ABSTRACT

Station Eleven by Emily St. John Mandel and Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood both resonate with apocalyptic theory in many ways, present the complete opposite. Its female characters are pigeonholed into “secondary character” roles, and serve as secondary characters at best. Despite these variations, both works resonate with apocalyptic theory as well as ecofeminist criticism. Station Eleven serves as a representation of how a natural phenomenon can decimate humanity, and yet women can rise just as the human race. The world as we know it, to the future, as Kirsten and others fight for survival and normality in a world that is so very foreign. Oryx and Crake focuses primarily on the protagonist, Snowman, or as he was known, in his youth, Jimmy. Jimmy's story begins as a young child living with his parents, when Jimmy eventually meets another boy his age named Glenn. Glenn and Jimmy quickly become best friends, and together navigate the strange world, together enjoying games like Extinctathon, and watching explicit and violent videos online. As adults, the two work together, and Glenn, who now goes by the name Crake, is a geneticist who has created a group of human-like animals named "Crakers." He frames them as a way to try to restore life, feeling, vitality, warmth, touch, the body, and the world. The novels in terms of ecofeminist theory are both unique in their treatment of female characters. On a basic level, ecofeminist theory can be illustrated as the principle that the issue of women’s rights is connected to the ecology of the Earth, and both are oppressed by a patriarchal society. Ecofeminism also makes the argument that for the issue of the divide between humanity and nature would be best solved by womankind and their innate knowledge. The novel's protagonist, Snowman, is a product of this idea, as well as the novels plot, which explores the gene splicing of animals, humans, and even viruses many of the issues it brings up are ecofeminist ones. When it is revealed at the end of the novel that the failure of the BlyssPlus pills and the following epidemic were at least in part intentional, Snowman can only watch as the world processes the idea of a widespread illness or some sort of cataclysmic natural disaster that forces humanity to its knees. In these types of narratives, nature striking back is a common theme. This is relevant to the ecofeminist principles that both Station Eleven and Oryx and Crake are applying to, in that, the Earth and its preservation is a feminist issue, and that women are both more in tune with the Earth, and as the novel's protagonist, Snowman and the Earth should be expected rather than taken advantageous of. In the case of the two novels, it is the female characters who help to further this idea despite their depiction in vastly different roles. In short, Station Eleven and Oryx and Crake both serve as different in these genres. The main difference is how both women and the ecology of the Earth can overcome and thrive, Oryx and Crake can be an example of ecofeminist working in favor of the female characters, in that they connect more to the Earth. Kirsten Raymonde, and Miranda Carroll, the novel's two main heroines, remain in tune with nature throughout. Kirsten fights for survival in the wilderness and is often able to sense danger before it comes, while Miranda's heart belongs in the underbelly of her Station Eleven work and when she succumbs to the Georgian Flu herself, she is drawn to the sea and she swims away. However, the group is pursued by a religious civilization attempt to rebuild. Kirsten moved on to wander the new world as we know it, to the future, as Kirsten and others fight for survival and normality in a world that is so very foreign.

INTRODUCTION

An apocalypse is generally defined and accepted as an event that brings about the destruction of a world, as it has been depicted in popular culture. From its Greek roots, the apocalypse or the apokaliposis “is literally understood as a ‘uncovering’ or ‘unveiling’ of the truth,” and means “that which is hidden will be revealed” (Heffernan 4). Discussing the apocalypse as a motif in 20th century literature, Frank Kermode states that, “the end is immanent” (68), meaning that the end by an apocalypse is not imminent, as in about to happen, but imminent, as in completely natural. Kermode goes on to explain that stories about the end of the world, or the literature of an epic, help us to understand our place in the world, as current affairs, and in accordance with its Greek roots, can reveal the true order of the world. In the case of Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood, these apocalyptic fictions, though similar in nature, serve as very different perspectives of what post-apocalyptic fiction can represent, specifically to women’s representation, and presenting their true order.

Both novels have received high recognition in the literary community, despite the fact that they may also be considered sci-fi, which usually doesn’t receive much. One writer for the New York Times suggests that, in the case of Station Eleven, “the reason it has garnered such attention is that it focuses ‘on character development and relationships against the backdrop of a global calamity. The apocalypse becomes more of a setting than a plot point’ (Adams).” It is the literature of the work that far outweigh the other elements. Kermode asserts that apocalypse literature may contain common statements about human nature, and that from these we can take away comfort and lessons (8). James Berger suggests yet another theory, that literature that describes an apocalypse and its aftermath can serve many different purposes, primarily psychological or political, in that they all serve as a commentary on the social order of the world (7). In the cases of Station Eleven and Oryx and Crake, while all theories may be true. From an ecofeminist perspective, the two novels both create quite the dialogue.

THE NOVELS

Station Eleven written by Emily St. John Mandel, and published in 2015.

Station Eleven by Emily St. John Mandel and Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood, these apocalyptic fictions, though similar in nature, serve as very different perspectives of what post-apocalyptic fiction can represent, specifically to women’s representation, and presenting their true order.

Alwood’s Oryx and Crake focuses primarily on the protagonist, Snowman, or as he was known in his youth, Jimmy. Jimmy’s story begins as a young child living with his parents, when Jimmy eventually meets another boy his age named Glenn. Glenn and Jimmy quickly become best friends, and together navigate the strange world, together enjoying games like Extinctathon, and watching explicit and violent videos online. As adults, the two work together, and Glenn, who now goes by the name Crake, is a geneticist who has created a group of human-like animals named “Crakers.” He frames them as a way to try to restore life, feeling, vitality, warmth, touch, the body, and the world. The novels in terms of ecofeminist theory are both unique in their treatment of female characters. On a basic level, ecofeminist theory can be illustrated as the principle that the issue of women’s rights is connected to the ecology of the Earth, and both are oppressed by a patriarchal society. Ecofeminism also makes the argument that for the issue of the divide between humanity and nature would be best solved by womankind and their innate knowledge. The novel’s protagonist, Snowman, is a product of this idea, as well as the novels plot, which explores the gene splicing of animals, humans, and even viruses many of the issues it brings up are ecofeminist ones. When it is revealed at the end of the novel that the failure of the BlyssPlus pills and the following epidemic were at least in part intentional, Snowman can only watch as the world processes the idea of a widespread illness or some sort of cataclysmic natural disaster that forces humanity to its knees. In these types of narratives, nature striking back is a common theme. This is relevant to the ecofeminist principles that both Station Eleven and Oryx and Crake are applying to, in that, the Earth and its preservation is a feminist issue, and that women are both more in tune with the Earth, and as the novel’s protagonist, Snowman and the Earth should be expected rather than taken advantageous of. In the case of the two novels, it is the female characters who help to further this idea despite their depiction in vastly different roles. In short, Station Eleven and Oryx and Crake both serve as different in these genres. The main difference is how both women and the ecology of the Earth can overcome and thrive, Oryx and Crake can be an example of ecofeminist working in favor of the female characters, in that they connect more to the Earth. Kirsten Raymonde, and Miranda Carroll, the novel’s two main heroines, remain in tune with nature throughout. Kirsten fights for survival in the wilderness and is often able to sense danger before it comes, while Miranda’s heart belongs in the underbelly of her Station Eleven work and when she succumbs to the Georgian Flu herself, she is drawn to the sea and she swims away.

ECOFOEMINIST THEORY

Ecofeminism literature, film, and television in popular culture often feature the idea of a widespread illness or some sort of cataclysmic natural disaster that forces humanity to its knees. These types of narratives, nature striking back is a common theme. This is relevant to the ecofeminist principles that both Station Eleven and Oryx and Crake are applying to. In short, the Earth and its preservation is a feminist issue, and that women are both more in tune with the Earth, and as the novel’s protagonist, Snowman, and the Earth should be expected rather that taken advantageous of. In the case of the two novels, it is the female characters who help to further this idea despite their depiction in vastly different roles. In short, Station Eleven and Oryx and Crake both serve as different in these genres. The main difference is how both women and the ecology of the Earth can overcome and thrive, Oryx and Crake can be an example of how both the Earth and women must be respected for all to thrive.

REFERENCES