and Close reading are tools to accomplish a literary ecocritical approach.

3. About the Author

Atwood has become the most prominent Canadian writer of the past several decades. Her novels have become international best sellers, and her work as a writer of poetry, fiction, and critical essays is highly regarded by academics. In addition, she has become a strong voice for women, the environment, and for human rights in general. (Ingersoll, E. G. 2016)

Margaret Eleanor Atwood was born on November 18, 1939 in Ottawa, Ontario. She is a poet and a literary critic. Atwood spent part of her early years in Quebec, but later her family moved to Toronto when she was seven. There, she received her undergraduate degree from Victoria College at the University of Toronto, where she studied English with minor in philosophy and French, and then she received her master's degree from Radcliffe College, Cambridge in Massachusetts.

Afterwards, Margaret obtained an MA in 1962 at Harvard University. Atwood, additionally, had a recognized career as a teacher at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver (1964-65), Sir George Williams University, now Concordia University in Montreal (1967-1968), and York University in Toronto (1971-72).

Her parents, a nutritionist mother and an entomologist father, fostered her interest in nature. The orientation of her family was scientific. Her parents were from a different culture in the fifties, since they were only interested in the education of their daughter and they did not want her to follow the same patterns of women in that time (i.e., marriage, house duties, etc). In brief, they were more interested in encouraging Margaret to explore her intelligence and abilities instead of any other thing (Howells, 2006).

According to Howells (2006), she began to write at the age of five, but it was when she was sixteen that she realized that her goal was to be a writer. Despite the dark time in the twentieth century, and the common belief that no woman could write, she continued doing it. In Canada there was no poetry or any kind of literature published during the fifties: writers had to publish their books elsewhere; however, Atwood made her first foray into Canadian Literature at Victoria College.

In 1961, Margaret won the E.J Pratt Medal for her collection of poems named *Double Persephone*. Then, she published some other books about poetry, such as: *Talismans for children* (1965), and *The animals in that country* (1968). Nevertheless, it was in 1969 when she published her first novel *The edible woman*.

Atwood was always worried about Canadian literature, since in that time there were few contributions to this literature. She published *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* in 1972. At that time it was considered the most original book ever written about Canadian literature. In *Survival*, Atwood argues that the central theme of Canadian literature, and culture as a whole, is survival, whether that is against the forces of nature or the forces of history, and that the paradigmatic character is the victim, which poses a problem for the development of a distinctive and positive Canadian identity. Atwood shapes these themes throughout her novels and stories. (Barbara Godard, April 3, 2015 taken from <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca>)

Around that same year, Atwood published her second novel *Surfacing*, where the author started mixing the themes of nature, technology and politics, which later she would use to write one of her best novels: *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). This work allowed Atwood to introduce herself in the dystopian and so-called-by-her speculative fiction.

According to Atwood, she does not write science-fiction, as many critics consider. “I write about something called the future, which is a wonderful thing to write about because nobody can check it.” (Atwood, 2012) She names her work as “speculative fiction,” which is the fact of seeing literature from the view of the question “What if?”. This question points out the relationship between the human being and technology, and the probabilities of changes in the real world that could be born from this relationship. Margaret allows readers to understand the necessity of doing things to improve the Earth conditions and life in general “before it is too late” in line with the measure of the evolutionary developments in individual lives. (Bartosch, 2013, p.242)

Atwood plays with what has been invented already, mixing different concepts, creating a hypothetical future. In other words, she uses what is in her disposition to develop an already-created concept. In comparison with science fiction, in speculative fiction new or modified inventions are possible to be seen in the real world in a next future; meanwhile, in sci-fi all creations are not going to be seen in reality: “speculative fiction encompasses that which we could actually do. Sci-fi is that which we’re probably not going to see.” (Atwood, 2009, cited by S. Thill, 2009)

Some of the works in which Atwood develops this idea of speculative fiction are *Cat’s Eye* (1989), *The blind assassin* (2000), and one of the most recognized works: *The MaddAddam Trilogy* that includes *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The year of the flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013). Some others are *The Penelopiad* (2005) and *The Tent* (2006). In addition, she published a book of essays to look at the implications of sci-fi and fantasy genre writing. This book is called *In Other Worlds: SF and Human Imagination* (2011).

Atwood has developed an ecocritical aspect in her novels. She has repeatedly made observations about human-beings relationship with the environment in her works. Some of her novels present the vision of post-natural worlds, i.e., worlds with little or no nature at all and their consequences, thus they formulate a critique of this state (Bartosch, 2013, p.221). She has been interested in ecocriticism since the 1960s; for instance, the change of the Earth’s temperature and its irredeemable repercussions is one of the topics that this writer reflects in her books.

In addition, she includes in her novels other topics such as pollution, over-population, social inequalities in relation with the environment, etc.

Through the novels in which the relationship between the human being and nature is shown, she invites readers to think about a world where human beings can live in harmony with nature. For instance, in *The MaddAddam Trilogy*, Atwood followed the more recent line of ecocriticism which has attempted to look at how literature can influence ecology in very concrete ways.

Atwood indeed presents strong metaphors and forms of representation that employ a critique of environmental devastation and the threat a post-natural environment may pose to human beings and animals alike (Bartosch, 2013, p 224). She makes use of both ethical and environmentalist discourses in her works. Following the environmental mentality that Atwood employs in her text, she proposes a re-thinking of what it means to be human (Bartosch, 2013, p 252).

Undoubtedly, Margaret Atwood is one of the most representative authors in literature that embraces the ecocriticism approach. Through her novels, readers can reflect and critique their actions, the way in which they live, and how these aspects affect the environment and the future of the human-beings, just as Bartosh (2013) considers when he “reassess the evolutionary commentary that informs Atwood’s novel as the vantage point for critique.” In her works Atwood makes the difference between writing about nature and writing ecocritically. The latter means she does not only portrait nature as a scenario of stories, but also she writes stories in relationship with nature and its place in reality, thus she develops a possible scenario where the

misuses of natural resources has led to human's own apocalypse. This allows the analysis of the facts, of things that are happening in the real world nowadays, the superficial state of mind of the people, and the most important: the sorts of destruction that the technology and the extreme abuse of the environment are causing in the world.

Atwood is a great realistic author who combines her creativity, dystopian worlds, and the crude reality of the near future. She gives the opportunity to think, not only to read, but to change and make good things for the world, especially the environment. Besides making the reader enjoy her works, she makes them be aware of the question: "What if?"

4. The Year of the Flood

The year of the flood is a novel published in 2009. Margaret describes her work as speculative fiction. In Atwood's essay collection, *Moving Targets*, she says that everything that happens in her novel is possible and may even have already happened, so it can't be science fiction.

The year of the flood is the second novel of the trilogy. The plot takes place in a future not too far from the actual time period, and on planet Earth. It represents a future society in advanced decadence. The Corporations control everything; the government does not exist anymore. There are only two social classes, the compounds and the Pleeblands. The pleebrats (inhabitants of the Pleeblands) are always in a daily struggle to survive while the compounders are hidden in their protected areas wasting all natural resources.

The story involves a story that begins with the assumption that most of the human race has been destroyed through a very fast spreading humanly created hemorrhagic virus, but left are the three protagonists whom the readers follow during the story and who have managed to survive. One of them is called Toby, who is an older woman associated with God's Gardeners; the second one is called Ren, a younger woman who survives by being in the quarantine room of a high-end sex club called Scales and tails. The third is the leader of the God's Gardeners' cult, Adam One, an extremely green vegetarian recycling man who lives in gardens on slum rooftops.

As it is said before, Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* guides the reader through the life of two female characters and their relation with a religious group called the God's Gardeners; besides, the book shows the reader the reaction of these two women to a present pandemic that has ended with almost every human being. In this novel, the reader can see how the author combines different apocalyptic and religious issues (especially Christian and environmental elements).

While Ren, a young girl and one of the narrators of the story, was a member of the Gardener's community since she was a kid, Toby, an adult woman and the other narrator of the story, resentfully joined the group when she was offered shelter by their leader, Adam One, as a consequence of her being sexually assaulted by her boss. Some years passed and Toby reached the position of Eve Six in the Gardeners' governing hierarchy, but then she had to change her look and name and quit the cult due to some threats of her old boss. Ren also left the Gardeners but earlier than Toby. She was carried away from the religious group at her parents' separation and was forced to adapt to the "external world," ending up working as an exotic dancer. In the aftermath of the pandemic these two women are forced to struggle to survive; the reader can also have a view of other survivors through the speech of Adam One. In the aftermath of the plague, or the "Waterless Flood," as it is called by the Gardeners, the two girls meet again and then catch up with the other flood's survivors.

At the end of the story, Toby and Ren meet Snowman and the Crakers who were the main characters in the first novel of the trilogy.

5. Related work

This section presents the previous researches related to *The Year of the Flood*. Since the main objective of our work is not a common one (ethics and the environment), we could not find many works related to it, especially in Colombia. First, we will present what we found in the local and national context and then in the international. All of these works are organized firstly as theses, and then as articles.

5.1. Local and National Context

After a deep research, in relation to Atwood's work, through the different resources available in Cali, and in Colombia the results were few, almost non-existent. However, the only work found, which is a thesis, was very helpful to the process of writing this analysis.

Maglioni (2017) investigated Margaret Atwood's perspectives and stances on genetic modification in the Dystopian Fiction *Oryx and Crake*. In this work, Maglioni (2017) wanted to collect some evidence of Atwood's perspective and stance on genetic modification of animals and food presented in the novel *Oryx and Crake*, and he did it by following the ecocritical approach which was supported with Stylistics as a secondary approach.

This author divides the analysis into four sections. In the first section, *The Crakers: the ultimate creation*, he addresses the story of the creation of the Crakers by the hand of Crake. He selects some meaningful fragments from the book to analyze this issue.

In the second section, *Bioengineered Animals: Scientists playing God*, Maglioni tackles the bio-engineering of several new species of animals by scientists who felt full of power to genetically manipulate the existent species in order to create new ones. To address this issue, he develops this second section through some extracts from the book, where Atwood expresses her perspective about responsibility, consequences, and facts of separation of the human being from the importance of nature.

In the third section, *Modified food: removing the animality*, the author analyzes genetically modified organisms and gene splicing in the novel, which were some of the most important topics in the first book of the trilogy. Finally, in the fourth section, *Pharmaceutics: exterminating all diseases, creating new ones*, he tackles this issue from the perspective of the ethics behind pharmaceutics. As first example, he mentions the BlyssPluss pill that was created by Crake, and also the role of HelthWyzer in the trilogy. The latter was a company that was in charge of both providing medicines to attack current diseases, and creating new ones so that they could create new medicine and sell it as the cure; in other words, for the benefit of the business.

Another example that Maglioni (2017) uses to show the manipulative power of pharmaceutics is the modification that Crake made in order to exterminate the human race around the world by inserting a hemorrhagic and assassin virus in the pills.

Maglioni (2017) considers that the language that Atwood used in the novel is evidence of her discontent with genetic modification when it is used as a resource that replaces some important elements of nature. In addition, he reflected about the problems that people can cause by using their scientific knowledge for their own benefit in a world where marketing is ruling several aspects of human-beings' lives, namely consumerism.

This work is closely related to ours considering the author's analytic perspective and the importance given to ethics in our relationship with nature. In the trilogy, it is common to perceive Atwood's criticism of the manipulation of nature for the benefit of men; in addition, the role of corporations in the degradation of values when using the natural resources in the real world.

5.2. International Context.

Most of the works found related to Atwood's novel were focused on different topics, especially feminism; however, here some relevant works that support the themes reflected in this analysis are exposed.

According to the analysis presented in this work, ethic is a subject recognized by its susceptibility in all the three books of the MaddAddam trilogy. As Tyler Dinucci expressed in his these *The Body of Margaret Atwood: Sex Work and Prostitution within Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale, Oryx and Crake, and The Year of the Flood*.

Dinucci (2011) investigated the concept of the body according to Margaret Atwood and the role of sex work and prostitution in her novels. He argues that in her dystopian novels the author shows that women are not obligated to follow a prostitution and sex work choice in such a world with gender equality. However, from a modern conservative philosophy, those issues are incompatible with gender equality; this means that women in the conservative perspective do not have options to choose, and sex work is an easy exit.

In his work, Dinucci divided the study into three chapters. The first one is about the role of women within *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Oryx and Crake*, and *The Year of the Flood*. This role is essential to Atwood's dystopian novels. Her protagonists show an evolution in Atwood's thoughts on women and the feminist movement. The second one deals with the role of sex work within Atwood's dystopias. This chapter examines how Atwood uses three characters, Offred,

Oryx, and Ren, to introduce the current dialogue, taking into account that all of them have experienced sex work in different ways, and while each was able to use her sexuality for small gains, each was forced to become a sex worker because of the choices presented to her.

Finally, the last chapter is about the concepts of Social Conservatism, Fiscal Conservatism, and Patriarchy. Dinucci (2011) defines social conservatism as the idea that government organizations should be used to pursue an agenda promoting traditional religious values, such as public morality, and opposing immoralities such as abortion, prostitution, and homosexuality. This chapter also defines fiscal conservatism as an agenda promoting privatization of the market, deregulation, lower taxes, with importance placed on individualism.

According to the findings of this analysis, Atwood shows sex work and prostitution as a result of the diminishing options for women who are poor or powerless and wish for a better life. Besides, Atwood places the inequalities of women under a microscope through dystopian literature. The characters of Offred, Oryx, and Ren are more than just characters; they also represent women in society who have been wronged by the seemingly innate patriarchy instilled within both people and society. Another finding is that Atwood continues to provide a provocative critique of modern society through her dystopian novels, using the genre to create compelling social commentary.

As in our work, the theme of ethics and the devaluation of the human being are some of the aspects to analyze in Atwood's novel *The Year of the Flood*, this study allowed us to have a view about the women values in her dystopian novels, and how patriarchy has helped to degrade the role of women in a supposed true gender and class equality.

Another thesis was *Coughing and Sneezing to the end of the world: Apocalyptic pandemic narratives in the 21st century*. It is a thesis submitted by Luke Daniel Schut to the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS. Here, Schut investigates the purpose of apocalyptic disease narratives in the 21st century. To accomplish this investigation, he analyzed two major works: Danny Boyle's film *28 Days Later* and Margaret Atwood's *Maddaddam* trilogy (only *Oryx and crake* & *The year of the Flood*). Moreover, in the analysis of Atwood's *Maddaddam* trilogy he explored the connections between contemporary technophobia and apocalyptic plague, leading into an examination of the post-apocalyptic scenarios presented after the plague in the *MaddAddam* (Schut, 2013). The first chapter is called "*On apocalypses*". In this chapter Schut investigated how the pandemic disease scenario is used to explore both the fears and desires of modern culture. Schut emphasized the innate ability of human beings to destroy themselves and how science and technology play a good part in this destruction. Although technology appeared to be mankind's savior, it gave humans the ability to destroy the world easily and cheaply (Schut, 2013). The author also showed the importance of apocalyptic narratives and how it forced human civilization to recognize the possible end of life and to find a fast solution to save humanity and the planet.

The next chapter, *Current events and the contemporary relevance of the disease narrative*, treated the disease as a reality; as technology and the global economy began to accelerate and enable the natural mutation and spread of new pandemics, the fear of an apocalyptic disease scenario increases (Schut, 2013). The author gave to the disease theme an important relevance in the real life; it is a fact that nowadays people can actually hear about a new illness created by scientist accidentally or intentionally (turning into a biological weapons, bioterrorism).

For instance, just over some years ago, scientists in the Netherlands announced that they had successfully mutated the deadly bird flu into a highly contagious version capable of airborne spread between humans (Schut, 2013). Schut indicated as well how easily it is to spread a disease in the real world, for instance it can be spread by the food (i.e. the salmonella), by mosquitoes (i.e. the malaria), or by the air or human contact like the flu. To end this chapter, the author concluded that pandemics are a type of apocalyptic scenario that do not cause a widespread collateral damage, contrary to other apocalypses that destroy indiscriminately, damaging or disrupting significant sections of the natural world as they kill off most of the human population (Schut 2013).

In Chapters 3 and 4, the author analyzed two works: Danny Boyle's film *28 Days Later* and Margaret Atwood's *Maddaddam* trilogy. Regarding the analysis of the second work, Schut argued that the causes and results of pandemic illness often contain a sense of technophobia, which is the fear or dislike of advanced technology. For Atwood, the danger of technology comes primarily from genetic manipulation and the commodification of everything from people

to genes, but globalization and the spread of Western consumer culture both play significant parts in enabling the pandemic, too (Schut, 2013).

Schut explains how Atwood portrays the Corporations in the novel; according to him, the Corporations had established themselves as an authoritarian regime.

The Corporations were getting richer while they destroyed the environment and destabilized civilization; however, the Corporations made sure to keep this sort of dangerous information away from the average person. Instead, they pushed a culture of extreme consumerism and hedonism to keep people distracted while the Corporations fill their pockets (Schut 2013). This culture turned plants, animals and, even people into products. Thus, the Corporations had little regulation and few morals slowing and regulating what they do. The reader can see how technology and corporate power have created the situation that leads to the apocalypse.

Finally in the next two chapter, Schut talks about the consequence of disease as an apocalypse and, the future of disease narratives. The author argues that a pandemic is a kind of apocalypse that does not damage infrastructure or the environment. According to Schut apocalyptic disease narratives expose a number of fears about and weaknesses of the current culture. They show that the current society fear both the possibility that technology could directly create a disease but also the increasingly common instances of disease being created or spread accidentally by the globalized consumer economy and the technology that powers it (Schut, 2013).

In the apocalyptic disease narratives the goal is to kill enough people to collapse society, leaving the natural world intact and, then, start a new civilization based on a whole new system in tune with the natural world.

The relevance of this paper is clearly shown in how Schut portrayed the causes of the apocalyptic pandemic narratives, describing patterns of excessive consumption, globalized capitalism, and largely unchecked corporate and military research. Since this paper touched themes of moral ethics, disease and corporation power, it helped to shape the dissertation in terms of exploring the society that Atwood describes and inferring how its behavior led to its own apocalypses.

One of the articles that serves as previous work is an ecocritical Retelling of the Bible: Genesis and Apocalypse in Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* (Bianca Del Villano, 2014).

Herein, Del Villano investigates the way in which an environmental group called the Gardeners, especially its leader, uses the Bible to impose a way of living that is meant to be alternative and against the materialistic one expressed by the techno-society described in *The Year of the Flood*. The author also shows the way Atwood used some traits of the dystopian fiction to embrace the most recent critical debates on ecocriticism.

Del Villano divides her paper into four parts: The conceptual frame: the location of the human; the sense of an ending: science and religion in *The Year of the Flood*; ecocriticism and post-structuralism; and finally, the Apocalypse of the Flood. In the first part, the author defines the concept of Anthropocentrism and proposes the re-thinking of the limits between human, animal and technology; she explains how the debate of the relationship between human and

environment is part of the project of ecocriticism. It is needed to overcome “the separation of subject and object, body and environment, nature and culture”(as cited in Bianca Del Villano, 2014). Del Villano portrays Atwood’s novel as a text in which the categories defining the human have collapsed.

The next section of this paper explores the kind of scenario built by Atwood in relation to the ecocritical perspective. The author expresses how *The Year of the Flood* illustrates a society without any ethical concern and with many selfish and brutal characteristics. In this paper Del Villano exposes how Atwood blames the commodification of science and technology for the exploitation and abuse of natural resources, animals and the weakest social subjects. For Del Villano, Atwood shows the destruction of the individual “I” as a result of the control wielded by totalitarian regimes and an expression of social inequality (Del Villano, 2014).

Throughout this section, the author focuses on a character called Adam One and on the way he uses the bible to show his cult, the Gardeners, how human-beings have taken the wrong path in term of the reckless ecological behavior of men (Del Villano, 2014). Adam’s theology recognizes a powerful potentiality in the Bible which, thanks to his manipulations (the insertion of science), proves useful to ‘convert’ people to the respect of nature (Del Villano 2014).

On the next two sections, Del Villano argues how the ecocritic and the post-structuralist awareness are implicit in Adam One’s speech by modifying some passages of the Bible. She also investigates how Atwood uses Adam One’s word to make the readers react to a possible not-so-good future. For instance, the Apocalypse that Atwood refers to is mainly appropriated as a

rhetorical strategy, to make sense of the pointless evil taking place in society and to narrate events that are perceived as senseless and out of control (Del Villano 2014).

The relevance of this paper resides in the fact that it discusses a project of survival, in the cases of Adam One's use of the Bible, as a response to the feeling that the world cannot continue in such a degraded way. This paper analyzes the themes of dehumanization of people, the exploitation of natural resources and how a well-used speech in opposition to consumerism and materiality, can be the salvation. Thus, it helped to shape this dissertation to describe whether or not *The Year of the Flood* gives the reader a solution to the lack of ethics in society.

Another related work that illustrates the power of corporations and the ethics of consumption is the Laura Wright article *Vegans, Zombies, and Eco-Apocalypse: McCarthy's The Road and Atwood's Year of the Flood*.

Wright (2014) examined two apocalyptic narratives: McCarthy's 2006 *The Road*, and the second of three co-temporal novels which is the Atwood's 2009 *Year of the Flood*. The main aim of this study was "to explore the ways that both narratives engage and complicate the zombie/cannibal metaphor via a focus on food and the ethics of consumption in the postapocalyptic present featured in both works." (Wright, 2014)

She analyzed both works. In the first part of the study, she analyzed the narrative of *The Road*, in which she found some meaningful metaphors that reflected that the characters "maintain an outdated morality that has largely ceased to function in the "post-natural" and "post-capitalist" (Kolling, 158) world of the postapocalyptic present." (Wright, 2014) She also mentioned in her

work the theme of cannibalism, which in *The Road* is one of the most representative features of the post-apocalyptic world. According to that, Wright considered that “survival means eschewing the most foundational ethical tenet that human beings hold with regard to diet, that human beings do not eat other human beings.” (Wright, 2014)

The second part of this study is about Atwood’s novel *The Year of the Flood*, in which she explained the main facts of the novel and pointed out the veganism of the Gardeners. Wright exposed that “after the flood, the Gardeners, historically and emphatically vegan, reevaluate their dietary stance to consider the contextual morality of cannibalism, should circumstances of extreme privation call for such a practice.” (Wright, 2014); and, made a relationship to some of the Gardeners’ behaviors as representations of the Biblical doctrine. Besides of that, Wright examined the symbols used in both narratives *The Road* and *The Year of the Flood*, to attempt to deal with the ecological crisis, and how, in the latter novel, the real meat was changing to become genetically engineered meat. The theme of zombification is also important in this article, since in Atwood’s novel, the BlyssPlus Pill, which is an engineered medicine that prevents sexually transmitted disease, was also used to kill all of humanity and it turned people into zombies in two ways: “First, it reduces them to beings driven solely by a desire for sex, and second, after the virus in the pill becomes active, by turning the infected into the walking death.” (Wright, 2014)

As a result of this study, Wright (2014) affirmed that “at the end of the world in both *The Road* and *The Year of the Flood*, one is either vegan or cannibal, and both works are about the nature of faith and the negotiation of belief in a changed world.”

This article is relevant for our analysis due to the examination of ethics from different perspectives; in this case, the representation of veganism, zombieification, and eco-apocalypse in these two novels. According to our work, all these perspectives are important for the reason that they allow us to see the degradation of the human being and Nature by mankind and their desire of power, especially in Atwood’s novel. Some details shown in this article are clues that help us to identify the deterioration of the ethics of human beings, promoted by the urgency of consumerism, perfection, and greed.

6. Theoretical Framework

6.1. Speculative Fiction

Margaret Atwood Works in literature are recognized by her genre Speculative Fiction. Most of her novels represent her insistence in that she uses things that she has not invented: “Speculative fiction invents nothing that we haven’t already invented or are beginning to invent” (Atwood, 2011, n.p., cited by R. Bartosch (2013). According to Bartosch (2013), Atwood’s insistence that she does not write works of science-fiction but rather novels of “speculative fiction” underscores the fact that her fiction is a literary “what if” of existing technologies and knowledge and points to her interest in realism and probability.

Neugebauer (2014) stated that speculative fiction is fantasy, science fiction, and horror. Although all of them contain fiction, in here it is important to give definition of the word fiction, which is untrue what makes it to have a degree of speculation. On the other hand, speculative fiction is fiction in which the author speculates upon the results of changing what is real or possible, not how a character would react to a certain event, etc. (Neugebauer, 2014)

Atwood (2009) explained in an interview that “speculative fiction encompasses that which we could actually do. Sci-fi is that which we’re probably not going to see. We can do the lineage: Sci-fi descends from H.G. Wells’ War of the Worlds; speculative fiction descends from Jules Verne’s Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea.

Out of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* came Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, out of which came *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin, then George Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* was speculative fiction, while *The Martian Chronicles* was not.”

Speculative fiction is any fiction in which the “laws” of that world (explicit or implied) are different than ours. This is why the term “world-building” usually goes hand-in-hand with “speculative fiction.” The defining line between fiction and speculative fiction is not so much scale as it is ‘what’s possible’ in reality. (Scale is more of a byproduct, and an optional one at that. Speculative fiction can be and often is small in scope – think a single character’s life vs. global battles.) (Neugebauer, 2014)

The term “speculative fiction” has three historically located meanings: a subgenre of science fiction that deals with human rather than technological problems, a genre distinct from and opposite to science fiction in its exclusive focus on possible futures, and a super category for all genres that deliberately depart from imitating “consensus reality” of everyday experience. In this latter sense, speculative fiction includes fantasy, science fiction, and horror, but also their derivatives, hybrids, and cognate genres like the gothic, dystopia, weird fiction, post-apocalyptic fiction, ghost stories, superhero tales, alternate history, steampunk, slipstream, magic realism, fractured fairy tales, and more. Rather than seeking a rigorous definition, a better approach is to theorize “speculative fiction” as a term whose semantic register has continued to expand.

While “speculative fiction” was initially proposed as a name of a subgenre of science fiction, the term has recently been used in reference to a meta-generic fuzzy set supercategory—one defined not by clear boundaries but by resemblance to prototypical examples—and a field of cultural production. Like other cultural fields, speculative fiction is a domain of activity that exists not merely through texts but through their production and reception in multiple contexts. The field of speculative fiction groups together extremely diverse forms of non-mimetic fiction operating across different media for the purpose of reflecting on their cultural role, especially as opposed to the work performed by mimetic, or realist narratives. (Oziewicz, 2017)

According to Oziewicz (2017), an inherently plural category, speculative fiction is a mode of thought-experimenting that includes narratives addressed to young people and adults and operates in a variety of formats. Additionally, speculative fiction is not limited to any specific literary techniques. Nor can its development be traced through a linear chronology. The current understanding of speculative fiction reflects a quantum jump that connected several established and emerging traditions.

Some of the forces that contributed to this cultural shift include accelerating genre hybridization that balkanized the field previously mapped with a few large generic categories; the expansion of the global literary landscape brought about by mainstream culture’s increasing acceptance of fantasy, science fiction, and horror; the proliferation of indigenous, minority, and postcolonial narrative forms that subvert dominant Western notions of reality or employ non-mimetic elements in different configurations than traditional Western genres; and finally the need for new conceptual categories to accommodate diverse and hybrid types of modern storytelling that

oppose a stifling vision of reality—with its correlates of “truth,” “facts,” “power,” and others—imposed by exploitative global capitalism. An inherently plural category, speculative fiction is a mode of thought-experimenting that embraces an open-ended vision of the real.

6.2. Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is a young movement that has been moving the humanities over the past few decades. It was only in the 1990s that it began to gain strength, first in the US with the publication of the first major collection of ecocritical essays, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* in 1996 Edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Frommand and then in the UK, as more and more literary scholars began to ask what their field had to contribute to the understanding of the unfolding environmental crisis.

Since the movement still does not have a widely-known set of assumptions, doctrines, or procedures, it is still an 'emergent' movement. Many people associate the word "ecocriticism" with a particular ideological line called Deep Ecology which is strongly related to political activism. Nevertheless, the term ecocriticism has stuck as the study of an earth-center approach to literary studies. (Glotfelty, 1996)

According to Glotfelty (1996), the majority of currents of ecocriticism assume that the ideas and structures of desire that govern the interactions between human beings and their natural environment (including , the very distinction between the human and the non-human) are of central importance if we are to get a handle on our ecological predicament. Although its mainstay is still the study of culture in a narrower sense (literature, visual arts, and also music), ecocriticism is by its nature an interdisciplinary enterprise, which seeks to engage with

environmental history, philosophy, sociology and science studies, and not least with ecology and the life sciences.

This is why some ecocritics see their field as a confluence of practices in which diversity of approach is a virtue. (Buell, 2005)

According to Glotfelty (1996), ecocriticism is meant to answer several questions this dissertation seeks to answer: Are the values expressed in this novel consistent with ecological wisdom? In what ways has literacy itself affected humankind's relationship to the natural world? In what ways and to what effect is the environmental crisis seeping into contemporary literature and popular culture? What cross-fertilization is possible between literary studies and environmental discourse in related disciplines such as ethics?

After reading the *Ecocriticism Reader*, one can conclude that ecocriticism is basically the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history, and this implies a critical analysis of the term "human" itself. Then, ecocriticism works under the premise that 'environmental problems require analysis in cultural as well as scientific terms, because they are the outcome of an interaction between ecological knowledge and its cultural inflection' (Garrard, 2004) and the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it (Glotfelty, 1996). Therefore, ecocriticism takes as its subject the connections and relationships between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature. (Glotfelty, 1996)

What do ecocritics do?

Barry (2002) summarizes the range of ecocritical literary approaches as follows:

1. They re-read major literary works from an ecocentric perspective, with particular attention to the representation of the natural world.
2. They extend the applicability of a range of ecocentric concepts, using them of things other than the natural world -concepts such as growth and energy, balance and imbalance, symbiosis and mutuality, and sustainable or unsustainable uses of energy and resources.
3. They give special canonical emphasis to writers who foreground nature as a major part of their subject matter, such as the American transcendentalists, the British Romantics, the poetry of John Clare, the work of Thomas Hardy and the Georgian poets of the early twentieth century.
4. They extend the range of literary-critical practice by placing a new emphasis on relevant 'factual' writing, especially reflective topographical material such as essays, travel writing, memoirs, and regional literature.
5. They turn away from the 'social constructivism' and 'linguistic determinism' of dominant literary theories and instead emphasize ecocentric values of meticulous observation, collective ethical responsibility, and the claims of the world beyond ourselves.

Taking into account the previous theory, this monograph will consider:

- The representation of nature.
- The role of nature in the story.
- Nature/Human relationships.
- Environmental ethic.

6.3. Dystopian literature

"It is, perhaps, too complimentary to call them Utopians, they ought rather to be called dystopian, or cacotopias. What is commonly called Utopian is something too good to be practicable; but what they appear to favor is too bad to be practicable." (John Stuart Mill, 1868)

The term "dystopia" was introduced by John Stuart Mill in 1868. It designates a future society in which all fears and threats conceived by man would be fulfilled, especially in relation to the loss of freedom and absolute control by the state, the tyranny of the majority, the imposition of consumption and systematic alienation.

On the one hand, through the term "utopia", the title of the famous work by Thomas More, readers understand the existence of an ideal society that synthesizes the social good par excellence and at the same time, it is impossible to realize. Dystopia, on the other hand, describes the dream transformed into a nightmare, the victory of a world immersed in necessity and totalitarianism, and characterized by human misery, poverty, oppression, violence, disease, and/or pollution.

The dystopian societies that appear in literary fiction usually call attention to issues that affect society in real life such as politics, the environment, religion, economy, psychology, ethics, science and technology (Howells, 2006). In dystopia, all or some of these aspects have been reversed giving place to unwanted situations. These dystopias are characterized by their double real nature and at the same time unrealizable: on the one hand, they have a possible line to draw

attention to existing problems in society, and on the other hand, the extravagant of most of these stories place them as something unreal. The dystopian genre is generally characterized by its location in a future more or less close and its development in totalitarian regimes in which it has occurred a dehumanization of the state as in Atwood's trilogy. In this environment, there is an oppressive social control and, at the same time, the illusion of a perfect society held through the domain corporate, bureaucratic, technological, moral and totalitarian. The information and the free thought are restricted and citizens are under surveillance constant.

The population has uniform expectations: individuality and dissent are sanctioned. Because of this, normally dystopian literature provides a pessimistic view of the ruling class, which governs brutal or indifferent towards society. Despite this, there is usually an individual -or group of individuals- who forms a resistance to this government and seeks a change in the established situation; in *The year of the Flood*, the resistance would be "the god gardeners".

Now, dystopias as well as utopias have a negative function, which as Theodor Adorno (1997) points out, serves to compare a certain society with a possible future served to correct reality from the imagination. In the case of utopias, it is about judging a society based on its multiple failures to create an image of what that society should become. Following this model, dystopia works, instead, as a warning about a path that should not be followed if you do not want to fall into a catastrophe without return. Its value lies in being *a credible warning* of what is to come. Therefore, the reader should then be attentive to the hopes that lie behind the dystopian projections because they tell a lot about current reality and how people can transform it.

Based on this theoretical framework, our work seeks to analyze, through lens of the ecocritical analysis of the selected passages from the novel *The Year of the Flood*, how Atwood uses the dystopian literature to portray the lack of ethics.

6.4. Stylistics

According to Norgaard, Busse, & Montoro (2010), stylistics has been defined as “the study of the ways in which meaning is created through language in literature as well as in other types of texts.” To do stylistic analysis is to explore language, and, more specifically, to explore creativity in language use (Simpson, 2004, cited by A. Ebaditabar (2011)). This approach is focused on different elements of the texts which could be a key for getting the right meaning of a fragment or a book. Among them, some elements are related to the base of this approach, such as: phonological, lexical, grammatical, semantic, pragmatic or discourse features of texts. Stylistics generally involves interdisciplinary fields, where two of them are underlined because of their importance in this analysis.

Now, in the context of our work, this means that the linguistic and literary studies will work together in order to have the scope needed to get Atwood’s demonstration of the lack of environmental ethics in her novel. As Widdowson (1975) stated, Stylistics involves both literary criticism and linguistics, and they share ideas and techniques from other disciplines which do not allow them to be autonomous. In this case, it is important to define what literary criticism and linguistics are. On the one hand, literary criticism is recognized as “the study, analysis, and evaluation of imaginative literature” (Lund, 1996, cited by K. Smith (2013)). On the other hand, linguistics is the study of language, but in literature it is well known as literary linguistics, which according to Short (1996) its meaning is the same as stylistics that he defines as “an approach to the analysis of (literary) texts using *linguistic* description.”

Linguistic stylistics and literary stylistics are fields with great importance in our work taking into account that this will be done by analyzing expressions or segments that show Atwood's perspective in relationship with environmental ethic in *The Year of the Flood*. Linguistic stylistics studies the devices in language of literary texts (such as rhetorical figures and syntactical patterns) that are employed to produce expressive or literary style (Encyclopædia Britannica, 1998). In linguistic stylistics practitioners attempt to derive from the study of the style and a language refinements of models for the analysis of language and thus to contribute to the development of linguistic theory (Carter and Simpson, 1989, cited by A. Ebaditabar, 2011).

As for Literary Stylistics, it is synonymous to literary criticism. Literary criticism rests solely on subjective interpretation of texts. It is useful to decipher message. It tries to provide the basis for understanding, appreciation and interpretation of literary texts using linguistic insights. (Ebaditabar, 2011)

As this work is analyzed from the ecocritical literary perspective, critical stylistics play an important role in relationship with the ideology and social context presented in the novel. According to Norgaard *et al* (2010), this term is used in the investigation of the ways in which social meanings are manifested through language. To analyze facts in the novel through this branch of Stylistics, it is necessary to say that the role of the reader can be an interesting issue to study, because of the differences of each reader about regarding the world by a specific point of view, and the way in which they perceive it through the language of the text. Fowler (cited in Norgaard *et al.*, 2010) explored the phenomena of critical stylistics such as the representation of

experience through language meaning, and world view, the role of the reader as well as the relations between text and context.

Norgaard *et al* (2010) describe several key terms in Stylistics. Some of them can be mentioned as relevant elements which could be present *The Year of the Flood*, for instance: metaphor, connotation, irony, simile, and corpus.

In rhetoric and other traditional approaches to figurative language, a metaphor is defined as a figure of speech, or trope, and it is often seen as a kind of linguistic embellishment (Norgaard *et al*, 2010). According to Mambrol (2016), connotation refers to a range of associated significations, the socio-cultural and ‘personal’ implications (ideological, emotional etc.) of the signs. As for corpus, it is a collection of texts used for linguistic analyses, usually stored in an electronic database so that the data can be accessed easily by means of a computer. Corpus texts usually consist of thousands or millions of words and are not made up of the linguist’s or a native speaker’s invented examples but on authentic (naturally occurring) spoken and written language. (Müller & Waibel, 2018) Then, there is the irony that appears when there are two contradicting meanings of the same situation, event, image, sentence, phrase, or story. In many cases, this refers to the difference between expectations and reality. And finally, simile is a literary term where the words “like” or “as” are used to compare two different things and show a common quality between them. A simile is different from a simple comparison in that it usually compares two unrelated things. (Literary terms, 2015)

Our expectation is to find through Stylistics the meanings and messages hidden between the lines in the *Year of the Flood*, that is to say, those that the author wants to share in order to make readers aware of the consequences of the lack of environmental ethic. These consequences may be reflected in the degradation of the natural resources, and also the unlimited power of the human being in the corporations trying to exploit every single thing that represents monetary gains.

6.5. Narratology

Narratology is an important element in the analysis of Atwood's novel, which is the study of Narrative and Narrative structure and the ways that these affect the perception of the messages. Narratology itself is the theoretical study of narratives paying particular attention to its levels and structures. Narratology focuses on the manifestations of narratives in language and the different media, and it also focuses on the narrator who is typically the entity or agent that tells the story.

Another item in narratology as branch of Stylistics is the narrative discourse which is the process of formal recollection and description of a series of activities for the purposes of ideology (Ufot, 2014). Narrative is crucial to a stylistic investigation. Yet, because the production, reception and use of narrative is seen as a meta-code or a human universal (and a feature which distinguishes human beings from animals in an even more pronounced way than creative language usage as such), it requires development, elaboration and embellishment.

There is a primary distinction between two basic components of narrative – narrative plot and narrative discourse as follows:

The term plot is generally understood to refer to the abstract storyline of a narrative; that is, to the sequence of elemental, chronologically ordered events which create the 'inner core' of a narrative. Narrative discourse, by contrast, encompasses the manner or means by which that plot is narrated.

Narrative discourse, for example, is often characterized by the use of stylistic devices such as flashback, prevision and repetition – all of which serve to disrupt the basic chronology of the narrative's plot. Thus, narrative discourse represents the realized text, the palpable piece of language which is produced by a story-teller in a given interactive context. (Simpson, 2004, p.20 cited by B. Ufot, 2014)

In this work some units of analysis in narrative description are used, they are narrative voice, setting, and characterization. The first of them is the *narrative voice or narrative point of view*. It consists on the perspective from which the events in the story are observed and recounted. To determine the point of view, it is necessary to identify who is telling the story, that is, the viewer through whose eyes the readers see the action (the narrator). The second one is the *setting*, which is defined as the “physical” environment where the story takes place (the description of this environment may suggest its importance to other aspects of the fiction such as theme and “message.” Also, it concerns time; it is the period of time when the story is developed. The third and last unit of analysis is the *characterization*. It is the process by which fictional characters are presented/developed in the story. (Hallett, n.d)

In brief, Narratology it is the name given to the critical and theoretical study of the numerous forms of narrative discourse, especially in literary and film studies. The narratological approach is characterized by its overriding concern with narrative structure, and the close attention it pays to the effects that this structure has on the shaping and unfolding of narratives. (Rudrum, 2002)

6.6. Close Reading

This work concerns different aspects of analysis, and one of them is the *close reading*, which is related to the method of *new criticism*. The term close reading is well used in literature for the reason that it examines the relationships between a text's ideas and its form, between what a text says and the way it says it. (Delahoyde, 2011)

Jasisnski (2001) defined the term as one of the more important movements in contemporary rhetorical criticism and, as such, it demands careful attention, which begins in an effort to position the text at a very center of critical activity. This same author stated that texts possess a rhetorical texture, and with it integrity and density. About the word integrity, Jasisnski (2001) mentioned that texts are not mere incoherent scraps of discourse but rather unified or completed discursive products. About density, he said that texts are not empty shells or vessels full of discursive drivel but rather repositories that contain almost endless insights into the particulars of their situations.

According to Burke (n.d), close reading is a critical analysis of a text that focuses on significant details or patterns in order to develop a deep, precise understanding of the text's form, craft, meanings, etc. It is a key requirement of the Common Core State Standards and directs the reader's attention to the text itself.

Delahoyde (2011) mentioned that new criticism attempts to be a science of literature, with a technical vocabulary, such as: third-person, denouement, etc. Working with patterns of sound, imagery, narrative structure, point of view, and other techniques discernible on close reading of

the text, they seek to determine the function and appropriateness of these to the self-contained work. On the other hand, Jasinski (2001) stated that the principal object of close reading is to unpack the text. Close readers linger over words, verbal images, elements of style, sentences, argument patterns, and entire paragraphs and larger discursive units within the text to explore their significance on multiple levels.

This process includes some steps to follow; however, before starting with the analysis using close reading, it is important to define the purpose of the reading and what to read. Reading has a nearly universal purpose: to figure out what an author has to say on a given subject, that is why readers must re-translate those words into the author's original meaning through the experiences or proper ideas to identify the real author's purpose of writing. (Paul & Elder, 2015)

When selecting a text, it is needed to consider the three components of text complexity: Qualitative measures, Quantitative measures, and the Reader and the Task. Each of these is equally important when considering the complexity of a text. (Burke, n.d)

To realize the analysis of Atwood's novel, the following steps are followed:

- 1) Using short passages and excerpts.
- 2) Diving right into the text with limited pre-reading activities.
- 3) Focusing on the text itself.
- 4) Rereading deliberately.
- 5) Reading with a pencil.
- 6) Noticing things that are confusing.
- 7) Discussing the text with others, or Think-Pair Share, or Turn and Talk frequently.
- 8) Responding to text-dependent questions.

The last process is done to look for systems of meaning in the text. It means, reading with discipline. In brief, understanding systems of thought means taking command of the structures that are the basis of all thought. (Paul & Elder, 2015)

6.7. Ethics

Ethics is considered one of the most important branches of philosophy. It is closely linked with concepts such as morality, values and especially culture. It stands out when making decisions because "It has to do with the behavior of men in relation to their conscience and responsibility" (Gurria, 1996).

Ethics is perceived by many authors in different ways. For example, for Ramos (2003) and Cañas (1998), its purpose is to find goodness, studying the foundations, causes and reasons of the righteous and the bad of human behavior. "This implies a reflection of moral acts and a critical review of the validity of human behavior" (Cañas, 1998, p.2) In contrast, Parker (cited in Green, 2001) believes that ethics is the use of tools of reason to generate rules that guide the trial in both general and particular circumstances. This will offer a greater vision and a wide range of alternatives to choose from to find the best path towards personal and common good.

Now, a definition of ethics that can synthesize the previous definitions is the one proposed by Connock and Johns (1995). For these authors, talking about ethics is talking about justice, deciding between what is good and what is wrong, defining how to apply rules that encourage responsible behavior both individually and in groups. It is also the essence of each person that makes part of human values, which affects the decisions of a person.

Therefore, Connock and Jhons (1995) propose to divide ethics into three areas, which are:

- 1) Social ethics, which consists of rules that help the people to be civilized, and to vary from a social group to other.
- 2) Transcendental ethics, where the concept of good, evil and of justice is explained. It preaches for equality without taking into account the social group, the demography or culture.
- 3) Tactical ethics, which is based on obeying rules and laws to avoid infractions or punishments. This kind of ethics usually is practiced for convenience and self-interest and not for the essence of good and wrong.

To conclude, there are rules that are imposed by society and they help to judge what is right, what is wrong and what seems more just. Likewise, they implement laws to maintain order. Thus, with this system, the interests of the same society and the common goal are involved.

To encompass all of the above, Orme and Ashton (2002) conclude that ethics should be based on structures, policies, codes or a general understanding of the rules. However, it is also necessary to have individuals who can differentiate between what is right and wrong, who are capable of making difficult decisions and who are firm enough to stick to them.

Environmental Ethics

Environmental ethics treat moral problems related to the environment from a rational point of view. This branch of ethics is becoming more important every day, given that environmental problems are present today, as people's ability to intervene in the environment is growing. Besides, these problems are not solved by mere application of traditional ethics, but clearly demand the adequacy of a new kind of ethical thinking.

Environmental ethics is a new discipline, fruit of the strictly current problems of man's relationship with nature. Human kind always thought of nature as a being with two faces, according to Darwin's metaphor. On the one hand, it is the loving mother who provides everything necessary for life and for some pleasures that exceed what is strictly necessary and that make life more human and worth living. On the other hand, nature is often greedy and demands from the human being the effort and ingenuity to pluck its most precious resources.

Lines of thought in environmental ethics

The lines of ethical thinking that until now have dealt with environmental issues are basically of three types: strong anthropocentrism, moderate anthropocentrism and *antiantropocentrism* (Marcos, 2001). In few texts, these types are found in their pure state. Thus, this text can cite among those most inclined to anthropocentrism; the strong anthropocentrism or "cow-boy ethics". And among moderate anthropocentrism; the utilitarianism applied to the ethics of the environment, the ecology of Catholic orientation, the ethics of responsibility.

On the other side of the spectrum biocentrism or the ethics of the rights of nature can be situated, just like the ecocentrism, the so-called ethics of the Earth, the movement called deep ecology, and ecofeminism.

The strong anthropocentrism

According to Marcos (2001) the anthropocentric thought grants human-beings a special position in nature and also recognizes them a value superior to that of other beings. It is important to distinguish between strong and moderate anthropocentrism. Strong anthropocentrism proclaims the absolute primacy of man over nature, denying any moral character to the relationship between man and the rest of natural beings. On the other hand, moderate anthropocentrism is based on the idea of protection and conservation of nature and admits that man's relations with other natural beings can have a moral character (Marcos, 2001).

Anthropocentrism is often criticized as a whole for attributing to moderate anthropocentrism ideas that only strong anthropocentrism defends. This is sometimes also called cowboy ethics or border ethics, because basically it seeks the conquest, colonization, urbanization and exploitation of what remains of the wild. The only value that it gives to nature is of an economic nature, for the satisfaction of human needs, and recognizes the absolute right of man over nature, in the confidence that there will be a technological solution for any environmental problem.

The moderate anthropocentrism: utilitarianism

Some theorists in the field consider that moderate anthropocentrism differs greatly from strong anthropocentrism, so any criticism that confuses them is especially unfair. Utilitarianism has developed a moderately anthropocentric form of environmental ethics. Even by reasoning in the interests of man, the utilitarian recognizes many more values in nature than the purely economic. For example, nature can provide man with an aesthetic, symbolic, psychological or spiritual character. The utilitarian ethic calls for a rational use of resources so that man can continue to enjoy nature in all its dimensions. Utilitarianism seems insufficient to the critics of anthropocentrism: man is not, for utilitarianism, a despotic ruler, but a responsible being; however, he is still the ruler of nature, which is still seen as a resource (Marcos, 2001).

The moderate anthropocentrism: the catholic environmental ethic

It gives value to the natural beings precisely insofar as they are creatures of God. It recognizes, therefore, certain sacredness and prevents against the unscrupulous deterioration of the nature created by God. The value of the human being, as being made in the image of God, is superior to that of other natural beings; therefore, man can make use of them to satisfy his needs, but these are never their absolute property. The textual bases of this position can be found in some biblical texts (such as Gen II), in the work of Francisco de Asís, whose Cantic of the creatures has been considered by many as a sort of an ecologist manifesto, and, more recently, in the Papal Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, 1995.

The anti-anthropocentrism: biocentrism

The critics of anthropocentrism consider that western civilization has failed to recognize the intrinsic value of nature, which has been put at the service of human beings in an abusive and inconsiderate manner. They are not satisfied with a simple reform of traditional ethical models, but ask for an *authentic refoundation of ethics*. Biocentrism, or the ethics of the rights of the living, gives moral importance to all living beings, animals and plants. It is less extreme in its critique of anthropocentrism than it can be, for example, the ethics of the Earth or ecocentrism. In this current we can place the promoters of the so-called animal rights, such as Peter Singer, Tom Regan and, and Jesús Mosterín. Singer (1999) defends that the moral importance of other beings derives from their ability to feel pleasure and pain. The conduct of man will be morally correct insofar as he avoids causing suffering to the living. Regan (1984) claims that animals cannot only suffer or enjoy, but can experience desires and frustrations. In this line there are those who recognize that all living beings can have their own interests, including plants (although, in their case, without awareness of these interests).

Anti-anthropocentrism: ecocentrism

This current extends the possibility of receiving moral consideration not only to the individual living, as biocentrism does, but also to other types of entities, such as ecosystems, including water or air, to which Lawrence E. Johnson (1991) also attributes interest without establishing a hierarchical order between them. Other authors, such as Rolston (1988), state that, although every entity has value in itself, this value is greater in entities that can realize their interests.

The anti-anthropocentrism: the ethics of the Earth

The origin of this current is usually linked to the work of Aldo Leopold. According to Leopold (1949), there is a "biotic community", formed by organic and non-organic matter and by all living. For him, *only* behaviors that do not interfere with the deep balance of natural connections between beings would be legitimate. Within this framework, man is considered only as another being. A being whose action can be fair or unfair. According to Leopold's words, "It is fair when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community, vice versa; it is unfair when it tends to the other way around". The ethics of the Earth constituted a courageous and early critique of strong anthropocentrism; however, this radical philosophy has been deeply criticized because it does not stop throwing paradoxical moral conclusions, like considering as timely a drastic reduction of the human presence on the planet.

Anti-anthropocentrism: deep ecology

A group of ecology thinkers, known as *deep ecologists*, consider that Ecologism should not be only limited to worrying about the consequences for human life of environmental aggressions, but should show the deep relationships between all parts of nature. This line of thinking leads to the belief that between the human being and his environment there cannot be defined borders because both are the same entity contemplated from two points of view. The ontological priority, according to authors such as Fox (1989) or Naess (1989), is given to the relations between elements more than the elements themselves, since the nature of the parts is determined by the relations with the whole. Deep ecology wants to obtain from the ecological science an inspiration

of general character for all the life and the culture. Its aspiration is to build a value system suitable for not only scientific research and the application of technologies, but also for politics and law in general. While ecocentrism seeks only the extension of moral recognition to non-human entities, deep ecology wants to found a new culture in a broad sense, inspired by ecological relationships; for example, they advocate the need to increase decentralization and local autonomy to deal with environmental problems.

The anti-anthropocentrism: ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is an environmental line of thought inspired by the feminism of authors such as Carolyn Merchant or Elisabeth Gray Dodson. It argues that anthropocentrism and androcentrism are two diseases that have gone together. The male human has exploited nature as he has done with the woman. The male human has conceived his relations with both as relations of domination, and both must be jointly liberated by a profound change of mentality. The reform of a patriarchal culture will change relationships in both directions.

It is now important to say that in the context of this monograph we take into account the basic ideas of environmental ethics mentioned above to do the ecocritical analysis. However, one of the lines of ethics that we explore the most is the ethics of Martin Heidegger, which is exposed in his thoughts about eco-phenomenology. This is the topic of the section below.

6.8. Eco-phenomenology

In his introduction to Phenomenology, Smith (2016) states that this term has been a classic issue in the philosophical world since the publication of Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807). During the 19th century, the word denoted a descriptive as opposed to a hypothetical–theoretical or analytic approach to a problem prevalent then.

However, it is uncontested that *Phenomenology* really began as an authoritative movement with Husserl's Logical Investigations (1901). From this philosopher's perspective, philosophy should take as its primary task the description of the structures of experience as they present themselves to consciousness, hence the famous phrase: "*To the things themselves.*"

Later, Martin Heidegger criticized and expanded Husserl's phenomenological enquiry (particularly in his "*Being and Time*" of 1927) to encompass the understanding and experience of Being itself, and developed his original theory of "Dasein" (the non-dualistic human being, engaged in the world). According to Heidegger, even though philosophy is not at all a scientific discipline, it is more fundamental than science itself. Then he took Phenomenology as a metaphysical ontology rather than as the foundational discipline Husserl believed it to be. (Mastin, 2008)

According to Zimmerman (n.d cited by Brown et al., 2003), the phenomenology developed by Husserl and transformed by Heidegger provided the basic conceptual distinctions for much of twentieth century continental philosophy. In addition to challenging customary conceptions of selfhood, language, and metaphysics, continental philosophy has also contributed significantly to postmodern ethics and multicultural theory by criticizing humanism. Nowadays there is common belief and hope that Heidegger's phenomenology can contribute to environmental philosophy, which stresses the involvement of humans in the system of nature and produces an ethic of responsibility to nature. (Marietta Jr., n.d cited by Brown et al., 2003)

Zimmerman (n.d cited by Brown et al., 2003) added that Heidegger's approach cannot be conceived as a term of debate between anthropocentrists, who believe that inherent value correspond to human, and instrumental value only belongs to nature, and biocentrists who, on the contrary, say that nature has inherent value with which human values are continues. This same author maintains that "Heidegger does not propose to discover some property in natural beings that is "inherently valuable." In his view, for something "to be" means for it to manifest itself, in the sense of being interpreted, understood, or appropriated by human Dasein." (Zimmerman, n.d)

Heidegger based the relationship between Dasein and the natural world on a different understanding of Being. This alternative reconciles the relative independence and integrity of beings with the fact that they "are" only insofar as they manifest themselves within the clearing constituted through Dasein.

Heidegger's phenomenology also addresses the importance of technology in relation to his particular notion of *Dasein* and *Dwelling*. For him, technology drives the Earth beyond the developed sphere of its possibility into such thing which is no longer a possibility and is thus the impossible; additionally, in relationship with nature, he questions that "the Earth can show itself only as an object of assault... Nature appears everywhere... as the object of technology." He argues that nature is located on the same line of Being; therefore, it must not be taken as an infinite giver of resources.

Relatively recently, the need to appropriate this environmental philosophical discourse has led the environmental community to coin new terms. One of these is Eco-phenomenology, which can be defined as the pursuit of the relationalities of worldly engagement, both human and other creatures. (Wood, n.d, cited by Brown et al., 2003) Wood brings eco-phenomenological considerations to bear on deep ecology, one of which is its reliance on the part/whole relation of humans to the Earth.

Stevenson et al. (2013) citing Largen (2003) and Wood (2003) state that eco-phenomenology sees the importance of meaning and values existing intrinsically or inherently and, therefore ontologically in nature. For this reason, Kennedy (2014) criticizes the necessity of human beings about taking advantage from other entities in order to survive; this might appear to present particular difficulties for eco-phenomenology, since the main thrust of the criticism of the technological worldview is that it treats all things as resources.

One important term that is presented in this analysis is the word *Dwelling*. Since dwelling relates to the manner in which we exist, the “being in the world”, Heidegger holds that problems of building are essentially problems of dwelling. Building is, in fact, dwelling, and with dwelling being the manner in which human beings exist on earth building as dwelling is something which nurtures things, natural or man-made. Dwelling according to Martin Heidegger is to remain in place and to be situated in a certain relationship with existence, a relationship which is characterized by nurturing, enabling the world to be as it is. And in Heidegger's own words: "The basic character of dwelling is to spare, to preserve... dwelling itself is always a staying with things. Dwelling, as preserving, keeps the fourfold in that with which mortals stay: in things" (Heidegger, 2001)

Retaking Heidegger, and summarizing the meaning of Dwelling, the following passage of *Building Dwelling Thinking* by Heidegger (1993) is quoted. It explains another important concept, which is *Oneness*: “*The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing. It pervades dwelling in its whole range. That range reveals itself to us as soon as we recall that human being consists in dwelling and, indeed, dwelling in the sense of the stay of mortals on the Earth. But "on the Earth" already means "under the sky." Both of these also mean "remaining before the divinities" and include a "belonging to men's being with one another."* By a primal oneness the four—Earth and sky, divinities and mortals—belong together in one.”

Additionally, Steiner (1978) maintains that Heidegger takes the concept of Being-in-the world as a being-with, which presents the possibility of comprehend the Dasein or Being itself as an everyday Being-with-one-another. This affirms that the own Being only is in reference to others. The term to describe what this author says is *Otherness* or *Alterity*.

In Atwood's novel it is common to find technological aspects; this is the reason why in this work the term *technology* in relationship with Heidegger's thoughts and eco-phenomenology is important. Blitz (2014) highlights that Heidegger draws attention to technology's place in bringing about our decline by constricting our experience of things as they are. Heidegger argues that in this modern world, nature and increasingly human beings too, are only taken as technological instruments — that is, nature and people are seen only as raw material for technical operations. Heidegger seeks to illuminate this phenomenon and to find a way of thinking by which humans might be saved from its controlling power, to which, he believes, modern civilization both in the communist East and the democratic West has been shackled. Heidegger argues, not by rejecting technology, but by perceiving its danger, specifically when he said: "Everything depends on our manipulating technology in the proper manner as a means. We will, as we say, "get" technology "intelligently in hand." We will master it. The will to mastery becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control." (Heidegger, 1993, pp. 313)

Heidegger argues that modern technology is problematic in a way in which its medieval counterpart, say, was not: the hydroelectric plant over the Rhine differs in essence, rather than merely in scale and sophistication, from earlier attempts to tame and utilize the river, such as wooden bridges. Underlying this claim is the belief that ‘modern technology’ is distinguished by a fundamental change in attitude, one that supposedly began with Descartes: entities are viewed as either resources for, or obstacles to, man’s manipulation of the natural world. In this sense, modern technology exemplifies a standpoint in which the human being “reduce everything down to man” (Golob, 2017)

7. Literary Analysis and Results: Atwood's representation of lack of environmental ethics in the novel *The Year of the Flood*

The purpose of this section is to provide evidence of Margaret Atwood's representation of the lack of environmental ethics in the novel *The Year of the Flood*. Her idea of environmental degradation is presented in the entire novel. She uses themes of corporation control and environment mentality to portray the reality of the world and its nature. To show these aspects of the novel, some segments were chosen to be analyzed taking into account some significant issues that are mentioned below. The analysis begins with a description of the Corporations, their importance in the novel, and then the environmental panorama that is developed.

7.1. Role of Corporations

Atwood creates a world where corporations are presented as absolute control. They are the owners of the Earth; people, animals, nature are subjects of their private interests.

7.1.1. Control

In the novel, all the spaces and species are dominated by corporations through the *CorpSeCorps*. The *CorpSeCorps* are puppets of the Corporations who are in charge of controlling the acts and behavior of people. They use different methods to manipulate and to obtain what they want. They watch over their own interests, leaving aside people and nature's needs using their tentacles, as it is said in the novel:

Already, back then, the CorpSeCorps were consolidating their power. They'd started as a private security firm for the Corporations, but then they'd taken over when the local police forces collapsed for lack of funding, and people liked that at first because the Corporations paid, but now CorpSeCorps were sending their tentacles everywhere.

(Atwood, 2009, pp 25)

As Schut (2013) states (See Related Works Section), Corporations turned into an authoritarian regime imposing their own rules. While they were growing in power, they were destroying the natural resources to increase their monetary profit. For them, everything becomes a product, if something or someone does not produce them money, it does not exist for them. Since Atwood conceives her novel as Speculative Fiction (See framework section), we can literally find similarities with our actual world. Nowadays, there are a lot of corporations that are consolidating their power and their position worldwide, up to the point to negotiate directly with the government of a powerful country. They can create their own rules and persuade society to fulfill their own needs. Therefore, we find the word "Tentacles" used by Atwood very appropriate to refer to the expansion of power on all the society and nature. This metaphor allows us to see the capacity of Corporations to manipulate life in general. The manipulation of the Corporations is exposed in different aspects throughout the novel. To show their power, they act in an unethical way:

It was said that the CorpSeCorps had decided that expelling illegals was too expensive, so they'd resorted to the method used by farmers who found a diseased cow in the herd: shoot, shovel, and shut up. (Atwood, 2009, pp 30)

Lund (as cited in K. Smith, 2013) with his definition of literary criticism (See the framework section), allows us to identify the image that Atwood wants to give about CorpSeCorps actions, which is the degradation of the human being by the CorpSeCorps in relationship with their interests. Since having illegal immigrants results expensive for them, they prefer to make them disappear to stop their expenses. Atwood makes use of the metaphor to compare the treatment of people as products, and cows as product for farmers. When people are not productive for Corporations, they just put them aside, as the case of the diseased cows for farmers, which are not productive, and maintaining them alive is more expensive. For instance, currently, in today's economies around the globe, the big firms only invest in countries that are likely to give them benefits.

Another example of control by Corporations is the segment where Atwood describes the treatment to Tex-Mex refugees. They are not allowed to enter the Pleebland, thus the CorpSeCorps build a wall to keep them away. This is what Amanda says to Ren when she retells her story about why she is now in the Pleebland, and how she got there:

Don't you watch the news? The Wall they're building to keep the Tex refugees out, because just the fence wasn't enough. There's men with sprayguns — it's a CorpSeCorps wall. But they can't patrol every inch — the Tex-Mex kids know all the tunnels, they helped me get through. (Atwood, 2009, pp 85)

In the lines above, we can see how the Corporations created a private space for the elites, ignoring the necessities of the other classes. This is a clear representation of the abuse of power and the discrimination, towards those who are different or do not agree with the thought of the one who has the power. In our days, it is possible to see this from the part of the president Donald Trump, who is isolating North Americans from the rest of America, which he considers offers no benefits to his country. In fact, as in the novel, Trump is building a wall to separate the border of Mexico from the United States.

Another important aspect to analyze here is the presence of the Speculative Fiction concept, which has been proposed by Atwood, and which allows her to ask the question “What if...”. Taking into account that the novel was written in 2009, it is surprising that she wrote about this situation in a fictional way without knowing that it was actually going to happen; however, nowadays, we can see that in these recent years some of those possibilities are coming true, specifically the wall she refers to in her novel.

Some of the methods used by CorpSeCorps to exert power are torture and death. In the novel, Burt, one member of the Gardeners, is arrested by the CorpSeCorps for having a crop of gro-op in the Buena Vista Building, fearing that Burt was forced to tell the Corps some information about them. In the Adams and Eves meeting, Zeb says:

Some claimed the CorpSeCorps would offer the age-old devil's bargain — information in exchange for your life. But the CorpSeCorps didn't need to make deals, Zeb said grimly, because once they got started on their Internal Rendition procedures a person would say anything. Who knew how many buckets of incriminating lies were being squeezed out of poor Burt, along with his blood, shit, and vomit? (Atwood, 2009, pp 190)

The CorpSeCorps manipulate everything around them. For example, when Zeb says that “the CorpSeCorps didn't need to make deals”, he refers to the danger that people are exposed to when they need something from them. Atwood shows the reader the imminent power of Corporations over people. The whole segment shows a negative connotation, which is seen with the use of words that express hatred, pain, and danger. For instance, words like devil's bargain, squeezed out, blood, shit, and vomit give us an image of this wickedness.

7.1.2. Image of Corporation Vs Reality

It is not a secret that as time passed, the world became more and more post-industrialized. Day by day, new corporations are born and the old ones keep growing. However, is this good for humanity and the Earth in general? Well, according to the media, it is definitely good for the entire world, since in their view the world and, especially, humans, are progressing and evolving. In fact, this is the excuse that the Corporations use to destroy the environment, “It is to improve human condition”. According to Marcos (2001), this is definitely an anthropocentric view, which portrays the human as the center of the world and gives the human an air of superiority over the living beings. However, the image that the Corporations intend to show us is a different concept: they fabricate for themselves the image of carers of men and the environment. A sample of this appears in the novel:

If there was a so-called reality TV exposé, the CorpSeCorps would make a pretense at investigation. Then they’d list the case as Unsolved and discard it. They had an image to uphold among those citizens who still paid lip service to the old ideals: defenders of the peace, enforcers of public security, keeping the streets safe. It was a joke even then, but most people felt the CorpSeCorps were better than total anarchy. Even Toby felt that.

(Atwood, 2009, pp 34)

In the previous segment, we can see that the narrator expresses irony between the lines of the segment, more exactly when Atwood says that “... It was a joke even then, but most people felt the CorpSeCorps were better than total anarchy.” The CorpSeCorps show themselves as caretakers and protectors of the city. The phrase “the CorpSeCorps would make a pretense at investigation,” shows the real intention of the Corporation which is to pretend something they would not eventually do; here the word that allows us to interpret that meaning is “pretense”, considering that it has an opposite purpose. As in advertising, Corporations have to sell a good image of themselves in order to make people believe in them.

As Corporations are the bosses of CorpSeCorps, the latter must show a credible image in front of the society. Some religious cults have similarities with Corporations; this is the reason why the Corporations must tend to preserve the relationship with them through the CorpSeCorps. It would not be seen well that this organization offends its beliefs, as Adam One says in the following segment:

It would be bad for their image to eviscerate anything with God in its name,” said Adam One. “The Corporations wouldn’t approve of it, considering the influence of the Petrobaptists and the Known Fruits among them. They claim to respect the Spirit and to favour religious toleration, as long as the religions don’t take to blowing things up: they have an aversion to the destruction of private property. (Atwood, 2009, pp 48)

In this segment, we can see the hypocrisy of freedom that the Corporations give to society. The corporation provides limited freedom and, contrary to what it says to be, it has no tolerance for the different thoughts. If an individual rebelled, he would very likely be punished. Dealing with Corporations is like committing suicide; in words of Atwood through the Gardeners: “We call it Corpicide. If you’re Corp and you do something they don’t like, you’re dead. It’s like you shot yourself.” (Atwood, 2009, pp 244)

7.1.3. Corporations attacking nature

Currently, Corporations have an important role in consumerism. They fabricate desires and needs in relation to everything, especially innovative technological products. In order to fabricate these products they extract materials from nature, and customers purchase them without caring about the environmental damage. In this way, Corporations give nature an instrumental value, leaving aside its inherent value. According to Zimmerman (n.d cited by Brown et al., 2003), Heidegger argued that human beings and nature have inherent value. Their own existence gives it to them. Nature does not have an instrumental value as anthropocentrists argue.

In *The Year of Flood*, Ren meets Amanda, who was a girl living on the street in the Pleebland. She used to wear some fancy objects, and one of them was an innovative bracelet, which Amanda shows to Ren when they began to talk:

You want to see my jellyfish bracelet?” Amanda said once I got there. I must have seemed pathetic to her, with my orphanish clothes and chalky fingers. She held up her wrist: there were the tiny jellyfish, opening and closing themselves like swimming flowers. They looked so perfect. (Atwood, 2009, pp 73)

In this segment, we can see an unnatural item (i.e. the bracelet), which changes the natural environment of an animal and puts it in an artificial place. This is a clear representation of the destruction that the corporation does to the environment. Why will they put a sea animal in a bracelet? The only reason is to fulfill the meaningless fabricated desire of a consumerist society.

Everything in the world has its place. Herein, we appeal the term *Dwelling*, which according to Heidegger (2001), is to remain in place and to be situated in a certain relationship with existence, a relationship which is characterized by *nurturing*, enabling the world as it is. Heidegger (2001) defended that Dwelling is “to spare, to preserve... dwelling itself is always a staying with things. Dwelling, as preserving, keeps the fourfold (i.e., earth, sky, mortals, divinities) in that with which mortals stay: in things.” He uses the term “Being-in the world”, which refers to the relationship of Being that two entities extended “in” space have to each other with regard to their location in that place (Heidegger, 1996). This definition is important in order to make others aware of the representation of space in the world. Each species in nature has its place, and from an

ecocritical perspective we think that all of them must be in their correspondent places and not in a different one, as the jellyfish, which was located in a bracelet.

Following the line of Heidegger's thought, which implies "letting things be", the passage above shows exactly an opposite view to this thought. Corporations are passing over the essence of the thing as unique and transforming its value to accomplish their own interests. In this way, they give the jellyfish and nature in general, an instrumental value, which is completely an anthropocentric and a utilitarian understanding of nature as only raw material. According to Marcos (2001) utilitarianism recognizes many more values in nature than the purely economic. For example, nature can provide man with an aesthetic, symbolic, psychological or spiritual character; however, it is still giving an instrumental value to *satisfy humans needs*, and in this case it is satisfying one of the most pervert needs of man, which is sadism. This kind of sadism, in particular, is reflected in the following selection:

They eat each other," said Amanda. She gave a little smile. "Some kids do that on purpose, they don't add the food. Then it's like a miniwar in there, and after a while there's just one jellyfish left, and then it dies. (Atwood, 2009, pp 73)

As it is mentioned above, even kids were used to having items created by Corporations with no ethical principles. Atwood portrays a society where the lack of ethics, especially environmental ethics, is evident. As a consequence, this attitude toward the Earth is eradicating wild nature and may be destroying the ecosphere's capacity to sustain complex life. Naess (1989) argues that to change society's attitude towards nature, an intuitive sense of identification with all things is required. Naess (1989) sustains that such identification allows us to reject the idea that we are "in" the environment, as if we were surrounded by something different from us. It is this "biospheric egalitarianism" which introduces us to the possibility of thinking that all living things are alike, independent of their usefulness to others. And this is what Corporations in the novel cannot even consider.

The society in the novel, except the Gardeners, treats nature as an infinite resource, in the same way as the actual Corporations of our world are doing. They are not aware of the importance of living with other kind of species. Steiner (1978) cited Heidegger when he said that "Being-in-the-world is a being-with, and that the understanding of the *presentness* of others is to exist." Sharing with other species gives the possibility to assimilate our own Dasein, which according to Heidegger represents the Being, as a Being-with-one-another. This is, we exist because of the others, in brief, as Steiner (1978) wrote: "we eventually come to not be ourselves, and surrender our existence to a formless "Theyness" or alterity".

7.1.4. Nature has been altered by technology

Nature itself has its properties. During the beginnings of Humans' history, people used to take care of nature, and they used their resources only for surviving, but in comparison with the recent years, Corporations have developed numerous lucrative projects that affect directly the environment. They explode the natural resources for monetary objectives, and most of them use advance technology to alter the essence of nature.

One of the cases shown in the novel is the creation of medicine and supplements that, at first, are for healing illnesses. However, the Corporations use human beings to explore and to experiment with them, as it is known in the novel with the name of "guinea pigs".

Atwood presents in this second novel of her trilogy a society very similar to our reality. It describes a Western philosophy based on Anthropocentrism; in addition, as in our society, this philosophy has paved the way for the technocratic mentality, which espouses domination over nature. Naess (1989) argues that technological "progress" has been built at the price of the domination of nature, due to the mentality imposed by capitalism and by early modern scientist such as Descartes. These scientists interpret nature as a lifeless machine that directly helps to improve economy. (See Carolyn Merchant, *The death of nature*, New York: Harper and Row, 1980) This situation is also presented in the novel:

“Tell me,” said Pilar. “What supplements was she taking?”

“She ran a HelthWyzer franchise, so she took those.”

“HelthWyzer,” said Pilar. “Yes. We’ve heard of this before.”

“Heard of what?” said Toby.

“This kind of illness, coupled with those supplements. No wonder the HelthWyzer people wanted to treat your mother themselves.”

“What do you mean?” said Toby. She felt chilly, even though the morning sun was hot.

“Did it ever occur to you, my dear,” said Pilar, “that your mother may have been a guinea pig?” (Atwood, 2009, pp 244)

It has been well documented that the pharmaceutical industry manipulates to take advantage of people by making us believe that we are sick even though we are in fact healthy¹. For this, they are converting what are normal processes of life (whose symptoms are certainly confusing) into "new" diseases that are finally treated with the products (the small pill) of the industry. Technology in the segment above is implicit, taking into account that medicine, supplements, and all pharmaceuticals are made with chemicals and advanced technological processes. We mention this important aspect because it is well known that nature itself has its own properties, and one of those is medicine. During the early years, before modern technology, people used to use medicinal plants to heal themselves from different illnesses, and if we could ask our ancestors, they would tell us that in the past it was not necessary to buy or use pharmaceuticals. We can believe that many of the nowadays illnesses around the world are created by Corporations in order to have more clients, or victims, as in the previous segment.

Now, according to Heidegger (1993), technology has two definitions: the first one is that technology is a means to an end, and the second one is that it is a human activity. These two definitions belong together. In brief, they are only one, which can be called as an instrumental and anthropological definition of technology. Heidegger (1993) is not against technology, but its use. He explains that “everything depends on our manipulating technology in the proper manner as a means. We will "get" technology "intelligently in hand." And we will master it.” (Heidegger, 1993, pp 313)

In this novel, Atwood gives another example of the abuse of technology in the form of the modification of nature. The supplements, which are supposed to improve health, are at the same time the illnesses. People in the HelthWyzer have no ethics; they do not respect animals or humans because for them, all species of the world are machines, infinite tools taken from nature to be modified. In this way, Corporations force entities to reveal themselves inappropriately. In the following segment, Zeb is telling Toby about the boy courier who is an unfiltered man from the Gardeners in the Compound, whose father worked in the HelthWyzer and was murdered when he realized that the pills and supplements were actually the sickness itself:

His dad was a friend of Pilar's — she used to be Botanic Splices, at HelthWyzer. I knew them both, at that time. But he got unhappy when he found out they were seeding folks with illnesses via those souped-up supplement pills of theirs — using them as free lab animals, then collecting on the treatments for those very same illnesses. Nifty scam, charging top dollar for stuff they caused themselves. Troubled his conscience. So the dad fed us some interesting data. Then he had an accident. (Atwood, 2009, pp 244)

In the passage above, we can see the power of the pharmaceutical industry and the pressure that it has over society. According to the movement Deep ecology, led by Naess, the anthropocentric socio-economic institutions destroy the environment for the sake of “progress.” This does not emerge only from abstract “anthropocentrism,” but rather from specific hierarchical power structures which let some humans dominate other humans and nature as well. These predatory practices of multinational Corporations are coupled with the belief that those who have and exploit more resources are superior to the others. In the passage below we can see how Atwood explains that the social hierarchy is central to the domination of humanity and nature:

He'd talk about other things too. One day, he said that what you had to do in any adversarial situation was to kill the king, as in chess. I said people didn't have kings anymore. He said he meant the centre of power, but today it wouldn't be a single person, it would be the technological connections. I said, you mean like coding and splicing, and he said, “Something like that.” (Atwood, 2009, pp 228)

Atwood describes the authority that governs the world as the technology exercised by Corporations. In Atwood's novel, humankind depends completely on technology, even their environment is made by technology: fake landscape, fake sun, fake air, etc.

Nowadays, we can see that we are in a time when we really depend on machines, small or large, but we are slaves to them. Decades before, it was said that the clocks decided for us, that is, we were obliged at every moment to look at the time for the different activities of the day and people always said that they depended totally on the clock in everyday life.

Nevertheless, time passed and the clock as such ceased to be important for us because new devices arrived among others; these were baptized as cell phones or mobile phones. People began to buy these appliances with much expectation and curiosity, but over time we were quickly invaded by numerous brands, styles and services; every day manufacturers companies entered into a competition to attract customers, creating new devices with practically everything that the imagination can come up with. Nonetheless, all these technological innovations are at the cost of more natural resources being destroyed. As Atwood shows in the segment above, little by little technology has been consuming us; for instance, from something basic as a clock to a multifunctional machine as the smartphone. Technology has worked its way to become what it is now.

The use of technology has a scientific background; thus the reason, and mainly the excuse, to harness nature for human ends is to free people from poverty by creating the means for greatly increasing material wealth. Adorno (1972) in his book “Dialectic of Enlightenment” expresses the domination of nature as the repression of the human spirit as well. To illustrate this, Atwood puts the Gardeners as the free human spirit which has not been corrupted by the technological advances:

The CorpSeCorps may have destroyed our Garden, but they have not destroyed our Spirit. Eventually, we shall plant again. Why did the Corps strike? Alas, we were becoming too powerful for their liking. Many rooftops were blossoming as the rose; many hearts and minds were bent towards an Earth restored to balance. But in success lay the seeds of ruin, for those in power could no longer dismiss us as ineffectual faddists: they feared us, as prophets of the age to come. (Atwood, 2009, page 275)

The last segment is all a metaphor, which represents willpower on the part of the Gardeners, who thought their ideology was growing. When we read the sentence “Many rooftops were blossoming as the rose ” we can perceive that this simile expresses the great growth of the cult in a place governed by Corporations and consumerism. They have their strong beliefs about nature and nothing or nobody could change their minds.

In this segment we can relate Adam One's speech to Leopold's (1949) words: "It is fair when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community, vice versa; it is unfair when it tends to the other way around". This thought belongs to the ethics of the Earth, which states that only behaviors that do not interfere with the deep balance of natural connections between beings would be legitimate. Within this framework, man is considered only as another being, a being whose actions can be fair or unfair. The human being, then, is seen with the same value as the other living beings. This leads to the development of an environmental mentality, which is clearly transmitted in the text by Adam One.

7.2. Environment in relationship with society

Throughout history, man has used nature and its resources to improve his quality of life and to prosper. Previously, nature was able to supply him with all the resources that he needed, recovering continuously, and maintaining a balance. However, factors such as global population growth, trends in materials consumption, globalization (as a result of capitalism), among others, led to overexploitation of natural resources, to the extent of questioning the availability of such resources in the future.

In recent years, natural phenomena whose scope and repercussions have been global (climate change, hole in the ozone layer, loss of biodiversity, and others.) have finally caused man to focus his attention on the environment. The worldwide society is becoming more and more aware of the problem represented by consuming the resources of nature faster than the latter can generate them. In the same way, prevailing models of production of goods and services pollute the biosphere on a large scale and put in danger the balance and support of the ecosystem.

Taking into account this scenario, in her novel Atwood has created an environmental mentality represented through a religious cult called the God Gardeners, which are as the voice of the conscience that are giving messages of love and respect towards nature. In the next section, this mentality is developed through two topics: the misunderstanding of the environment and the description of the Gardeners' mentality.

7.2.1. A misunderstanding of the environment

Atwood promotes, through the leader of the group, Adam One, an ideology that respects and protects every single element of nature. In the novel, there are different sections where the reader can see the discourse of Adam One, who bases on the Bible and past events to transmit wisdom regarding the natural laws to live in harmony with the environment:

Welcome! Adam's first act towards the Animals was thus one of loving-kindness and kinship, for Man in his unfallen state was not yet a carnivore. The Animals knew this, and did not run away. So it must have been on that unrepeatabe Day — a peaceful gathering at which every living entity on the Earth was embraced by Man. How much have we lost, dear fellow mammals and fellow Mortals! How much have we wilfully destroyed! How much do we need to restore, within ourselves! (Atwood, 2009, pp. 12-13)

In this passage, it is evident how Adam One emphasizes the genesis chapter in the Bible to make a point. He talks about human's relationship with animals which was meant to be a harmonic relation since the beginning of times. Del Villano (2014) gives an overview of what Atwood criticizes when she reflects on the relationship between human beings and nature. She proposes a re-thinking of the limits between animals, humans, and technology.

In other words, Del Villano (2014) states that Atwood conceives the human being as a hopeless species (See Related Work). We agree with that perception.

Atwood configures Adam One as the awareness of the cult: the person who is in charge of reminding the Gardeners about the importance of nature and the respect that should be shown towards it. Furthermore, he proclaims the idea of oneness and otherness. All species of nature are one, there is no superiority, and therefore all deserve respect and care. Now, it is important to note that this perspective resembles Heidegger's thought of eco-phenomenology, where human beings have to be immersed in the natural environment to become one with nature and therefore, become nature themselves. Nevertheless, the reality is that human beings do the opposite, namely possessed by greed, their only purpose is to possess as many resources as possible, forgetting where they come from and how they are acquired: nature's invasion and destruction. This issue can be seen in the following passage:

Ours is a fall into greed: why do we think that everything on Earth belongs to us, while in reality we belong to Everything? We have betrayed the trust of the Animals, and defiled our sacred task of stewardship. God's commandment to "replenish the Earth" did not mean we should fill it to overflowing with ourselves, thus wiping out everything else. How many other Species have we already annihilated? Insofar as you do it unto the least of God's Creatures, you do it unto Him. Please consider that, my Friends, the next time you crush a Worm underfoot or disparage a Beetle! (Atwood, 2009, pp 52-53)

This segment is full of words with negative connotation. The words greed, betrayed, defiled, wiping out, annihilated, crush and disparage, are words that reflect the nonconformities with the behavior of men. This is a criticism made by Atwood through Adam One's voice via which she gives the readers the opportunity to think about their own behavior and their place in the world. In addition, we believe that Atwood shares Heidegger's philosophy: he also criticizes the exploitation of nature as an object of assault. Besides, both Heidegger and Atwood believe that nature is located in the same line as Human Beings. (See Eco-phenomenology section)

In the passage, Adam One is criticizing how some humans have interpreted the Bible for the own benefit. They argue that God has sent men to Earth to make use of its natural resources with no limits; however, Adam One explains the contrary: God sent men to live in harmony with nature, not in nature. Through the speech of the leader of the Gardeners Atwood interprets the Bible in an ecological, and according to him, correct way. Another example of a bad interpretation of the Bible is the following:

Then God says a noteworthy thing. He says, "And the fear of you" — that is, Man — "and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the Earth, and upon every fowl of the air ... into your hand are they delivered." Genesis 9:2. This is not God telling Man that he has a right to destroy all the Animals, as some claim. Instead it is a warning to God's beloved Creatures: Beware of Man, and of his evil heart. (Atwood, 2009, pp 91)

Some Anthropocentrists argue that the Bible itself places man as the center of things; therefore, in the eyes of God, man is free to abuse and control nature resource since it was created for him. Here, it is adequate to mention the catholic environmental ethic that gives value to the natural beings precisely insofar as they are creatures of God; however, the value of the human being, as being made in the image of God, is superior to that of other natural beings. Thus humans can make use of them to satisfy their needs, but these are never their absolute property. Following this line, nature is still present as an object, with some limits, but still an instrument. In his speech, Adam One wants to delete completely this thought and take off that label, i.e., “object”.

Adam One sees man as the sickness of nature, the one who is destroying everything that surrounds it. Further, he sees man as the being that has no respect for the other species and believes that the world is made for him, who has no environmental ethics and offends nature with no mercy. Through this character, Atwood shows her affinity with the fight of environmentalists, which is not a surprise, if we recall that she is a biologist, and that she has expressed her green thoughts through literature as in the previous segment, where she uses a metaphor to give the message of God giving us nature, and also our misconception.

In her work, Atwood represents each element of nature as an important piece in the environment. Every part has a role to play. On the one hand, we can associate her thought to the radical line of environmental movement called deep ecology. As we have explained before, this line believes that the living environment, as a whole, should be respected and regarded as having certain inalienable legal rights to live and flourish, independent of its utilitarian instrumental benefits for human use. On the other hand, Atwood disagrees with some deep ecologists, who argue that the best way to improve the current environmental conditions is to decrease the human population. As we said, Atwood gives importance to each element of nature, including human:

But think of them as God's tiniest Angels, doing His unfathomable work in their own way, for these Creatures, too, reside in the Eternal Mind, and shine in the Eternal Light, and form a part of the polyphonic symphony of Creation. Think of the antibiotic properties of the Maggots and of the various Moulds, and of the honey that our Bees make, and also of the Spider's web, so useful in the stopping of bloodflow from a wound. For every ill, God has provided a remedy in His great Medicine Cabinet of Nature! (Atwood, 2009, page 160)

The last segment comes from one discourse of the book, spoken by Adam One, who expresses by means of metaphors the importance of every single species that is part of nature, as insects which he refers as "God's Tiniest Angels". The environmental mentality that Atwood transmits to the reader is a new ethical thinking, which demands a shift of

attitude from human beings, which recognizes each part of nature as his equal, and, then, respect nature as an equal being. Insects and bacteria are also part of nature, as it is mentioned before, each thing in the world has its role, and they were created with an intention. As is the case of Maggots and the various Moulds, and the honey of Bees, and Spider's web, their role is to act as natural medicine.

With this passage, Atwood presents the unrepeatable power of nature, since it is well-known that nature has a protective image, as the mother of everything, and from this perspective we as humans must take care of it and understand it as part of ourselves. Nature offers us everything, it does not need us, but we need it, and this is the reason why men using technology and other evolutionary elements are destroying what is left of it through the excessive use of its resources. In this segment, Atwood tells the reader that current and artificial medicine is not necessary inasmuch as nature has medicinal properties and its own antidotes for illnesses.

All animals of the world are also present in the development of life. In this novel, Atwood makes sure to include every category of animals, giving them the same importance as each species. This is the time to mention aquatic animals, which deserve the same respect as the land animals; however, nowadays they are species in danger due to the indiscriminate treatment given by men:

Let Love and aid be brought to the Sea Creatures in their present peril and great suffering; which has come to them through the warming of the Sea, and through the dragging of nets and hooks along the bottom of it, and through the slaughtering of all within it, from the Creatures of the shallows to the Creatures of the depths, the Giant Squid included; and remember your Whales, that You created on the fifth day, and set in the Sea to play therein; and bring help especially to the Sharks, that misunderstood and much-persecuted breed. (Atwood, 2009, pp 196)

In this passage, Adam One is describing a reality: man as the biggest predator. The greatest murderer on Earth is man and he even kills for sport. The predator kills to survive; man is self-destructive and is aware of the murder he is committing. Man has become the voracious destroyer of the natural source of his own life, and in his eagerness to overcome himself he feels a little like God: he is creator, inventor, transformer, owner of life, patron of the universe; he forgets that all things in nature are not made by chance, that each species occupies its place in the wheel of life, that each one has a role, and thus, they deserve respect.

Additionally, we interpret Atwood's rejection of the increasing damage to the seas of the world, as consequences of the perversion, greed, and desire to have more goods. Also, the consequences of the global warming caused by we as humans. This perception is possible to get when we analyze the verbs used in the segment, which shows an absolute repudiation. These verbs are: suffering, warming, dragging, and slaughtering.

Beyond a criticism, this is more a prayer. Atwood is using the voice of Adam One to make society realize the harm that they, and Corporations are doing. She is practically calling for attention in a desperate but subtle way.

According to Glotfelty (1996), the majority of trends inside ecocriticism assume that the ideas and structures of desire that govern the interactions between human beings and their natural environment (including the very distinction between the human and the non-human) are of central importance if we are to get a handle on our ecological predicament.

Particularly, Atwood's perspective follows this ecocritical approach, which is represented in the novel when she explores the evolution of the human beings and their relationship with nature.

In the following selection, Atwood explains, through Adam One's speech, how he is trying to improve the relationship between humans and nature, using God as a means to accomplish this goal:

The truth is,” he’d said, “most people don’t care about other Species, not when times get hard. All they care about is their next meal, naturally enough: we have to eat or die. But what if it’s God doing the caring? We’ve evolved to believe in gods, so this belief bias of ours must confer an evolutionary advantage. The strictly materialist view — that we’re an experiment animal protein has been doing on itself — is far too harsh and lonely for most, and leads to nihilism. That being the case, we need to push popular sentiment in a biosphere-friendly direction by pointing out the hazards of annoying God by a violation of His trust in our stewardship. (Atwood, 2009, pp 241)

Nowadays, people are unconscious of what life means; they think that the only worthy life is the human’s. This thought is promoted by the strong anthropocentrism that proclaims the absolute primacy of man over nature, denying any moral character to the relationship between man and the rest of natural beings (Marcos, 2001). In this passage, Atwood explains the role of God in the care of the environment. God is represented as a punisher and the creator of nature, then, if someone acts against nature there will be a punishment. In this way Adam One uses God as a tool to develop an environmental mentality within the Gardeners:

Do we deserve this Love by which God maintains our Cosmos? Do we deserve it as a Species? We have taken the World given to us and carelessly destroyed its fabric and its Creatures. Other religions have taught that this World is to be rolled up like a scroll and burnt to nothingness, and that a new Heaven and a new Earth will then appear. But why would God give us another Earth when we have mistreated this one so badly? (Atwood, 2009, pp 424)

This previous selection has also a connotation of criticism in which Adam One is telling one of his discourses. He is asking the reader to think about how indifferent and destructive we, human beings, are towards the Earth. He uses the simile “this World is to be rolled up like a scroll and burnt to nothingness” to express how far we have come, and how unconscious we are when using the natural resources. Heidegger (2001) maintained that to be a human being means to be on the Earth as a mortal. This means to dwell, and man *is* insofar as he *dwells*; the term *bauen* however, also means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine. The last words mean that we must take care of the place where we live in, namely the Earth; nevertheless we human beings are doing the opposite. In this passage Atwood presents an excessive confidence on the part of man and an anti-environmental religious stance which allows humans to destroy nature, since, according to religion, God will give them another world to live in. This is a misconception, and Adam One highlights it: “How would human beings receive a new Earth, if they hadn’t taken care of the one they have?” Nowadays, the relationship between human beings and nature is totally utilitarian.

In contrast, in the beginning of time, ancient and middle men felt part of nature. They found their sense in complementarity with the other living beings of nature and with nature itself.

Nature was a gift, a gift from the creator. Therefore, humans felt a great responsibility to take care of it because through it, man could see and understand God. The relationship with nature is not subject- object, but subject- subject. There is no domination of one over the other. Nature is part of the life of man, thus, we must live in a constant harmony. From the creation until these days, the relationship between nature and man has been evolving. Nowadays, there is a subject-object relationship which comes from the anthropocentric view. Atwood presents a brief summary of this evolutionary process:

According to Adam One, the Fall of Man was multidimensional. The ancestral primates fell out of the trees; then they fell from vegetarianism into meat-eating. Then they fell from instinct into reason, and thus into technology; from simple signals into complex grammar, and thus into humanity; from firelessness into fire, and thence into weaponry; and from seasonal mating into an incessant sexual twitching. Then they fell from a joyous life in the moment into the anxious contemplation of the vanished past and the distant future. (Atwood, 2009, pp36)

Atwood puts into words the degradation of men throughout the years with an allusion. In order to do this, she uses the word “fall” to represent the idea of deterioration of the human being in different aspects of life, which can be seen in the repetition of this word to explain them. Every evolution brought with it a negative connotation, that means that with meat-eating, reason, technology, language, fire, weapons, and promiscuity, the human being started a process of decay. With reason came language, with reason and language came technology, with technology came weapons, and with all of them power. Finally, we can compare power with technology, which are images of domination; it is domination over nature, and this is illustrated when Heidegger (2001) gives an example of the use of technology in agriculture:

Agriculture is now the mechanized food industry. Air is now set upon to yield nitrogen, the Earth to yield ore, ore to yield uranium, for example; uranium is set upon to yield atomic energy, which can be unleashed either for destructive or for peaceful purposes. (Heidegger, 2001)

In the process of evolution, man confronts nature in a struggle until he dominates it and exploits it. Nature began to be an object that man uses to satisfy his needs through exploitation. There is no harmony in the relationship between these two realities. Man seeks his good through nature. Taking into account this bleak scenario, what some radical ecological movements think is that in the early years most of the resources were well used without contaminating the environment, according to that, some of them manifest that the Earth would be better if we were as in the past (Bramwell, 1989). Nevertheless, Atwood

does not want humanity to make a step-back in knowledge, since it will be impossible to do that. Instead, what she is proposing is a change of mentality and attitudes towards nature; this will be addressed in the next section.

7.2.2. The Gardeners Cult: An environmental mentality

Atwood created in the novel a cult named The Gardeners. They are a religious and radical environmentalist group who values everything that nature has to offer. They are against the actual consumer society and all materialistic thought. As we have said before, the Gardeners interpret the Christian Bible in an eco-friendly way. They live in a rooftop of a building, where they have grown their own crops. They teach their children to be tolerant and green-friendly with everything that surrounds them. Additionally, they are seen by the rest of the Pleeblands as poor people because of their way of living and the clothes they wear; however, the reality in their place is different. They have everything they need, but in a different way.

The Gardeners live in some abandoned buildings, which they have given names to, such as Edencliff Rooftop Garden, which is the principal building where the Gardeners have their crops and where the Adams and Eves gather to make decisions about the cult; the Wellness Clinic is the school. In this place the Adams and Eves give different subjects of study to the Gardener's children, but not as math or languages, some of them were eco-subjects; they

teach culinary arts, sewing, mental arithmetic, bees and mycology, holistic healing with plants remedies, wild and garden botanicals, meditation, and predator-prey relationships and animal camouflage. They are used to glean or collecting things that they think are still useful; their beds are futons stuffed with husk and straw, and their blankets are blue jeans and second hand bathmats all sewed as a collage.

In the following analysis, different aspects of the Gardener's mentality are detailed: their thought according to the murder of living beings, what they do when they need something from nature, the use that they give to non-nature materials and how they help to preserve the environment. Also, we see that Toby asks pardon for having stepped on a green beetle in the garden. This shows how important the living beings are for her, who in this case is the representation of the whole cult:

She picks some spinach, flicks off the iridescent green beetles on it, steps on them.

Then, feeling remorseful, she makes a thumbprint grave for them and says the words for the freeing of the soul and the asking of pardon. Even though no one's watching her, it's hard to break such ingrained habits. (Atwood 2009, pp 16)

Here, we can see the respect and the belief that every species on the Earth has a soul, even if they are non-living, which are also recognized as beings. This idea can be supported with Heidegger's thought when he said:

The soul (of man) is in a certain way beings. The "soul" which constitutes the Being of man discovers in its ways to be, all beings with regard to their thatness and whatness, that is to say, always also in their Being. (Heidegger, 2001)

With the word *Being*, also referred to as *Dasein* by Heidegger, he called attention to the fact that a human being cannot be taken into account except as being an existent in the middle of a world amongst other things. (Warnock, 1970)

Asking for pardon, after killing an animal, is a way to be in peace with oneself and with the animal that was killed, because it is a life that was taken, keeping in mind that every animal has a soul. What Atwood wants to imply in this passage is the idea that if you kill an animal, it must be for a valuable reason; it could be only to survive; killing for fun is out of the question. Another example that illustrates better this idea is the following:

The older children will have a demonstration by Zeb, our respected Adam Seven, concerning the trapping of small Animals for survival food in times of pressing need. Remember, nothing is unclean to us if gratitude is felt and pardon asked, and if we ourselves are willing to offer ourselves to the great chain of nourishment in our turn. For where else lies the deep meaning of sacrifice? (Atwood, 2009, pp125)

As we mentioned before, the Gardeners have in their minds the preservation of all creatures of the Earth; however, if it is extremely necessary, they will use their hunt capacities to feed themselves, but doing first the ritual of pardon and gratitude that makes them guilt-free. Men and nature are equals, in this way, as nature is willing to offer itself to us, we must also be willing to do the same for nature. Atwood, then, gives to the theme of death another definition; the Gardeners define death as an encounter with nature, and as we are fertilizer for nature, we shall not fear death; on the contrary, we should find it as something gratifying, since they mention that when bodies are buried in the ground they become compost, which signifies that we as humans are giving us as a gift to the cycle of life.

According to the environmentalist mentality that the Gardeners have, they teach their children to care about nature and to make things in order to maintain the balance of it. They used to do some meeting and fests where they pray in name of God for natural resources, and all the participants show a gift or perform something for having fun as a family, a green family: “I have enjoyed viewing the excellent Tree of Creatures created by our Children from the plastic objects they’ve gleaned — such a fine illustration of evil materials being put to good uses!” (Atwood, 2009, pp 51)

In this selection, we see the happiness that Adam One feels when his pupils make good things for nature; we can see it because of the use of the words “enjoyed”, “excellent”, and “good”, which have a positive connotation. Nevertheless, he profits his intervention to criticize the misuse of things, and how some of them turn into trash. He does it with the expression “evil materials”, that is, at the same time, an allusion that represents the thrash.

This segment shows the recycling culture that the Gardeners promote. With these actions Adam One increases the growth of ecological awareness, encouraging responsible behavior in relation to the environment by citizens. The Gardeners also have a culture of rejection towards the invention of useless materials for human consumption, such as dryers and washing machines. This is well reflected in the following segment:

The Gardeners didn't believe in wasting water and soap on too much washing. My clothes were always dank, because of the humidity and because the Gardeners didn't believe in dryers. “God made the sun for a reason,” Nuala used to say, and according to her that reason was for drying our clothes. (Atwood, 2009, pp 65)

Throughout the years, and with the intervention of man, the existing natural balance has been seriously altered. This could be due, in large part, to the consumerist and even wasteful habits of the human being, consubstantial with their nature. Although, in the past, such a condition did not seriously alarm anyone, since the population was scarce, the land

remained almost virgin and the consumerist eagerness was slowed down thanks to a shortage of goods that made the desires of consumption almost useless. Not even the higher classes had much to lay their hands on. Consequently, if little was consumed, less still ended as a residue, but, obviously, these were produced without, apparently, disturbing the dream of anyone.

Afterwards, the age of technology arrived and with it, consumerism and the inventions came. Day by day new corporations were created, and new products appeared on the market. In this field, as we have said before, Heidegger draws attention to how technology has caused our decline by not letting us see things as they are. Heidegger seeks to find a way of thinking by which we can save ourselves from its controlling power, which, he believes, modern civilization has been chained to. We can escape from this slavery, Heidegger argues, by learning how to use technology in a moderate way.

Consumption is almost always wasteful, diverse and dispersed by its own nature, and evidently, generator of contamination. The base of consumerism is the creation of a product to be sold and traded among members of a society. These products usually have a limited life; the end of the useful life means that what was once a good that was enjoyed and used, becomes waste, trash, something that must be discarded. This trash becomes garbage and in that way it contaminates nature. Contrary to this, Atwood proposes a lifestyle where there is no trash or garbage; everything has a use even when “its life has ended”:

Our Young Bioneer work was supposed to teach us some useful lessons. For instance: Nothing should be carelessly thrown away, not even wine from sinful places. There was no such thing as garbage, trash, or dirt, only matter that hadn't been put to a proper use. And, most importantly, everyone, including children, had to contribute to the life of the community. (Atwood, 2009, pp 69)

The mentality expressed in the previous segment summarizes what the Gardeners are: caretakers of the Earth, workers and lovers of nature; they share their beliefs with all the people that they can convince to be part of their cult. Besides caring about the environment, they teach their people to be ethical and to help other species; in few words, they teach the cult to understand nature and conceive it as part of them.

Another important aspect to mention about this selection is the fact that everything in life has its value. This is the reason why Adam One calls the attention about not to throw away things as garbage, since for them, consumerist people do not profit all the benefits and extra uses of the objects that for them, the Gardeners, are still profitable. They recycle them and fix them, or in other cases they just invent a new use of things keeping always in mind their contribution to the environment.

8. Reflection and Dialogue

In this section we present a summary of the main findings of the analysis presented in the previous section. Below these findings, which are the product of a process of a detailed analysis of the most representative segments of the novel, will be presented in relation to the objectives of our research.

General Objective:

In relation to our general objective, namely to gather evidences of Atwood's representation of lack of environmental ethics in the novel *The Year of the Flood*, we found that Atwood blames the capitalist society for the degradation of the environment. Through the different corporations, i.e., AnooYoo, Rarity, Secret Burgers, HelthWyzer, Scales and Tails, Atwood presents the negative consequences of capitalism on the environment. In the society depicted in the novel, the air they breathe, the water they drink, the food they eat, in a word, everything is contaminated. Many of the diseases they suffer are caused by this contamination, and this is caused by Corporations themselves. The analysis of the segments evidence that contamination is clearly a byproduct of the Corporations' lack of environmental ethics.

We can compare the society that Atwood depicts in the novel to our current society. The construction of infrastructures and the wild urbanism are destroying the natural environment that surrounds us. We are losing biodiversity and the natural landscapes are disappearing; in conclusion, we are losing quality of life. These consequences are what we call the ecological footprint; the ecological footprint that we leave in our territory, and according to Atwood, the lack of environmental ethics from the society she creates in her novel has left a dark ecological footprint in that world.

We also found how Atwood describes the decline of the relationship between man and nature. Unquestionably, the "primitive man" had a balance in relation to nature; he knew that the latter was his provider of food and shelter; therefore, he had to preserve it. This scenario is contrary to what happens today, when the result of a political, economic and social model whose only interest--it seems--is the destruction of the planet. There is no doubt: capitalism is determined to destroy soil, subsoil, air and water, main sources of food for the earthlings. Environmental problems are not the product of fate; they are related to human interventions. And these present many components, not only the economic, but also the scientific, the technological, the political, the legal, in brief, society as a whole.

From this point of view, Atwood invites us to ask ourselves about the reason of human interventions or actions, that is, the way in which these actions originate and present themselves in relation to the environment. What are the short, medium and long-term consequences of these

interventions? And what can we do about them? These are unavoidable questions that make us ponder men's actions and behavior towards the biosphere as a whole.

One of the fundamental variables related to the degradation of the relationship between nature and man is the scientific and technological development, since this the latter has led us to use nature without even realizing that by the same token we have triggered situations that have endangered the continuity of life. And in *The Year of the Flood* Atwood states loud and clear the catastrophic consequences of this unethical being in the world.

Specific objectives

Taking into account the first specific objective, which is to identify the role of Corporations in the damage of the environment in Atwood's novel, we can see that the author shows the Corporations as the system that control everything that surrounds them: people, animals, and technology.

In the novel, the damage of the environment is reflected in the time in which Corporations make use of technology. We can see this when they use animals to turn them into objects to be manipulated and to be sold. Corporations treat nature, and all that it includes, just as instrumental beings. Only what has monetary value is important for them; the rest does not exist.

This mentality of Corporations is transmitted to the consumerist people who enjoy the “new” inventions, and what is worse is that those people have adopted an attitude of indifference towards nature, especially towards animals.

People follow blindly the notion that men are superior over the rest of species on the planet. This stance and thinking make them believe that they have the right to do whatever they want with the resources and all that concerns nature. In *The Year of Flood*, Atwood shows the concept of *otherness* throughout the whole narrative, which reflects that human beings are not aware of the importance of living with other kind of species.

The second specific objective of our analysis is to analyze the relationship of the human being with nature in the novel. We find that Atwood tries to give a message through the character of the Gardeners, who are always working for nature, and telling people about the importance of taking care of the environment and the Earth itself. Through the Gardeners, the author invites the reader to think about a new life where recovering the planet is the main goal.

Additionally, she uses these characters to express her opinion and, maybe, to ratify her affinity with some Heidegger's perspectives about the respect for the *Being*. However, we have to remember that from Heidegger's eco-phenomenology, the *Being* includes all the species on the Earth, including the non-living beings, and the conception of dwelling.

Since his existence, man has modified the natural environment he inhabits to survive. It is evident that this survival, over time, has caused him to seriously distort the planet's environment. As a thinking individual, man has used nature as a source of power, promoting his knowledge and inventiveness, to obtain a greater profit of it, reaching superlative levels with advances in science and technology. This action has led to large ecological imbalances that are the result, among other causes, of excessive use, ignorance, or misuse of current technology.

According to Atwood, only in the hand of man is the power to limit this type of aggressive actions towards nature, putting the preservation and integrity of natural resources before the particular economic interests, through the application of firm policies of sustainable development. Overall, what Atwood proposes is the acquisition of an environmental mentality that will treat nature and man as equals.

9. Conclusions

The main purpose of this work was to find evidences of Atwood's representation of lack of environmental ethics in the novel *The Year of the Flood*. As a result of our work, we can conclude that in this novel there is plenty of evidence to claim that Atwood questions the role of Corporations and human beings on the Earth on account of their indifference and the damage caused to Nature. The excessive use of power on nature and the wrong use of technology, specifically, are the causes not only of today's environmental destruction but also of the future depletion of natural resources. Men do not seem to be able to coexist ethically with other species different from his. The ecocritical analysis of the novel shows that with this novel, Atwood is not only showing the lack of environmental ethics, but also inviting us to reflect on our behavior in relation with nature. In order to do this, she proposes an urgent change of mentality—an EnvironMentality (Bartosch, 2013)

The contribution of this work is to offer an opportunity to think and reflect about the consequences of our acts in relation with the environment. Most of the causes of the environmental deterioration are because of man-made actions and greed. In fact, Corporations, as Atwood shows the reader, are the owners of the world. They have appropriated the biggest providers of life: natural resources, and with that, contamination and death of numerous quantities of beings (plants, small and big animals, etc.) in the forests appear. For them, life is nothing if it does not produce money. That lack of environmental ethics makes Corporations and their employees (directly or indirectly) insensible. Hence, we believe that with our work we are

accepting Atwood's invitation, which is to change our mind and start to do things in order to recover our Earth, recognizing ourselves as the same beings, in the same line, of all species in nature.

We can compare our work to the findings of previous analyses of *The Year of the flood*. For example, in his study Dinucci (2011) allowed us to have a view of women's values in Atwood dystopian novels, and how patriarchy has helped to degrade the role of women in a supposedly true gender and class equality. We can relate this to the ecofeminist approach that argues that the male human has exploited nature as he has done with the female human. The male human has conceived his relations with women and nature as relations of domination, and both must be jointly liberated by a profound change of mentality. We agree with Dinucci: man must firstly change his dominant attitude towards nature, women, and humans in general.

Another work that can be compared to ours is the one written by Schut (2013). We agree to the fullest with the conviction that man-made apocalypses are caused by patterns of excessive consumption, globalized capitalism, and largely unsupervised corporate and military research. Atwood represents in *The Year of the Flood* a society where the Corporations have a lot of power. The rich and powerful social class inhabits in luxurious villages and the rest of society lives in poor and overpopulated cities and desolate suburbs. The human being has created his own destiny with the Corporations as a base. And since the Corporations have little regulation and few morals controlling what they do, there is no salvation for men if we continue depending

on them. In doing so, through her novel, Atwood not only hints a clue how to end the world, but also a model of how a new world could recover.

As we have mentioned before, this literary analysis was done mainly under the light of the ecocritical literary approach. It is well known that this approach does not provide specific guidelines to do a literary analysis other than its purposes, tenets, and philosophical roots. However, we met the challenge of interpreting Atwood's manifestations of the lack of environmental ethics in the *Year of the Flood* from this approach. Methodologically speaking, we find that combining this novel approach with the other more classical ones, namely close reading, stylistics and narratology, was very helpful to our literary research objectives.

There are many issues that can be explored in *The Year of the Flood*. For example, the analysis and interpretation of the anthems, which have very interesting word formation and metaphors, on one hand, and further hints of the ethical dimension of this novel's narrative universe. In general, we think that there are many other lines of investigation that can be addressed from the same eco-centric approach to literature. This approach opens the door to key questions about relationships between humans-technology, nature-technology, and consumerism-nature, among others. Finally, we recommend analyzing the three novels of the trilogy *simultaneously* in order to rebuild the whole universe of meanings, connotations, links, and revelations as pertaining to a single eco-dystopian narrative.

To conclude, we hope our work is an invitation to reflect on the serious deterioration that we have caused, above all, to our natural systems, an invitation to reflect on our responsibility, both as individuals and as authorities. We can make the difference and as Adam One said “...we must be a beacon of hope, because if you tell people there's nothing they can do, they will do worse than nothing.” (Atwood 2009, pp 147)

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