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Attitudes to Nature in Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* and the MaddAddam Trilogy

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Abstract. The article presents a study of relations of humans to nature in Margaret Atwood's novel *Surfacing* and her MaddAddam trilogy. These novels highlight various negative aspects of the relationship between humans and nature or non-human beings, such as violence against animals, hunting and fishing, exploitation and destruction of the environment, climate change, genetic engineering and the creation of genetically modified animals and humans. On the other hand, the novels also suggest some possibilities of positive relations, such as the experience of unity with nature, deriving hope from the beauty of nature and its power of adaptation and regeneration, creating new ways of cooperating with nature and non-human beings, instead of dominating and destroying them.

Key words: Margaret Atwood, MaddAddam, animals, nature, ecology

1. INTRODUCTION

Margaret Atwood's novel *Surfacing* (2012, originally published in 1972), is set in the Canadian wilderness in the 1960s. While nature in *Surfacing* is still a power to be reckoned with and a picturesque wilderness where animals thrive, the futuristic natural world of America in the MaddAddam trilogy, comprising the novels *Oryx and Crake* (2004, first published in 2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2010, first published in 2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013), is totally devastated by the unmitigated development of human civilization, which results in drastic climate change, massive species extinction, and introduction of transgenic organisms. The article presents a study of complex relations between humans and the non-human world as well as various attitudes of humans to nature, as reflected in these particular novels by Atwood, selected because nature and humans' relation to it play an especially important role in them. The juxtaposition of the early novel with the recent trilogy reflects the intensification and increasingly alarming character of human modifications and control of the natural environment in the

contemporary world. While her early novel focuses mainly on the problem of abusing and killing animals on a local, even personal level, the trilogy deals with numerous aspects of human civilization's negative impact on the natural world on a global scale and its possible future consequences, demonstrating the growing urgency of changes to prevent an environmental catastrophe.

2. HUMANS AND NATURE IN CANADIAN LITERATURE ACCORDING TO ATWOOD

Margaret Atwood devotes considerable attention to Canadian attitudes to the natural world in her book *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972), as well as in a series of lectures, published originally in 1995, entitled *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* (2014). In *Survival*, she observes that nature is typically presented in Canadian literature as an entity that cannot be trusted (49). The image of benevolent Mother Nature, so common in European literature, for example, is quite rare; instead, nature is commonly perceived as "dead, or alive but indifferent, or alive and actively hostile towards man" (54). The wilderness appears to be a dangerous place in which it is difficult or even impossible to live without necessary knowledge and skills, and even these cannot guarantee survival. As Atwood observes, "Death by Nature ... is an event of startling frequency in Canadian literature" (54), with drowning and freezing as the most common causes of death (55). Another way of claiming a character by nature is "Death by Bushing," a kind of insanity caused by spending too much time alone surrounded only by the non-human world, where "the character sees too much of the wilderness, and in a sense becomes it, leaving his humanity behind" (Atwood 1972, 55). Similarly, the first lecture from the collection *Strange Things* is devoted to the examination of the image of the Canadian North in literature, where personified female Nature was typically portrayed in the past as strange, mysterious, fearsome, simultaneously hostile and tempting, encouraging exploration but finally driving explorers insane or killing them.

However, according to Atwood, the attitude to nature in Canadian literature began to change in the 20th century, when humans started to subdue and control it more and more effectively, posing a greater danger to nature than it could pose to them. Consequently, "the problem is no longer how to avoid being swallowed up by a cannibalistic Nature but how to avoid destroying her," which would finally lead to self-destruction (Atwood 1972, 60). One of the possible alternative attitudes to nature, discussed in Atwood's (2014) second lecture "The Grey Owl Syndrome," is inspired by native inhabitants of the continent. When certain white people try to become like the Natives, their vision of nature is notably different from that of earlier explorers and settlers. They perceive the wilderness not as a hostile entity that can kill them but as a friendly space where one can live if one has learned the skills of Indians. Moreover, the wilderness can become a place of spiritual renewal and salvation from the ills of civilization. This attitude is also related to greater respect for nature and can offer a counterbalance to the dominant exploitative tendencies.

3. ATTITUDES TO NATURE IN *SURFACING*

The unnamed narrator of the novel *Surfacing* returns to the wilderness area where she grew up in order to search for her missing father. She observes that the place has already undergone significant changes, while civilization is slowly encroaching on it. The level of the large lake has been raised to facilitate transportation of timber. After old trees have been cut down, the ancient forests have no chance of restoring themselves: "The trees will never be allowed to grow that tall again, they're killed as soon as they're valuable, big trees are scarce as whales" (Atwood 2012, 45). Large trees, just as great sea mammals before, are disappearing from the face of the earth because they are treated as commodities and a source of profit.

Moreover, a new modern road has been built, and the now easily accessible area is attracting more and more tourists keen on fishing in the lake and hunting in the surrounding forests. Even people that are supposed to care for wildlife, such as members of the Wildlife Protection Association of America, who would like to buy her father's land and his cabin on the island, betray their wish to amuse themselves from time to time with fishing and hunting: "What we'd use it for would be a kind of retreat lodge, where the members could meditate and observe ... the beauties of nature. And maybe do a little hunting and fishing" (Atwood 2012, 97). The protagonist observes that contemporary tourists in general do not wish to experience and admire the wilderness, practicing their survival skills, but mainly want to catch as many fish as possible to boast about their achievements: "They're the kind who catch more than they can eat and they'd do it with dynamite if they could get away with it" (65). They are even capable of killing some creatures, such as birds, only for amusement: "They got drunk and chased loons in their powerboats for fun, backtracking on the loon as it dived, not giving it a chance to fly, until it drowned or got chopped up in the propeller blades" (126). The image of drunk American tourists chasing a loon in a motorboat until it is dead could be interpreted as a monstrous exaggeration of Thoreau's playful chase of a loon on Walden Pond in a rowboat, where both parties had more or less equal chances in the game (Thoreau 1995, 152-153).

An unexpected encounter with a killed heron, hung on a tree "like a lynch victim," prompts the narrator of *Surfacing* to reflect on human capacity for and delight in senseless violence, a demonstration of power over other beings: "it was valueless; ... it couldn't be tamed or cooked or trained to talk, the only relation they could have to a thing like that was to destroy it. Food, slave or corpse, limited choices; horned and fanged heads sawed off and mounted on the billiard room wall, stuffed fish, trophies" (Atwood 2012, 120-121). The killing of the heron reveals that even if an animal cannot serve as a source of nourishment, work power, or as a pet, it is still not safe from humans. If no other use is possible, it may be killed to become a trophy on the wall or even be destroyed for no reason and left to decay, like the heron.

At the beginning of the novel, the narrator herself participates and helps her companions in fishing, trying to justify her actions by familiar norms of her culture: "I feel a little sick, it's because I've killed something, made it dead; but I know that's irrational, killing certain things is all right, food and enemies" (Atwood 2012, 63). In the course of time, she starts to feel that killing animals for entertainment is unjustified in their situation: "I couldn't anymore, I had no right to. We didn't need it, our proper food was tin cans. We were committing this act, violation, for sport or amusement or pleasure,

recreation they call it, these were no longer the right reasons” (124). In the end, she understands that death cannot be avoided, as it is an inherent part of nature, “a sacrificial cycle of life dying to sustain life” (Sullivan 1976, 13). Even those who do not hunt or fish profit from animals’ death by buying and eating meat: “And we eat them, out of cans or otherwise; we are eaters of death, dead Christ-flesh resurrecting inside us, granting us life. ... even the plants must be Christ. But we refuse to worship” (145). In this vision of a sacrificial cycle of life, animals and plants save other lives by feeding humans as well as other creatures in never-ending communion. However, contemporary people are not grateful to animals for their gift of life; they take it for granted.

In the last part of the novel, the protagonist stays behind alone on the island for a few days, and during that period she has a powerful spiritual experience of unity with nature. This event, as well as her earlier search for ancient rock paintings that her father had located, bring back “the repressed memory of the presence of indigenous people in this place” (Ridout 2015, 38). She undergoes a kind of “ritual of purification” and “sacred initiation into nature” (Sullivan 1976, 14), in which she sacrifices and frees herself from everything that is connected with her past life “to be a natural woman totally at one with nature” (Davidson and Davidson 1979, 48). During that period, as Jagodzka (2020, 12-13) points out, the narrator explicitly questions boundaries between species and between human and non-human beings. Creating and immersing herself in her own natural spirituality leads her to an attempt to abandon her humanity. In an almost shamanic trance, she gradually eliminates all the material artefacts of civilization, such as clothes and other objects in the cabin, blurring the boundary between the human and the non-human being (Jagodzka 2020, 13). Nevertheless, the intense spiritual experience is temporary, and living alone on the island like an animal cannot last forever. The protagonist has to return to the human world to survive and continue to live (Davidson and Davidson 1979, 49). However, by thus questioning and transcending her experiences of childhood, adulthood, and humanity in general, she is finally able to face reality with courage (Woodcock 1973, 26-27).

On the whole, the protagonist of *Surfacing* considers herself to be a person living in harmony with nature, while others are perceived by her as separated from nature, artificial, corrupted by civilization, and violent. In practice, she gradually stops participating in killing non-human beings, which might suggest that personal choices do matter, in spite of an individual’s entanglement with destructive and exploitative society.

4. ATTITUDES TO NATURE IN THE MADDADDAM TRILOGY

The MaddAddam trilogy is commonly considered as an instance of dystopian literature. However, as Boyd (2015) points out, while the first novel, *Oryx and Crake*, appears purely dystopian, *The Year of the Flood* is dystopian with elements of an attempted utopia, in the form of God’s Gardeners’ religion and ecological lifestyle. The final novel, *MaddAddam*, presents a mixture of both, a “ustopia,” to use the term coined by Margaret Atwood herself. According to her, utopias and dystopias are in fact closely related, as one always contains hidden elements of the other. Thus, even in the face of utter environmental degradation, there is still some hope that the characters will adapt to the new conditions and the human race can survive and continue to live on Earth in a new way (Boyd 2015, 161-162).

The MaddAddam trilogy is not a typical example of the post-apocalyptic novel in that the characters' memories of the pre-apocalyptic world are far from idyllic: in many respects, the monstrous civilization based on greed and exploitation appears to be much worse than the post-apocalyptic reality (Canavan 2012, 141). In the novels, due to unchecked technological progress, the environment becomes "less and less viable for more and more species – including humans" (Dunning 2005, 89). The natural world has been "altered and corrupted for the benefits of a hyper-consumerist society that reached its final potential and has doomed itself to self-destruction" (Stefan 2014, 294), which follows not only from ruining the foundations of life on Earth but also more directly from an artificially created pandemic.

Perhaps the most significant difference between the world as we know it and that of the novels is climate change, which for the characters is no longer a threat and prediction but a fact of the past, with effects in their present: "climate change is not disruptive but constitutive of the world that Atwood's characters find familiar" (Phillips 2017, 149). For instance, one of the characters, Jimmy, remembers that when he was a small child, "the leaves still turned colour then, and they were orange and red" (Atwood 2004, 17-18), but then the four seasons disappeared. Jimmy recalls that when he was still a boy, "the northern permafrost melted and the vast tundra bubbled with methane, and the drought in the midcontinental plains regions went on and on, and the Asian steppes turned to sand dunes" (Atwood 2004, 27). Now the climate of the north-eastern coast of North America¹ is tropical, with very hot, sunny days and violent storms and torrential rains each afternoon. Meanwhile, coastal cities have been partially flooded as a result of the rising sea level.

Meanwhile, as Trexler and Johns-Putra (2011, 189) emphasize, "not just climate change, but rampant genetic modification carried out by repressive corporation-led regimes, have led to species extinction," which occurred even before the events described in the novels. The presented world is inhabited mostly by hybrid species created in laboratories "in order to fulfill various kinds of human needs" (Mosca 2013, 41). Some of the transgenic animals and plants have been created just to test the new technology of gene splicing (e. g. luminescent rabbits), for esthetic effects (e. g. luminescent roses growing in gardens), or as pets (e. g. gentle and friendly rakunks, racoon-skunk hybrids). Others have been created to satisfy commercial needs, such as sheep with human hair of various colors used for transplantation, or other practical needs, for example, aggressive and untamable wolvogs (wolf-dogs) used to guard prisons. Nevertheless, many of the new transgenic species "do not turn out the way their creators had intended" (Sanderson 2013, 221). While some of them are generally harmless, others, such as wolvogs, pigoons, and liobams (lion-lambs), pose a threat to humans and to other animals, especially after the collapse of civilization, when they get out of human control. As Schmeink (2016) points out, they "surpass the original intent for their genetic programming" (85) and thus "challenge any remaining delusions of a mastery over nature" (88). In fact, the few survivors of the pandemic feel constantly threatened by animals that, ironically enough, are products of human technological progress, since

¹ The trilogy is not set in Canada, but somewhere on the east coast of North America, south of the US-Canadian border. However, in this futuristic globalized and corporation-controlled world, states and borders appear to lose their significance, and all people and areas are affected by climate change. A detailed discussion of Atwood's decision to set her dystopian novels in the US can be found in Ridout (2015).

“after the collapse of the civilization – one of whose main purposes was to make sure that humans would never be eaten – the risk of becoming food increases drastically for humans” (Kozioł 2018, 273).

One of these transgenic species is especially significant because of its direct relation to *Homo sapiens*. So-called pigoons are large pigs that have some human genes, because they have been created as donors of organs for transplantation in people. Due to this genetic modification, their intelligence is presumably as high as that of humans. As Schmeink (2016) observes, they “completely undermine any conception of human exceptionalism and frightfully cast into doubt the neat boundaries of nature/culture and human/animal” (89), yet their role is reduced to that of organ donors for people, and subsequently, of food source, as meat becomes scarce (90). It is only after the collapse of the civilization that pigoons gain freedom and in the end even enter into complex relationships with human survivors, agreeing not to kill and eat one another. They even form an alliance to combat together a group of escaped ruthless criminals, who pose a serious threat to the lives of both the humans and the pigoons. Communication and understanding between the two parties is enabled by yet another transgenic species, a small group of humanoids called Crakers.

Like pigoons, the Crakers serve as a link and mediator between people and nature. Even though they look essentially like unnaturally beautiful and perfect humans, they also have some characteristics of various species of animals (for example, they feed only on grass, leaves, and fruits, like herbivores) or even of plants (they smell of citrus fruits to repel insects). They were created by a scientist called Crake, who intended this “better-designed, upgraded version” (Canavan 2012, 140) to replace humanity after its annihilation by a deadly and highly contagious virus, which he also created and distributed all over the world in pills. For Crake, “the radical solution to humanity’s ills ... is the destruction of humanity and the creation of the Crakers, noble savages that are environmentally friendly, peace-loving and socially and economically egalitarian” (Bouson 2011, 16-17). To achieve this goal, he introduced numerous genetic modifications into their bodies and brains.

The Crakers are better adapted to their environment than humans: their food source is easily available and does not require preparation, and they do not need any material belongings, such as housing, tools, clothes, and shoes, having inbuilt UV protection in their skins and thick foot soles. Thus, they can live in harmony with their environment, without modifying it in any way, like animals. Moreover, their creator “carefully eradicated those biological traits of older humanity that have led it down the path to ecocide” (Bergthaller 2010, 734), such as aggressivity, competition, ambition, greed, spirituality, high intelligence, which could lead to the development of advanced culture and civilization again. The goal of Crake was “preventing any rerun of the destructive capitalist attitude towards the environment that first necessitated their creation” (Canavan 2012, 144).

The resulting creatures appear “outwardly human yet emotionally and mentally retarded” (Pordzik 2012, 153). Nevertheless, it turns out later that they are not exactly as Crake intended them to be, as certain features of humanity cannot be entirely eradicated by genetic engineering. In addition, the Crakers develop in unexpected ways under the influence of the remaining humans; for example, they are keen on telling and listening to stories, they create a kind of religion, and one of their children learns to read and write. The process of their “humanization” is bound to continue, enhanced by the fact that some

female human survivors mate with Craker men and give birth to children; thus, the further process of “hybridisation is carried forward not by transgenic but by natural means” (Phillips 2017, 156).

When it comes to the relation to nature of the few humans surviving the collapse of civilization, we can observe that they have to learn anew how to function in the natural environment. They are suddenly forced to live without the protection of the city, where they spent all their lives before the disaster, isolated from the natural world and surrounded by an artificial environment, whether of the affluent corporation “compounds” or of the dilapidated “pleeblands.” Even the former members of God’s Gardeners, an eco-religious group, knew nature mostly theoretically and had little contact with it beyond their rooftop garden. After the catastrophe, the survivors occupy a small house in the city park. They continue to be dependent to some extent on the products of civilization, such as remains of food, household equipment, and bedsheets, which they can still collect from the ruins of the city, but they also have to look for new ways of feeding themselves, so they turn to gardening, shepherding, and beekeeping. Since they feel threatened by feral animals as well as by three escaped ruthless criminals, they venture away from the house only if necessary and never alone or unarmed. Their life is centered around the house and its close surroundings, where they feel relatively safe, if a little imprisoned and separated from the external world, like early settlers in a fort in the middle of the wilderness.

For instance, one of the protagonists, Toby, “perceives nature as a benevolent force” but at the same time “she is aware of its predator-prey savagery” (Bouson 2011, 18). As a former God’s Gardener, Toby has a good knowledge of nature, especially natural healing methods, medicinal uses of plants and mushrooms, as well as beekeeping, and she has an affectionate relation with her bees. This knowledge and other survival skills, such as shooting, enable her to defend herself, find food, treat wounded companions, or even poison her main enemy, one of the escaped convicts.

Even so, when she ventures beyond her first temporary shelter, an abandoned spa building, she feels overcome by nature and threatened. At one moment, the surrounding meadow appears to her an idyllic place of peace and safety: “All around her is a sweet scent – the tall clover’s in bloom, the Queen Anne’s lace, the lavender and marjoram and lemon balm, self-seeded. The field hums with pollinators: bumblebees, shining wasps, iridescent beetles. The sound is so lulling. Stay here. Sink down. Go to sleep” (Atwood 2010, 392). However, Toby resists the temptation, remembering the advice of Adam One, the leader of God’s Gardeners: “Nature full strength is more than we can take ... It’s a potent hallucinogen, a soporific, for the untrained Soul. We’re no longer at home in it. We need to dilute it. We can’t drink it straight” (Atwood 2010, 392). Thus, we can see that even the city-dwelling God’s Gardeners were in fact separated from nature and afraid of its power over the human psyche. They cherished their rooftop garden with its vegetables, flowers, and butterflies, but apparently this was as much of nature as they could stand.

Even though she is only in a meadow just outside the spa, Toby perceives it as “an enormous wild savannah” and feels like an antelope threatened by invisible predators in hiding, “alone, unprotected, vulnerable” (Atwood 2010, 393). She is afraid of open spaces, but she feels equally threatened in dark wooded areas, where it is even more difficult for her to see potential predators or enemies before they approach her. She observes the edge of the forest from the meadow: “She feels it drawing her, luring her in,

as the depths of the ocean and the mountain heights are said to lure people, higher and higher or deeper and deeper, until they vanish into a state of rapture that is not human” (Atwood 2010, 393). Again, nature appears enticing, alluring, but at the same time dangerous. It is not prudent to give in to the feelings of awe and exaltation, as one could lose one’s mind, one’s humanity, and finally perish. Toby’s attitude is reminiscent of that of the past, where the wilderness was perceived by early explorers, settlers, and writers as a beautiful, tempting, but in the end hostile and destructive force. The irony of the situation is that Toby is not wandering through an immense wilderness, but through meadows and forests on the outskirts of a deserted city.

The attitude of the Crakers, the transgenic mediators between the human and the non-human world, is a little different. Partly because of their naivety and lack of awareness of possible dangers, and partly because of their better adaptation to the environment and their status of human-animal hybrids, they are not afraid of walking freely in the park and forest, going to the beach, or swimming in the sea. As some of the survivors observe, “the Crakers wander back and forth at will ... No animal has molested the Crakers on their woodland walks” (Atwood 2013, 206). The Crakers also mediate between the humans and the pigeons. Being able to communicate with the latter in a non-linguistic way, they function as their interpreters. This communication and an agreement reached between the two sides results in an end to mutual killing of humans and pigeons for food, as well as in uniting forces to do away with the criminals, thus eliminating two of the main threats to the survivors. In this way, the trilogy suggests a need for “negotiations of human-animal relations; it proposes the possibility of non-anthropocentric culture” (Schmeink 2016, 96) and offers “a hope for a sustainable planet free of human-constructed hierarchy” (Labudova 2013, 27).

One of the ways in which the surviving humans can still relate to the natural world, despite their alienation from nature and the hostility of the environment, is through their ability to appreciate its beauty. Regardless of all the destruction of nature by civilization and subsequently of civilization by natural and semi-natural forces, the world can still be perceived by the characters as beautiful, giving hope for a new beginning, for renewal of the Earth: “Here comes the sun, a hot rose lifting out of peach-coloured clouds. The leaves on the overhanging trees are covered with tiny droplets that shine in the strengthening pink light. Everything looks so fresh, as if newly created” (Atwood 2010, 460).

A change in their approach to the natural world seems necessary, and the direction of this change could be indicated by two descriptions of the same scenery contemplated by Jimmy, which begin and end the novel *Oryx and Crake*. The first description is our first encounter with the post-apocalyptic world of the future: “On the eastern horizon there’s a greyish haze, lit now with a rosy, deadly glow. Strange how that colour still seems tender. The offshore towers stand out in dark silhouette against it, rising improbably out of the pink and pale blue of the lagoon. The shrieks of the birds that nest out there and the distant ocean grinding against the ersatz reefs of rusted car parts and jumbled brick and assorted rubble sound almost like holiday traffic” (Atwood 2004, 3). The description is an incongruous mixture of romantic beauty of natural elements (the sky, the sea) and ugliness of the remains of civilization (ruins of skyscrapers and a “reef” of rubbish in the sea). The two can no longer be separated; there is no return to the pristine wilderness. The color of the dawn is both “rosy” and “deadly,” an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. Even more tellingly, Jimmy associates the natural sounds made by birds and waves with

his nostalgic memories of the sounds of traffic, as if they were preferable to natural sounds.

The novel ends with a description which begins in an identical way: "On the eastern horizon there's a greyish haze, lit now with a rosy, deadly glow. Strange how that colour still seems tender. He gazes at it with rapture; there is no other word for it. *Rapture*. The heart seized, carried away, as if by some large bird of prey. After everything that's happened, how can the world still be so beautiful? Because it is. From the offshore towers come the avian shrieks and cries that sound like nothing human" (Atwood 2004, 429). Even though Jimmy observes the same scenery, he stops paying so much attention to the ruined remains of civilization, though the "offshore towers" remain an integral part of the landscape and home for seabirds. Nevertheless, the cries of the birds no longer resemble the sounds of car horns to him. They bear no relation to anything from the past world of humans, as nature exists now on its own terms, and it is the only reality for him now, the reality that he must finally accept and face despite his nostalgia. Finally, regardless of everything, he allows himself to feel rapture, which can give joy, strength, and hope for the future.

While the collapse of civilization and the human race is perceived as a disaster and a tragedy by the survivors, there is hope that the natural world will recover and dominate the Earth again. As Schmeink (2016, 88) observes, "after the plague has wiped out most human life, non-human life begins to thrive in the novels." Even the deserted city is gradually being covered with vegetation: "Already the kudzu vines are thrusting in, covering the broken shapes with a soft fledging of green" (Atwood 2013, 347), while asphalted roads are beginning to be conquered by wild plants: "Already there are weed shoots nosing up through. The force they can exert is staggering: they'll have a building cracked like a nut in a few years, they'll reduce it to rubble in a decade. Then the earth swallows the pieces" (Atwood 2013, 221). The descriptions suggest that even the unsightly ruins of the contemporary civilization may disappear under vegetation and earth, like ancient monuments hidden in jungles, and nature may once again have its way on the planet.

The recovery of nature can also provide an opportunity for the remaining humans to begin anew, creating a new relation to their surroundings and other beings. According to Rozelle (2010), Margaret Atwood suggests hope for the environment as well as for human and non-human beings that have survived the apocalypse: the devastated world is quickly covered with flourishing plants and it is a place to which animals and people can adapt to live in it. As Wierel (2014, 157-158) argues, in the post-apocalyptic world, it is Nature that resists total destruction, is the first to recover, and enables survival, provided that she is treated as a subject and not an object. There is a chance for the human race to thrive again, but it depends on what choice the surviving humans will make: whether they will return to Nature and adjust to her rules or follow the old destructive path of technological progress. The narrative appears to suggest an alternative vision of the future, based on coexistence of human and non-human beings (Wierel 2014, 161). Thus, the final outcome of the experiment brought about by Crake, unknown to the readers, will probably depend on the way the remaining humans relate to other species and to their environment.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The first explorers and settlers of the American continent perceived nature as an untamed wilderness full of dangers and discomforts, but at the same time picturesque and alluring. It was also a place where it was difficult to live but it was possible to survive and inhabit it permanently, as the presence of Native tribes testified. Later on, people started to control and exploit the wilderness to a more and more considerable degree. However, it still retained its beauty and attraction, and with proper skills, knowledge, and experience, one could live there, as the example of the narrator of *Surfacing* and her family demonstrates. Unlike the tourists, the inhabitants of the wilderness still maintained a close relationship to their land and the creatures inhabiting it.

The MaddAddam trilogy, on the other hand, portrays the American continent of the hypothetical future, completely modified and devastated by human civilization. While nature before the disaster was seemingly totally subdued by humans, the epitome of their control being genetic manipulation of animal and plant species, finally it got out of hand. The most extreme aspect of this unpredictable rebellion of nature, apart from dangerous transgenic animals, is pollution, ozone layer depletion, and drastic climate change, which make it difficult for the handful of human survivors of the pandemic to continue their life without the former protection of civilization. In the novels, we witness almost complete separation of humans, both affluent and poor, from nature in the pre-disaster world, their contact with it being limited to pets, domestic animals, and garden plants, as well as memory and theoretical knowledge of the natural world of the past and its extinct species. Consequently, because of this lack of relation to nature and due to the new hostile environmental conditions, they begin to perceive nature again as a dangerous enemy and try to protect themselves against it by shutting themselves in their shelter, isolating themselves from it like early settlers in forts. Nevertheless, what remains of nature can still be perceived as beautiful, and they retain their ability to appreciate this beauty, which reconnects them with the natural world. There is also hope in the novels for reestablishing friendly relationships with at least some species of animals and developing new, more sustainable ways of living in the post-apocalyptic environment

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