



**APOCALYPSE, ECO-AWARENESS AND PASTORAL AS A TRIAD OF ECO-  
PHOBIA IN SELECTED WORKS BY MARGARET ATWOOD**

**By**

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**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in  
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## Dedication

To that pure soul, present yet absent ...My brother, As'ad Akram...



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2023

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This research utilized ecocriticism to analyze Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013). It illustrated how Atwood perceives environmental eco-phobia and its appropriation via apocalypse, pastoral, and eco-awareness. The statement of the research was a discussion of eco-phobia as the fictional characters' feelings of the impending apocalyptic danger threatening the natural environment, as well as the possible remedies to this problem. Therefore, eco-phobic apocalypse was analysed based on the selected characters' experiences. The characters underwent eco-phobic feelings when they expected impending apocalyptic environmental disasters. As a result, they resorted to pastoral natural places where they developed eco-awareness, enabling them to control a detrimental catastrophe. In this regard, three ecocritical concepts were applied to the textual analysis of the selected works: apocalypse and pastoral by Greg Garrard and eco-awareness by Scott Slovic. The research achieved three objectives: 1) to examine natural apocalypse as a genuine indication of the characters' feelings of eco-phobia in the selected novels by applying Garrard's concept of an apocalypse, 2) to investigate how environmental pastoral scenic sublimines provide the characters with ideal regional components for their living in the selected novels by applying Garrard's concept of pastoral, and 3) to discover the characters' development of remedial eco-awareness which curbs their eco-phobic feelings depicted in the selected novels by applying Slovic's concept of eco-awareness. As a conceptual framework for the entire study, ecocriticism was crucial to attaining these objectives. Textual analysis and close reading of characters, narrators, and settings were employed to attain these objectives. So, the significance of the research was to look into environmental eco-awareness as a way to stop the eco-phobic apocalypse. The research's major findings were that the rural and scenic sublimines were perfect parts of nature that helped protect the characters' environment. Thus, the characters' eco-awareness was a viable remedy for eco-phobic apocalypse through pastoral scenic sublimines.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

## **APOCALYPSE, EKO KESEDARAN DAN PASTORAL SEBAGAI TRIAD EKO-FOBIA DALAM KARYA TERPILIH OLEH MARGARET ATWOOD**

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Penyelidikan ini memanfaatkan eko kritikan bagi menganalisis karya Margaret Atwood *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009) dan *Maddaddam* (2013). Ia menunjukkan bagaimana Atwood menanggapi eko fobia persekitaran dan pengambilgunaannya melalui konsep apocalypse, pastoral dan eko kesedaran. Pernyataan penyelidikan ini ialah perbincangan mengenai eko fobia sebagai perasaan karakter fiksional akan bahaya apokaliptik yang bakal terjadi yang mengancam alam sekitar semula jadi di samping penyelesaian yang mungkin terhadap masalah tersebut. Oleh sebab itu, apocalypse eko fobia dianalisis berdasarkan pengalaman karakter, iaitu karakter mengalami perasaan eko fobia ketika mereka menjangkakan bencana persekitaran apokaliptik yang bakal terjadi. Akibatnya, mereka memilih tempat semula jadi pastoral di mana mereka membangunkan eko kesedaran yang membolehkan mereka mengawal malapetaka yang merugikan. Dalam hal ini, tiga konsep eko-kritikal telah diaplikasikan kepada analisis tekstual karya terpilih; iaitu, apocalypse dan pastoral oleh Greg Garrard dan eko kesedaran oleh Scott Slovic. Penyelidikan ini cuba mencapai tiga objektif: 1) Untuk meneliti apocalypse semula jadi sebagai indikasi tulen perasaan karakter mengenai eko fobia dalam novel terpilih dengan mengaplikasikan konsep apocalypse Garrard, 2) Untuk menyelidiki bagaimana pemandangan indah pastoral persekitaran memberikan komponen regional yang ideal kepada karakter tersebut bagi kehidupan mereka dalam novel terpilih melalui pengaplikasian konsep pastoral semula jadi Garrard, dan 3) Untuk menemui perkembangan karakter mengenai eko kesedaran pemulihan yang membendung perasaan eko fobia mereka yang digambarkan dalam novel terpilih melalui pengaplikasian konsep eko kesedaran Slovic. Sebagai kerangka konseptual bagi keseluruhan kajian, eko kritikan adalah penting bagi pencapaian objektif tersebut. Analisis tekstual dan pembacaan teliti karakter, narator dan seting telah digunakan bagi mencapai objektif tersebut. Oleh itu, kepentingan kajian ini adalah untuk meneliti eko kesedaran persekitaran sebagai cara untuk membendung apocalypse eko fobia. Dapatan utama kajian ini adalah untuk meninjau luar bandar dan pemandangan yang indah sebagai bahagian semula jadi yang sempurna yang membantu melindungi alam

sekitar karakter. Oleh itu, kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa eko kesedaran karakter merupakan penyelesaian yang wajar bagi apocalypse eko fobia melalui pemandangan indah pastoral.



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Literature and environment are integral subjects of ecocriticism. Scholars tend to interpret literary texts according to the depiction of environmental nature and its related concerns. In this sense, nature is examined in the context of literary topics deduced by specialized researchers. The necessity of tackling nature from a literary perspective serves as a way of responding to natural crises or problems and the possibility of resolving them via viable ventures. For this reason, ecocritics emphasize literary themes, purposes, and techniques as mere exemplifications of a natural description of the environment's situation and how it could be properly preserved. On this basis, literary writers evoke environmental, physical, and nonphysical perfection. They conjure up an effective perception of the environment, whereby "in the nonphysical aspect, the imagination is tied to writers' cultural, spiritual, connection to place" (Egya 2). Literary imagination is influential in revealing the intricate environmental negative issues and how they could be mitigated through deliberate and elaborate literary works. Accordingly, Eco's critical matters profoundly highlight literature and the natural environment.

The significance of literature to nature lies in exposing the inherent crises threatening the ideal environmental situation. Eco-phobia is one of these crises. In recent decades, there has been much obsession with the natural imminent danger that could endanger human life. Literature approaches eco-phobia to a great extent. It is concerned with reflecting humanity's feelings about natural dangers. Eco-phobia, in literary contexts, indicates diverse human experiences amid fierce environmental precarious changes. Here, literature envisions the complication of natural problems that make people more afraid of their surroundings. Literary descriptions have a serious predilection for depicting such human feelings as a logical response to the vitality of safe environmental recovery; they are "representations of rest and recovery in literature in light of changing attitudes towards humanity's relation to land itself" (Kalaidjian 3). In this way, eco-phobia designates the sense of an exhausted environment portrayed in literary works. Literary authors, therefore, attempt to describe this environmental exhaustion through serious narrative modes regarding the state of nature.

In this regard, literature evolved to offer stereotypical images to make sense of the world's complexities, resulting in eco-phobic sequences. As such, ecocriticism saves humanity from these complexities; as Oppermann notes, "the main reason behind them is obvious: they result from the desire to see ecocriticism as a field that sustains intellectual inquiry and contributes to the advancement of knowledge in environmental humanities" (158). Similarly, in *The Truth of Ecology* (2003), Dana Phillips relates eco-phobia awareness to ecocritical studies in literary works. According to Phillips, eco-phobia is an essential ecocritical phenomenon that makes "ecocriticism seems overtly

devotional and hostile to the intellect at times” (IX). Furthermore, using an Ecocritical approach strengthens the academic scrutiny of literary works in a nontraditional “approach.” Phillips adds, “It seems to me that to be Eco critical is to be plunged into the kind of uncertainty that calls traditional approaches” (IX). Accordingly, fictional environmental nature and literature can be studied in an Eco critical method in which “nature and culture can be offered from a theoretically adventurous and conscientiously” (IX).

In *Loving Nature: Towards an Ecology of Emotion* (2006), Kay Milton approaches fictional eco-phobia through the critics’ predictions of the future of the characters’ environment. Milton argues that environmental critics attempt to formulate pretentious literary strategies to save nature from future frightening destruction so that the characters can get rid of “their fears for its future” (3). In this way, the characters could survive environmental destruction that may cause anger and sadness in their lives: “The damage to and destruction of nature is experienced as a personal loss which provokes anger and sadness” (57).

In *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature* (2008), Louisa Gairn tackles the idea of literary Eco critical potential discussed in Eco-phobic texts. According to Gairn, the innovative impulses devoted to fictional eco-phobia have produced an Eco critical theoretical approach in which theorizations of such basic concepts as region, place, and nature have been constantly challenged and manipulated. Furthermore, the literary study of the Eco critical through ecology is the belief that regional place studies are major to ecological thought, as dialectical as the boundaries of ecology are. Gairn comments, “The crossing of such boundaries, or transformational spaces, provides a context in which to question the relationship between humans and nature” (180). Ecocritical studies are genuine eco-phobia improvements. Therefore, environmental fictional eco-phobia would reflect the inherent quality of ecological features in literary works, although eco-phobia has illustrated a much broader front for the characters, with new Eco critical insights and with studies on numerous other ecological topics, themes, subjects, and issues that need special consideration. Hence, Gairn ascribes eco-phobia to the human contiguous relationship with environmental nature. Such a relationship reveals the fictional characters’ safe symbiosis with nature to be safe and peaceful. Otherwise, they would be in real danger if they do not preserve or take care of nature.

In this case, the characters’ fear of environmental collapses is diversified without making any solutions to the problems posed by critics’ literary representations. Consequently, the characters’ avoidance of environmental fear would be sustained by making nature a utilitarian means for exploiting environmental nature for their benefit: Gairn adds, “a utilitarian intrusion into the landscape rather than the natural expression of human community and interconnection” (121). Thus, the fictional image of natural eco-phobia turns out to be the opposite. That is, instead of being harmful to the fictional characters, it becomes their motivation to improve their environmental spatial settings to ensure an ideal place for their lives, safe from any possible apocalyptic destruction.

Furthermore, Elizabeth Parker approaches eco-phobia through the narrative's precise narrative descriptions of nature in fictional works. These works are primarily concerned with the human terror or felt fear experienced when nature is endangered. However, the fictional characters exemplify real human beings who undergo such terrifying fear. According to Parker, authors have a common consensus: "There is an extremely important, but often underestimated relationship between fiction and environmentalism" (4). In literature, the environment is regarded as a perfect setting threatened by catastrophic danger, making the characters agitated and not feel at ease with their natural peripheries. In this sense, narrative environmental settings are merely "fictional portrayals of nature" created by the author to provide a vivid picture of how the character feels the impact of possible environmental collapse (4). Fictional characters, consequently, respond to this feeling by having the desire to control any natural debacle spawned by the abrupt appearance of eco-phobia; Parker comments, "eco-phobia, it is suggested again and again, predicated on humankind's seeming need to control and order all nonhuman nature" (24).

The contiguous affinity between eco-phobia, specifically in literature, is blatantly projected in literary works to highlight its genuine negative effect on the lives of literary characters who exemplify real people suffering from the same terrifying Eco-phobic feelings. In sum, Parker deduces eco-phobia from the fictional characters that experience the fear of environmental terror since they begin to notice the inevitable depreciation engulfing their lives.

The purpose of this research is to study the narrative descriptions of eco-phobia in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013). This research aims to emphasize the fictional characters' development of eco-phobia caused by the predicted apocalyptic destruction portrayed by Atwood. The interpretation of the fictional pastoral ideal scenes preferred by the characters elaborates on the literary attributes of eco-phobia. Such scenes are analyzed to unravel the characters' gradual eco-awareness depicted by Atwood. The interpretation of eco-awareness sustains the vitality of an ideal pastoral environment, which ameliorates the characters' feelings of eco-phobia. Thus, the characters' acquisition of eco-awareness is explored as the remedial opposition to eco-phobia that Atwood's narrative traits designate.

This research focuses on literary attempts to address eco-phobia and its dangerous consequences in human life. It examines the issue of eco-phobia in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013). The research will use three ecocritical concepts to interpret eco-phobia portrayed in these novels. The concepts are Garrard's apocalypse and pastoral and Slovic's eco-awareness. The concept of apocalypse will unravel the novel's indirect warning of the death of nature and, consequently, the death of human beings. On the other hand, the concept of pastoral is applied to discuss the scenes celebrated in the novel. The concept of eco-awareness will reveal how Atwood uses her fictional settings as a tool for spreading eco-consciousness to avoid the destruction of nature. These scenes exemplify Atwood's predilection for a serene and safe environment.

## 1.2 Authorial Background

Margaret Atwood is a distinguished Canadian novelist. She is mostly recognized for her realistic depiction of wildlife. As such, I introduce her writing style and themes to understand her writing manners comprehensively. Realism is a common literary writing mode. Atwood uses her fictional compositions to address realistic issues and concerns. Her novels contain many real situations and scenes that simulate real-world life. In this manner, the essence of her fictional realism is found in people's daily interactions and lives. She depicts the complexities of people's needs at harsh times in real fictional modes. These complexities are underscored in terms of fictional plots. Because the "role of literary agents are fairly documented," her characters suffer from social and environmental dilemmas that restrict them severely (York 72). They develop environmental problems as they lead their habitual lives. There are various problems, including natural crises, that leave their apparent impact on people's emotional reactions to nature. Eco-phobia is one aspect of these reactions that is elaborately accentuated in this research. Another obvious style of her writing themes is environmental complexities in combination with reality.

Environmental issues emanate from the common encounters through which people meet or face dilemmas that make them psychically disordered. In the context of "environmental activism," both harsh life and apocalyptic incidents lead to eco-phobia, which is because Atwood works "to support environmental causes" (York 30). Although it is claimed that environmental issues are thematic peculiarities of her literary works, she tackles environmentalism as a serious matter that should be treated seriously. She also writes in an experimental style. She wrote some novels with complex structures to express different aspects of reality through fictional narratives. Therefore, her novels were of utmost importance for writers still writing fictional compositions. Her experimental technique has greatly influenced contemporary writers as a result. Consequently, her literary experimentation is considered one of the apparent styles of her environmental themes.

Atwood is a prolific writer because she wrote different short fiction collections and nonfiction works in addition to her novels. Her works have a universal appeal and tackle critical contemporary issues, such as climate change and environmental deterioration, making her fiction famous worldwide. She has a great legacy of literary works, including *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Surfacing* (1972), *Lady Oracle* (1976), *Life Before Man* (1979), *Bodily Harm* (1981), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), *Cat's Eye* (1988), *The Robber Bride* (1993), *Alias Grace* (1996), *The Blind Assassin* (2000), *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Penelopiad* (2005), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), *MaddAddam* (2013), *Scribbler Moon* (2014), *The Heart Goes Last* (2015), *Hag-Seed* (2016), and *The Testaments* (2019). These works brought her a great literary reputation in the environmental and realistic narrative contexts because they have a universal significance in different literary fields, including environmentalism, science fiction, speculative fiction, and the like.

### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

Although there has been much scholarly work on Atwood's trilogy, *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013) have been studied in various ecocritical contexts. Shaista Irshad and Niroj Banerji apply feminism to discover the attributes of gender-based relations in constructing the human personality's subjectivity in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003); Irshad and Banerji argue that the novel unravels "feminine and masculine gender identities," which are significant for understanding the Canadian society (585). Irshad and Banerji contend that gender identities are portrayed through women's attempts to reject masculine misogyny to establish their feminist subjectivity. They focus on environmental nature and its biology because gender identities are "associated with nature and biology" (587). Therefore, the biological nature plays a crucial role in bridging the gender gap between men and women in a literary "mould of masculinity and femininity" (587).

Therefore, Irshad's and Banerji's study connects their analysis with nature because it affects the gender peculiarities depicted in the novel. That is, nature is described as a way of mitigating the tense misogynistic domination that negatively affects the lives of Canadian women. Here, nature empowers women's quest for gaining social equality. My view of these gender attributes is justified by shedding light on the significance of environmental nature to human beings. My study demonstrates how human beings need their environmental nature as it exemplifies sustainable existence. However, it focuses on the significance of nature to people in general, not only women, achieved by Atwood's portrayal of characters, which is explained in my argument's paragraphs. My study does not lead to the analysis of female characters and their feminist problems in the selected works. It is primarily on the characters' eco-phobic feelings and how they are relieved through eco-awareness.

My research, consequently, differs from Irshad and Banerji's study in that it will approach Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2012) from an ecocritical perspective. It looks into the selected novels through the lens of ecocriticism. It demonstrates how Atwood depicts perfect environmental scenes to enhance the characters' eco-awareness, which, in turn, causes the readers' eco-awareness to prevent apocalyptic disasters for the environment. Instead, it focuses on environmental eco-phobia and how Slovic's eco-awareness concept might help mitigate it. Accordingly, the novel's postmodern features are not interpreted because the only focus is on eco-phobia and its possible remedy by analyzing the ideal scenery depicted in the plot.

Melissa Cristina Silva De Sa examines the speculative fictional elements of Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* (2009). She argues that storytelling is a means of survival in the novel because the hero relies on telling his own adventurous stories for the sake of being able to cope with his critical situations among survivors of apocalyptic events: "I [Silva De Sa] argue that storytelling is a means of survival in both novels, since protagonists rely on telling their own stories in order to be able to deal with their situations of survivors of apocalypse" (vi).

To analyze the apocalyptic presence in the novel, Silva De Sa examines two textual factors that indicate the inevitable occurrence of the environmental apocalypse. First, the notion of “elect” and “nonelected” offers new ways of reading the fictional apocalypse in the context of the novel. Both elect and nonelected exemplify God’s will to destroy humanity using a waterless flood. In this way, God plans to create new humanity as a substitute for the previous one: “In *The Year of the Flood*, the rewriting of apocalypse is rather different. Notions of elect and nonelected are made more ambivalent because there are two ways to read apocalypse in the novel. The first relates to the supposed Waterless Flood, the belief of the God’s Gardeners in a happening that will strike humanity and start a new beginning” (110). The second factor is science. Silva De Sa analyzes one of the characters, Crake, who invents new scientific “Bliss Plus” pills used to kill people. These pills might annihilate the existence of humanity, and Crake becomes responsible for producing scientific objects that would lead to apocalypse: “The second is the actual reason apocalypse happened: Crake, the scientist who designed the Bliss Plus pills that killed almost all humans. In the novel, these two visions of apocalypse collide creating a more complex questioning of apocalyptic logic” (111). Thus, Silva De Sa concludes that these factors interact, creating an environmental apocalypse.

This research, however, does not shed light on speculative fiction elaborated in Silva De Sa’s research. Although she partially focuses on the apocalypse portrayed in Atwood’s *The Year of the Flood* (2009), this research discusses the apocalypse as a dangerous immanent environmental crisis depicted in the course of fictional settings. In addition, it shows such an apocalypse might be circumvented by deducing eco-awareness messages projected by Atwood in the pastoral scenic sublimines. Eco-awareness is almost neglected in Silva De Sa’s research, which sustains this research’s authenticity. Hence, the research unravels the apocalypse and its simultaneous solution that are not properly discussed in Silva De Sa’s critical analysis.

In *Narrating the Anthropocene: Threading Contemporary Feminist Theory and Fiction in a Human-Dominated World* (2016), Susanne Ferwerda studies the Anthropocene features of Atwood’s *MaddAddam* (2013). Consequently, these features serve as active fictional tools for exploring the feminist love themes projected in the course of the novel; Ferwerda argues: “My entry into research on the Anthropocene has been through the humanities and more specifically through contemporary feminist philosophy and literary theory. This thesis, therefore, engages with the Anthropocene first and foremost from a feminist and literary point of view” (8).

Ferwerda analyzes the novel’s symbolic depiction of utopian love to accentuate feminism’s love affairs in the novel. The characters, Cracker and Toby, are depicted as lovers yearning to write and tell stories about their origins. In this way, they quench their nostalgic longing for perfection. According to Ferwerda, this nostalgic tone has an original allusion to the biblical texts: “Symbolic thinking was unstoppable in the *Crakers*: in *MaddAddam*, a child-Craker called Blackbeard learns to write. The telling of stories, moreover, is central to how the *Crakers* conceive of themselves. They crave the stories of their origins, stories that through Jimmy-the-Snowman are told in a form that—in part to take revenge on Crake and his utopian ideals of erasing art—is reminiscent of biblical and mythological narratives” (82).

My research does not place as much emphasis on feminism as Ferwerda's study does. It does not tackle the Anthropocene, which is greatly accentuated in the previous research. Notwithstanding, it reveals the causes of the characters' eco-phobia in Atwood's *MaddAddam* (2013). Furthermore, this research does not examine the plight of women in patriarchal societies. The point of departure is on Atwood's perception of the environmental apocalyptic problems and her depiction of fictional scenic sublimates that raise the reader's eco-awareness. In this way, eco-phobia and eco-awareness are brought to light in the textual analysis of the current research, although gender issues are not considered as done in Ferwerda's aforementioned feminist study.

However, my research does not look into Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013) from a feminist perspective. It tackles eco-phobia and its possible remedy through apocalypse, pastoral and eco-awareness within the scope of ecocriticism. The characters in the selected works overcome their eco-phobia by living in complex pastoral settings and enjoying their scenic sublimates, such as birds, animals, mountains, wilderness, and so forth. It looks into eco-phobia as a precarious environmental feeling that the characters sense. Due to the characters' ignorance of the function of the environmental nature in their lives, such feelings are approached as the manifestation of eco-phobia. As such, this ignorance is discussed as the core of apocalypse according to the characters' authentic perception of the environmental dangers threatening the safety of their lives, which is hardly tackled in previous studies. The sense of eco-phobia is accentuated as the peak of apocalypse, which endangers the characters' natural milieus. This research uses Garrard's apocalypse concept to demonstrate how these characters truly fear the peril of nature.

Consequently, my research's argument lies in the importance of pastoral as the ideal environmental scenery providing the characters with possible outlets to escape destructive apocalyptic events. Yet, they recognize the vitality of the pastoral scenic sublimates and become convinced they must stop their destructive actions toward nature, such as conducting genetic experiments. Pastoral is thus explored in light of Garrard's concept of pastoral, which includes scenic sublimates such as solitary landscapes, wilderness, forests, lakes, mountains, and cliffs that embody ideal alternatives for the destroyed environmental places. In this sense, the fictional characters could resort to these scenic sublimates to live satisfactorily. These scenic sublimates are revealed as the penultimate condition, leading the characters to recognize the function of nature.

Consequently, the scenic sublimates make them strongly conscious of nature's vitality in their lives. They eventually become capable of preserving nature for their ultimate nature. In this regard, Slovic's eco-awareness concept is applied to unravel the characters' genuine understanding of nature's significance, enlightening the readers' recognition of nature's importance to their lives, which is scarcely tackled in existing studies of the selected works. Thus, the research's main gap lies in exploring eco-awareness as a vital remedy for apocalypse.

My research, therefore, examines eco-phobia through the lens of apocalypse, pastoral, and eco-awareness. In the first place, it emphasizes eco-phobia as a kind of feeling sensed by the characters in the selected works when they confront genuine threats, such as waterless floods and genetic experiments, which are true challenges to their environmental nature. The research also accentuates the characters' belief in an imminent natural apocalypse as the authentic impetus to their developed Eco-phobic feelings, which has been partially addressed in previous studies. Therefore, it reveals the selected novel's pastoral scenic sublimas as a way to alleviate eco-phobic feelings. In this respect, the research explores the characters' eco-awareness when they live in a natural pastoral place. As a result, the research finds that eco-awareness is the curative remedy for the characters living in peaceful and safe environmental settings.

The selected works' characters, accordingly, are the essential focus of my study. Three interrelated arguments analyze them. First, Atwood depicts male or female characters as the subjects of eco-phobia because they suffer and expect impending natural disasters. As a result, they develop eco-phobic feelings that make them agitated, and they lead uncomfortable lives. Second, all characters described in the selected works are victims of natural apocalypse. Waterless floods or genetic experiments would eradicate them. So, they share the same destiny, and the devastating consequences of natural catastrophes threaten their human existence. Third, the characters help each other to raise eco-awareness of the challenges of natural disasters and curb their destruction and harm to environmental nature. In this case, they collaborate in saving their human existence, which apocalyptic calamities might obliterate by resorting to pastoral scenic sublimas where they could sustain their eco-awareness and invigorate its vitality to limit natural disasters surrounding their living circumferences.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

This research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine natural apocalypse as a genuine indication of the characters' feelings of eco-phobia in the selected novels by applying Garrard's concept of apocalypse.
2. To investigate how environmental pastoral scenic sublimas, provide the characters with ideal regional components for their living in the selected novels by applying Garrard's concept of pastoral.
3. To discover the characters' development of remedial eco-awareness, which curbs their eco-phobic feelings depicted in the selected novels by applying Slovic's eco-awareness concept.

## 1.5 Research Questions

This research tries to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the fictional description of a natural apocalypse formulate the characters' feelings of eco-phobia in the selected novels?
2. How are environmental pastoral scenic sublimines considered perfect regional components for the characters' lives in the selected novels?
3. How do the characters acquire remedial eco-awareness that enables them to become free of frightening eco-phobic feelings caused by the imminent apocalypse depicted in the selected novels?

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

This research contributes to the scholarship of Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013) by identifying literary eco-awareness as a remedy for eco-phobia. It also presents a different reading of fictional pastoral elements, as Eco critical elements are rarely examined in the selected novels. The rarity of studying literary apocalypse and pastoral in the selected works leads to a new ecocritical interpretation. Conducting an Eco critical study on Atwood's concern with nature opens the door for a common consensus on the potential of literary texts to depict eco-phobia, whereby they could offer literary solutions due to their narrative peculiarities. Equally important, the value of this research lies in its symbolical portrayal of eco-phobia, which exemplifies a literary critique of apocalyptic views of environmental nature, proposing remedial invigorating solutions to them.

Furthermore, this research provides an original literary analysis of eco-phobia, which might play an influential role in raising environmental awareness by creating fictional characters who become aware of natural deterioration and respond to it once they realize the significance of nature in their lives. Such awareness would mitigate the apocalyptic danger lurking behind the destruction of the natural environment, which is blatantly depicted in the selected works. In this regard, students of literature could perceive the research topic as a key factor of fictional eco-awareness, paving the way for new literary insights into the stereotype of an ideal environment. As a result, studying the selected works from this critical perspective could orient literary scholars and academicians to unprecedented literary themes on the reflection of nature in literature. Additionally, the application of ecocriticism is of paramount importance because it provides future studies with creative ideas and notions about the possibility of spreading eco-awareness through literature, especially in Atwood's works.

Furthermore, the significance of research relates to the accentuation of literary pastoral scenes portrayed in the plots of the selected works. That is, the selected works are abundant with pastoral scenes that serve as primal descriptions of a perfect environment that must be protected by human beings instead of destroying it. In this case, environmental destruction could be avoided by highlighting the ideal pastoral scenes that

promote the significance of nature in human life. In this way, the selected works could elevate people's consciousness concerning the nexus of the environment; that is, the ecological system as a whole is described in the selected works. For this reason, polarizing ecocriticism to examine such literary awareness may inevitably yield a serious response to preserve nature from any ecological apocalyptic decline that essentially involves the lives of all people of different races on Earth.

## 1.7 Limitations of the Study

This research is limited to the theory of ecocriticism and Atwood's selected novels. Atwood's novels are limited to *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013), all of which are discussed within the context of environmental eco-phobia. Such representation is restricted to the apocalyptic insights projected in Atwood's novels. This theory encompasses three concepts in terms of ecocriticism: Garrard's concepts of apocalypse and the pastoral and Slovic's concept of eco-awareness. Applying these concepts to the selected novel results in a different interpretation of the selected novels within the wide context of ecocriticism.

Most of Atwood's works are about feminism and the dystopian social issues related to the Canadian state of affairs. *The Handmade Tale* (1985), for example, is merely about intricate women marginalization, which takes it a bit away from ecocriticism, and it could not be feasible to the primary subject of the current research. *Surfing* (1972) is essentially about gender discrepancies and the possibility of establishing gender indemnity that seems to be restricted in Canadian society at a certain time. In *Cat's Eye* (1988), Atwood reiterates the issue of art and coming-of-age maturity in Canadian society in post-World War II life.

*Alias Grace* (1996), set in the Canadian West, is rarely closely associated with environmental nature and its related problems. It concerns the rife spread of murder and how it features the dystopian sides of Canadian society, which suffers from a murder phenomenon. By the same token, Atwood's *The Blind Assassin* (2000) is told in realistic narrative flashback, highlighting conspiratorial insights regarding the spread of employment in the Canadian past over several historical phases. *The Testaments* (2019), a sequel to *The Handmade Tale* (1985), reflects the crisis of women's oppression in some layers of Canadian society. As such, my research highlights ecocritical issues, and the aforementioned works scarcely address them sufficiently.

This research, therefore, is limited to Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013). The research mainly concentrates on the Eco critical insights of the novels and how they reflect the sense of literary destructive apocalypse. In this regard, the Eco critical arguments are limited to the selected concepts. Garrard's concept of the pastoral is the proper critical vehicle to reveal the presence of eco-phobia in the novels. These concepts represent the essential critical interpretation of the selected novels to explore the effect of eco-phobia tackled by the author's implied

critique of natural crises. Such crisis is reflected in the primary environmental scenery depicted in the plots.

## **1.8 Conceptual Framework**

This research analyzes the fictional eco-phobia in the selected works using the concepts of apocalypse, pastoral, and eco-awareness from a different perspective. The concept of apocalypse is specified in Garrard's argumentation of the notion of apocalypse reflected in fiction. It is used to interpret the destructive scenes in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013). The concept of the pastoral is limited to Garrard's postulations about literary aspects of the pastoral, such as countryside, scenic sublimes, and domestic picturesque. However, eco-awareness is used to demonstrate how the characters could hinder their feelings of eco-phobia caused by the possibility of a natural apocalypse.

### **1.8.1 The Concept of Apocalypse: the Imminent Destruction of the Environment**

The discussion of environmental ecocriticism entails the application of this theory to deduce the lurking, dangerous end of the world as depicted in literature. This end is the apocalypse itself. In this research, I apply the apocalypse concept in light of Garrard's critical discussion of apocalypse. Garrard tends to describe this end as a sequence of natural limitations that are anti-utopian: "These limitations afflict" an "eschaton," which means the end of the world "without a utopia to follow" (Garrard 93). Moreover, the fictional strategies concerning the apocalyptic treatment of literature can be executed through ecocriticism. Consequently, the environmental meaning of literature could be easily interpreted.

For this reason, I concentrate on the ecocritical meaning of apocalypse in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009) and *Maddaddam* (2013) by pursuing Garrard's idea of a fictional apocalyptic environment. Garrard says that the concept of apocalypse includes the literary and rhetorical aspects that denote the presence of apocalypse in reality; Garrard noted, "The long-term dangers this approach poses for environmentalist causes may outweigh its rhetorical usefulness" (99). Therefore, the selected works are analyzed as literary compositions against the imminent apocalyptic events that might destroy the ideal environment portrayed in the plots. Further explication of the concept and its methodological application are elaborated in chapter three.

The study of human and nonhuman components in ecological literary works pertains to ecocriticism's apocalyptic and theoretical characteristics. In this regard, Frederick Buell, in *From Apocalypse to Way of Life: Environmental Crisis in the American Century* (2004), maintains that the concept of apocalypse is parallel to the theoretical concerns is a desire to interpret literary texts, which are primarily works of fiction about nature writing, that somehow reinforced pragmatism through the fictional environmental

elements. Given that literary apocalypse notions can be more or less descriptive about their decisions, apocalyptic literary visions could be contingent and uncertain perilous apocalyptic events in literary works. In this sense, the concept of apocalypse originates in the conventional analysis of apocalyptic literature through which the critical interpretation discovers the local or universals, the concrete and the abstract contexts of apocalyptic texts because the concept of apocalypse primarily means the end of humanity; Buell wrote: “The prospect of these ‘ends’ does not mean that people confront an onrushing apocalypse, the end of humanity” (70).

In *Ignoring the Apocalypse: Why Planning to Prevent Environmental Catastrophe Goes Astray* (2007), David Howard Davis discusses the concept of apocalypse as a result of human destructive practices. These practices are tackled in literature to reveal humanity’s over-exploitation of nature. Davis tackles the main threat lurking behind nature’s destruction via an apocalyptic end perceived in literature. He mentions some phenomena that are conspicuously treated in literary works. Chief among them are the earth’s heat, overpopulation, energy imminent shortage, and wars. These are all indications of real environmental apocalypse treated in literature, and they will inevitably lead to the end of the world. Davis adds that “environmentalists often predict an apocalypse is coming: The earth will heat up like a greenhouse. We will run out of energy. Overpopulation will lead to starvation and war. Nuclear winter will devastate all organic life” (xi). For this reason, Davis accentuates the literary importance of taking precautionary steps to confront the possible apocalyptic risk by putting forth suitable plans, and the concept of apocalypse necessitates the vitality of facing apocalyptic disasters by means of fictional works written on natural apocalypse.

The environmental features of the apocalypse are developed to be assessed within the field of ecocriticism. In *Nature, Technology and Cultural Change in Twentieth-Century German Literature: The Challenge of Ecocriticism* (2007), Axel Goodbody tackles the ecological characteristics of a fictional apocalypse. Goodbody asserts the importance of choosing suitable places for human residence and presents them in illustrative narrative descriptions. However, he maintains that the concept of apocalypse has an ecological catastrophic dimension rather than environmental features. Like Davis, Goodbody approaches the literary implications of the apocalypse concept through the idea of the end of the world depicted in apocalyptic texts. Davis wrote, “The implications of the word ‘apocalypse’ are more far-reaching, complex and problematic. The term originally signified a ‘revelation’ or ‘un-concealing’; apocalyptic texts were visions of divine punishment at the end of time, involving violent destruction” (89).

The interconnection between human habitation and apocalypse is discussed in Tad Daley’s *Apocalypse Never: Forging the Path to a Nuclear Weapon-Free World* (2012). Daley argues that a fictional environmental apocalypse threatens the characters’ ideal dwelling. The concept of apocalypse entails the implications of the position that conciseness and activity are rooted in the engagement among the characters and their environment circumferences for understanding and perception of nature in the light of apocalyptic considerations. Moreover, the concept of apocalypse offers better ways of coming into reconciliation with human existence in fictional plots.

The literary traits of apocalypse have evolved to indicate the connection between an apocalypse and fictional human society. In *Countdown to Apocalypse: A Scientific Exploration of the End of the World* (2000), Paul Halpern elaborates on the concept of apocalypse to involve apocalypse and fictional human society. Therefore, Halpern provides an optimistic view of life instead of waiting for the end of the world through apocalyptic disaster projected in fiction, or else “the human race meets a more natural demise” (15). So, this research applies the concept of apocalypse within ecocriticism. It specifically depends on Garrard’s argumentation of the concept of apocalypse in relation to ecocriticism, whereby the concept of apocalypse includes the typical manifestations of characters’ relationship with fictional environmental nature. In essence, the concept of apocalypse, presumably, is the most suitable way followed by the characters to predict the future of their environment and the danger threatening it.

### **1.8.2 The Concept of Pastoral Garrard’s Notions of Fictional Environment Scenery**

The concept of pastoral is of paramount ecocritical significance in scholarly studies. Therefore, an Eco critical concept applied to literary works represents the author’s reactions toward certain ecological problems through narrative events. These accidents and events have already been included in the literary fantasy projected in the literature, whereby applying ecocriticism would provide knowledge of the negative reasons behind psychic anxiety, such as social problems or traumatic events. Moreover, the application of the concept of pastoral in light of ecocriticism is adopted by some pastoral theorists that ecocriticism has a privileged position to entail a critical method viewed as a model for pastoral to discuss the origin of the concept of pastoral. As a result, ecocriticism helps to specify the origin or the cause of the pastoral portrayed in literary works.

In *Ecocriticism* (2004), Garrard analyzes the historical roots of the concept of pastoral in literary works and its significance to the interest of eco-critics. According to Garrard, literary pastoral serves as an effective means literary authors use to amend political ways of life. Here, Garrard tends to describe pastoral as a literary “trope”; in this sense, it is a metaphorical concept applied by Eco critics to explore the latent insights of classical authors’ works. Garrard writes, “With its roots in the classical period, pastoral has shown itself to be infinitely malleable for differing political ends, and potentially harmful in its tensions and evasions... the pastoral trope must and will remain a key concern for ecocritics” (33).

Moreover, Garrard discursively explains two major contrasts of the historical evolution of the concept of pastoral in classical literature. These contrasts differentiate between the past and the present states of fictional pastoral. They are vital for understanding the critical core of the concept of literary pastoral itself. Garrard wrote, “There are two key contrasts from this period that run through the pastoral tradition ... the temporal distinction of past (idyllic) and present (‘fallen’)” (35). Garrard uses the word “idyllic” to refer to the supreme state of the natural environment necessary for suitable human living. He adds that the literary features of fictional pastoral contribute to the

understanding of the perfect environment desired by the author to promote the importance of nature to humanity.

Deborah Lilley discusses the concept of pastoral in *The New Pastoral in Contemporary British Writing* (2020) concerning literary notions of environmental crises. By its very nature, the concept of pastoral represents the authors' writing style, which deals with the negative effects of environmental crises on people and how it is projected in the literary text. It exemplifies an author's appreciation of the environment as a safe living place. As a result, literary authors attempt to write about the various forms of fictional pastoral; in this way, their writings become a kind of "mode" that unravels the seriousness of environmental crises through pastoral functions. Lilley wrote about the "mode of writing and previous distinctions" which are "made between different forms and functions of pastoral" (33). Lilley adds that literary writing modes are mere ways of comprehending the possible environmental crises, handling them appropriately in their literary works, and "recognizing the different ways that pastoral is being approached and understood in relation to environmental crisis" (33). Accordingly, literary works serve as a means of illuminating the dilemma of environmental crises and how they might be faced using the available tools.

However, the absence of authentic pastoral quality is substituted by the aesthetic application of pastoral. In *Rethinking Pastoral Care* (2002), Úna Collins and Jean McNiff argue that the aesthetic usefulness of fictional pastoral is deeply rooted in the twentieth century. In addition, the use of fictional pastoral presents a literary discourse through ecological terms such as wilderness and civilization. The implication of civilization in fictional pastoral terminology refers to the aesthetic advantage of pastoral to ethical and literary issues. As a result, the concept of pastoral provides a discourse between wilderness and civilization depicted in literary works. At the same time, fictional pastoral backs up a sense of a literary dialogue between utilitarianism, aesthetic, and ethical values of literature. In this regard, literary aesthetics is the culmination of the fictional quality of pastoral, which is used to determine the interconnections among literature, culture, and pastoral.

In *Mathematical Ecology of Populations and Ecosystems* (2011), John Pastor illustrates this environmental notion by contending that the view of environmental nature is literary formulated because we know that what is thought of as natural manifests in the idea of the pastoral environment. After all, the fictional environment is the core conceptual component of pastoral scenes. That is, fictional pastoral refers to nature's sense of serenity and quietness; such quietness is important for human benefit. In this respect, literary human and nonhuman elements are the key components of fictional pastoral settings. Human and nonhuman elements are harmonious components of the fictional environment "when conditions of homogeneity of materials and environment are re-imposed" (Pastor 64).

Literary works, moreover, parade fictional environmental attitudes toward nature. The image of pastoral scenery in literary works renders them a special meaning. In other words, the pastoral function becomes mutual. That is, it is conveyed by the author in the text. A reader will then grasp its meaning and functions, attempting to exalt pastoral's importance to the environment.

Consequently, fictional characters gradually develop a sufficient understanding of nature. In this respect, literary works serve as vehicles for conveying the author's implied message about the fictional pastoral scenes resided by the characters to mitigate "the harms consequent on civilization" (Garrard 36). According to Garrard, such pastoral prosperity is the ultimate objective of a habitable environment, and literary works are just replicas of this ideal environment. He adds that the characters are the quasi-real components of that fictional pastoral environment. Therefore, he claims that when the characters keep this kind of pastoral environment, they accomplish a great mission, leading to their good living amid fictional pastoral scenery. Consequently, literary authors primarily portray this fictional environment to enlighten a character's awareness of the significance of the environmental pastoral nature engulfing real people's lives.

Therefore, this research aims to apply Garrard's concept of pastoral to identify Atwood's literary depiction of fictional pastoral scenic sublimines and their function to offer an ideal environment for the fictional characters. These scenic sublimines include solitary landscapes, wilderness, forests, lakes and water, mountains, and cliffs. The scrutiny of these scenic sublimines accentuates their significance in unravelling Atwood's depiction of ideal pastoral natural elements that would sustain the characters' appreciation of the nature surrounding them. In this regard, Garrard's concept of pastoral is significant for paving the way for applying Slovic's concept of eco-awareness when the research sheds light on the ability of the selected works to reinforce the characters' understanding of nature as a concomitant environmental circumference for humanity.

In this sense, the research underscores the typical fictional environmental scenic sublimines depicted in the novels and how Atwood's narrative descriptions use them to convey an implied literary message concerning the ideal environment. As a result of their serious emphasis on the significance of environmental nature for human beings' lives and how it plays a decisive role in saving their lives, the selected works become very influential. Both ideal fictional pastoral scenic sublimines and eco-awareness are used to demonstrate how the characters could hinder their feelings of eco-phobia caused by the possibility of the natural apocalypse. Thus, natural apocalypse is used in light of Garrard's ecocritical arguments, as discussed in the following section.

### **1.8.3 Eco-Awareness: Environmental Consciousness**

The concept of eco-awareness involves several literary issues. In *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing: Henry Thoreau, Annie Dillard, Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry, Barry Lopez* (1992), Slovic claims that these issues are fictional apocalypse and pastoral because they have a pertinent relationship with the characters' eco-awareness.

As such, the importance of eco-awareness lies in its promotion of eco-consciousness, which might lead us as human beings to appreciate the integral position of nature in our lives. Furthermore, nature is the most comprehensive environmental means through which the threat of natural elements could be obliterated in the critical discussions of fictional eco-awareness. For this reason, the treatment of eco-conscious issues would be paramount for perceiving nature through literary contexts.

According to Slovic, the issue of eco-awareness was examined further by citing some nature literary writers. In this context, Eco-awareness is the authentic exemplification of literary writers' portrayal of the environment at the edge of deterioration. Human practices against nature play an essential role in harming nature to a great extent. Such practice is the core of apocalypse, which might threaten the existence of fictional characters because they are harmed by their natural surroundings reciprocally. The literary interpretation of such conscious practice enhanced the characters' eco-awareness, allowing them to discover nature's inseparable existence from humans. This is the conceptual notion of fictional characters interacting with their natural surroundings. On the one hand, nature exemplifies the infrastructure of the characters to use and harness the beneficial elements of environmental nature for the sake of permanent settlement alongside nature. On the other hand, the characters could sustain and maintain nature for their benefit, thereby avoiding the deterioration of nature around them.

Such natural deterioration may force the fictional characters to lose their ideal natural settings, resulting in a decline in their health and lives. Furthermore, Slovic's argument's exploration of eco-conscious issues has been supported by citing the works of great writers such as Henry Thoreau, Annie Dillard, Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry, and Barry Lopez. Eco-awareness demonstrates the significance of fictional natural elements such as trees, natural water, and animals in preserving nature. Slovic maintains that the concept of eco-awareness has been used to explicate the depiction of apocalyptic visions in literary works "to instill in the readers an urgent awareness of the environment" (115). In other words, the readers' eco-awareness begins with the fictional characters' eco-awareness, which is conveyed to the readers through the narrative descriptions of nature's elements.

## **1.9 Justification of Selection of Texts**

The reason for selecting Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013) is their ability to be evaluated using ecocriticism. These novels are most appropriate to my aim in dealing with apocalyptic events and how they could be avoided by following eco-awareness. The central themes of the novels highlight the characters' ambition to gain a safe and peaceful environment. I have selected *Oryx and Crake* (2003) because it has a setting full of characters, such as Snowman, Oryx, Crake, Sharon, Jimmy, and Ramona, who suffer from environmental crisis and escape it by reserving the natural habitat. Second, Atwood deeply understands the danger of the waterless flood that threatens the lives of many characters, such as the God Gardeners, Ren, Toby, and Blanco in *The Year of the Flood* (2009). These characters understand

that this flood is caused by humans misusing nature, which leads to dangerous floods. Moreover, the third novel, *MaddAddam* (2013), was selected because of its obvious critique of humanity's exploitation of nature for genetic experiments, which results in the mass extinction of human tribes as depicted in the plot. Because these experiments result in the disappearance of the human race, they are the primary cause of the apocalypse.

The novels parade many natural descriptions that appeal to the core subject of apocalypse, pastoral, and eco-awareness. The novels abound with the depiction of the environmental nature more than Atwood's other works, which seem to focus on gender relations and social fragmentation. Accordingly, I found three important natural descriptions in the novels, which make them feasible for my Eco critical analysis. First, the novels have miscellaneous depictions of natural calamities. These depictions orient and sustain the catastrophic insights of the environment. In this way, it is possible to conclude the catastrophic fictional visions from Atwood's depiction of the threat to human life on Earth. Such danger makes the characters develop a fear of natural destruction, which is the crux of eco-phobia. The novels' plots contain numerous catastrophic references to the end of the world. That is, the human overexploitation of nature would be one major factor for such catastrophe. For instance, in *The Year of the Flood* (2009), hunting is an obvious indicator of the earth's destruction at the hands of human arbitrary utilization of the natural environment essential to humanity. Here, the novels' implied apocalypse predictions make the selection relevant and logical to my Eco critical discussion.

The second natural description is pastoral scenes, such as the natural descriptions of wilderness, gardens, mountains, plains, birds, animals and the like. They are reflected in the selected novels' portrayal as ideal regional dwelling places for the characters. They are key factors for providing the characters with escape from apocalyptic disasters. Furthermore, they are reflected as places for peace and solace of mind for the characters when they need safe havens for social stability and rest. My reading of the novels offers the idea of a perfect environment destroyed by unjustified human practices destroying nature. These practices are the nub of destructive human action toward nature. Therefore, fictional wilderness scenes are the ideal environment that must be protected from destructive human actions. In this sense, the ideal environment depicted in the novels is approached in terms of scenic sublimates. Such sublimates are the central elements of fictional wilderness, parallel to my research's integral subject. The representation of a certain fiction region's seas, forests, fauna, and flora enriches the research's critical identification of imaginative wilderness scenes as the acme of an ideal environment that guarantees good and healthy living conditions for human beings. On that account, the blatant presence of fictional wilderness is of utmost importance as it aptly bolsters the research's applicable thematic discussion of literary scenic sublimates that lay bare the vitality of eco-awareness for the characters. Moreover, the selection of the novels relates to the literary scenic sublimates that could be appropriately approached within the wide scope of fictional wilderness scenes that strikingly appear in the novels. Hence, the fictional environment is a conspicuous literary environmental element in the novels, completely applicable to my research's argument.

The third description is the characters' gradual understanding of their environmental significance. The novels implicitly reference the attainable way of protecting nature from catastrophic human actions. In doing so, they exemplify Atwood's insistence on better persevering natural milieus before they worsen and eliminate human existence; a concept almost missed in her other novels. This implied indication of environmental significance raises human enhancement of environmental nature and protects it from any looming natural menace, and I tend to select the novels because they straightforwardly portray this environmental menace in an exquisitely fictional manner. In this context, Atwood's implicit warning against catastrophic, disastrous destructions might be fitly conceived in light of my research's objectives. The novels' sombre and subtle indictment of human's harmful exploitation of nature for different purposes underscores the research's analysis of the characters' invigorating attempt to increase positive human consciousness about the importance of protecting nature, which appears in the textual description of nature. As a result, analyzing Atwood's implied critique of the negative exploitation of nature is highly conspicuous in the novels' descriptions of people's overutilization of the environment in harmful ways. This reinforces my selection of the novels to be studied by applying ecocriticism, which plays an influential role in sustaining the research's ultimate aim to discover the relevance of the author's interest in crucial natural issues through fictional imaginary settings.

Finally, all these novels have the theme of eco-phobia, and the research's focus on these descriptions provides a new reading of the novels and their contribution to the field of ecocriticism as a whole. As such, studying the ideal environment through pastoral descriptions results in a palpable analysis of the novels, proliferating in academic studies on Atwood's fiction in particular and Canadian environment literature in general. Furthermore, by tracing the literary treatment of eco-phobia and its remedy in the selected novels, it was possible to explore the authorial implied admonition of creating natural crises that may be evaded before their real occurrence. As a sequence, the selection of the novels would enhance the research's gap, which would be fortified by scrutinizing the implicit authorial message projected in the characters' conscious reaction to preserve nature. The emphasis on the authorial implied hints about environmental issues is highly significant for justifying the selection of the novels because they are reasonably discernable for grasping the reality of the pernicious catastrophic treatment of nature. Thus, my selection of novels could be conscientiously analyzed using ecocriticism to construe the covert, terrible, fictional catastrophic exigency.

The justification of text selection also depends on the characters. Atwood introduces the characters as the pivotal point of the issue of eco-phobia and its possible remedy. The characters play a crucial role in identifying and reflecting the gradual development of eco-phobia as an uncomfortable feeling that makes them live in unrest and anxiety. Therefore, the characters are the narrative component that Atwood used to provide a vivid picture of how eco-phobia must be limited and, thus, obliterated in the long run. In this way, the characters are very important for analyzing the selected works for four reasons.

First, they are the plot's human elements; they embody the source of eco-phobia because they suffer from it when they perceive precarious natural phenomena or genetic experiments. Second, eco-phobia is a mere feeling, and the characters develop this feeling once they recognize certain apocalyptic destruction of nature. The characters connect eco-phobia with environmental apocalypse, which must be faced with precautionary procedures. Third, the characters could consciously seek ideal pastoral places to live. Accordingly, they begin to think of proper actions to save their pastoral scenic sublimates to ensure the safety of their future. Fourth, it is the character that could acquire eco-awareness. They could cope with their environmental surroundings by recognizing the vitality of the environmental nature. This recognition could be achieved by avoiding genetic experiments or facing dangerous natural disasters.

## **1.10 Definition of Terms**

### **1.10.1 Eco-phobia**

Eco-phobia denotes the feeling of fear of a natural crisis. Therefore, Eco-phobia is an Eco critical notion that designates natural deterioration through literary descriptions of how nature might harm suitable living conditions. In this sense, eco-phobia enhances human consciousness about the negative effect of nature when it worsens; such an effect would lead to properly considering the importance of protecting it from any possible danger. Here, the research concentrates on Oppermann's appropriation of eco-phobia in the context of ecocriticism. Oppermann argues that eco-phobia is a compelling cultural phenomenon that should be treated seriously to halt any danger lurking behind nature: "eco-phobia compels us to take note of the inherent logic of the sociocultural system that begets the present ecological crisis" (165). In light of this definition, eco-phobia is essential to convert a sense of fear into a genuine appreciation of impending approaching hazardous natural ruin. The research studies eco-phobia as a dominant feeling of natural decline created by Atwood's literary descriptions.

### **1.10.2 Apocalypse**

The concept of apocalypse refers to the end of the world or history due to devastating natural catastrophes. These catastrophes comprise many forms, such as natural crises, wars, chemical products, and so forth. In literature, the depiction of imminent natural catastrophes is described as imminent ecological disasters that must be impeded before they lead to the destruction of human lives. This research adapts Garrard's concept of apocalypse to suit the purpose of the study. Garrard claims several Eco critics "have adopted and adapted apocalyptic rhetoric, again with catastrophic results as prophecies of crisis and conflict inexorably fulfill themselves" (85). Consequently, apocalypse is defined as ecological perilous indicators that "consider the past and future role of the apocalyptic narrative in environmental and radical ecological discourse" (85).

Therefore, the research applies the concept of apocalypse to accentuate that natural catastrophes influence human beings because they represent an integral part of nature. Accordingly, the selected works are interpreted as apocalyptic narratives concerning the possible danger threatening the existence of humanity as a whole.

### **1.10.3 Pastoral**

The concept of pastoral, in literature, deals with society free from all kinds of environmental decadence or complexities. Such problems are brought by corrupt fictional characters that do not preserve nature for the benefit of safe human lives. In this sense, it presents the idyllic literary urban and rustic residences. In several cases, literary pastoral is construed as “pastoral convention,” which refers to the authorial subjective style of depicting nature in literary works. Consequently, the pastoral literary convention allows the author to create regions, wilderness, landscapes, characters, and problems that occur in reality. These literary elements are devised by the author to seriously provide influential responses to natural disasters that might intimidate the existence of human beings in ideal societies.

In the same way, Garrard interchangeably replaces the term “pastoral convention” with “pastoral tradition” to explicate the author’s pejorative attitude concerning the corrupt practices against nature. Moreover, the author utilizes fictional characters to reflect their aversion to ecological decline within the narrative gambits. Garrard contends that the literary paradigm of “pastoral has decisively shaped our constructions of nature” to confront the dangerous complexities that are profoundly “problematic for environmentalism” (33). For this reason, Garrard argues that the concept of “pastoral remains significant” in literature “because it continues to supply the underlying narrative structure in which the protagonist leaves civilization for an encounter with nonhuman nature, then returns having experienced epiphany and renewal” (49). This research focuses on the narrative description of idyllic pastoral scenes to unravel Atwood’s concern with nature in fiction. Such concern is scrutinized by exploring the deception of imaginative pastoral places similar to the perfect environmental places desired by Atwood.

### **1.10.4 Eco-awareness**

The current research depends on Slovic’s eco-awareness concept to unravel how the selected works function as enlightening fictional writing about the dangers of neglecting nature and the importance of reinforcing its environmental infrastructure. The concept of eco-awareness indicates the elevated consciousness regarding the perception of environmental nature as an ideal place for human living. Therefore, nature should be preserved from any apocalyptic destruction that might demolish its primary ecological elements. As such, literary works play an essential role in sustaining human awareness about the significance of nature to humanity. Eco-awareness is defined as “the assumed power of awareness,” which leads human beings “directly to corresponding action” to impending environmental calamity (169). As a result, the apocalypse concept is applied

to examine the selected works as literary promotion of an ideal environmental nature, which must be safe from apocalyptic danger caused by human negative excessive practices against ecological species.

### **1.11 Conclusion**

My research studies Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013) from an ecocritical perspective. It perceives the novels as fictional representations of the issue of eco-phobia through apocalypse, pastoral, and eco-awareness. For this reason, the main focus of this chapter has been on introducing the most important aspects of the research. The chapter has discussed the background of the study to give a comprehensive discussion about the research's topic and critical arguments. It has also introduced the issue of eco-phobia and its relationship with literary works.

Moreover, other literary works and natural disasters have been brought to light to offer the obvious meaning of eco-phobia and how it affects the fictional characters' feelings. From this point, the necessity of approaching eco-phobia in other literary works emerges and proves appropriate and worth analyzing in this research. For clarification and elaboration, the chapter has introduced some literary works that reflect the essence of eco-phobia. The chapter, furthermore, concentrated on the conceptual frameworks and how they are elaborated in further critical discussion in Chapter 3. Therefore, introducing the comprehensive conceptual framework in this chapter is necessary due to its vitality in illuminating the theoretical insights of the selected concepts and their feasibility to be applied to the selected novels.

Therefore, the selected concepts are Garrard's concepts of apocalypse and pastoral and Slovic's concept of eco-awareness. Again, the introductory critical orientation of these concepts illustrates the core of my research's problem and how it could be achieved through the research's objectives and questions. In this way, the chapter has set the research's objectives and questions concerning the methodological frameworks, which are qualitative, by closely reading the selected works' settings and characters. The significance of the study, justification of text selection, and scope and limitations have been highlighted in the current chapter to provide a clear and logical choice of the novels and their integral role in the contemporary ecological literary discourse. For this reason, the definition of some ecocritical terms and the qualitative methodology have also been introduced in the chapter to put them in a suitable literary position when applying them from an ecocritical perspective. Thus, this chapter has recapitulated the research's primary topical tenets, further developed in the ensuing chapters.

## 1.12 Methodology

A textual study is conducted on the selected novels *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013) by Margaret Atwood. The study follows a close reading of the selected novels' settings, narrative points of view, and characters. Therefore, the methodological approach is pursued to interpret these elements in relation to ecocriticism. The main conceptual methodology used in this research will specifically apply Garrard's concepts of apocalypse and pastoral and Slovic's concept of eco-awareness. On the one hand, the study focuses on the ecological settings and their literary roles in the selected novels. On the other hand, the characters' inner feelings are analyzed in terms of eco-phobia as a thematic exemplification of an environmental apocalypse.

First, Garrard's apocalypse concept is used to unravel the selected novels' narrative description of the danger threatening the characters' safe natural environment. Here, such danger lies in the fact that the characters overexploit nature; in turn, nature deteriorates and loses its viability for living. Consequently, the analysis sheds light on how the characters begin to feel the imminent apocalyptic end of the environmental nature surrounding them. Then, Garrard's concept of the pastoral is used to demonstrate how Atwood precisely writes about natural scenic sublimates, such as birds, animals, mountains, wilderness, woods, wild gardens, and so on, to convey a vivid picture of the ideal environment that should be preserved. In this respect, the research follows a close reading of the novels' depictions of these scenic sublimates using the pastoral concept. In this sense, natural pastoral is empathized as a good way to lead the characters to be more aware of the significance of their natural places. Therefore, the selected works' setting is analyzed by applying the concept of the pastoral.

Finally, Slovic's eco-awareness concept is applied as the connection between nature and the selected works, especially their fictional description of nature. Slovic's main concern is the use of eco-awareness as a product of the interconnections between the representations of nature from a fictional narrative point of view. For this reason, the current research only focuses on the fictional side of eco-awareness, which treats the depiction of environmental nature and its function in the selected works. Here, the concept of eco-awareness indicates the conscious state of the characters that begin to understand the importance of a safe environment for their good living conditions. My research depends on this concept to examine the characters' narrative point of view. They perceive their natural places as ideal regions and stop overexploiting them negatively. Thus, the characters' eco-awareness becomes a remedial reaction to their previous feelings of apocalyptic eco-phobia.

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