

## THE FEATURES OF DYSTOPIAN AS DEPICTED IN MARGARETH ATWOOD'S ORYX AND CRAKE NOVEL

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### Abstract

This research discusses the features of dystopian in Oryx and Crake novel written by Margaret Atwood. The researchers is interested to discuss about the features of dystopian because dystopian literature could be one of the future vision about what will happen to the humankind who live in the earth and we as the current humankind generation may find the best way to live side by side with the earth. The researchers applies sociological approach and uses qualitative in research in conduction the research. The researchers found all 3 characteristics in dystopian setting which are: The setting is usually set in a hopeless world where a portion of the population survives some sort of global disaster, the setting will center on citizen uprisings, and there are also man-made disasters like overpopulation, genetic-engineering. In the protagonist categories, the researchers found 1 from 3 characteristics which is the protagonists often questioning the rules of society and political systems. They believe or feel that something is terribly wrong with the society in which he or she lives.

**Key words:** Characteristic of Dystopian, Dystopian, Sociological Approach.

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### INTRODUCTION

All people in this world want to have a perfect life. A perfect life may include having much money to buy anything they want, having safe place so they don't need to worry about crime, having good environment so they will not get hit with any kind of disasters, having a good government with no oppression, and other aspects that many people expected. This kind of perfect world called as utopia, Eutopia (and u-topia) names texts that render the good place and utopists focus their efforts on constructing models of ideal societies. It means utopia is condition of world where human tried to create ideal world which will make all human in the world live side by side happily with everything they need to accomplish their desires and happiness.

It is really difficult and almost impossible to achieve this utopian world. However, there are still some people try to create utopia in this world. When the process of constructing this utopia world failed, the world will remain as dystopia world which is the opposite world of utopia. The word Dystopia is originally a Greek word meaning bad or ill. Dystopia is usually associated with science fiction; a future of advanced technology brings

about the fall of mankind. It means dystopia is bad world where all human is in difficulty and put human in survival condition. Moreover, this chaotic world usually caused by the advanced of technology of human who try to achieve the utopian world. It means that dystopia is about narrative fiction that tells about the social structure of human which is worse than in the real world.

The dystopian world finds itself isolated from nature; the people are alienated from all that is green, making a person confide to darkness and indoor life in most of his or her life. It means that dystopian world is world where societies afraid to live in the nature because they are not get along well with nature and they protect their selves from the nature by creating indoor life. In addition, most of dystopian world will not able to cover and protect all human into their indoor life and they must filter people who able to enter this protected indoor life by consideration about their intelligent which is useful for their improvement or about the money they can invest to support the improvement of the world which they are building.

By reading a dystopian literature, the reader will realized about what how the condition of human after the bad thing that they have done to the earth and the readers also will wonder what will happened if human can not fix what they have done. And the researchers believes that *Oryx and Crake* novel is one of the best dystopian literature that shows the current process and effort of humankind try to fix the condition of the current world with their advanced technology and knowledge that is not sure will bring the world to the betterment or not. *Oryx and Crake* is a novel written by Margaret Atwood that published in 2003. The novel described the division between the rich and poor is fairly obvious. The rich live in corporation compounds, futuristic versions of ‘company towns’ where employees live with their families in corporation-owned spaces. Meanwhile the poor live the Pleeblands were places where the compound people did not go and where the poorer class lived. The rich creates their own company towns and separates themselves from the poor because the afraid to be infected from spreading disease.

The researchers is interested to discuss about the dystopian society in *Oryx and Crake* novel because dystopian literature could one of the future vision about what will happened to the humankind who live in the earth and we as the current humankind generation may find the best way to live side by side with the earth. Moreover, the researchers thinks that

the dystopian novel of Oryx and Crake can be as critics toward the scientist in the world that not all advanced technology or knowledge will bring the world to betterment to human or even to the earth.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Features of Dystopian Narratives**

Dystopian narratives are portrayed with different defining. However, they often have the same concerns and characteristics (Rido & Sari, 2018), (Gulö, 2014). One thing they often share in common is that they resemble a utopian or harmonious society but with at least one fatal flaw. It means that in order to have an effect on the reader (Suprayogi & Novanti, 2021), dystopian fiction (Amelia & Daud, 2020) often has one common trait: familiarity with one big mistake (Muliyah et al., 2020). However, it is not enough to show people living in a society that seems unpleasant. Moreover, dystopian narrative will have certain issue which is quite similar with the trend in the real world in order to attract the readers and make them think that this dystopian narrative could be happened and become real. To sum up, in 2006, International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English (IRA/NCTE) has classified the characteristics or features of dystopian narratives. All story or prose which tells about the world where people live and survive from great disaster can be called as dystopian narrative or story about dystopian world.

### **The Society**

#### **a. Propaganda Control**

Propaganda is action of spreading the misleading information which is used to promote a particular point of view (Handayani & Aminatun, 2020). Propaganda is used to control the society by make them believe (Mandasari, 2016), (Berlinda, 2015), (Mandasari, n.d.), (Muliyah & Aminatun, 2020) to certain point of view and they will do everything to stay save in certain place.

#### **b. Restriction of Information and Independent Thought**

The dystopian narrative usually tells about the world where information, independent thought, and freedom are restricted. It means that society is being force to follow the rule

which is made by certain people or certain group that have more power than other society for certain reason. The society usually will not get the right to propose a policy for the betterment of the world; the society will not get the right information about what actually is happening with the current country.

**c. Constant surveillance of citizens**

Another characteristic of dystopian narrative is that citizens are perceived to be under constant surveillance. Constant surveillance means that society compound is always being watched by guard and when society went to outside the compound, they will also being guarded.

**d. The fear of the outside world.**

Citizens have a fear of the outside world means that citizen creates certain place or building to protect their selves from something dangerous outside the world. The outside world means natural world where usually all creatures live by side in this earth.

**e. Dehumanized state**

Dehumanized state means condition when human are not treated as human, the treatment that is done to human lower the value and the quality of human. This dehumanized state usually done by the human who have power to human who have no power and human who are in dehumanized state usually in difficult situation.

**f. The distrust of natural world**

The natural world is all of the animals, plants, and other things existing in nature and not made by people (Eklesia & Rido, 2020). One of the characteristics of society in dystopian narratives is that society no longer need the natural world and tend to disbelieve with the use of natural world.

**g. Uniform expectations**

Conform to uniform expectations happened when certain community creates a concept or they way the citizens live in that certain community and other citizens who want to join into that community should follow the concept whether they like it or not.

#### **h. Illusion of a perfect utopian world**

Illusion of perfect utopian world is world where most of citizens are seemed to be happy but some parts of citizens are actually suffered. In illusion of perfect utopian world, usually people live with high technology and advanced knowledge that can fulfill all the necessity human need to be live in perfect world (Gazali & Yusmaita, 2018), (Adrian et al., n.d.).

### **The Setting**

#### **a. Hopeless world**

One of the characteristic of setting in dystopian narratives is that where society live in hopeless world against global disaster (Puspita & Pranoto, 2021) and society are trying to survive from this global disaster.

#### **b. Man-made disasters**

Other characteristic of setting in dystopian narratives is that there is man-made disaster like epidemic which is probably caused by failure in certain research.

#### **c. Political event**

Another characteristic of setting in dystopian narrative is that the country is in the condition of revolution or the uprising of citizen. It means there are some part of society who believe that the governmental system is not right and not support all part of society.

### **The Protagonists**

#### **a. The rules of society and political systems**

The characteristics of protagonist in dystopian narratives usually questioning the rules of society where she or he lives. This protagonist character sees something wrong with the system that used by society to live (Mertania & Amelia, 2020), (Amelia & Dintasi, 2019), (Mulyanto et al., n.d.), (Yulianti & Sulistiyawati, 2020), (Kardiansyah, n.d.-b).

#### **b. The negative aspect of the dystopian world**

The protagonists also help the audience recognizes the negative aspects of the dystopian world through his or her perspective (Wahyudin, 2018), (Oktaviani & Desiarti, 2019), (Pustika, 2020), (Amelia, 2021), (Pranoto, 2021).

### **c. Trap and Escape**

The protagonists will have characteristics like feeling trapped and struggling to escape.

### **d. Rebellion**

The protagonists tend to be rebellious and against the system. The researchers will analyze the features of dystopian in *Oryx and Crake* novel which are the dystopian society, the dystopian setting (Heri Kuswoyo & Wahyudin, 2017), (Kuswoyo & Wahyudin, 2017), (Kuswoyo & Audina, 2020), (Rido, 2015), (Rido et al., 2020), and the protagonists. The researchers will follow the parameter above in finding the data in the *Oryx and Crake* novel. The researchers believe that the theory above is sufficient to be used in analyzing the problem formulated in the first chapter because this theory has been used by many researcher who discussed about dystopian literature because this theory provide completed characteristics

## **METHOD**

The researchers uses qualitative research since the research is about the features of dystopian and the data will be in the form of word or narration. In this case, the researchers's research is study case about the features of dystopian in *Oryx and Crake* novel and the result of the research will be present in the form of descriptive (Ayu & Zuraida, 2020), (Kardiansyah, n.d.-a), (Daun-Barnett & Affolter-Caine, 2005). In conducting this research, the data source is *Oryx and Crake* novel written by Margaret Atwood. Meanwhile, the data are in the form of dialogue and narration contained about the features of dystopian fiction in three categories, first the dystopian society, second the dystopian setting and the last, the protagonists.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Dystopian Society**

### **Propaganda Control**

Propaganda is action of spreading the misleading information which is used to promote a particular point of view. Propaganda is used to control the society by make them believe to certain point of view and they will do everything to stay save in certain place. The propaganda in *Oryx and Crake* is done by one of the biggest Compound. This compound creates virus with the antidote, the HelthWyzer creates the antidote because they know the infect society will come to them because of the trust of society toward the HelthWyzer compound. The HelthWyzer compound promotes and sells medicine which is really needed by society to prevent their selves to get infected from the spreading diseases which haunt the whole society. The compound put this virus through the medicine they sell.

*“HelthWyzer,” said Crake. “They’ve been doing it for years. There’s a whole secret unit working on nothing else. Then there’s the distribution end. Listen, this is brilliant. They put the hostile bioforms into their vitamin pills – ... Naturally they develop the antidotes at the same time as they’re customizing the bugs, but they hold those in reserve, they practise the economics of scarcity, so they’re guaranteed high profits.” “Are you making this up?” said Jimmy. “The best diseases, from a business point of view,” said Crake, (Oryx and Crake: 247)*

The data above is part of explanation of Crake to Jimmy about the HelthWyzer compound that do propaganda to control society who face and fear with the spreading disease. The HelthWyzer compound is so powerful with the capacity to create medicine that make the HelthWyzer is trusted by society, so even the compound put a virus inside the medicine they sell after preparing the antidote before. The propaganda done by the HelthWyzer is that they create the virus along the antidote and spread the virus through the society by putting the virus inside the medicine that they sell. In the end, when the society gets infected with the virus which the HelthWyzer creates, the society will come to the HelthWyzer because society has more trust to this compound than other compounds. The purpose of this action is not only to gain money from sick society but also to show to other compounds that the HelthWyzer is the most advanced compound in the term of medicine which is becomes the first necessity of society now on. The action to show they power to other compound by creating disease scheme can be called as propaganda action because the HelthWyzer done that to have control toward the society. This propaganda has been done by the HelthWyzer compound for years and makes them the most powerful compound which is can be seen as the most powerful organization because there is no

government in America now. Crake is also making the virus to spread to society and the virus will make The HelthWyzer compound gain much more money than other virus before.

## **Dystopian Setting**

### **Hopeless world**

One of the characteristic of setting in dystopian narratives is that where society live in hopeless world against global disaster and society are trying to survive from this global disaster. In *Oryx and Crake* novel, the researchers did not find the global disaster which society were facing. The researchers only found the effect of global disaster which is described on several datas below: The extreme weather affects all aspect of society in *Oryx and Crake*, including the farmers who can not predict how the weather or the season will be and make them really difficult to decide when to plant their farms.

*What if a family needed to sell a child and he would not buy it because he'd been offended on a previous visit? He was the villagers' bank, their insurance policy, their kind rich uncle, their only charm against bad luck. And he had been needed more and more often, because the weather had become so strange and could no longer be predicted – too much rain or not enough, too much wind, too much heat – and the crops were suffering. (Oryx and Crake: 136)*

The data above shows how villager who works as farmers suffered so much because of unpredictable weather that cause the farmers can not determine the time to plant their farm or plantation because of the weather often change drastically, sometimes it is too much rain, sometimes there is no rain for a long period time, and sometimes there is too much wind. The villagers can not earn money because of the extreme weather and many villagers are forced by the economical problem to sell their children in order to stay alive. The situation that is faced by poor villager can be called as hopeless situation because the villagers only rely on farm or plantation to earn money, but because of the extreme weather, the villagers can not earn money to survive.

## **The Protagonist**

### **The doubtful of the rules of society and political systems**

The characteristics of protagonist in dystopian narratives usually questioning the rules of society where she or he lives. This protagonist character sees something wrong with the system that used by society to live.

*“No, you are. You and your smart partners. Your colleagues. It’s wrong, the whole organization is wrong, it’s a moral cesspool and you know it.” “We can give people hope. Hope isn’t ripping off!” “At NooSkins” prices it is. You hype your wares and take all their money and then they run out of cash, and it’s no more treatments for them. They can rot as far as you and your pals are concerned. Don’t you remember the way we used to talk, everything we wanted to do? Making life better for people – not just people with money. You used to be so . . . you had ideals, then.”*

The data above shows how Jimmy’s mother really hates how Jimmy’s father feels really after figure out new project that can heal many dangerous diseases. Jimmy’s mother does not agree with the system of compound which only helps people with much money but leave poor people in desperate live and die with no hope at all. Jimmy’s mother used to work in compound as researcher as well but she quit for certain reason. Later on, Jimmy’s mother will escape from OrganInc compound. Jimmy’s mother becomes fugitive and always being hunted by the CorpSeCorps because the compound afraid that Jimmy’s mother will leak some of important information to other compounds which can be dangerous for OrganInc compound. The action which is done by Jimmy’s mother to questioning the rules of some certain people was so much powerful is categorized as the characteristics of protagonist of dystopian narratives.

## CONCLUSION

This has attempted to examine how the features of dystopian as depicted in Margareth Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* viewed from International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English (IRA/NCTE) which divided into three categories : 1). Dystopian Society, 2). Dystopian Setting, 3). The Protagonist. As the completion of the previous chapters, this study more likely driven to more specified term where it have to be concluded. The conclusion will be presented through the coherency between the application of the theories and concepts and the result of the analysis that formed in the form of tables and extend discussion, to answer the problems that have been formulated in the early pages. Based on the finding on three categories above, the researchers can surely

conclude that *Oryx and Crake* novel written by Margaret Atwood can be categorized as dystopian narratives based the theory of International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English (IRA/NCTE).

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