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BAKALaura DARBS

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Family in Margaret Atwood's Novels

Ģimene Margaretas Atvudas romānos

BACHELOR THESIS

Author: **Laura, Voitīņa**

Matriculation Card lv05025

Adviser: doc. Edgars Ošiņš

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Anotācija

Mūsdienās diskusijas par ģimeni, tās vērtībām, mainīgo uzbūvi un problēmām, kas ietekmē šo institūtu, ir sastopamas ne tikai mutvārdu runā, bet arī rakstos. Dotā pētījuma mērķis bija veikt saturisku analīzi par ģimenes aprakstiem Margaretas Atvudas romānos “Istabenes Stāsts” un “Oriksa un Kreiks”, lai identificētu romānos aprakstītos ģimenes modeļus, vērtības, paražas un notikumus, kas ietekmē šo institūtu. Tika izmantotas gan teorētiskas, gan empīriskas pētījuma metodes. Lai sniegtu teorētisko pamatu empīriskajam pētījumam, tika analizēta atbilstoša literatūra par ģimenes definīcijām un veidiem, kā arī bioloģisko, sociālo un apkārtējās vides faktoru ietekmi. Tika atrasta sakarība starp teorētisko informāciju un romānos aprakstīto ģimenes dzīvi. Rezultātā tika atklāts, ka ģimenes institūtu var ietekmēt politiski, sociāli, izmaiņas apkārtējā vidē un zinātniskā attīstība. Tātad, tika secināts, ka ģimene ir pastāvīgi mainīgs nodibinājums un par izmaiņu cēloņiem galvenokārt ir atbildīgi cilvēki.

Atslēgvārdi: neauglība; pārapdzīvotība; sociālās un apkārtējās vides izmaiņas; emocionāla funkcija; nākotnes ģimenes modelis; iznīcības draudi.

ABSTRACT

Nowadays the discussions about family, its values, changing structure, and issues affecting this institution can be found not only in spoken, but also written discourse. The present research has been conducted with the purpose of doing content analysis of family descriptions in Margaret Atwood's novels "The Handmaid's Tale" and "Oryx and Crake" in order to identify the family models, values, customs and developments influencing the institution in the novels. Both theoretical and empirical methods were employed. Studies of relevant literature covering the issues of definition and types of family as well as biological, social, and environmental effects were undertaken in order to provide theoretical basis for the empirical research. A connection was discovered between the theoretical material and the family life described in the novels. It was detected that the institution of family can be influenced by political, social, environmental changes, and scientific developments. Thus, it was concluded that family is a constantly changing establishment and mostly people are responsible for the causes of these modifications.

Key words: sterility; overpopulation; social and environmental changes; emotional function; the future family model; threat of extinction.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6
1 FAMILY	8
1.1. Types of modern family models.....	9
1.2. World population and fertility	12
1.3. Society and Environment.....	13
1.3.1. Women’s movement	13
1.3.2. The Club of Rome.....	14
1.3.3. Environmental pollution	15
1.3.4. Globalisation.....	16
2 FAMILY IN “THE HANDMAID’S TALE”.....	18
2.1. Modern family model	18
2.2. Future family.....	20
2.3. Civil registry	23
2.4. Conception, pregnancy and labour	24
2.5. Degraded role of women and men	25
3 FAMILY IN “ORYX AND CRAKE”	28
3.1. Jimmy’s childhood.....	28
3.1.1. Jimmy’s family	30
3.2. Crake’s family.....	34
3.3. Oryx’s childhood	36
3.4. The new family model	39
CONCLUSIONS.....	44
THESES	46
REFERENCES	48
Internet Sources	48
APPENDIX.....	50

INTRODUCTION

The author of this paper has previously conducted small studies of the family life in Margaret Atwood's novels "The Handmaid's Tale" and "The Cat's Eye". Nevertheless, several challenges still remain for the author when studying family life depictions. First of all, family is a notion with no clear definition as several types of family models exist. The modern family is gradually affected by social, political, psychological and environmental aspects every day. Family is the primary institution where socialisation occurs and it is the first group of people a person joins. Due to the fact that the family is formed by individuals with unique characteristics every family is exceptional as well. Nevertheless, some modern traits seem to be accountable for the constantly changing nature of the family. Especially the last two centuries have introduced liberations that have affected this institution permanently; mostly negatively. To continue, there is no clear distinction as to what factors influence the formation and lifestyle of a family since this institution is said to reflect the tendencies occurring in the society, which is a versatile notion. The author of this research paper, however, put forward the following **goal** - to investigate the family life depicted in Margaret Atwood's novels "The Handmaid's Tale" and "Oryx and Crake".

The both novels employ dystopian elements and the author of this thesis will try to investigate the family models, values and characteristics depicted in the novels and attempt to mention the differences between the modern and the future families; also, the author of this thesis will try to name the causes of these modifications.

The **hypothesis** of this research paper is that the dystopian depictions of the society and family in Margaret Atwood's novels "The Handmaid's Tale" and "Oryx and Crake" are based on the notorious modern values and lifestyle.

The following **enabling objectives** were set:

- to read the theory available on definitions of the notion "family"; investigate the modern family models and look at the issues of the 20th-21st centuries affecting this institution;
- to do a content analysis of the novels "The Handmaid's Tale" and "Oryx and Crake" in order to identify the family models described and the factors influencing a family formation in the future;
- to draw relevant conclusions.

The methods of research are both theoretical, i.e. the study of the relevant theories, and empirical, i.e. content analysis of family life in the two novels.

The bachelor paper is divided into three Chapters. In Chapter 1, the definitions and types of modern family models, the world population and fertility rates, as well as the influence of the developments and changes in the society and environment are discussed. Chapter 2 concentrates on the family depictions in “The Handmaid’s Tale” as well as studying the factors contributing to the specific aspects of this futuristic family. In Chapter 3, the family depiction in “Oryx and Crake” is analysed emphasising the social and environmental changes that have affected the modern and futuristic family models and values.

1 FAMILY

When hearing or reading the word “family” every person has a different interpretation of what this words denotes. It is understandable since throughout the historical course of time the notion of family has changed constantly. Family is defined as ‘parents and their children, considered as a group, whether dwelling together or not.’ Also this word is used to denote a group of people who are closely related by blood, such as uncles, aunts, cousins, etc. (Online 1).

According to Gary North, family is either church or state dependant, ‘whichever institution seems to offer healing – earthly salvation – will gain the support of the family. The family cannot independently offer social healing. It looks to external authorities to do this’ (1995:7). He also claims that, ‘church and state can bring sanctions against the family. The family is not in a position to bring autonomous sanctions against the state. It is required by God to pay the tithe’ (ibid:8).

James E. Hugh JR states that family is formed by, ‘two or more individuals who, either because of bonds of affinity or because of genetic or emotional linkage, think of themselves as related to each other’ (2004:6)

Doc. Silva Omārova (2002) writes that family is the primary institution of socialisation which a person joins after he/she is born. The child’s mental state and the norms of social behaviour start forming and developing in the family. Omārova also emphasises that family as the society’s fundamental cell and the primary agent of socialisation is a unique social group. The author of the book has mentioned several functions of a family: reproductive function, the function of upbringing, domestic function, economic function, the function of primary social control, the function of moral interaction, the function of allocating social status, the function of relaxation, and emotional function. Furthermore, family can be defined as a primary group; Omārova specifies that the family is a group of intimately connected people where individuals expect emotional warmth, understanding and support from the other family members. In a family it is anticipated that a person will be accepted despite his/hers wrongdoings, decisions, etc. Every family is different and the socialisation of children can vary due to the fact that each family consists of different individuals. The background, characteristics, upbringing, etc. of each person [parent] is unique; thus also the nurturing of children differs. Omārova considers that,

‘The particularity of inborn features (for example, temperament) determines each child’s original response even to identical upbringing methods. Secondly, the mileage and upbringing practice of parents develops in the course of time. [...] Thirdly, within a family not only grown-ups but also older siblings participate in the process of raising up younger brothers and sisters which also contributes to the specific character of socialisation’ (ibid:68). [Appendix 1.1]

Throughout different times the family models have varied greatly due to the development of cultures, improvements in standard of living, social modifications, etc. The modern family model is greatly influenced by changes in religious beliefs, men and women roles in the society, political system and many other causes. Omārova (ibid) indicates that nowadays, when the families typically consist of parents and children, the wife and the husband tend to adopt the skills of the spouse so that in case of a divorce, decease or other event that affects the family structure the spouses could deputise for each other. As a result, many women have a paid employment and they help to provide for the family while men participate in doing housework and caring for children.

In the next subchapters the author of this thesis will attempt to mention the commonly known family models and the main events and developments that have affected the family formation and the understanding of this notion.

1.1. Types of modern family models

At this day and age many types of family models have developed which can be explained by the great variety of cultures, different living standards and conditions. When the term “family” is mentioned people mostly imagine a union of father, mother and one or two children. However, such description might be applied to *nuclear families*, which is only one of the family models. Accordingly, a nuclear family consists of: ‘a mother, father, and their biological or adoptive descendants, often called the traditional family. The nuclear family was most popular in the 1950’s and 60’s.’ Such families provide caring and loving environment for the children as the both grown-ups are either biological or adoptive parents of the children. Also, the nuclear families might be divided into three types according to the employment status of the mother and the father. Firstly, there are nuclear families in which the father works outside home while the mother stays at home and cares for the children. Secondly, the roles of the parents might be reversed – the father stays at home to care for the children and mother has a job outside the household. Thirdly, both parents are employed outside the house and the child is taken care of at day-cares or by professional babysitters (Online 2).

Next, there are also the so-called *single parent families* and the number of such type of family model is constantly increasing. If before such a family was formed due to the death of either of the parents, then now the parents choose not to marry in the first place or file for a divorce more often. For example, in the United States the number of married couples is constantly decreasing. In year 2002, 89 percent of all the population in the United States were living together unmarried. These tendencies have resulted in 23 percent of children who are not yet 18 years old and are living with their mother only, and 5 percent – only with their father. As one can see from the statistics, this is one of the fastest growing family models in North America (Online 3).

To continue, there are also *extended families* in which there are more than two adults from different generations. Very often the household in such families is run and children are taken care of by parents and grandparents. In an extended family parents, children, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, foster children, etc. might be living under the same roof. Sometimes extended families are formed for convenience's sake – if both parents have full-time jobs, it is very efficient if a, e.g., grandmother looks after the children. There are also cases when the biological parents of the children have died or are not able to take care of them anymore, thus a relative is asked to help in raising the children. There can be one, two or three generations living together in an extended family and in North America the number of this family type has increased by 40 percent in the last decade (Online 4).

Also, a *childless family* can be formed if the couple has no children. There might be many reasons why a married couple decides to live together and not have children, namely, financial reasons, personality aspect, age, readiness, lifestyle, job priority, etc. Even though families without children are often urged by the society to have infants and the stereotype that people should reproduce this family model has become more popular in the last few decades. American Demographics Magazine has predicted that in two years the number of childless families will have increased up to 50 percent. In the colloquial speech childless families are also referred to as “DINK” – double income, no kids (Online 5).

In addition, there is also increase in the number of *step-families* due to the high divorce rates and number of single parent families as well as unexpected teen pregnancies, economical instability, etc. In this type of family model children are adopted by mother and father or sometimes a single parent. There are some disadvantages for step-families: the parents and the adoptee/-s might not have a mental connection as no family history or information is

shared, children might have psychological problems due to environmental changes (dereliction from biological family, attachment to friends in foster homes, etc.). However, in most cases these families resolve the problems and children prosper more in a step-family than foster home. (Online 6).

A very much discussed family type is the *same-sex family* in which a homosexual couple is living together. In some countries these couples are allowed to adopt children; occasionally surrogate mothers give birth to children and gay couples raise them or a sperm donor is chosen for lesbian couples. Many sociologists have tried to define what a family is and nowadays a statement that, 'family no longer needs to be a group of people bound together by bloodline or legal (marital) ties' is very often correct [when speaking about, e.g., single parent and step families]. Even though numerous studies show that children living in same-sex families are not more disadvantageous than children from "traditional" families [nuclear and extended families], the society is rather against homosexuals forming a family. The stereotypes and society's rejection are the biggest issues of same-sex families (Online 7).

All in all, there are increased divorce rates, raise in marital age, career priority instead of family priority and many other negative tendencies of the 20th-21st centuries; as a result the family model and values are unstable. Jeļena Jermolajeva, Vladimirs Jermolajevs, and Andrejs Mūrnieks (2002:193) point out that people are always in search for new experiences due to the free access to information, fast means of conveyance and communication, etc. Thus, an increased lifestyle tempo can be observed and more couples get divorced and remarried. Not only objects but also experiences and relationships have become disposable for the modern people.

The Americans for Divorce Reform have predicted that if the current trends remain the same then about forty or even fifty percent of marriages will end in a divorce. Furthermore, there is a tendency for childless couples to get divorced more often, 'Sociologists believe that childlessness is also a common cause of divorce. The absence of children leads to loneliness and weariness and even in the United States, at least 66 per cent of all divorced couples are childless,' (Online 8).

According to Jānis Kučinksis (2000:275) the Western society is more interested in enjoying their own lives and exciting their imaginations than thinking about the future, i.e., their future plans and dreams are not connected with having and raising children. The author of

the book came to this conclusion after studying thousands of people's personal photographs in which neither mothers nor children appeared but rather fast sports cars, pets, building, etc. To conclude, many tendencies regarding family life are not welcome by a part of the society mainly because in some cases the children are less advantageous, for example, children from single parent families. Nevertheless, the family type a person chooses to form does not necessarily determine or influence the relationships between the family members. Also, the tendency to divorce more often and remarry have been of great significance in the changing family model. Authors Jermolajeva et al and Kučinskis emphasise the change in moral values: disposability of emotions and affections as well as excitement about the material comforts of the world rather than family values.

1.2. World population and fertility

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (CB), International Data Base there has been a fifty percent increase in the world population; accordingly, there were three billion people in the 1959 and 6 billion in 1999. It is predicted that the increase of world population will continue in the 21st century; however the growth will not be as rapid as in the second part of the 20th century, 'The world population is projected to grow from 6 billion in 1999 to 9 billion by 2040, an increase of 50 percent is expected to require 41 years,' (Online 9).

Even though the world population has increased the growth rates have been declining gradually since the 1960s. In 1950 the world population growth rate was 1,5 percent per year and by the early 1960s there was a peak – over 2 percent. The increased world population growth rates in this period have been explained by the decreased mortality rates. Since then, however, the rising age at marriage and the availability and effectiveness of contraceptive methods have caused the population growth rates to decrease. In addition,

'A dip in the growth rate from 1959-1960, for instance, was due to the Great Leap Forward in China. During that time, both natural disasters and decreased agricultural output in the wake of massive social reorganization caused China's death rate to rise sharply and its fertility rate to fall by almost half,' (Online 9).

Jermolajeva et al (2002:219-220) emphasise that the creation of the birth-pill allowed women, and couples in general, to control pregnancy and also changed the women's role in the society. By secluding conception from sexual relationship "sexual revolution" was achieved. In contrast, there is a gradual increase in the number of people who are infertile or cannot conceive a child naturally. The solution for the problems of conception came in 1970s

– 1980s when artificial fertilisation methods were developed. It is stated that consequently the notion “mother” lost its previous moral and biological meaning as a child could have two mothers – a biological and a surrogate mother.

Kučinskis (2000:105) draws attention to the fact that in comparison with the year 1970 the birth rates have significantly decreased: In Asia the birth rates have diminished by one third, in Europe and North America – by half, but in Africa the reduction has not been that significant. Also, the mortality of children has increased, especially in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. According to Kučinskis (ibid:106) the main cause for the deaths of children is war, ‘Eight out of eleven countries with the highest children mortality rates are warring countries [...]’ [Appendix 1.2.] In addition, the author states (ibid:106) that there are two significant reasons behind the deaths of children: firstly, the lack of medical care; secondly, approximately half of the children living in underdeveloped countries live in starvation and as a result their immune systems are attenuated.

1.3. Society and Environment

There are numerous issues that cause changes in the society and environment and the main are: patriarch versus feminism, environmental pollution, globalisation, and scientific and technological developments. In the next subchapters the author of this thesis will look at these phenomena because social and environmental modifications affect family as well [since the family reflects the society].

1.3.1. Women’s movement

The women’s movement started in the late 1960’s as a response to women’s changing role in the society. As a result women could enter the labour market and get relatively equal pay and professional jobs, they could easily access contraceptive means, etc. By the 1970’s there was an overall feeling that everything was changing; in comparison, nowadays demoralisation due to lack of general economic struggles and political confidence within the working class can be observed. In other words, one will not find articles about women’s strikes in a magazine, but rather some degrading issues about how to look better or scandals of the famous TV stars (Online 10).

According to Jermolajeva et al (2002:199) the most important aspect of feminism is the radical critique of the existing culture. They write that feminists criticise the aggressive nature of men; the women are against the subordination of nature and claim that a culture that is based on violence [patriarch] is doomed to extinction.

Arturs Mauriņš (1997:26) argues whether the modern wave of feminism is caused by an accidental fad or powerful social, mental, and metaphysical impulses. He concludes that the modern feminism movement resonates with new global phenomena and is concerned with ecologisation of science, philosophy, religion, morals, rights, etc. Mauriņš explains that the nature of women is more ecological than that of men,

“The nature has appointed women with such functions of reproduction that are marginally different from the functions of men. [...] The mother not only bears but also feeds and nurtures children.” (ibid:21) [Appendix 1.3.]

1.3.2. The Club of Rome

Jermolajeva et al (2002:200-201) write that in the end of the 20th century several researches carried out by the Club of Rome proved that the human race could soon face threats of extinction due to interfering with the course of nature. The organisation was created and run by several scientists, publicists, businessmen and social workers from different countries. In “The Limits to Growth” (1972) they stated that at the beginning of the 21st century people could experience a global catastrophe if the increase in world population, the development of industrial and agricultural production, the environmental pollution, and the intensity of harnessing natural resources did not decrease. Twenty years later their calculations were more optimistic and the Club of Rome ensured that stable development is possible with the help of modern technologies. Nevertheless, it was emphasised that in the period of time since the book was published the ecological situation had deteriorated.

Mauriņš (1997:27-28) continues to outline the pessimistic future that awaits a patriarchal society by reciting a member of the Club of Rome Claudio Naranjo. The scientist [Naranjo] came to a conclusion that the industrial mentality, capitalism, exploitation of people, greed, inability to maintain peace on Earth, destruction of nature and other difficulties of today are caused by patriarch. Furthermore, numerous scientists have confirmed a study result that claims that men are not only frustrated because of the dissolving role of men as dominators in the society and family but are also experiencing biological problems. The sexuality of men is dejected by the global factors (e.g., acid rains, ozone depletion, etc.). Mauriņš also emphasises that because of feminism movement a completely unique stage of society could develop in the future.

In other words, the women’s movement has proven to be a strong opposition to the patriarch which it fiercely criticises. The steady force of feminism has not only affected the social

behaviour and improved women's role in the society and family but also changed the way people deal with the environmental pollution. Several specialists indicate that the tendencies of thinking about ways how to lessen the pollution and interfere with the course of nature less are affected by the enforcement and growing popularity of feminine nature, which is ecological and more peaceful. Patriarch, on the other hand is said to be facing decline due to the its excessive aggression and inability to maintain peace. There is a prediction that feminism could create a completely unique stage of the society.

1.3.3. Environmental pollution

As mentioned in the previous subchapter in the second half of the 20th century people were first warned about the imminent future prognoses. According to Jermolajeva et al (2002:207-208) this period is also referred to as nuclear age due to the creation of atomic weapons and nuclear energy. While the atomic power plants produce plenty energy threats of global catastrophes and the complexity of treatment of radioactive waste still remain. Not to mention the fact that even the smallest amount of the atomic weapons would be sufficient to exterminate life on the planet. The authors of this book reason that the developments of science ought to be suspended until the society becomes more peaceable. In 1970s environmental protection movement was created; the participants of this movement – “Greenpeace” – still fight actively and courageously against environmental pollution sometimes even by endangering their lives in these activities. All in all, the society is more aware of and concerned about the environmental pollution; still, an active participation of every person in the world is needed to stop global warming and other processes caused by pollution.

In “The New York Times” article “Global Warming” it is said, ‘On Feb. 2, 2007, the United Nations scientific panel studying climate change declared that the evidence of a warming trend is "unequivocal," and that human activity has "very likely" been the driving force in that change over the last 50 years.’ As a result to the human activities the atmosphere has become warmer and within a hundred years the sea level is said to raise between 7 to 23 inches (Online 11).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported in 2001 that due to the global warming the humans are also to expect heat waves, ocean warming, coastal flooding, glaciers melting, and Arctic and Antarctic warming. In addition, with continued warming

several changes might occur: spreading diseases, plant and animal range shifts and population changes, downpours, droughts and fires, etc. (Online 12).

1.3.4. Globalisation

Kučinskis (2000:78-79) defines globalisation as excessive import of goods of foreign manufacture, crisis of banks and insurance system, increased crime rates and prostitution, increase of the poor population up to 85 percent, the disappearance of the middle-class, unemployment, demographic catastrophe, family's moral crisis, etc. He also claims that the economical power is in the hands of a small number of financial institutions which maintain the already wealthy.

Jermolajeva et al (2002:190) also point out that the Third World countries have reservations towards globalisation as in their opinion the dictatorship of the Western countries might increase as a result of this process. In addition, the number of "anti-globalists" is growing each day in the Western countries.

The advocates of globalisation emphasise that the poverty of underdeveloped countries can be caused by geographical and cultural differences, as well as lack of freedom and peculiar property rights in these countries. Furthermore, the international community is said to help the poor countries, 'Development assistance is distributed through several means, including development banks, government and international agencies, and non-governmental organizations.' The goal of these institutions is to improve the economical, governmental, social situation and living conditions (Online 12).

Kučinskis still considers that,

'Nowadays as a response to the suggestion to do something good for a poor country or at least the lower-class of their own nation there is genuine perplexity. [...] the USA with other Anglo-Saxon countries [...] have decided to abuse their position by implementing a new world order, also called – globalisation' (2002:105).

To conclude, a family is formed by two or more people on the basis of blood relations and/or bonds of affinity. The modern family models can be different due to personal preferences; there are nuclear, single parent, extended, childless, step, and same-sex family types. In the last decades the family formation has been greatly influenced by the increased divorce rates, unwillingness or inability to have children, and high children mortality rates. In addition, the change in the social values is the cause of different family values; namely, the women's movement is the reason for the changing roles of men and women both in the society and family. Due to sexual liberation and accessibility of contraceptive means pregnancies are

planned. Next, there is said to be an overall deterioration of moral and family models. Many couples place material benefits and values above family formation. There is a tendency for people to live for the moment, travel, buy fast cars, etc. This indicates that the society is becoming commodity-dependant and greedy. Also, the environmental issues such as global warming and pollution are of importance in the social background. For example, as a result to the global factors the sexuality of men is dejected. When studying pollution and its effects on civilisation threat of extinction is detected; thus the society is more pessimistic about the future.

In the next chapter the author of the thesis will investigate how Canadian writer Margaret Atwood has depicted modern and futuristic societies and families in her dystopian novel “The Handmaid’s Tale”.

2 FAMILY IN “THE HANDMAID’S TALE”

The novel “The Handmaid’s Tale” depicts the life of a modern woman born in the 20th/21st century who has to adapt to the changes in government and society caused by numerous issues. The events take place in the near future and Christian fanatics – Sons of Jacob - have come into power. Margaret Atwood expresses concern about pollution, pornography, sexual harassment, and sterility in “The Handmaid’s Tale”; accordingly, these phenomena could lead to oversetting the democratic government and modifying the values of society and family. The cornerstone of this novel is infertility and the effects it has on people.

2.1. Modern family model

Margaret Atwood has used flashbacks in “The Handmaid’s Tale” thus the reader learns about the life before and after the upheaval. The time before the change is referred to as “pre-Gilead period” and the setting is probably the 21st century. Correspondingly, the family model depicted is similar to the nuclear family type. The protagonist Offred, whose real name is never mentioned, has a lover Luke and a daughter. Offred and Luke are not married, since Luke already has a wife, ‘She [a friend] said I [the Handmaid] was poaching on another woman’s ground. I said Luke wasn’t a fish or a piece of dirt either, he was a human being and could make his own decisions. [...] I said I was in love. She said that was no excuse’ (Atwood 1996:180). Their love affair is illegal (the civil husband is committing adultery); nevertheless Offred justifies it because of the romantic feelings they have for each other.

Offred’s best friend Moira is a homosexual and even though Offred does not disapprove of Moira’s sexual orientation she does not understand it either, ‘[...] if Moira thought she could create Utopia by shutting herself up in a women-only enclave she was sadly mistaken. Men were not going to go away [...]’ (ibid 181). Apparently, there are many women in the 21st century who are against gender inequality and Offred interprets Moira’s interest for women as disassociation from men’s population. To continue, the mother of Offred is an active participant in the women movement which is against the degraded role of women, prostitution, and pornography and advocates free choice for women to choose for or against abortion. Furthermore, the mother speaks disparagingly of Offred’s father, ‘[...] I [the mother] don’t want a man around. Not that your father wasn’t a nice guy, not that I expected anything of him. Just do your job and bugger off’ (ibid 130). The last two quotes indicate

that Margaret Atwood considers the women movement to be a powerful tool; nevertheless her assessment of this phenomenon is of two sorts: the writer emphasises that the society naturally consists of men and women and also points out the strength of women.

The relationship between the mother and Offred is not entirely harmonious; Offred reproaches that the mother cares more about the women movement than her daughter. Also, the protagonist admits that she somewhat admires her mother for that, but in the meantime feels that the mother expects something more of Offred. In the handmaid's opinion, the mother wishes the daughter to 'vindicate her [the mother's] life for her' (ibid 132) and share her opinions. The author of this thesis assumes that Margaret Atwood has raised the question of women caring more for social activities, independence, and self-fulfilment than working at improving the family relations.

When the mother conceives Offred she is thirty seven years old and the environment is already polluted to an extent where deformed babies and babies with defects are born more often. The statistics of that time show that the possibility of having an unhealthy baby is increased for women after thirty five years of age. The mother admits, though, that Offred was a wanted child and that the warnings about the risks of having a child at such an old age did not frighten her. Offred grows up in a single-parent family and is the only child. Despite the complicated relationship between these two women Offred is clearly attached to her mother and misses her after the upheaval when they cannot see each other. Again, parallels can be drawn with the nowadays situation – parents put careers as primary goals in life and only when they are middle-aged they think of starting a family.

To continue, Offred has a daughter with Luke and despite the fact that they are not legally a family they are content with their lifestyle and have a harmonious relationship. The modern tendency to live in a successful civil marriage is depicted and the author's of this novel attitude is clearly positive. Offred's daughter is still very young when the government is overturned; at first the three of them try to leave the country, but unsuccessfully. The new law provides for second marriage couples and couples who are not married to be arrested and if there are any children they are given up for adoption.

Before Offred's daughter is born the couple discusses the possibility of having a child lightly, 'We [Luke and the Handmaid] would have a garden, swings for the children. We would have children. Although we knew it wasn't too likely we could ever afford it, it was something to talk about, a game for Sundays' (ibid 33). Margaret Atwood has depicted the nowadays' tendency to start families and have children when the couples are materially independent. Very often it happens only when the women and men are over thirty years old;

and this age is not the most fertile. Perhaps, it is one of the reasons why the birth rates of the 21st century decreased and there was a necessity for drastic changes in the family model. As mentioned before, already in the 21st century there are numerous cases of deformed babies and newborns with obvious defects; still the tendency of decreased birth rates and unsuccessful pregnancies is not yet seen. Offred is surprised when her daughter is stolen one day, ‘She [the woman] must have been about thirty-five. She was crying and saying it was her baby, the Lord had given it to her, he’d sent her a sign. [...] I thought it was an isolated accident, at the time’ (ibid 73). It is stated at the end of the novel that already in this period the birth services are needed as the first indications of infertility could be noticed. Judging from protagonist’s observations the common society is not fully aware of the seriousness of the issue because she mostly mentions the problems with pregnancies and infertility after she has been converted to being a handmaid. Similarly, people of the 21st century are still careless about the issues connected with infertility, pregnancy, decreased birth rates, etc.

2.2. Future family

The future society is affected greatly by the social and political changes; thus also the future family model is entirely different from the modern one. First of all, the individuals living together in one household are each allotted a task and they have to follow a protocol which is based on Christian values. People are not allowed to form families on the basis of affection or blood relation – the society is class divided and each person has his/her own responsibilities. The protagonist of the novel lives in an upper-class family thus a deeper insight into this family model is provided. The centre of the family is a highly situated married couple – the Commander and his Wife. Their household consists of a handmaid, Marthas, and Guardians of the Faith.

1) “Handmaid” is the future term for “biological mother”. Fertile women are offered to join a family and try to conceive a child from the Commander; a child that would then be raised by the Commander and his Wife. If there is a successful pregnancy, then the Handmaid moves to another household where the previous scenario is repeated. If the pregnancy or conception are unsuccessful or if a deformed baby is born, the Handmaid is declared to be an Unwoman and is sent to the Colonies. Before joining a household the handmaids are trained in the Red Centre (officially called the Rachel and Leah Centre) which is facilitated for young women. This centre is run and supervised by Aunts – elderly women who cannot conceive children or want to profit from this position. In the centre the

Handmaids are told that their sole purpose is to give birth to children, '[the Handmaids are] two-legged wombs [...], sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices' (ibid 146).

2) The Commander is a highly situated elderly man, usually in his fifties. He is the ruler of the household and his tasks include reproduction, overseeing the household and being the bread-winner. Not all the Commanders have Handmaids as sometimes their Wives can have children. Even though the official belief is that in the case of an unsuccessful conception or pregnancy there is some fault with the Handmaid, it is mostly the Commanders who are infertile, 'There is no such thing as a sterile man anymore, not officially. There are only women who are fruitful and women who are barren, that's the law' (ibid 71).

3) The Wives are women who are legally married to the Commanders. Most likely these couples are married before the upheaval. Some of the Wives can conceive a child, but the task of the infertile Wives is to oversee the household and control the daily routine of their Handmaids'. The Wives are relatively powerful and equal to their husbands; in addition they can punish and hit the Handmaids if they have misbehaved.

4) The Marthas are women servants who are responsible for the household chores. These women participate in many activities of the family; still, they are only silent observants as they are not allowed to express their opinions. In comparison with the Wives, the Marthas have more maternal instinct and they anticipate labours more. Since Marthas are elderly women they remind of grandmothers, 'She [the Martha] wants a Birth Day, here, with guests and food and presents, she wants a little child to spoil in the kitchen, to iron clothes for, to slip cookies into when no one's watching' (ibid 145).

5) The Guardians of the Faith "[...] aren't real soldiers. They're used for routine policing and other menial functions, digging up the Commander's Wife's garden for instance, and they're either stupid or older or disabled or very young" (ibid 30). The Guardians are not allowed to marry; only the young ones, after being promoted to the Angels, have the possibility to get married and in case they are able to gain some power and live to be old enough – they might be allotted a Handmaid.

The protagonist of the novel lives in Serena Joy's and Fred's household and the ambience in this family is tense. First of all, the Wife admits that the couple does not have any intimate relationship, 'As for my husband, she [Serena Joy] said, he's just that. My husband. [...] Till death do us part. It's final' (ibid 26). Secondly, already in the Red Centre the Handmaids are

warned that the Wives will not feel warmly about them and Serena Joy clearly despises Offred. On the one hand, the attitude of the Wife is only to be anticipated because the Handmaids are not only the birth mothers of their step-children (if there are any) but also the mistresses of the Commanders, ‘The fact is that I’m [Offred] his [the Commander’s] mistress. Men at the top have always had mistresses [...]. The mistress used to be kept in a minor house or apartment of her own, and now they’ve amalgamated things’ (ibid 172). On the other hand, the society only seems to tolerate the Wives’ hardships not taking into consideration the feelings of the Handmaids. In the author’s of this paper opinion both the Wives and the Handmaids are in an unenviable situation; firstly, the Wives have to approve of their husbands having sexual relationships with the Handmaids and perhaps even raising a bastard child. In addition, the Handmaids are obliged to have sexual relationships with men they have no feelings for and if they conceive a child the Handmaids have no choice but to give the offspring to the married couple, ‘She [the Handmaid] will be allowed to nurse the baby for a few months, they believe in mother’s milk. After that she’ll be transferred, to see if she can do it again, with someone else who needs a turn’ (ibid 137). Since Margaret Atwood has depicted the early stage of the future life affected by the social and political changes people have nostalgic memories about the past. Nevertheless, the society is told that after they adapt to the changes the life will be better for everyone,

‘The women will live in harmony together, all in one family; you will be like daughters to them [...]. There can be bonds of real affection [...]. Women united for a common end! Helping one another in their daily chores as they walk the path of life together, each performing her appointed task’ (ibid 171).

All in all, the type of the future upper-class family is that of the extended family. The author of this novel has contemplated how the severely decreased birth rates and unsuccessful pregnancies might lead to a society which is reproduction-oriented only. The future scenario seems ominous and unacceptable for the author of this thesis; apparently Margaret Atwood has tried to emphasise how people should pertain to the threats of extinction of humans more seriously.

To continue, there is a different family model for the middle-class families; nevertheless, not much is said as the novel is narrated from the protagonist’s point of view. The wives of the middle-class families are called “Econowives”, ‘These women are not divided into functions. They have to do everything, if they can’ (ibid 34). It is stated in the novel that the Econowives disapprove of the Handmaids even though the reasons why are not mentioned. According to the Aunts there will be a day when no woman will have to be an Econowife.

The middle-class family model is similar to the nuclear families of today – the Econowives not only give birth to children (if they are able to), but also work and run the household. The husbands have waged jobs and the married couple has no servants.

2.3. Civil registry

There are different marriage customs in the future; nowadays men and women get married because they are in love with each other. Also, the ceremony usually takes place in a church, registry office or a place chosen by the bride and groom. In comparison, the couples have a group wedding in the future and the marriages are arranged by the parents of the youngsters. In addition, some of the girls are only 14 years old and they are married so young in order for the reproductive age not to be wasted, ‘*Start them soon, is the policy, there’s not a moment to be lost [...]*’ (ibid 231). Another difference is that the girls are given away by their mothers, not by fathers as it is common nowadays. The young men and women have never even met their future spouses. Such marriage customs demonstrate the artificiality of the family, it is not a union of equal partnership and the husband and wife are not bound by affection in any way, ‘*But you [the bride] aren’t expected to love him [the groom]. You’ll find that out soon enough. Just do your duty in silence*’ (ibid 233). The families are not formed so that two people might complement each other, but only for the crude reason of reproduction. Not all of the youngsters accept their destiny willingly, there is often crying among the brides during the ceremony, but the marriage is supposed to be rejoiced. The ceremony is performed by a Commander of high rank and the brides are told to be humble, modest and obedient wives. Allusions to the Bible are used during the ceremony,

‘*Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection [...]. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.*’ (ibid 233)

Men, on the other hand, are not given such explicit instructions on how to behave as husbands. There is no description of the marriages of the Commanders and the Wives, probably because, as that was the early stage of the new system, they had been married according to the previous customs and during the period when there was still democracy.

2.4. Conception, pregnancy and labour

The main reason for overturning the democratic governing system and incorporating Christianity into the politics and social customs is the sterility of the human race. The principal cause of the sterility is the pollution of the environment,

‘The air got too full, once, of chemicals, rays, radiation, the water swarmed with toxic molecules, all of that takes years to clean up, and meanwhile they creep into your body, camp out in your fatty cells.[...] Women took medicines, pills, men sprayed trees, cows ate grass, all that souped-up piss flowed into the rivers. Not to mention the exploding atomic power plants [...] and the mutant strain of syphilis no mould could touch.’ (ibid 122)

The author of “The Handmaid’s Tale” is obviously against the aggressive intrusion in the course of nature and the excessive use and creation of chemical substances.

The population of the 21st century is subjugated to many spreading viruses as well – the R-strain syphilis, the AIDS epidemic which ‘eliminated many young sexually active people from the reproductive poll’ (ibid 317). All in all, the careless lifestyle of people is said to be the cause of the sterility. By not paying attention to the changes in nature, by using too many chemical ingredients (pills, medicine, hospitals, etc.), by polluting the Earth people foredoomed themselves.

In order to salvage human population and save it from extinction the future society’s and government’s priority is reproduction. The sexual activity between men and women is no longer love or passion related; furthermore, the upper-class families have a special Ceremony when a Handmaid and a Commander are having intercourse. During the Ceremony the Handmaid is fully dressed, lying on her back, between the spread legs of the Wife, ‘My [the Handmaid’s] arms are raised; she [the Wife] holds my hands, each of mine in each of hers. This is supposed to signify that we are one flesh, one being. What it really means is that she is in control, of the process and the product. If any’ (ibid 104). Since time immemorial intercourse has been an intimate and private matter of couples. Also, couples having sexual relationship are either love, passion or desire driven. This future Ceremony, on the other hand, deprives people of any privacy and is morally unacceptable.

If the conception has been successful, the Handmaid is treated with more respect and carefulness, ‘[...] there must be a Guardian standing outside the door, waiting for her [the pregnant woman]. Now that she’s the carrier of life, she is closer to death and needs special security’ (ibid 36). Mostly the protective measures are implemented due to the fact that the

infertile women or the Wives might get jealous; there are cases when the pregnant Handmaids get killed by the envious women. Such an outrage and hostility can be partially understood because the women who cannot conceive a child for a long time can be sent to the Colonies, '[...] you've got three years maximum, at those [the Colonies], before your nose falls off and your skin pulls away like rubber gloves. They don't bother to feed you much, or give you protective clothing or anything, it's cheaper not to' (ibid 260). In other words, if a Handmaid emerges as infertile, she is sentenced to death penalty.

Even if a Handmaid conceives, there is a risk that the child might be an Unbaby – a baby with deformities or defects, '[...] with a pinhead or a snout like a dog's, or two bodies, or a hole in its heart or no arms, or webbed hands and feet' (ibid 122). Such infants are secretly disposed of, but no one knows exactly how. If previously it was possible for the doctors to determine the sex and the health condition of the baby with the help of Ultrasonography, then in the future world such actions are outlawed – there is no use in knowing as abortion is prohibited. The future society has deteriorated; the things women fought so actively for in the 21st century – contraception, freedom to choose abortion, independency, etc. – have all been abolished.

For the delivery of a baby there is yet another ceremony called the Birth Day during which many Handmaids and Wives observe the labour process. As mentioned before, women are not allowed medical care during the pregnancy, nor during the labour, 'Once they drugged women, induced labour, cut them open, sewed them up. No more. No anaesthetics, even. Aunt Elizabeth said it was better for the baby, but also: I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children' (ibid 124).

The doctors are waiting outside the building where the labour takes place and are only allowed in if there are serious complications. The pregnant Handmaid and the Wife are placed so that the Wife as if frames the pregnant woman. Again, this ritual is thought to symbolise the unity of the Wife and the Handmaid. After the child is born he/she is not given to the biological mother, but is ceremoniously placed into the hands of the step-mother. For the first few months the mother of the child is allowed to feed the baby, but afterwards is forced to leave him/her with the Commander's and Wife's family.

2.5. Degraded role of women and men

As mentioned before, the environmental pollution that led to sterility was one of the main causes for the creation of a government and society with Christian values. Nevertheless,

another cause was the degraded women's role in the society. According to the advocates of the new regime the women's right to choose not to give birth to children, to use contraception and to have waged job made them "Godless", 'Back then, the Unwomen were always wasting time. They were encouraged to do it. The government gave them money to do that very thing. Mind you, some of their ideas were sound enough [...]' (ibid 128). The sexual liberties are said to be connected with the degradation of women position as these liberties gave rise to prostitution, pornography and rape, "[...] women tied up or chained or with dog collars around their necks, women hanging from trees, or upside down, naked, with their legs held apart, women being raped, beaten up, killed. [...] That was what they thought of women, then' (ibid 128). The Christians also emphasise that the women themselves caused such an attitude; they led men on by dressing provocatively. It is stated that women ought to have been wiser and to realise that it is in men's nature to see such women behaviour as sexually arising, 'Men are sex machines [...]. They only want one thing. You must learn to manipulate them, for your own good. Lead them around by the nose; that is a metaphor. It's nature's way. It's God's device. It's the way things are' (ibid 153). The presence of chauvinism can be felt – women are blamed for the lustful nature of the men and they are the ones who have to change their attitude. The high rape rates caused the implementing of security means – the households are secured by Guardians, there are checkpoints which can be crossed only by particular people or on particular occasions. However, the implementation of such security measures not only means that the women are protected, but also that they are supervised and limited in their actions. The protagonist of the novel contemplates that the women movement's ideas that at first seemed necessary backlashed, "“Mother,” I [the Handmaid] think, “wherever you may be. You wanted a women's culture. Well, now there is one”" (ibid 132). Furthermore, as a result to the women movement men became self-conscious,

““The problem wasn't only with women, he [the Commander] says. The main problem was with the men. There was nothing for them anymore. [...] I'm not talking about sex, he says. That was part of it, the sex was too easy. Anyone could just buy it. There was nothing to work for, nothing to fight for. [...] they were complaining about [...] inability to feel. Men were turning off on sex, even. They were turning off on marriage”" (ibid 249)

Nowadays men are used to patriarch domination, but the significance of this social model has decreased due to women's movement and overall social changes. Thus, the men feel as if their social role has been degraded. In addition, the practical studies show that due to

environmental changes the sexuality of men diminish and Margaret Atwood successfully depicts the effects of such phenomena.

In conclusion, the pre-Gilead's and 21st century's family models are very similar; namely, less couples choose to marry and instead together as lovers. In addition, people want to be materially stable before having children which is one of the causes of the decreasing birth rates. Margaret Atwood depicts two modern family models – Offred's mother's and Offred's – in which a common trait can be observed, i.e., having only one child. Furthermore, in these both families the women are not married: Offred's mother does not want a commitment with a man and Offred's lover is already married to another woman. One can conclude that the author of "The Handmaid's Tale" has brought out some of the most essential 21st century's tendencies – the majority of the couples form a family without getting married; the women have gained complete independence from men; there are many families with an only child; couples firstly aim for financial means and being successful careerists and only then – starting a family.

When describing the future family a relationship between an unhappy married couple is depicted. Despite the fact that the upper-class people living in one household are not related by blood the author of this paper considers the future family to be an extended family in its formation. The middle-class family in its form is similar to the nuclear family. The new government has not only changed the social customs but has also inflicted a protocol according to which a family is to be formed. In addition, there is a set of rules for each member of the family to obey. Such methods seem drastic and the rules violate a person's right of freedom. As a result, the family relations are not sincere, but rather hostile. The future families are formed only for the reason of reproduction and not because women and men have genuine feelings of attraction or intimacy. With this novel Margaret Atwood sends out a warning that the social and environmental changes in the 20th-21st centuries might negatively affect the future society and family life. She emphasises that people ought to be more careful and responsible as concerns reproduction, intrusion in the nature's processes, sexual liberation, etc.

In the next chapter Margaret Atwood's novel "Oryx and Crake" will be analysed taking into consideration the importance of emphasising social and environmental changes accountable for the change in family life.

3 FAMILY IN “ORYX AND CRAKE”

“Oryx and Crake” is a novel with dystopian elements set in near future. The civilization as we know it today has ceased to exist and the protagonist Snowman is supposedly the last man on earth. Nevertheless, a new society has been created before the apocalypse in order to take over human beings’ place. The cornerstone of this novel is scientific and technological inventions; other essential themes are: the gap between the rich and the poor, overpopulation and the effects of it, prostitution, commoditisation, political and economical developments leading to social changes, as well as romance and family life.

3.1. Jimmy’s childhood

When describing events before the apocalypse, Margaret Atwood uses flashbacks and the reader is introduced with the life of little Jimmy who later calls himself Snowman. Jimmy is different from the other boys, at least in his parents’ opinion. As he is the one telling the story, the reader feels Jimmy’s anger towards his parents who, apparently from their behaviour and conversations, do not seem to know or understand their son, ‘They knew nothing about him [Jimmy], what he liked, what he hated, what he longed for’ (Atwood 2004:66). As it was stated in the theoretical part of this theses it is important for the family members to feel accepted and understood; Margaret Atwood has pointed out the detachment of modern families.

The relationships between the family members are tense; the mother and father have grown apart and do not seem to understand each other anymore. It is mentioned in the novel that Jimmy’s mother used to work for a corporate compound company as well, as a scientist, but due to some unmentioned reasons she has become hostile against the corporations and existing system in general. Jimmy’s father, on the other hand, strongly believes that genetic engineering is useful to people and they could only gain from scientific developments. These contrasting beliefs of Jimmy’s parents lead to them constantly fighting. Jimmy does not seem to be anxious; on the contrary, he seems amused and entertained by his parents’ quarrels, ‘Once the fight got going Jimmy felt relieved, because he’d known then that he wouldn’t be punished. All he had to do was say nothing and pretty soon they’d [parents] forget why they’d started arguing in the first place’ (ibid 18) He even has hid microphones in the living room and kitchen to spy on his parents. When Jimmy is present his parents try to pretend that everything is fine; also, after they have finished arguing one of them always checks to make

sure Jimmy is his bedroom supposedly asleep. Such a behaviour annoys Jimmy, ‘Whoever it was would now come upstairs [...]. Then they [the parents] could tick off that item on the Terrific Parenting checklist they both carted around inside their heads’ (ibid 66).

It is evident from the ironic way Jimmy talks about his parents that in his opinion they are far from being perfect. First of all, both his father and mother want him to be something he is not. Jimmy’s father always gives him ‘some tool or intelligence enhancing game or other hidden demand that he measure up’ (ibid 57) on birthdays hoping that his son would become more like him – a scientist. Also, the mother seems to be disappointed by Jimmy, but she never really pinpoints why. Jimmy himself is puzzled by what he should do to live up to his mother’s standards, ‘But what did she [the mother] mean about letting her down?’ (ibid 304) In another conversation Jimmy finally apprehends that his mother wants him to be more intellectual, “‘Your friend [Crake] is intellectually honourable,” Jimmy’s mother would say. “He doesn’t lie to himself” [...] If only he [Jimmy] could be like that – intellectually honourable’ (ibid79-80). The author of this paper believes that Jimmy wants to satisfy his parents’ expectations of him, but the parents are not clear about what they want. Moreover, they do not appear to know their son very well, ‘They [parents] thought he was only what they could see. A nice boy but a bit of a goof, a bit of a show off. Not the brightest star in the universe, not a numbers person, but you couldn’t have everything you wanted and at least he wasn’t a total washout’ (ibid 66).

Second of all, Jimmy grew up in the early 21st century therefore the author of this thesis expected that the family would value the traditions of this time, namely, celebrating birthdays. However, Jimmy’s birthday is rarely even remembered,

‘He’s repressed his birthdays: they weren’t a matter for general celebration, not after Dolores the live-in Philippina left. When she was there, she’d always remember his birthday [...]. His mother on the other hand could never seem to recall how old Jimmy was or what day he was born. He’d have to remind her, at breakfast; then she’d snap out of her trance and buy him some mortifying presents [...]. Then his father would put them all through an awkward excuse about why this really, really special and important date had somehow just slid out of his head, and ask Jimmy if everything was okay, and send him an e-birthday card – the OrganInc standard design [...].’ (ibid 56).

Based on the fact that the parents never remember their son’s birthday, which is an important event in parents’ life, one can deduce that either the parents are completely disappointed by what a person Jimmy is turning into or they are too consumed by their own lives and goals, thus caring for a child and having time for him is put aside.

As a result, the boy begins to mock his parents publicly at school. He is a person who loves getting attention so Jimmy has been putting on little shows in front of his schoolmates the whole time. Not only Jimmy but also his peers have a number of overheard quarrels between their parents,

‘Evil Dad blustered and theorized and dished out pompous bullshit, Righteous Mom complained and accused. In Righteous Mom’s cosmology, Evil Dad was the sole source of haemorrhoids, kleptomania, global conflict, bad breath, tectonic-plate fault lines, and clogged drains [...] (ibid 68).

To continue, Jimmy’s childhood is disturbed by his mother’s runaway. After years of feeling depressed she finally leaves the family and compound taking with her the only friend Jimmy has acquired – a rakunk. Jimmy’s reaction is surprising because he is more annoyed by Corpsmen, who ask the boy endless questions about his mother, and the fact that Jimmy’s mother has liberated the rakunk than his mother’s absence, ‘He [Jimmy] was enraged by it. How dare she? Killer [rakunk] was his! [...] Jimmy had mourned for weeks. No, for months. Which one of them was he mourning the most? His mother, or an altered skunk?’ (ibid 69-70) After a while Jimmy’s father starts dating his co-worker Ramona who later moves in with them. The boy is a little bit embarrassed by the fact that his father is sexually active again and has a girlfriend. The way the father and Ramona are consumed by each other makes Jimmy feel invisible and he mocks their relationship by calling them ‘two hormone-sodden love bunnies’ (ibid 75).

3.1.1. Jimmy’s family

As mentioned before, Jimmy’s family is not a very happy one mostly because the relationship between the boy’s parents is strained. Their estrangement might be explained by the fact that the father and mother are different individuals with no common interests or opinions. Even though they both were scientists once and believed that the scientific developments are going to change the world into a better place, the mother has alienated herself from everything scientific while the father has stayed true to his beliefs. It is not pinpointed in the novel if Jimmy’s mother considered the compound workers and the government to be fraudulent; however there are a few cues, e.g., ‘Finally Crake said, “How come your mother took off the way she did? [...] I bet your dad was in on something like that. Some scam like the HealthWyzer one [artificially creating illnesses]. I bet she found out”’ (ibid 249)

Margaret Atwood has depicted how different interests and beliefs of a married couple can estrange them from each other. Furthermore, the author of this thesis considers the character of Jimmy's mother to represent an anti-globalist because she is against the overpowering corporations and everything they embody.

Jimmy's parents argue about whether or not science is immoral and according to Jimmy's mother genetic engineering is immoral and sacrilegious, but the father is pro-scientific, "There's nothing sacred about cells and tissue, it's just..." "I'm [the mother] familiar with the theory" (ibid 65) The fact that the family is provided by the money earned in NooSkins and HealthWyzer – multinational corporations with privileged compounds built for the employees – depresses Jimmy's mother even more.

Jimmy's mother is described as an apathetic and depressed woman, 'She sounded so tired; maybe she was tired of him [Jimmy]' (ibid 35). Jimmy's mother does not work anymore and is a stay-at-home mother; she quit her job and told everyone that it was because she wanted to spend more time with Jimmy. The boy is surprised by how illogical this seems: his mother left the job right when he started school and was away from home for most of the day. In a way, this particularity described in the novel is similar to the increased tendency of parents aiming for self-fulfilment rather than caring for children.

Another reason for the mother being so depressed is the change in politics, society and environment. The novel is set in near future when the Global warming has reached its climax and the world is ruled by corporations. There is a drastic class division as the intelligent people live in compounds with their families while poorer people live in pleeblands. Consequently, the rich people, mostly scientists and their families, are very privileged – the air in the compounds is clearer, there are no illnesses spreading, there are guards at the entryway of every compound, the families are allotted houses that are cleaned by housekeepers twice a week, the crime rates of compounds are very low if not non-existent because everything is thoroughly monitored, etc. On the other hand, there are curfews, night patrols, drug raids, probable bugged telephones and e-mails and people cannot travel freely,

'There were the things his [Jimmy's] mother rambled on about sometimes, about how everything was being ruined and would never be the same again, like the beach house her family had owned when she was little, the one that got washed away with the rest of the beaches and quite a few of the eastern coastal cities when the sea-level rose so quickly [...]. But everyone's parents moaned on about stuff like that. *Remember when you could drive anywhere? Remember when everyone lived on the pleeblands? [...] Remember when voting mattered?*' (ibid 71-72)

The author of this novel emphasises the negative aspects of the modern life as the cause of people's apathy: globalisation, global warming, etc.

Finally, after her escape Jimmy's mother becomes a radical protester that fights against the above mentioned issues. First of all, the globalisation has been a cause of many small manufacturers going bankrupt. Secondly, the genetically modified foods are more profitable, but a group of people are against such interfering with the nature (e.g. growing only particular chicken parts without a head or a beak, creating genetically altered coffee beans, etc.) Also, there is a huge gap between the rich and the poor, the latter being reduced to 'starvation-level poverty' (ibid 210) It is no surprise that Jimmy's mother has joined such a group of people, 'There in the shouting crowd, clutching a sign that read *A Happicup Is A Crappi Cup*, [...] was his [Jimmy's] [...] vanished mother' (ibid 212).

When Jimmy has matured he portrays a different image of his mother to entertain his listeners, 'By then his [Jimmy's] mother had attained the status of a mythical being, something that transcended the human, with a dark wings and eyes that burned like Justice, and a sword' (ibid 224) The use of the word "Justice" seems peculiar to the author of this paper – apparently, Margaret Atwood signalises that globalisation equals injustice.

Finally, Jimmy of the novel sees his mother on a video taken during execution. Jimmy's mother is shot for supposedly treason. There is no information about her last years of life as she spent them on the run and any attempt to contact her family were dangerous. Thus, the protagonist of the novel does not know neither how long and where had she been imprisoned before the execution nor when her death took place, '[...] her skin was lined, her mouth withered. Was it the hard living she'd been doing on the run, or was it bad treatment? How long had she been in prison, in their grip? What had they been doing to her?' (ibid 304)

Jimmy seems to care more for his mother than his father; also, the mother seems to love her son in a weird way. The proof of Jimmy's love towards his mother is, first of all, the numerous descriptions of her. To continue, it is stated about Jimmy, 'More than anything, Jimmy wanted to make her laugh – to make her happy, as he seemed to remember her being once. He would tell her funny things that had happened at school, or things he tried to make funny, or things he simply invented.' (ibid 35) Moreover, the first true heartache Jimmy feels is after the death of his mother, 'In earlier days he [Jimmy] would have made his mother's death into a psychodrama, harvested some sympathy, but that wasn't what he wanted now' (ibid 305) He mourns for his mother for weeks – does not leave his apartment, does not go to

work, ignores phone calls and e-mails, and is rude to his lover. Jimmy also has nightmares of him being in the family's kitchen and waiting for his mother to enter the room. All this considered, the author of this paper believes that Jimmy loved his mother and she loved him as well, even though the maternal bond was not as strong, 'Maybe she [the mother] had loved Jimmy, thinks Snowman. In her own manner. [...] She must have had some sort of positive emotion about him though. Wasn't there supposed to be a maternal bond?' (ibid 69) Jimmy's father, on the other hand, is not of great importance in Jimmy's life; after a while the protagonist cannot even remember what his father looked like. Most of the time Jimmy mocks or is ironic about his father. Moreover, the father does not seem to have any particular characteristics apart from being intelligent and pro-scientific. According to Jimmy's mother the father's career interferes with him being a good father, "Leave Daddy alone," said his [Jimmy's] mother, "Daddy is thinking. That's what they pay him for. He doesn't have time for you right now" (ibid 22) However, it is stated that Jimmy's father tries to look like a good father by reacting some of the moves he has seen elsewhere, like throwing sucker punches and ruffling Jimmy's hair. In Jimmy's opinion even the father's voice is exaggerated when he says the word "son". The protagonist's father provides for his family, is faithful to his wife and is committed to acting as a good father, but there are no emotional feelings behind that. Also, Margaret Atwood has depicted parents whose career and self-fulfilment are more important than family.

When Jimmy is older and Ramona moves in with them, the boy and the father grow more apart. After Jimmy's father and mother are legally divorced the father marries his co-worker, 'She [Ramona] was allowed to say *we* and kiss him [Jimmy], because she was now officially his stepmother. His real mother had been divorced from his father in absentia [...] and the bogus wedding of his father had been celebrated, if that was the word for it, soon after' (ibid 206) However, the father does not seem to notice his son's hostility towards his relationship with Ramona and is more than happy to marry a co-worker, a scientist who shares his beliefs and understands his opinions. Jimmy's father and Ramona are eager to start a "new" family; however trying to conceive a child is unsuccessful thus they start considering alternatives, 'They'd [the father and Ramona] have a few trial runs, and if the kids from those didn't measure up they'd recycle them for the parts, until at last they got something that fit all their specs [...]' (ibid 293). The negative attitude felt towards the decision to adopt a child indicates the author's of "Oryx and Crake" standpoint on genetically modified humans. Also, the theme of infertility is again emphasised.

The stepmother Ramona appears to have maternal instinct even if she does not have a child of her own yet. First of all, she ignores Jimmy's adversity when she moves in with the boy's father and instead tries to become friends with him. She is actually more interested in his opinion and contentedness than Jimmy's parents ever were,

'She [Ramona] did try. She laughed at his jokes [...], mowaved dinner for just herself and Jimmy [...]. Sometimes she would watch DVD movies with him [...]. She asked him if there was anything he wanted to ask her about, like, you know. Her and his dad, and what had happened to the marriage' (ibid 76).

Even if her attempts are a bit artificial she merely tries to be Jimmy's friend not his second mother. Moreover, Ramona seems to believe that conversations are important in relationships and she is also the one to Jimmy the protagonist to visit her and the father while Jimmy's biological parents do not even contact him.

Finally, Jimmy himself never starts a family probably because he has had such a bad experience with his parents when growing up, 'He [Jimmy] didn't want to have a father anyway, or be a father, or have a son or be one' (ibid 206). The protagonist has many lovers, but none of them he is in love with, except for Oryx. 'He'd wanted to track down and personally injure anyone who had ever done harm to her [Oryx] or make her unhappy. He'd tortured himself with painful knowledge [...]. The more it hurt, the more – he was convinced – he loved her' (ibid 158). Due to the fact that Crake is also in love with Oryx Jimmy does not show his feelings in public and afterwards it is too late for Jimmy – Snowman (as he calls himself after the apocalypse) – to get married or start a family as there are supposedly no humans inhabiting the planet anymore. At one point, when Jimmy suspects that Crake knows about his affair with Oryx, he even considers running away with Oryx and living in the pleeblands. Even though he wanted to be left alone before Snowman is very lonely after the apocalypse, "'Crake! [...] Why am I on this earth? How come I'm alone? Where's my Bride of Frankenstein?'" (ibid 199)

3.2. Crake's family

There is not much said about Crake's family as he is a very introvert person and he rather talks about science and intellectual matters. His real name is Glenn; his father has died and his mother has remarried with Uncle Pete, whom Crake despises, 'He'd [Crake] smile, he'd say *Sure, Uncle Pete* and *That's right, Uncle Pete* when the man was around, even though Jimmy knew Crake disliked him' (ibid 102). Crake's mother is a diagnostician in the hospital complex and is described as a quiet woman who respects her child's privacy. Still, there is a

similarity with Jimmy's mother – they both often get lost in their thoughts to such an extent that they do not notice anybody else, 'Sometimes she [Crake's mother] would stop in the middle of her preparations (...) and stand stock-still (...). Jimmy had the impression she couldn't remember his name; not only that, she couldn't remember Crake's name either' (ibid 101) To continue, Crake's biological father died by falling off a pleebland overpass and, even though the official story is that it was suicide, Crake suspects that his father revealed some HealthWyzer's scheme and was pushed over. Despite the fact that Crake never clearly characterises his relationship with the biological father, the author of this paper assumes that they had been quite close. First of all, Crake is convinced that he would have known if his father was thinking about suicide which indicates that there had been some closeness between the father and the son. Next, at first Crake is not comfortable with talking about his dad with Jimmy, 'That's all he'd [Jimmy] ever got out of Crake before: dad died, full stop, change the subject. It wasn't anything Crake would talk about' (ibid 214). It is probably because those are too painful memories to remember; in contrast, when Crake's mother dies of an undiscovered illness he finds it as if entertaining, "It was impressive," Crake told Jimmy. "Froth was coming out" (ibid 207). Finally, Crake chooses the same path in life as his father once had - contributing to the improvement of the human kind.

Crake's attitude towards his mother's and Uncle Pete's relationship is also negative, similarly to Jimmy's. The difference between the two friends is that Jimmy is more fond of his mother, but Crake – of his father. When speaking about how Uncle Pete joined their family, Crake is ironic which the author of the novel has depicted by quoting the grown-ups in Crake's speech, 'My [Crake's] mother said he [Uncle Pete] was really *supportive*. [...] She said [...] he was turning out to be a really good friend of the family, not that I'd ever seen him around much before. He wanted things to be *resolved* for us [...]' (ibid 214-215). Moreover, Crake is convinced that both his mother and Uncle Pete were the ones who betrayed Crake's father's secret – having found out about the HealthWyzer scheme – which led to the father being killed. Crake's father entrusted Uncle Pete and his wife with this revelation and they, according to Crake, either already knew about the scheme or were scared about the truth coming out.

After a few years Uncle Pete is killed by a virus as well, but interestingly enough, no one else catches this virus, 'It was like watching pink sorbet on a barbecue – instant meltdown. Sabotage was suspected, but nothing had been proved. *Where you there?* asked Jimmy. *In a matter of speaking*, said Crake' (ibid 297). Crake's response is somewhat suspicious; also the

fact that no one else got infected except for Uncle Pete raises questions if it really was a coincidence and if Crake could have been responsible for the creation of the virus.

As a grown up Crake shows no interest in having a family or even dating for that matter. This character is more interested in the scientific developments than his personal life and family relations. Crake is in love with Oryx as well; thus the novel speaks about a love triangle relationship as well. There is a whole chapter “Crake in Love” in which the protagonist observes changes in his best friend Crake, ‘Jimmy’s heart sank. Crake was in love, for the first time ever. It wasn’t just the praise, rare enough. It was the tone of voice’ (ibid 364).

‘He’d [Crake] touch her [Oryx] in public, even. Crake had never been s toucher, he’d been physically remote, but now he liked to have a hand on Oryx (...). *Mine, mine, mine*, that hand was saying’ (ibid 368). Because Crake has shown interest in Oryx by saving her from being a prostitute and providing her with a job Jimmy tries to be honourable and not to show his feelings. Nevertheless, Oryx has an affair with both Jimmy and Crake. Jimmy is aware of this love triangle while Crake supposedly does not know about it; Oryx explains her having an affair with both men by saying that Crake is her boss and Jimmy is for fun. Even though Crake is apparently deeply in love with the woman he does not mention anything about commitment or marriage which is probably because his scheme of destroying the human population is already in progress. Moreover, Crake kills his lover knowing that Jimmy will revenge Oryx’s death; the fact that Crake relies on Jimmy not to let him live after Oryx’s death indicates that Crake knew about their affair – he knew that Jimmy was in love with Oryx as well, ‘He [Crake] looked at Jimmy, a direct look, unsmiling. “I’m [Crake] counting on you [Jimmy],” he said. Then he slit her [Oryx’s] throat. Jimmy shot him’ (ibid 385)

3.3. Oryx’s childhood

As a girl Oryx lives in a village where people have little or no income, where there are too many children for the poor families to feed and where starvation is commonplace. Her family is big, but only the mother can work; the numerous children are still too little,

‘[The mother had] two older sons who would soon be able to work in the fields, which was a good thing because the father was sick. He coughed and coughed; this coughing punctuated her earliest memories. [...] So the father of Oryx was pitied, but also blamed and shunned. His wife tended him with silent resentment’ (ibid 134).

Margaret Atwood has depicted a situation where women are able to work as a result of the women’s movement but do not appreciate this social development.

From Oryx's monologues it is clear that the families living in the village are frustrated and living in inhumane conditions: the children have to start working before they reach the legal age, they do not go to school. Also, the grownups are depressed for having to struggle to earn a living. People in this village either work on the fields or in the rice paddies. From the descriptions of the village the author of this paper assumes that Oryx was born in some Third World country. Furthermore, e.g., the fact that Oryx's father's illness is being "treated" by performing superstitious rituals such as burning small images in the fire and ringing bells proves that health system operating in this village is inadequate. Again, the drawbacks of globalisation as causes for distress of families have been portrayed by the author of "Oryx and Crake".

When the father dies Oryx's family is left with no provider; therefore, the mother sells two of her children – Oryx and her brother – to a man called Uncle En. In this village it is common for families to sell their children, especially girls because the traffickers consider boys to be more disobedient and run away more often. The children are mostly sold by women who have lost their husbands; the author of the novel has tried to view trafficking of children from a different angle, i.e., she has tried to comprehend the mothers selling their children, 'Still, after the man left, the mothers who had sold their children felt empty and sad. They felt as if this act, done freely by themselves [...], had not been performed willingly' (ibid 140). It is understandable that in desperate times the mothers choose desperate measures and Oryx does not reprove of her mother's actions, but merely understands this situation caused by overpopulation and starvation,

'Besides, if they stayed where they were, what was there for them to do? [...] They [girls] would get married and make more children, who would then have to be sold in their turn. Sold, or thrown into the river, to float away to the sea; because there was only so much food to go around' (ibid 135).

There is no chance of progress in this village and the children comprehend that. It is said that the mothers encourage their children to come back to the village after they have earned some money, but Margaret Atwood notes that no one ever has before. Uncle En does not buy all the children that mothers are willing to sell and only chooses a few which means that only the handsomest and most smart children are taken. Oryx mentions the consequences of not being chosen by Uncle En, '[...] it must have been bad for a child not to be chosen. Things would be worse for it in the village, then, it would lose value, it would be given less to eat' (ibid 140).

The author of this thesis believes that the excessive importance of money has been emphasised in this novel. Furthermore, the simple arrangements and process of trafficking of children are only possible due to the open borders (globalisation).

Even though the families in Oryx's birthplace value the profit their children can bring the attitude towards their decisions is not entirely negative. There is still an emotional connection between Oryx's mother and her daughter and Oryx believes that the mother loves her. The mother is said to have sold Oryx's brother in hope that they would keep each other company. In other words, despite having sold her children, Oryx's mother at least cares about them enough to try to make this experience as easy as possible for them. When Oryx is grown up she comments on her mother's choice, 'Every child should have love, every person should have it. She herself would rather have her mother's love – the love she still continued to believe in [...] – but love was undependable [...], so it was good to have a money value' (ibid 146-147). Thus, the woman believes that her mother had no other option but to sell her children in order for them to have a better life someday. Also, the money from this transaction could be used to help the family.

Oryx's first trafficker Uncle En makes the children work on the streets – sell roses. When Oryx and her brother arrive in Uncle En's building there are already several children who also have been sold by their parents. These children tell stories about how Uncle En knows everything the children are doing, if they are lazy or stealing the money earned from tourists, 'If you tried these forbidden things often enough [...] you would be sold, to someone much worse [...], you would be killed and tossed on a rubbish heap, and nobody would care because nobody would know who you were' (ibid 149). It is said that the children are also beaten or burnt if they "misbehave". The children have only money value; their human rights are not taken into consideration.

Oryx is very successful at selling roses as she is very petite and angelic; even the children pet her as she is the smallest one. Her brother, on the other hand, is not so fortunate – he is too proud to sell the roses which in his opinion is a girl's occupation – therefore Oryx tries to help him by selling his leftover roses. When Uncle En announces that he will sell Oryx's brother to some other trafficker of children the brother is frightened, '[...] she [Oryx] wasn't surprised when he [the brother] ran away; and whether he was ever caught and punished Oryx never knew. Nor did she ask because asking [...] would do no good' (ibid 152). In these shocking circumstances it is no wonder that all the children are so frightened that they rather are ignorant about their relatives' fate than endanger themselves. The relationship between

Oryx and her brother is not heartfelt before his runaway either; the author of the paper speculates that they were still too young to care for a sibling. To continue, Oryx soon is given another job and Uncle En is very satisfied with her success. He even jokes about marrying Oryx, but she is against the concept, “I [Uncle En] wish I could marry you [Oryx]. [...]” This was as close to love as Oryx could get right then, so she felt happy. [...] “Can I listen to your watch?”[...] *Instead of marrying you, instead of answering your question, instead of being your real child*’ (ibid 155-156) It appears to the author of this paper that even as a little girl Oryx knows that Uncle En is not earnest and that he thinks of her as money profit.

To summarise, one of the main problems concerning families of the 21st century is poverty, starvation and inhuman conditions in the Third World countries. The level of development in these places is below zero – people still believe in superstitions, there is no medical care, children are illiterates, families have too many children and there is overpopulation, the only bread winners are the males of the family. In a situation where the father of the family dies or is no longer able to work the mother has to provide her children with no means. As a result, many women choose to sell their children to traffickers of children. Still, the author of the novel has not entirely condemned the families of the Third World countries; she merely speculates about the inextricable situation these people are in. On the one hand, these families care about each other and believe in loving relationships between the family members. On the other hand, the children are sold to strangers which is a violation of human rights. Not only that, some children are killed soon after their birth because of the starvation and poverty. Even if trafficking of children is legally a crime, the author of this paper believes that Margaret Atwood merely tried to understand and depict the reasons behind it – it is not the individual responsible for such atrocities, but the whole society and world order that have led to the huge gap between the rich and the poor, i.e., globalisation.

3.4. The new family model

There are many reasons that lead to a new human-like race’s – the Crakers – development. It is clear that the old family model is faulty as well as the social, political and scientific changes have negatively affected people. As mentioned before, Margaret Atwood describes the lives of three modern families and in all three cases it is implemented that family values are not of great importance to the characters. On the one hand, it is this experience that impels the younger generation to implement some changes in the family model.

Nevertheless, the youngsters rather date, have affairs and hire prostitutes than start their own

families. On the other hand, the world has changed greatly and the future is about scientific developments, not relationships.

Crake is a scientist who has a unique concept of the world and society; in his opinion the *homo sapiens*' existence is doomed due to the deficient decision making. He compares humans with animals and vegetations claiming that the former is not able to adapt and is destroying not only the human population but also flora and fauna. Furthermore, due to overpopulation there is famine in many areas and Crake states that people ought to act accordingly, "You can't couple a minimum access to food with an expanding population indefinitely. Homo sapiens doesn't seem able to cut himself off at the supply end. He's one of the few species that doesn't limit reproduction in the face of dwindling resources" (ibid138-139). The human race is ignorant about the current situation, but Crake believes in altering the world into a better place. Margaret Atwood has implemented women's nature (ecologisation) in the character of Crake.

At first, Crake fools everybody into believing that this project is meant for families who would like particular characteristics and features in their children. With the help of Crake's scientific inventions couples would be able to choose not only the skin, eye and hair colour, body physique, but also characteristic traits, 'Not everyone will want all the bells and whistles, we know that. Though you'd be surprised how many people would like a very beautiful, smart baby that eats nothing but grass' (ibid 359) From Crake's point of view the creation of genetically altered human beings and extermination of *homo sapiens* is the solution to overpopulation, wars, famine, excessive use of natural resources, commodification, etc. Thus, Crakers are secretly created; these creatures are modified to an extent where they do not register a person's skin colour (no racism), they eat only grass and leaves and recycle their own excrement, are polygamous, are not religious, do not have hierarchy, etc. Also, the family model of Crakers is radically different; to begin with, due to being polygamous these creatures do not marry or raise children in a mother-father family. Instead, Crakers live in a commune and have an extended family. The purpose of men is to mark the territory that the Crakers inhabit by urinating along an invisible boundary line every day. The scent of their urine frightens away predators; also, the chemicals are programmed only in men's urine so that there is 'something important [for them] to do, something that didn't involve childbearing, so they wouldn't feel left out. Woodworking, hunting, high finance, war, and golf would no longer be options, he'd [Crake] joked' (ibid 183). Jimmy describes the Craker's facial expressions during this routine as 'aiming-for-the-target (ibid

182) like and also sees parallels between the men urinating and Jimmy's father leaving in the morning for work. Naturally, as Crakers only eat plants and do not need comfortable accommodations the men are no longer bread winners, but merely protectors of the family. The women, on the other hand, have the purpose of childbearing and tending the fire, '[...] fire-tending is about the only thing the women do that might be classified as work. Apart from helping to catch his [Jimmy's] weekly fish, that is. And cooking it for him' (ibid 186). Furthermore, the children of Crakers grow up faster than normal human beings due to incorporated rapid growth factors because, according to Crake, 'Far too much time was wasted in childrearing [...] and being a child. No other species used up sixteen years that way' (ibid 187) Interestingly enough, the children still have to be breast-fed even though they consume only plants. The author of this paper speculates that Margaret Atwood still felt the need to create a mother-child bond and first of all this connection can be achieved during pregnancy and breast-feeding. There is no necessity for Crakers to mature for such a long period of time as nowadays because they do not attend or have, for that matter, schools. Children can easily attain the knowledge needed in life from grown-up Crakers – their life customs are simplified; they have to be taught only which animals are dangerous, which plants are poisonous and what could hurt them (e.g., falling on the ground, touching the fire, etc.). Other concerns of *homo sapiens* are not characteristic for Crakers, e.g. medical care is no longer needed because Crakers can heal the wounds by purring (cat's purr is at the same frequency as the ultrasound). Also, sexual education is not required anymore as Crakers are polygamous, mate cyclically and do not transmit sexual diseases; their mating is for purely reproductive purposes and women's readiness to copulate is obvious by the pigmentation on their bodies. Usually, a quintuplet of Crakers are "in heat" – four men and a woman - and the men copulate with the woman one after another, 'It no longer matters who the father of the inevitable child may be, since there's no more property to inherit, no father-son loyalty required for war' (ibid 195). In addition, such reproduction system rules out prostitution, rape, sexual abuse of children, human trafficking, and sex slaves. The Crakers' family model might seem utopian; nevertheless, several drawbacks can be observed. Namely, despite Crake's attempts to exclude the human characteristics the Crakers display the incipience of religiousness, creating art and leadership. The author of this paper believes that Margaret Atwood has tried to prove in her novel that some human traits cannot be extinguished and that scientific modifications are helpless against the nature laws.

To continue, in the Crakers' family there will never be elderly people as these creatures are programmed to die at the age of thirty, “suddenly, without getting sick. No old age, none of those anxieties” (ibid 356). It is not described in the novel how the Crakers react to death as none of them has ever reached that age yet. Even though Crake believes that it is similar to immortality the author of this paper is of opinion that Crakers might still be more similar to *homo sapiens* when it comes to death. The fact that Crakers make a facsimile statue of Snowman and play percussion instruments proves that they have symbolic thinking. According to Crake, ‘Next, they’d be inventing idols, and funerals, and grave goods, and the afterlife, and sin, and Linear B, and kings, and then slavery and war’ (ibid 420)

The character of Crake does represent the notion of a “mad scientist” who adopts the role of God. On the other hand, the belief that the human race is responsible for the global catastrophes and is more ignorant about the threats of extinction than the supposedly less intelligent animals and plants depicts the feminine nature of the author of the novel.

To summarise, the modern family models depicted in “Oryx and Crake” include nuclear and extended families. As a result of women’s movement, globalisation, characteristic differences and other aspects these families seem dysfunctional, i.e., the emotional function is not present in the described family models. Moreover, the world and society have been affected by social, political and environmental changes. The latter is the main reason for the creation of human-like creature – Craker. Crakers are genetically engineered and have such characteristics and are programmed so that they are more environment friendly than humans. The feminine nature is emphasised – the new generation ought to be more considerate of the environmental pollution and its effects on humanity. The many modifications, such as rapid growth, consuming only plants and their own caecothrophs, copulation for reproductive reasons only, polygamy, etc. have affected not only the sociological but also family models of Crakers. Also, the author of this novel expresses concern that overpopulation in less developed countries might lead to increased trafficking of children, child labour, starvation, and other important issues of the 20th-21st centuries. To continue, such problems as old age, courtship and sexual frustration have also been resolved by the means of genetic engineering; hence the group of Crakers form a harmonious family. The reader of the novel can only speculate about how the Crakers will develop, since only the early stage of their existence is depicted. Nevertheless, as there are some indications that Crakers are more similar to human beings as they were intended to be the future of these creatures might evolve similarly to the humans’.

By carrying out the study of family in Margaret Atwood's novels the author of this thesis has achieved the following results: recognised the differences between the modern and futuristic family models depicted, studied the probable causes of the creation of the two new family types, emphasised the effects of social, political, environmental, and moral changes in connection with the family institution. The author of this thesis has found out that such 20th-21st century issues as scientific inventions, women's movement, sexual liberation, globalisation, threats of extinction, overpopulation and famine in the underdeveloped countries, pollution, etc. have determined Margaret Atwood's viewpoint on the values of the society and family.

CONCLUSIONS

The **goal** of this study was to investigate the modern and futuristic family models and lifestyle depicted in Margaret Atwood's novels "The Handmaid's Tale" and "Oryx and Crake"; as well as to denote the differences between these two family models and name the reasons for the creation of a new family model.

The **hypothesis** of this research paper that the dystopian depictions of the society and family in Margaret Atwood's novels "The Handmaid's Tale" and "Oryx and Crake" are based on the notorious modern values and lifestyle has been proven by the author of this paper.

The author of this thesis concluded that Margaret Atwood has brought out the most essential 21st century's tendencies affecting family formation, values and the society in her novels "The Handmaid's Tale" and "Oryx and Crake". Both novels have dystopian elements which indicates that the writer criticises the current situation in the world and the perspective developments. Also, the modern families described lack the emotional function (communicating, understanding and accepting the family members). In both novels the social, political, and environmental changes have negatively influenced the future families. In addition, the process of globalisation is seen as an ominous driving force possibly accountable for the huge gap between the rich and the poor, increased power of corporations, commodification, trafficking of children, etc. In "The Handmaid's Tale" Margaret Atwood manipulates with the possibility that due to the environmental pollution people have become sterile; in "Oryx and Crake" – that overpopulation and excessive utilisation of natural resources might result in the creation of more environment-friendly society. Similarly, the both novels predict that the humans will face extinction and new family models will be formed only for the function of reproduction. All in all, Margaret Atwood sends out a warning that the social and environmental changes in the 20th-21st centuries might negatively affect the future society and family life. She emphasises that people ought to be more careful and responsible as concerns reproduction, intrusion in the nature's processes, sexual liberation, etc.

In a broader context this research has documented the increased concern about the future and humans' place in determining it. It has been discovered that modern literary works emphasise the negative impact people have on the environment, society, and moral values. The strengths of this thesis include analysis of numerous related sources as well as literary

works. The author of this paper would suggest that a further study of novels with dystopian elements is carried out in order to grasp a more objective viewpoint on family in relation with society, environment, politics and other aspects.

THESES

1. In a family it is anticipated that a person will be accepted despite his/hers wrongdoings, decisions, etc., but every family is different and the socialisation of children can vary due to the fact that each family consists of different individuals.
2. Western society is more interested in enjoying their own lives and exciting their imaginations than thinking about the future, i.e., their future plans and dreams are not connected with having and raising children.
3. The creation of the birth-pill allowed women, and couples in general, to control pregnancy and also changed the women's role in the society. By secluding conception from sexual relationship "sexual revolution" was achieved.
4. The modern feminism movement resonates with new global phenomena and is concerned with ecologisation of science, philosophy, religion, morals, rights, etc.
5. Numerous scientists have confirmed a study result that claims that men are not only frustrated because of the dissolving role of men as dominators in the society and family but are also experiencing biological problems. The sexuality of men is dejected by the global factors (e.g., acid rains, ozone depletion, etc.)
6. Margaret Atwood has depicted the nowadays' tendency to start families and have children when the couples are materially independent. Very often it happens only when the women and men are over thirty years old; and this age is not the most fertile.
7. Margaret Atwood sends out a warning that the social and environmental changes in the 20th-21st centuries might negatively affect the future society and family life.
8. The drawbacks of globalisation as causes for distress of families have been portrayed by the author of these two novels.
9. As a result of women's movement, globalisation, characteristic differences and other aspects the families depicted by Margaret Atwood seem dysfunctional, i.e., the emotional function is not present.
10. The changing environment is the main reason for the creation of human-like creatures – Crakers which are genetically engineered and have such characteristics and are programmed so that they are more environment friendly than humans.

11. Both novels have dystopian elements which indicates that the writer criticises the current situation in the world and the perspective developments.

12. The character of Crake does represent the notion of a “mad scientist” who adopts the role of God. On the other hand, the belief that the human race is responsible for the global catastrophes and is more ignorant about the threats of extinction than the supposedly less intelligent animals and plants depicts the feminine nature of the author of the novel.

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APPENDIX

1.1. “Ēdzimto iezīmju savdabība (piemēram, temperaments) nosaka katra bērna oriģinālu reaģēšanas veidu pat uz vienādiem vecāku audzināšanas paņēmieniem. Otrkārt, laika gaitā attīstās vecāku dzīves pieredze, audzināšanas prakse. [...] Treškārt, vienas ģimenes ietvaros ne tikai pieaugušie, bet arī vecākie bērni iesaistās savu jaunāko brāļu un māsu audzināšanas procesā, kas arī piešķir socializācijai specifiku.”

1.2. “Astoņas no 11 valstīm ar lielāko bērnu mirstību ir karojošās valstis [...]”.

1.3. “Taču daba tām noteikusi tādas funkcijas paaudžu atražošanā, kas kardināli atšķiras no vīriešu funkcijām. [...] Māte ne tikai dzemdē, bet arī baro un kopj bērnus.”

Bakalaura darbs „Family in Margaret Atwood’s Novels” (Ģimene Margaretas Atvudas romānos) izstrādāts LU Moderno valodu fakultātē.

Ar savu parakstu apliecinu, ka pētījums veikts patstāvīgi, izmantoti tikai tajā norādītie informācijas avoti un iesniegtā darba elektroniskā kopija atbilst izdrukai.

Autors:

Rekomendēju darbu aizstāvēšanai

Vadītājs:

Recenzents:

Darbs iesniegts Literatūras un kultūras nodaļā

Lietvede/Studiju metodiķe:

Darbs aizstāvēts bakalaura gala pārbaudījuma komisijas sēdē

..... prot. Nr., vērtējums

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