

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
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**THE ROLE OF FAITH
IN THE FORMATION OF TOBY'S CHARACTER
IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S *THE YEAR OF THE FLOOD*
BA thesis**

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ABSTRACT

The global ecological crisis is among the most urgent problems of contemporary time. The Canadian author Margaret Atwood, for whom nature and environment have been among the major concerns in her oeuvre, draws people's attention to the issue especially in her later works. In *The Year of the Flood*, Atwood contemplates on environmentalism and its forms in order to understand what kind of social activism might be a solution to the growing problem of environmental degradation. At the center of the novel are the God's Gardeners, an eco-religious community of deep ecologists, who see the way of benevolence and care as the best way to teach the society to respect both nature and humans themselves. This thesis aims to establish the role of faith in the kind of environmental activism that the God's Gardeners practice and whether it is suitable to replace the mainstream environmentalism that is thought to be ineffective by many scholars.

The introduction of the thesis contains a summary of the novel as well as provides a brief description of the other two installments of the *MaddAddam* trilogy. The literature review deals with the key concepts and ideas selected from the scholarship on environmentalism, ecocriticism, ecofeminism and the novel itself. The main resource used in the process of writing this thesis is Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism*. Garrard's work provided definitions of many terms and concepts pointed out in the thesis, such as deep ecology, ecofeminism and its connection to environmentalism. The empirical part analyses the development of the protagonist of the book, Toby, and her perception of the God's Gardeners. Therefore, the eco-religious community is analyzed through the skepticism of the female protagonist towards it. The conclusion summarizes the main findings of the thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

In our efforts to rise above ourselves we have indeed fallen far, and are falling farther still /.../ Ours is a fall into greed: why do we think that everything on Earth belongs to us, while in reality we belong to Everything? (Atwood 2009: 63).

The above quote provides in a nutshell the issues that Margaret Atwood raises in the *MaddAddam* trilogy. In her earlier career as a published author, Atwood has given much attention to feminism (Staines 2006: 17) and various topics connected to the Canadian identity such as the Canadian victim complex (2006: 18). However, lately she has turned her attention, above else, to the ecological problems. The first novel of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, *Oryx and Crake*, addresses the ethical issues connected to scientific experiments and the role of humanities which are often overlooked (Bergthaller 2010: 728). The second installment, *The Year of the Flood*, focuses on social activism, environmentalism, and religion. The narration in both novels is nonlinear and describes both the pre- and post-apocalyptic worlds at the same time with different protagonists. However, the third novel, *MaddAddam*, describes only what happens after the apocalypse. Namely, it elaborates on the surviving protagonists of previous novels trying to preserve their lives, humanity, and culture. All in all, the theme that connects the three novels is survival, since both worlds before and after the apocalypse require certain skills as well as mental and physical strength.

The dystopian novel *The Year of the Flood* deals with the human-made ecological disaster and the violent culture that birthed it. The protagonist of the novel is Toby who is in the victim position from the beginning of the novel. Her difficult life leads her to work at a fast-food restaurant chain, the SecretBurgers, where she is forcefully engaged into an abusive relationship with the manager, Blanco. The only way out of the dangerous situation forced onto her is offered by the God's Gardeners who come to rescue her. However, Toby remains to be skeptical of the community even after they save her from Blanco. Thus, in the beginning, the image of the community painted by Toby is the one of

eco-religious fanatics with obscure customs. They see the contemporary reality as destructive and doomed to be wiped out by the apocalypse which they refer to as the Waterless Flood. The Gardeners believe that the upcoming disaster is inevitable due to the wickedness of the world described in *The Year of the Flood*. Despite the common view on the violent culture and social norms, the community is divided between those who prefer quietly awaiting the Waterless Flood and those who want to take radical measures in order to save the remains of the natural world. Adam One is the peaceful leader of the group who does not approve of the extremist views of his fellow-Gardener, Zeb.

Even though in the God's Gardeners' view, both past and future are not bright, they see hope in the "practice of care" and benevolence towards both human and non-human elements (Lindhé 2015: 53). When the apocalypse comes, Toby successfully waits out the Waterless Flood and then saves other former Gardeners Ren and Amanda with the help of her skills and knowledge acquired in the community. Moreover, the Flood happens to be a human-made virus created by the radical antagonist of the first installment of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, *Oryx and Crake*.

In *The Year of the Flood*, Atwood elaborates on environmental activism and portrays its different forms from 'shallow' environmentalism to the more radical variant, deep ecology. The former tends to be criticized in the novel and the scholarly articles concerning the *MaddAddam* trilogy, while deep ecology, similar to what the Gardeners practice, is generally seen as more effective. Moreover, the community of the God's Gardeners is eco-religious. Thus, this thesis also deals with the religious aspects of the group. The overall aim of this study is to find out whether the kind of environmentalism practiced by the God's Gardeners is sustainable and effective in terms of managing the global ecological crisis. In addition, this thesis also seeks to discover the role of faith in the deep ecology of the God's Gardeners and its contribution to Toby redeeming the Other.

HOPE FOR HUMAN UTOPIA THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE GOD'S GARDENERS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Introduction

The *MaddAddam* trilogy covers various topics including over-consumption and inequality, however, the prevailing issue is still the environmental damage caused by humans. In the brutal world described in *The Year of the Flood*, the only refuge from the chaotic and wicked culture is provided by the God's Gardeners, a radical eco-religious group of deep ecologists. By the means of the novel, Margaret Atwood contemplates on deep ecology as a way to force the necessary shift in the Western culture from anthropocentrism and the idea of nature as a never-ending source towards biocentrism and regarding other elements as equal rather than inferior (Bouson 2016: 342).

The God's Gardeners are the focus of *The Year of the Flood* as well as this thesis. The community is opposed to the whole world where shooting exposed illegal immigrants is cheaper than deporting them, the world where people buy Halloween costumes made of skinned endangered animals, whose meat is sold to the chain of gourmet restaurants (Atwood 2009: 37). According to Toby, the protagonist of the novel, it was possible to find fragments of cats, mice, and even humans in the popular fast food restaurant SecretBurgers (Atwood 2009: 40). All these characteristics of that reality are connected to Atwood's main concern and question in the trilogy, the survival of the human species and whether humans deserve to survive after all (Bouson 2016: 344). As the God's Gardeners are the main ray of hope in the second installment of the trilogy, this thesis will concentrate on their contribution to the possible salvation of the human species, the rescue of Toby and her returning the favor by saving the Other.

The literature review begins with a description of environmental social activism and its forms such as mainstream environmentalism and deep ecology. Furthermore, it is

crucial to give a short description of ecocriticism and what critics see as its inspiration in the USA and Britain. A discussion of the ecofeminist features is also needed since the issue of ‘disposable’ women is connected to the problem of ‘disposable’ nature, as according to Greg Garrard, ecofeminism and deep ecology are indeed intertwined because of the shared “logic of domination” (2004: 23). The literature review will also explain the role of faith and religion in the novel on the grounds of the God’s Gardeners being an eco-religious group and believing that faith is vital for a switch from anthropocentrism. The last section will elaborate on what critics think regarding the survival of humans in *The Year of the Flood* and the hope for a happy ending that lies in a community.

1.2 Environmentalism and its Forms

Margaret Atwood’s novel *The Year of the Flood* elaborates on the issue of ecological crisis as a human-made disaster. The work of fiction describes a wicked world of never-ending consumerism and decay. By the means of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, Atwood expresses her own concerns regarding the survival of the planet as well as the whole human species. Even though the reality portrayed in *The Year of the Flood* is depressing, Atwood’s novel implies that the disaster could still be avoided and that there is still hope which lies in the “practice of care” (Lindhé 2015: 53). However, in order to understand environmentalism, it is important to look at what laid its foundation in the first place.

Rachel Carson’s environmental science book *Silent Spring* (1962) is what initiated the social response to the contemporary ecological implications. The work investigated the effects of toxic industrial and agricultural chemicals on living organisms and was the first indicator of the public environmental movement. (Garrard 2004: 1-3) Garrard also points out that environmentalists tend to see the root of the environmental problems in humans

placing utilitarian value on nature. Moreover, eco-activists advocate for a value system based on see the intrinsic value of the ecosystem. (2004: 18)

Even though many critics agree that the change of values is necessary, they acknowledge that environmentalism in general is subject to much criticism. One of its forms, deep ecology, is claimed to be “hostile to pleasure” and the other, or mainstream environmentalism, is viewed as too accommodating and soft (Kerridge 2006: 534, Garrard 2004: 20). Kerridge defines deep ecology as an extreme branch of environmentalism that was developed in early 1970. He claims that radical ecologists view technology or all forms of governance as variations of human supremacy (Kerridge 2006: 536). They see the need to change the system of values in contemporary society not only to stop the ecological catastrophe but also for the sake of spirituality. Furthermore, the activists also see the link between social inequality and the mistreatment of the environment. Thus, they also demand elimination of “oppressive hierarchies” in all countries. (Kerridge 2006: 536)

Another form of environmentalism is the opposite of deep ecology but it is still subject to criticism. Shallow or mainstream environmentalism is criticized because of its feeble methods and compromise that it makes with the contemporary system (Garrard 2004: 18-19). Hannes Bergthaller (2010: 730) characterizes this variant of environmentalism or ‘sustainability’ as “amorphous” or even hypocritical because such activists want to preserve the environment and retain or improve their own way of life as well as better the quality of life in the world. He argues that all these things are not possible to achieve at the same time because such activists do not wish to stop the progress. He uses the allegory with a cake which the followers of sustainability want to save and eat at the same time. (Bergthaller 2010: 730) Moreover, *The Year of the Flood* also elaborates on mainstream environmentalism and its failure to save the environment. Namely, while contemplating her past, Toby mentions that those who attempted to speak

up regarding the “wrongness” were ignored “because what they were saying was both so obvious and unthinkable” (Atwood 2009: 284).

Even though sustainability is considered more accommodating than deep ecology and despite a profound change in modern life and contemporary Western culture that it endeavors, according to Garrard (2004: 20), most ecocritics claim that it does not offer a solution to the growing environmental problems. Therefore, as Garrard explains, ‘deep ecology’ is thought to be more influential and radical. While mainstream environmentalism seems stagnant and passive to some people, deep ecology strives for a move from anthropocentrism towards biocentrism. Deep ecologists believe that overpopulation and especially the growing standard of living triggers environmental issues such as deforestation, land degradation, extensive greenhouse gas emissions and so on. (Garrard 2004: 20-21) Furthermore, J. Brooks Bouson (2016: 342-343) argues that deep ecologists promote a shift of the whole paradigm towards the idea that nature should no longer be exploited by the human species.

Hostility to comfort is not the only argument against the radical environmental movement since Garrard (2004: 18-19) also defines environmentalists as people who are generally concerned about the human impact on the planet and living organisms but who also want to improve the quality of life in the developed countries and do not approve of radical social changes or cultural shifts. Therefore, environmentalists usually appeal to non-governmental organizations or political parties to handle environmental problems. However, Garrard points out that they still have a lot of power to bring about change because politicians and industries want to appeal to as many people as possible including those who represent environmentalism. (Garrard 2004: 19)

The criticism of environmentalism is explained by Richard Kerridge. He points out that the movement in general is often associated with disapproval of technology and

contemporary culture, although in reality, it functions because of the ability to swiftly share information by the use of technology. However, in the view of Kerridge, the reason why today, some people in the developed world are not concerned about environmental problems is that as they do not witness the consequences yet, they find the issues raised by scientists difficult to relate to. He also points out that the contemporary forms of communication, through which it is possible to share information instantly, contribute to environmentalism by making it possible to inform and alarm people immediately through social media and telecommunication technology. (Kerridge 2006: 533) Therefore, it is difficult to establish whether technology is a threat to the environment or should be the tool of environmentalists.

Overall, even though there is a lot of criticism of environmentalism and the variants of the movement vary, the one thing that unites all environmentalists is the agenda to convince the world that the problem is real and it requires immediate actions (Kerridge 2006: 532-533). Social activism and scientific studies of ecosystems are not the only ways to draw attention to the ecological crisis. There is also a branch of literary and cultural criticism that establishes a connection between environmentalism and culture. (2006: 530)

1.3 Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism, a new field of literary studies, emerged in the end of the 20th century as a response to the need for analyzing literature and culture in relation to nature (Garrard 2004: 3). The aspect of the ecocritical study this thesis will focus on is an earth-oriented analysis of works of literature which are assessed according to their description of the outcomes of the global environmental crisis (Kerridge 2006: 530). The first use of the term is attributed to an American critic William Rueckert in 1978 in his essay “Literature and ecology: an experiment in ecocriticism,” however, some works of ecocriticism like

Raymond William's *The Country and the City* are thought to have preceded Rueckert (Kerridge 2006: 530, Barry 2009: 240). Even though works of literature that addressed environmental issues and critical articles that attempted to theorize such writing were written before the 1990s, ecocriticism is still considered the slowest of critical schools to be established in the academic humanities (Kerridge 2006: 530). However, the term 'ecological' was introduced by Karl Kroeber, an American ecocritic. Both terms 'ecocritical' and 'ecological' were not widely used until the Western Literature Association (WLA) conference in 1989 when Cheryll Glotfelty encouraged the use of 'ecocriticism' as a term to describe the ill-defined critical school of humanities formerly referred to as 'the study of nature writing.' (Barry 2009: 240). Therefore, Barry states that the initiator of ecocriticism was Cheryll Glotfelty, the co-founder of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE). However, Barry also points out that the concept is still rather new and does not have a strict set of regulations. (2009: 239)

According to Barry (2009: 240), the roots of ecocriticism in the USA lie in the works of transcendentalists of the 19th century who honored American wilderness, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller. The British counterpart of ecocriticism, green studies, was originally inspired by the British Romanticism of the 18th century (Barry 2009: 241). However, Barry (2009: 242) points out that there is a distinction between the two names of the same concept. Namely, he uses the word "celebratory" in order to describe the American 'ecocriticism,' whereas the term 'green studies' which is preferred in the UK is rather "minatory" in his view, meaning that green studies aim to express environmental concerns and warn us of their impact. (Barry 2009: 242)

1.4 Ecofeminism and Consumerism

The connection between the mistreatment of women and nature is pointed out by Greg Garrard (2004: 23). According to Garrard, deep ecology questions “the anthropocentric dualism” of humans and nature while ecofeminism argues also against “the *androcentric* dualism” of men and women. Therefore, ecofeminists and deep ecologists have a common ground and both oppose a “logic of domination” (Warren 1994: 129 quoted in Garrard 2004: 23). This concept is also described by Kerridge who refers to Sherry B. Ortner’s essay “Is Female to Male as Nature to Culture?” In her work, Ortner explains the connection between women and nature and describes that the beliefs legitimating the mistreatment of one legitimate the other as well (Ortner 1974 in Kerridge 2006: 537-538).

In the view of Anna Lindhé (2015: 47), the world of violent culture, consumerism, and domination that Atwood describes in the *MaddAddam* trilogy sees nature and people as disposables. Bouson (2016: 344) argues that in *The Year of the Flood*, Atwood describes the modern cultural norm of violence. Painball is described as a brutal sport where men kill each other off for the sake of audience’s entertainment. Bouson also discusses the plight of women like Ren and Amanda who were physically and mentally abused by Painballers. By introducing the sport and its players, Atwood wants to draw the reader’s attention to the contemporary sadistic culture that treats humans and especially women as objects. (Bouson 2016: 344-345)

According to J. Brooks Bouson (2011: 10), through *The Year of the Flood* and the first installment of the trilogy, *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood wants to express her concerns regarding the survival of the human species at the time of the environmental catastrophe, overconsumption, and unethical scientific research. However, excessive consumption does not only include non-human elements but also “disposable” people and especially women.

Bouson (2011: 11) claims that Toby is just one of the “vulnerable and unprotected women” who cannot escape from “predatory men” in the wicked world of Pleeblands. Bouson goes on to analyze Atwood’s essay on Angela Carter in which Atwood describes the cruel world of sexual predators like Blanco. Furthermore, while both men and women can be predators, women are likely to be the “meat” and the men to be the “meat-eaters.” As Bouson suggests (2011: 12), by mentioning cannibalism, Atwood aims to describe the “corporation-controlled world” and emphasize the never-ending consumption by the contemporary culture. Objectification of women is seen by Bouson as common in American culture and is portrayed in Blanco’s abuse of Toby. For Blanco, women are simply objects to be sexually abused and then discarded, they are simply meat that will be devoured after he is done with them. (2011: 13)

1.5 Faith and Hope for a Utopia

The God’s Gardeners being an eco-religious group makes the topics of religion and faith as relevant as environmentalism and ecocriticism in the discussion of *The Year of the Flood*. According to Garrard (2004: 22-23), the roots of ecocriticism go deep into belief systems of Eastern religions, Christian “heterodox figures” like St Francis of Assisi and some other religious practices including American Indian and Wiccan. In addition, Garrard (2004: 19) points out that Christianity is still important for environmentalists as generally, they do not approve of a radical change and precisely this religion is deeply rooted in the Western culture. Overall, it is difficult to establish the exact role of Judeo-Christianity in the destructive attitudes of humans as Garrard (2004: 108-109) points out conflicting claims made by scholars who disagree with each other regarding the interpretation of nature and ecological catastrophe in the Bible. Moreover, the God’s Gardeners themselves question some popular interpretations of Scripture. For instance, Adam One, the leader of

the God's Gardeners, explains that humans were to 'replenish the Earth' and this did not mean 'wiping out everything else' (Bouson 2016: 347).

Another controversy regarding religion is revealed in *MaddAddam*, the last installment of the trilogy, where Margaret Atwood introduces the reader to Holy PetrOleum (2013: 111-113). Followers of this religion have based their beliefs on Christian scripture. As was pointed out by Zeb, the cult was highly corrupted, used online outlets for advertisement, and told "people what they want to hear" (Atwood 2013: 111). Bouson (2016: 345) claims that Holy PetrOleum, a cult of oil worshipers, has been introduced by Atwood in order to express her own and other environmentalists' concerns regarding today's obsession with fossil fuels and the dependency on them.

While religion in *MaddAddam* is still a debated topic, faith has an explicitly positive role. Scholars like Lindhé (2015: 46-47) and Bouson (2016: 347) have pointed out a similarity between Adam One and Christ. Lindhé (2015: 47) mentions it as she describes Adam One rescuing Toby from her abusive relationship with Blanco and hence bringing "hope and light to the fallen." Adam One is the only hope for Toby in the rough system of domination over "disposable" people (Lindhé 2015: 47). Moreover, Bouson (2016: 347) points out that Adam One himself once refers to the eco-religious group as 'plural Noah' that is to cultivate what is known about other species after the Waterless Flood and the end of humanity. Additionally, she also claims that Atwood uses Adam One and his sermons in order to express her own apprehension regarding the consumerist culture and misuse of nature (Bouson 2016: 347).

In his discussion of environmentalism, Garrard (2004: 18) states that many environmentalists opt for a change of the current Western value system towards the one that will acknowledge humans as a part of nature. For the God's Gardeners, faith brings such a change of values. Therefore, according to Bouson (2011: 17), Atwood suggests that

the God's Gardeners and their belief system signify hope for human survival. Namely, she sees faith as the evidence of human ability to favor ethics over the immoral and hence faith might help the human species survive (Bouson 2011: 17). A similar idea is suggested by Bergthaller (2010: 740) who argues that humans require faith and must believe in something "bigger than themselves" in order to balance out science and ethics and avoid "nihilism and despair." However, Roman Bartosch (2013: 250) still questions faith and points out that the God's Gardeners are flawed and far from perfect as a community as well as ecologists. As examples he uses Burt 'The Knob,' a Gardener blamed of "touching children," and the Adams and Eves who are still secretly using laptops even though they claim to reject contemporary technology. Furthermore, Bartosch mentions Adam One saying that expectations should not be too high when it comes to faith and the members of the eco-religious community are still humans and are not perfect. (Bartosch 2013: 250)

According to Lindhé (2015: 48-49), Toby is a typical Atwoodian heroine but with one exception, she was saved to redeem the Other. The protagonist of *The Year of the Flood* goes through suffering the loss of her parents, surviving mental and physical abuse by Blanco and then rises from it with the help of the God's Gardeners (2015: 48). Lindhé explains that such a shift from individualism towards caring for the Other is caused by the eco-religious community (Lindhé 2015: 50). Therefore, for Lindhé (2015: 53), Atwood sees the hope for a utopia in "Christian-based ethics of charity and stewardship" and selflessly redeeming the Other. A community like the God's Gardeners where "*practice* of care comes before faith (in transcendence and salvation)" promotes the needed change of value-system from the violent consumerism that treats people and nature as disposables. The reason why Toby was saved from the wicked culture of "disposable" women and Blanco is to help the Other. (Lindhé 2015: 53)

1.6 Conclusion

In *The Year of the Flood*, Atwood elaborates on various problems and raises topical questions that in many ways mirror the contemporary reality. Therefore, several critics have worked to find answers to those questions and problems but the most prominent issue discussed in this thesis is faith and its ability to stop the human-made destruction of the ecosystem. The solution is a shift of mentality from viewing nature as something that somebody owns towards accepting its intrinsic value and sovereignty. Atwood (2009: 201) believes that this is possible with the help of a community where “action precedes faith” and which preaches compassion, benevolence and sacrificing one’s needs for the sake of the Other. Therefore, the purpose of the God’s Gardeners is to lead by example in order to save humanity.

FROM A 'DISPOSABLE' WOMAN TO REDEEMING THE OTHER THROUGH THE 'PRACTICE OF CARE' OF THE GOD'S GARDENERS

2.1 Introduction

The world introduced to the reader in *The Year of the Flood* is dark and degrading to its inhabitants who “literally become meat” (Lindhé 2015: 45). The protagonist of the novel and a member of the God’s Gardeners, a religious group of deep ecologists, has to descend in order to rise up and “redeem the Other” with the help of a community (Lindhé 2015: 49-50). The God’s Gardeners save Toby from abuse and ignorance imposed onto her by the harsh culture of domination. The empirical part of this thesis will analyze the God’s Gardeners from the point of view of Toby both as a skeptic and a true believer. It is crucial to understand the culture and the society in order to understand the role of the God’s Gardeners opposed to the predator-ruled society.

2.2 Toby before Being Saved by the God’s Gardeners

As a child, Toby still witnessed the old way of life in the rural area. Her mother owned a vegetable garden and her father taught her how to hunt deer and shoot with a rifle (Atwood 2009: 29). It was not only the deer that wandered into her mother’s garden but also “the first green rabbits.” Toby saw how her mother’s illness forced Toby’s father to sell their house and how the developers “flattened the place” where it stood (Atwood 2009: 31). The world was changing rapidly but her father did not wish to change with it, so after going through his wife’s death, hospital bills, selling the house, losing his job, he was “eaten away” (Atwood 2009: 32).

In the novel, the description of Toby’s childhood and early youth is short. She does not even mention the names of her parents since they are irrelevant for her story. The fact of their death and why it occurred are what is truly important for Toby herself. Her father shot himself after his wife’s funeral (Atwood 2009: 32-33) but her mother died from a

mysterious illness that no doctor was able to diagnose (Atwood 2009: 31). Toby's mother, who was a franchise operator of HealthWyzer Hi-Potency VitalVite that sold the supplements that she took daily, was a very healthy person according to Toby: she exercised and followed a healthy diet (Atwood 2009: 31). However, the reason why Toby's mother died is revealed later in the novel after Toby was saved from Blanco. According to Pilar, a member of the God's Gardeners, her dead mother was "a guinea pig" of the Corporation or the Private Security Corps which is described by Lindhé as a private organization seeking domination over everyone (Atwood 2009: 125, Lindhé 2015: 45). Pilar urges Toby to never take a pill from the Corporation and to never believe scientists, doctors, or the data that they produce because, according to her, "they've all been bought" (Atwood 2009: 125).

As pointed out by Lindhé, the world of *The Year of the Flood* ruled by corporations perceives people as disposables (2015: 47). Toby descends into the Pleeblands (a ghetto ruled by wicked men like Blanco) and the Sewage Lagoon because she knows that the CorpSeCorps would never look for her there. Sinking deep into the lowest of the lowest is a metaphor for Toby's journey as an Atwoodian heroine. According to Lindhé, she had to descend in order to rise again and help others (2015: 45).

However, the disturbing death of her parents is not the moment yet when she can ascend. Even though Toby's childhood was not a bed of roses, what she went through before being saved by the God's Gardeners was even worse. The culture of the Pleeblands described in *The Year of the Flood* expects "a young woman like her" without parents and financial support to become a sex worker (Atwood 2009: 34). Even though Toby did not become a prostitute, she was still exposed to sexual and mental abuse in every job she took. She worked as furzooter where she wore a faux-fur costume and an advertising sign (Atwood 2009: 37-38). There, she was subjected to sexual harassment and was even

attacked by fetishists three times within her first working week. According to Toby, “it wasn’t rape” but it was still unpleasant and degrading to her. (Atwood 2009: 38)

In the abusive system of the Pleeblands, Toby was just another disposable and replicable woman. According to Bouson (2012: 12), in *The Year of the Flood*, Atwood wanted to emphasize that women often become victims so they have to go to extreme lengths in order to endure difficulties. Toby’s own survival lies in learning how to oppose the predatory society while at the same time remain a strong woman and embrace her gender. Throughout the process of staying afloat, she had to literally sell fragments of her female body such as hair and eggs (Atwood 2009: 38). During the process of extracting eggs, the needle was infected and she accidentally became sterile and even though, at that point, she did not think of having children in the future, she felt “the light leaking out of her.” By losing her ability to reproduce, she also lost her direction in life and wanted to withdraw from reality by having sexual intercourse with multiple casual partners. (Atwood 2009: 39)

The oppressive system did not wish to let Toby go so the God’s Gardeners were her only way out of it. As it has already been briefly mentioned, Lindhé claims that Toby is a typical Atwoodian heroine since she was physically and mentally abused by Blanco and the whole system of domination over women but she was saved (Lindhé 2015: 45). However, before her salvation, Toby got a job at the SecretBurgers, a chain of fast food restaurants with secret ingredient patties so no one knew what was inside (Atwood 2009: 40-42). Even though Toby saw it as a way to earn money in order to survive, there was a “catch,” Blanco. At that moment he was “doing” another one of his female employees and Toby was advised to “stay off his radar.” (Atwood 2009: 42) According to Toby’s co-worker Rebecca, Blanco would do “just one at a time” and could “take a girl apart” if she made him jealous. This attitude and wording already imply that Blanco treats his female

employees and women in general as objects to abuse and then “take /.../ apart.” (Atwood 2009: 42) Rebecca adds that “he just likes the kittens, not the old cats” and implies that Toby should “wrinkle [herself] up” if she wants to be invisible to him. (Atwood 2009: 42) Thus, after Dora, his current prey, has been used up, Toby was next in line.

As pointed out by Lindhé (2015: 46), Toby was trapped in the abusive relationship and had no way out of it. Blanco was a dangerous man and his history of violence then led him to the Painball Arena after he killed “the wrong kind of woman.” Painball was one of the two choices offered to condemned criminals, whether that or death. (Atwood 2009: 117) The Arena was more of a restricted area where people would kill each other off for the amusement of others as it was recorded by hidden cameras and then broadcasted (Atwood 2009: 118). As Toby pointed out, everyone was afraid of long-term Painballers “hooked on adrenalin” (Atwood 2009: 118). When Blanco “ordered Toby to his office” and told her: “cross me up, I’ll snap you like a twig,” she “could only whisper” and felt as powerless prey in danger (Atwood 2009: 44-45). Therefore, she needed someone to save her and the help came in the face of the eco-religious community, the God’s Gardeners.

Despite the fact that Blanco was Toby’s torturer, he saw himself as a savior because a woman “with an ass as skinny as Toby’s” was not supposed to be attractive to other predators (Atwood 2009: 46). Blanco wanted Toby to be thankful for the abuse and “demanded a thank you after every degrading act” (Atwood 2009: 46). She did not have time for a lunch-break at work because “he demanded her services” even then so she was getting “hungrier and more exhausted” (Atwood 2009: 46-47).

When we see the God’s Gardeners for the first time, the distinction between them and the common people of the Sewage Lagoon is clearer than ever as Adam One is talking about kindness and compassion towards “fellow Creatures” and the passers-by are shouting vulgar replies while devouring “the mutilated flesh of God’s beloved Creatures”

(Atwood 2009: 48-50). Even though the God's Gardeners sound fanatical and radical, they represent light in the dark reality of the Pleeblands. They lead Toby towards salvation and crack her "shell" by guiding her away from Blanco and the SecretBurgers. While she is welcomed to the Garden, the members of the God's Gardeners give her hugs and the non-sexual touch feels strange to Toby considering her former relationship with Blanco (Atwood 2009: 51-52). Seeing the Garden, Toby "found herself crying with relief and gratitude" as she saw many kinds of plants for the first time in her life. The air and atmosphere was completely different from the rest of the Pleeblands. (Atwood 2009: 52) Toby was "flooded with the Light of God's Creation" and the light cracked the shell of her indifference open. (Atwood 2009: 52)

2.3 Toby after Being Saved by the God's Gardeners

Even though "standard religion" was unimportant if not discouraged in Toby's family, they still attended church service for the sake of business and social approval. At the same time, Toby turns to a prayer at the moment of hardship while burying her father's body. She reads "Earth to earth" in order to find courage to move on and embrace "God's great dance of proteins." (Atwood 2009: 33, 486) Even before meeting the Gardeners, faith was in Toby but it could not pierce the darkness of degrading norms imposed onto her by the society. It was only her willpower and inner light that steered her towards the community she needed. Thus, when Adam One told her that he was happy that Toby "made this decision," she thought that "something else had made it for her" (Atwood 2009: 52). Even without being one of the Gardeners or even believing in their practices, faith was within Toby and guided her to benevolence.

In the *MaddAddam* trilogy, religion and faith play distinct roles with the former being powerful and profitable. According to Adam One, religious groups were "off-limits"

for the CorpSeCorps and did not have to be afraid of being attacked or investigated by the them. The leader of the God's Gardeners pointed out that the Corporations did not want to damage their public image by disturbing something with "God in its name." Furthermore, he mentioned Petrobaptism or its branch, the Church of Petroleum (Atwood 2009: 58, Atwood 2013: 111). As according to Zeb, a cult was a good way "to coin the megabucks:"

Tell people what they want to hear, call yourself a religion, put the squeeze on for contributions, run your own media outlets and use them for robocalls and slick online campaigns, befriend or threaten politicians, evade taxes. (Atwood 2013: 111)

In the world of *The Year of the Flood*, standard religions are just a part of the consumerist ideas and abused by the Corporations, whereas a religion in which "action precedes faith" teaches one compassion and kindness toward the Other and nature (Atwood 2009: 201). However, as long as the God's Gardeners "own nothing they [the Corporations] want" and "don't take to blowing things up," the community is safe and seen by the outsiders as religious freaks (Atwood 2009: 58).

The first impression of the "bizarre people" and "their wacky religion" made Toby question her impulsive decision to leave everything behind and follow them (Atwood 2009: 52). No matter how grand the Garden seemed or how friendly the Gardeners were, she was skeptical of their religion, beliefs, and practices for a long time even after joining the community. Thus, her critical opinion is suitable for a rational analysis of the "religious fanatics" (Bergthaller 2010: 739). After all, she did not fit in and could not even properly complete the assigned chores. Toby was an awkward sewer, cook, and gardener and it stood in the way of her becoming a true believer. (Atwood 2009: 54) Besides the tangible evidence of her being different from the rest of the group, Toby also could not comprehend the ways of the Gardeners, for example, their hierarchical system. Even though Adam One assured Toby that spiritually all Gardeners were equal, in reality, the Adams and the Eves were clearly higher in rank than the rest of the Gardeners (Atwood 2009: 54-55). Toby compared the order to a monastery without sexual abstinence (Atwood 2009: 55).

Moreover, since the community believed that the whole human population was about to be wiped out by the Waterless Flood, Toby did not see the reason for “tedious” prayers, the dreary diet, and strict rules, such as God’s “aesthetic preference” for women to grow their hair long (Atwood 2009: 56). During her “probation” period, Toby had a lot to learn both about the community and its leader (Atwood 2009: 54).

Despite the fact that in the beginning of the novel, Adam One seems mysterious and almost God-like, later on, as Toby fully emerges into the group and becomes Eve Six, it is clear that the Gardeners and their leader are “all-too-human” and flawed (Bartosch 2013: 250). Just like a Petrobaptist preacher, Adam One knows what to say and when in order to manipulate people into believing what he wants them to believe. He lies his way into keeping the group in order. This is evident after Pilar’s death, who was the former Eve Six and Toby’s dear friend, as Adam One did not tell the whole truth regarding Pilar’s advanced cancer and her wish to end it herself (Atwood 2009: 212-213). Instead, he blamed her death on Pilar’s faulty “mycological expertise” (Atwood 2009: 218). When approached by Toby, Adam One admitted to a lie but he also added: “I must sometimes say things that are not transparently honest.” Even though he claimed that he did so for the sake of “the greater good,” it still proves the fact that the God’s Gardeners, not being transparent with each other, are a flawed community. (Atwood 2009: 219)

As it was stated in the literature review, deep ecologists see overpopulation and consumerism dangerous towards environment (Garrard 2004: 20-21) since according to George Sessions (1995: 68 quoted in Garrard 2004: 21), non-human life on the planet requires a much smaller number of human inhabitants. Similarly, in *The Year of the Flood*, the Gardeners believed that the Apocalypse was inevitable because of the excessive human population, its effect on the environment, and human “wickedness.” The community, in its

turn, was to wait out the Flood in the Ararats, discreet storage places with enough provision to withstand the disaster, and “replenish the Earth.” (Atwood 2009: 56)

The breaking point of Toby’s skepticism about the Gardeners and their beliefs was the moment when Pilar, Toby’s predecessor as Eve Six, offered her to learn more about bees and mushrooms which was Pilar’s specialty (Atwood 2009: 118). Labor, knowledge, and friendship helped Toby to fully emerge into the group and their creed. Even though Toby still questioned Adam One and his methods, Pilar was the one to show her the way of being in harmony with nature and kind to the Other but not being afraid to use poisonous mushrooms when needed (Atwood 2009: 121).

2.4 Toby as an Eve

Toby’s becoming a true Gardener was a gradual process which did not happen immediately after she was saved from Blanco. It took a long time for her to recognize the value of the community and its actions. It required time for her to find peace in “her new skin” and Pilar was the one who helped her on the way. (Atwood 2009: 121) However, despite the fact that the God’s Gardeners seem flawless at first glance, Toby was still sexually harassed by one of the members. As previously mentioned, the eco-religious group had rather loose views on sexual relationship between the members. Therefore, when Toby was attacked by a male Gardener, it did not seem to be a major issue to Pilar who simply said: “we never make a fuss about such things.” (Atwood 2009: 124) However, what Pilar said afterward is a sign that the Gardeners still differed from the immoral Sewage Lagoon. She encouraged Toby to forgive the harasser as “the ancient Australopithecus can come out in all of us.” (Atwood 2009: 124) Even though the God’s Gardeners are not an unblemished community, they still recognized that everyone has the right for forgiveness.

Unfortunately, as Atwood emphasizes in *The Year of the Flood*, sometimes trust and empathy do not go a long way and one of the Gardeners was soon “seduced by the spirit of materialist greed” (Atwood 2009: 228). As it turns out, Adam Thirteen was growing “skunkweed” in the Buenavista, one of the buildings belonging to the community (Atwood 2009: 165). The drug was created in the HealthWyzer lab and naturally, the wholesalers were people working for the Corporations. According to Zeb, skunkweed was highly addictive and expensive. Furthermore, Burt, the person responsible for the operation, worked along with the CorpSeCorps until he tried to avoid the intermediary and someone, presumably his jealous wife, gave him away. (Atwood 2009: 206-207) Although Toby is skeptical regarding the Gardeners putting too much trust into their own followers, she does so herself when she risks her life to save Ren and Amanda after the Waterless Flood. She is compassionate towards others even without recognizing it because of faith.

As time passed, Toby did not become less suspicious towards the community. She still questioned their rituals, rules, and even challenged the hypocrisy of certain members of the God’s Gardeners. However, after advancing in the hierarchical order one step further and becoming an Eve herself, she also became a witness to a whole new level of questionable activities. Before her “Eveship,” Toby saw the Adams and Eves as something extra-terrestrial since no one knew how they managed “to move and think as one” and interact unnoticed without any technology involved. The fact that they worked together so harmoniously made Toby see them as a machine that would never break down. Eve Six herself acknowledges that before “Eveship” she thought that the Adams and Eves shared information between each other “chemically, like trees,” when in reality, they had a secret room for meetings. (Atwood 2009: 225) However, the key to this mystery is not poetic at all, the ruling body of the God’s Gardeners owned a secret room for meetings and a laptop. Zeb, the most rebellious member of the group compared it to “the Vatican’s porn

collection,” which is, according to him, “safe in [their] hands.” (Atwood 2009: 225) The fact that the ones that ruled the community used an electronic device was shocking to Toby as it contradicted fundamental postulates of the God’s Gardeners. Even though the Adams and Eves used the laptop for the good of the group, they have once again been proven to be “all-too-human” (Bartosch 2013: 250).

As Toby points out, the God’s Gardeners were gradually growing in influence and branching out into other plebs and cities. Therefore, they were getting more powerful in the world ruled by the Corporations. The Gardeners had their people working undercover “at every level, even within the Corporations themselves.” (Atwood 2009: 226) The group was not just a sect of pacifist vegetarians waiting for the end of the world, but they were gathering information and by the means of that, power. Now, with the arrest of Burt, all the secrets of the God’s Gardeners were to be exposed and the community to be attacked by the CorpSeCorps. When Toby became Eve Six and joined other Eves and Adams at the table, she realized just how dangerous it was to oppose the wicked system and those on top who did not stand opposition.

Ever since Toby found out that Blanco, her former employer and abusive partner, was taken to the Painball Arena, she felt safe or at least as safe as one can feel in such a world (Atwood 2009: 117). However, when Zeb told her that Blanco was out, Toby “felt an ice needle shoot through her” because she knew that even the Gardeners would not be able to save her from the “older and meaner” abuser (Atwood 2009: 297-298). On the contrary, now she was putting them at risk.

The God’s Gardeners had a strict set of rules that everyone, except for one member of the group, followed. Based on Toby’s description of Zeb, he is a radical deep ecologist and, at the same time, the complete opposite of Adam One. He is rebellious and not afraid to take risk. Zeb almost seems irresponsible and immature when he drinks Happicuppa, a

drink that was “gen-mod, /.../ sprayed with poisons.” As Toby points out, its production “kills birds” and “ruins peasants.” (Atwood 2009: 221) He does what he wants and has different views on environmentalism. He advocates for more radical measures as opposed to how Adam One sees the Gardeners:

Peace goes only so far ... There’s at least a hundred new extinct species since this time last month. They got fucking eaten! We can’t just sit here and watch the lights blink out. Have to begin somewhere. Today SecretBurgers, tomorrow that fucking gourmet restaurant chain. Rarity. That needs to go. (Atwood 2009: 300)

Zeb’s radical attitude and Adam One’s dreary restfulness divided the God’s Gardeners and as the former said, “a house divided against itself could not stand” (Atwood 2009: 227). Although the Gardeners managed to repel Blanco’s attack, they knew he would come back for Toby. Thus, she was not only unsafe there, but she also posed a danger to the God’s Gardeners (Atwood 2009: 306).

2.5 Toby after Leaving the God’s Gardeners

Now that Toby was forced to abandon the God’s Garden and her responsibilities, she realized just how much she appreciated being a part of the community. While contemplating her previous feelings towards the Gardeners, Toby saw her views changing drastically and she no longer wanted to leave everything behind. Furthermore, she even felt “like a wrenching, a severing, a skin peeling off” (Atwood 2009: 307). The first things that came to her mind were the bees and her duties as Eve Six. She was burdened with melancholy because by leaving her chores, she would let Pilar down. Toby’s new purpose was her work as an Eve and taking care of the bees and she could not imagine her life without the hard work at the Garden.

After leaving the Gardeners, Toby had to wait for Zeb to arrange her new refuge, but it would not be too far from the Garden since Adam One did not want Toby to go too far, in case it became safe for her to return (Atwood 2009: 309). While waiting for the right

moment, Toby had to lay low and the idea of the Gardeners abandoning her crossed Toby's mind a couple of times (Atwood 2009: 310-311). Adam One's last words to Toby were "keep the Light around" because he knew that by leaving them, she would go back to the harsh outside world (Atwood 2009: 308). However, when Zeb did return to take her to the safe place, Toby had to go through a procedure of changing her identity as well as appearance and voice. While waiting for the results to sink in, Toby was sheltered at SolarSpace. Her contact let her know that Toby would have to eat meat as "just about everyone in SolarSpace is a carnivore." Even though Toby was still a Gardener, the smell of cooking meat made her hungry. (Atwood 2009: 312)

As was briefly explained before, the God's Gardeners were strict vegetarians and did not encourage animal protein consumption "unless dread Famine drives" (Atwood 2009: 417). Moreover, they credited contributing their protein to a fellow Species as an ultimate divine sacrifice: "Should your life be required of you, rest assured that it is required by Life" (Atwood 2009: 415-416). The God's Gardeners worshiped both the predators and the prey "because God made them thus" (Atwood 2009: 317). Even after the Waterless Flood has wiped out most of the humans, Toby does not wish to partake in "that kind of slaughter" and devour "a fellow mammal" (Atwood 2009: 384). No matter her morals, after leaving the Garden, she did not have any other choice but to work in the AnooYoo Spa even though Adam One had spoken against it (Atwood 2009: 355).

Toby's new identity was Tobiatha, a Tex-Mex manager (Atwood 2009: 315). The Spa was essentially the place where women went for beauty treatments and anti-aging procedures as "selling hope" was the unofficial motto of the AnooYoo Spa (Atwood 2009: 315). Despite the changes in her appearance, Toby remained to be the skeptical self and in her mind, she thought that the best way to stop the aging process was "jumping off the roof" since "death's a sure-fire method for stopping time" (Atwood 2009: 315-316).

Besides her skepticism, Toby also managed to retain the creed of the God's Gardeners. Even after leaving the group, she remembered about the prophecy of the Waterless Flood. She began stocking up on resources and "building her own private Ararat." (Atwood 2009: 316) Although Toby was still not sure whether she was a true believer, she made the decision to make certain preparations for the apocalypse. She used her position as an inventory-taker to stockpile soon-to-be-recycled containers with food at the end of the shelves of the stock room (Atwood 2009: 316-317). Furthermore, Toby also kept her eyes open for any news connected to the activity of the God's Gardeners by using her office computer (Atwood 2009: 317). Adam One also did not leave her thoughts as whenever an idea he would not have approved of crossed her mind, she heard his voice: "Dear Eve Six /.../ Such fantasies are unworthy of you. What would Pilar think?" (Atwood 2009: 320).

After a long period of calm, the silence broke with Zeb coming to see Toby. The God's Gardeners split up into two and Zeb started his own group of radical environmentalists called MaddAddam. (Atwood 2009: 321) The group communicated through a series of encrypted private networks and Zeb gave Toby her own number to access the chat room (Atwood 2009: 321). This gave her the feeling of belonging that she missed so much (Atwood 2009: 322). After all, she needed to feel "included" in a fellowship in the new world of beauty industry she was in (Atwood 2009: 322). However, this feeling did not last, just like the rest of the God's Gardeners. All that was left for her was laying low and expecting "the knock on the door, the shattering of glass, the *zipzip* of a spraygun" by the CorpSeCorps. (Atwood 2009: 323)

The new order of things for the God's Gardeners included them being "feared /.../ as prophets of the age to come." The peaceful Gardeners were associated with the attacks that were actually done by "the schismatic and heretical group calling itself MaddAddam."

(Atwood 2009: 327) After all, the divided community “could not stand,” as Adam One had said before (Atwood 2009: 227). Even after the group was dissolved, Adam One encouraged the followers not to consume “flesh of our fellow Creatures” (Atwood 2009: 227). The God’s Gardeners were struggling to retain their creed and took comfort in the upcoming Waterless Flood:

Nothing will remain of the Exfernal World but decaying wood and rusting metal implements; and over these the Kudzu and other vines will climb; the Birds and Animals will nest in them /.../ For all works of Man will be as words written on the water. (Atwood 2009: 373)

Contemplating all the destruction that the human species has done to the planet and its elements, the God’s Gardeners looked forward to seeing it being wiped out from the face of Earth. As they hid in the dark shelter and whispered prayers, they begged the Spirit of Saint Dian to “shelter [them] in the wings of a yet greater Spirit.” (Atwood 2009: 373)

Toby’s inner light represents the spirit that the God’s Gardeners worshiped. Toby “interposed her Faith,” as Saint Dian (Atwood 2009: 374), to save the Other. While working at the Spa, a former Gardener Ren came to Toby to ask for help. The young woman was feeling “numb inside, like an orphan” and could not see any prospects in her life. Toby made Ren feel “safe,” “welcomed” and “wanted.” (Atwood 2009: 356) She took a great risk in helping a fellow Gardener and revealing her own true identity. Moreover, she employed Ren as an apprentice, shared the information about the “Gardener-style Ararat” and allowed Ren to use it when needed. (Atwood 2009: 356-357) Although Toby said that she was not sure whether they would actually use the supplies, she still went to great lengths to prepare them. Thus, deep inside she was still a true Gardener.

After the pandemic, everything changed but Toby’s Faith. What saved her was all the things that she had learned from the Gardeners. After all, she had prepared her own Ararat because she trusted Adam One’s doctrines. While walking through the post-apocalyptic city, she remembered the words of the main Gardener:

When the Waterless Waters rise /.../ the people will try to save themselves from drowning. They will clutch at any straw. Be sure you are not that straw, my Friends, for if you are clutched or even touched, you too will drown. (Atwood 2009: 26)

She did not want to be wiped out by the Flood as well as to become a victim. Wading through the streets, she relied on Zeb's coaching: "running away makes you a prey" (Atwood 2009: 26). Overall, the issue of the pray-predator relationship plays a vital role in the novel as pointed out by Bouson (2011: 11) who has described women being the victims of "predatory men." Toby is tempted to follow nature and feels the forest "luring her in," but remembers Adam One's words: "nature full strength is more than we can take /.../ We're no longer at home in it." (Atwood 2009: 392-393) Toby has to stop herself from fully emerging into the wild as humans can no longer survive in their primal habitat. The human species can no longer exist in Nature. Thus, Toby has to rely on her Gardener identity in order to survive both the wilderness and the remaining elements of human civilization.

In *The Year of the Flood*, the new wilderness altered by humans has little in common with the natural spirit that created them in the first place. Regardless, Toby wants to survive and this challenges her Faith. In order to retain her humanity in the new post-apocalyptic world, she has to choose redeeming the Other. When approached by Ren in disguise begging for help, Toby hesitates to assist the human in need since the only thought on her mind is her own survival. Toby is thinking of the stranger's blood "boiling with microbes and viruses" but the Gardener identity reminds her that humans are "God's Creatures too." (Atwood 2009: 423) Even though she saved Ren's life, Toby's inner battle between her conscious and the instinct to survive was not over. After all, once recovered, Ren would need half of Toby's almost finished supplies (Atwood 2009: 427-428). In this moment of hesitation, the Gardeners and their philosophy of benevolence spoke to Toby:

Adam One would say that Ren is a precious gift that has been given to Toby so that Toby may demonstrate unselfishness and sharing and those higher qualities the Gardeners had been so eager to bring out in her. Toby can't see it that way, not at the moment. But she'll have to keep trying. (Atwood 2009: 428)

In the end, the inner Gardener wins and Toby does not just help Ren, but she also strives to “cherish her” (Atwood 2009: 431) and ventures out into the outside world in order to save another survivor and former Gardener, Amanda, who was captured by three surviving Painballers (Atwood 2009: 479).

The fragile and innocent Ren, who relies on Toby for protection, is actually a blessing as she rescues Toby from being “the ghost” (Atwood 2009: 431). Toby realized that Ren was actually more than just an injured woman, she was to give Toby the meaning of life, which is to redeem the Other. Therefore, she even risked her life to save Amanda from the Painballers (Atwood 2009: 479). In the moment of confusion, Toby finds purpose in life though “the practice of care” taught to her by the eco-religious community of the God’s Gardeners. (Lindhé 2015: 52) After all, it was the Gardeners’ doctrine that she relied on in the most difficult moments of her later life. Therefore, even though Toby has had Faith all along and was intrinsically a good person, she needed a fellowship to lead her in the direction of benevolence and environmentalism.

2.6 Conclusion

The society described in *The Year of the Flood* is tough on people and especially women who undergo physical and mental abuse on a daily basis. However, there is a community that challenges the wicked culture by showing people the path of love and kindness. This eco-religious group saves Toby and many other followers and teaches them that the “practice of care” goes a long way and that if one surrounds themselves with light, they can survive the Flood (Lindhé 2015: 53). Unfortunately, as can be seen from the analysis, the God’s Gardeners are flawed and divided, which destines them to break up. However, their teaching still lives on in former Gardeners like Toby, who finds the meaning of life in redeeming the Other, including the environment. The Gardeners’ view

on environment is inspiring as they acknowledge the intrinsic value of nature and worship it. This merger of environmentalism and humanism saves Toby and gives her life a purpose.

CONCLUSION

Never before have the issues described in *The Year of the Flood* and the whole *MaddAddam* trilogy been as relevant as they are today. With her novels, Margaret Atwood draws the reader's attention to the issues of human rights, overpopulation, and the degradation of environment. In the recent years, it is especially the environmental damage that has been receiving a lot of attention from authors as well as literary critics.

The focus of this thesis has been on environmentalism and ecofeminism as the eco-religious community of the God's Gardeners is opposed to the cruel cultural norms of the world that sees women as disposables and is ruled by the Corporations. The Gardeners rescue Toby and show her the practice of love and benevolence. Even though she is intrinsically good and has Faith, this kind treatment is new to her as most of the things she had experienced before were degrading. Toby, unlike the majority of Atwoodian female characters, does not stop her progress after being saved, but she uses the knowledge obtained in the Garden to redeem the Other.

Based on the analysis done in this thesis, religion is not essential in Toby becoming the redeemer. It can even be used for the purposes of propaganda and brain-washing as can be seen in the description of the Holy PetrOleum church (Atwood 2013: 111-113). Faith and compassion, on the other hand, are important in Toby's path of redemption. Even though Toby has had Faith long before she came across the God's Gardeners, the community brought out the light inside of her.

When it comes to mainstream environmentalism, Toby's example shows that it can be replaced by the benevolent and charitable approach towards the environment as well as its human and non-human elements. The "practice of care" that the God's Gardeners strive for, leads to the switch from treating people and the planet as disposables to recognizing their intrinsic worth.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Elizaveta Sai

The Role of Faith in the Formation of Toby's Character in Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*

Usu roll Toby tegelaskuju arengus Margaret Atwoodi „Uputuse aastas“

Bakalaureusetöö

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Lehekülgede arv: 36

Annotatsioon:

Romaaniga „Uputuse aasta“ juhib Margaret Atwood lugeja tähelepanu globaalsele ökoloogilisele kriisile. Käesoleva töö eesmärk on välja selgitada, kas teoses kujutatud ja Jumala Aednike praktiseeritav keskkonnakaitse vorm suudab asendada peavoolu keskkonnakaitset, mida peetakse keskkonna säilitamise seisukohast üldiselt ebatõhusaks.

Töö sissejuhatuses asetatakse romaan Atwoodi loomingu konteksti, antakse ülevaade „Uputuse aasta“ sisust ja *MaddAddam*'i triloogia kahest ülejäänud osast. Samuti sõnastatakse töö eesmärk ning uurimisküsimused.

Kirjanduse ülevaates käsitletakse keskkonnakaitse, ökokriitika ja ökofeminismi alasest teaduskirjandusest valitud põhimõisteid ja -seisukohti, mis on aluseks käesolevale tööle, samuti „Uputuse aasta“ retseptiooni. Töös kasutatud mõistete ja lähenemiste üheks peamiseks allikaks on Greg Garrardi *Ecocriticism*, kust on pärit ka idee feminismi ja ökoloogia vahelisest seosest ning arusaam domineerimise aluseks olevast sarnasest loogikast.

Empiiriline osa analüüsib romaani peategelase Toby kujunemist läbi elu, pöörates tähelepanu sellele, kuidas Jumala Aednikud ja nende õpetused teda mõjutasid. Samuti käsitletakse karme sotsiaalseid norme ja üldist kultuuri, mis rõhub inimesi ja eriti naisi. Töö eesmärgi saavutamiseks uuritakse lähemalt Jumala Aednikke ja Toby skeptilist suhtumist neisse.

Kokkuvõttes sõnastatakse töö peamised tulemused. Nimelt läheb Toby kaugemale tüüpilisest Atwoodi kangelannast, kes püüab päästa eelkõige iseennast. See osutub võimalikuks tänu armastusele ja heatahtlikkusele, mis temale Aednike seas osaks sai ning kogukonda kuulumisele. Pärast uue identiteedi omaksvõttu näitab ta eeskuju ja päästab Teise, ehk Reni ja Amanda. Toby tegelaskuju areng osutab sellele, et keskkonnakaitse vorm, mida Jumala Aednikud praktikas rakendavad, võib peavoolu varianti asendada.

Märksõnad: Margaret Atwood, kanada kirjandus, ökokriitika, Uputuse aasta

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