The Levinasian Responsible Subject's Breaching the Face's Command: Inversion of the Master-Slave Relationship in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy

Zakarya Bezdoode (Corresponding Author) [1]

Associate Professor of English Literature, University of Kurdistan, Sanandaj, Iran

Negar Monfared Saeed [2]

PhD Candidate of English Literature, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran

Abstract

In accordance with Emmanuel Levinas's ethics, the interconnection between the subject and its Other is equated with the master-slave relationship, which is not by any means absolute. This article aims at illustrating an oscillating state of master-and-slave relation with regard to Levinas's ethics in Margaret Atwood's MaddAddam trilogy. The Face of the Other becomes a 'poor master' who needs help and yet gives a serious order to the subject, one that he should obey. Subsequently, the Other deprives the subject of his/her wealth, thus overcoming its own poverty; therefore, the Other as a 'poor master' and the subject as a 'wealthy subject' constitute an ethical relationship. Founding the argument on the above-mentioned Levinasian principles, this paper approaches the altruistic intentions of Atwood's post-apocalyptic characters, and inspects how the post-apocalyptic world of her MaddAddam trilogy is ultimately orientated towards, if not also predicting, a return to now bygone humanistic, ethical and communal society.

Keywords

1. Introduction

Both Margaret Atwood and Emmanuel Levinas have altruistic motivations and struggle to fight "narcissistic affinities." They move from self-centeredness towards "non-self-centric subjectivity," as the existence and encounter with the other ruptures the self's freedom, and the self becomes the hostage of the Other for whom it is responsible. "Such a traumatic encounter is the basis of Levinas's ethics" (Marcus 242). In this paper we will be guided by Levinas's key terms including the *other*, the *face*, *subject*, and *responsibility*. The connection between Levinas's thought and Atwood's fictional world can be established in a number of ways. The notions that help to make this connection include the dichotomy of utopia and dystopia, anthropocentrism, Levinas's environmental thought, Levinas's concept of "saying" and "said," Levinas's

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[1] z.bezdodeh@uok.ac.ir

[2] monfarednegar4@gmail.com

"third party" and Atwood's "third thing." The salient common ground here is their common concern about the "other than oneself;" they both, if in different ways, care deeply about the possibility of a true "ethics of the Other."

A review of scholarly approaches to Atwood delineates the importance of the concepts and issues referred to above. Rebecca Mead in "Margaret Atwood, the Prophet of Dystopia," proclaims that Atwood's "*fiction has imagined societies riddled with misogyny, oppression, and environmental havoc. These visions now feel all too real.*" She investigates Atwood's works, particularly *MaddAddam* trilogy, and refers to *The Handmaid's Tale*—which represents a dystopian world and highlights the fact that this dystopia has now become the reality. Atwood's goal, in effect, is to enable our human society to become a true utopia, which can only be accomplished by passing through a dystopian state or condition. Thus, since neither the term nor the state can be absolute, the novelist has coined the term "ustopia" to characterize the fundamental "world" of her *MaddAddam* trilogy and *The Handmaids Tale* (Atwood *In other Worlds*, 69)*.*

Mohr in "Transgressive Utopian Dystopias: The Postmodern Reappearance of Utopia in the Disguise of Dystopia" has referred to this non-absolute state as "hybridized utopian dystopias." Indeed, Atwood represents new ways of creating utopia or dystopia or in Mohr's words: "new ways of utopian coexistence within the ruins of dystopia" (16). As a result, there is not disappointment regarding dystopian world since apocalypse does not end in absolute nothingness. Does Atwood reach the absolute perfection or utopia after apocalypse? Mohr provides a reasonable answer to this question; according to him "transgressive utopian dystopian texts discard the polarization of static dystopia and of static utopia, of thesis and antithesis, and thus never arrive at a definite synthesis that comprises the classical utopian notion of a blueprint for perfection" (10).

Like the oscillating state of master-and-slave or of the subject-and-Other relationship, the passage from dystopia to utopia is not absolute; it is rather transgressed, and Atwood has paved the way for a new world out of the ruins of the apocalypse. The fields where these transgressions occur include "transgressions of subject/object, male/female, human/animal and human/alien or human/non-human, master/slave, nature/nurture, nature/culture, mind/body, sanity/madness, self/other, literacy/orality, codes/stereotypes" (12). The reason Atwood has arrived at a utopia through transgression is she has depicted the eradication of the human race. The concepts of subject/object, male/female, human/non-human, master/slave, nature/nurture, self/other, and literacy/orality in Atwood's trilogy do clearly make the reader think of Levinas's ethical framework.

Survivors of the apocalypse in the *MaddAddam* trilogy survive mostly through storytelling, and their narrative may be compared with Levinas's ethical approach to Saying and the Said. As stated by Newton, "Narrative, as participatory act, is part 'Said' (to refer again to terms employed by Emmanuel Levinas) and part 'Saying,' the latter being the level of intersubjective relations, and the former the site of surplus, of the unforeseen, of self-exposure" (3). This is indicative of the humanistic and communicative power of storytelling as a means through which the connection between the self and the other is formed. The concepts of saying and said are interwoven and with respect to narrative, the narrator and the listener participate in this encounter. In storytelling or saying, "selfhood always remains in some way incomplete" (12), the storyteller is responsible for the listener and does not focus on selfhood, but why is the act of narration remarked as an ethical issue? Because it is in the field of narrative that exposure to the other occurs, "to narrate is to give; to listen to redeem" (106). When the narrator gives, it means that a story is bestowed upon the listener, something is given to the other or the listener.

Storytelling or "narrative ethics" (114) becomes, for Atwood, the only way to survive after apocalypse, they do not keep anything for themselves and strive to survive; therefore, this fact is construed as a proof that "saying is ethical sincerity itself, 'a way of giving everything, of not keeping for oneself,' as Levinas puts it" (168). Keeping for oneself and resisting the face of the other lead to violence but saying or speaking saves the world. "Levinas equates the face with discourse" which indicates that the responsibility for the face of the other conforms to the discourse or saying which contains said as the focal point (193).

'Saying' is prior to 'Said' since in the face to face encounter with the other, there might be no speech but there is a reaction and communication through saying. Remaining silent in the face of the other is impossible and saying is caring for the other, living for the other and answering the needs of the other, to be sensitive to the presence of the other, "to say is to approach a neighbor" (*Otherwise than Being* 48). Survivors in Atwood's trilogy constitute an ethical relation through storytelling which is similar to 'saying' and the content of their communication as 'said' but generally 'saying' is prior to language and words that are uttered in language. "Saying is communication, to be sure, but as a condition for all communication, as exposure" (48). All the directions are towards the other since saying is "breaking up of inwardness," abandoning "of all shelter," "exposure to traumas" and "turning inside out" (48). Atwood's characters also act outside of themselves; they are passive and they are doomed to take care of each other to reach the intended utopia.

Levinas' Other commands the subject not to kill, but in Atwood's trilogy the human race is replaced by Crakers who are created by man. Even the apocalypse was a reaction to the other and it was a reaction to end the evil that presided over the world. It was impossible for the survivors to escape from storytelling. They were confined in an ethical boundary and due to the passivity, they started to 'say' or narrate in order to survive. Their condition "signifies in the form of one-penetrated-by-the-other" which is inescapable (49). In saying or narrating something, the teller does not keep anything for himself or herself, "saying is giving" (50), he or she gives something to the other and does not benefit in the self and the other relation. Moreover, Levinas's impression of the third party is in line with Atwood's "third thing."

Levinas's concept of the "third party" is comprehensible by realizing the relation between the self and the other since the third emerges consequent to this relation. The self does not have direct access to the third and it becomes attainable only through the presence of the other. Put differently, the third is manifested in the "Face" of the other. In the face to face encounter, the self not only answers the call and the command of the other, but also the third. Consequently, this relation is not dedicated to two members but to a larger group, to the whole society and to the whole humanity.

By the entrance of the third, justice and politics are established. Responding to the other, requires responding to the others or the whole society and accordingly, it brings justice by redefining the concept of responsibility in a broader sense. In the face to face encounter, a command is emanated from the other that "thou shall not kill the other." Obeying this command in a larger scale leads to the ethical society and infinite responsibility to the world. This command can be breached since the self kills the other and disobeys the command. The poor other asks for help from the rich self but this relation has another unstable feature regarding the notion of the third party; the poor other also becomes the rich self for the others.

In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas has largely reflected on the concept of the *third party*. According to him "the third party looks at me in the eyes of the other," and the subject's relations are not confined to its/his/her relations with the other because there are others that the subject becomes responsible for. "The face in its nakedness as a face presents to me the destitution of the poor one and the stranger;" the other or the stranger is extremely poor and devoid of anything and the subject in spite of being subject is absolutely rich and is unable to strip away the process of providing a service for the other. "He comes to join me. But he joins me to himself for service; he commands me as a Master." The poor other commands the subject to help but what about the position of the subject as a wealthy master? In this approach, master and slave acquire the same level since "the poor one, the stranger presents himself an

equal." This equality undermines the position of the subject as a master. This is not just related to the relation with the other; indeed, "the presence of the face, the infinity of the other, is a destituteness, a presence of the third party (that is, of the whole humanity which looks at us) and a command that commands me commanding" (213). The subject is responsible for the whole of humanity or the third party, the subject responds to the poverty of the third by coercion without withdrawal.

Levinas's 'third party' provides a clear understanding of Atwood's theory of the "third thing." In an interview with Graeme Gibson in *Eleven Canadian Novelists Interviewed by Graeme Gibson*, Atwood has discussed this theory; the gist of the idea is that "people see two alternatives. You can be part of the machine or you can be something that gets run over by it. And I think there has to be a third thing" (31). This quotation from Atwood is also referred to in "Re-Construction of Reality, Margaret Atwood's Literature: A Constructionist Approach" by Muller. In this article Muller also states that: "Atwood warns against simply taking over the roles and criteria of one's society for one's own biography…The third thing is obviously something that needs to be constructed" (239).

Atwood is against seclusion or living for one's own benefits. She demands cooperation with others. She believes that people choose two ways: self or the other; however, there should be a third condition. Muller also focuses on the construction of the third thing which means it is only in the third thing that mass society can be built. If we compare this notion with Levinas's third party, we obviously notice their connection. According to Muller, "Atwood demands the creation of a hybrid construct, where the opposites are not denied but integrated, or transformed into something new" (239). By hybrid, Atwood means the connection between not only self and the other but also the whole of humanity in the form of the 'third thing' or 'third party.' Anderson in her article "The Machine, the Victim, and the Third Thing: Navigating the Gender Spectrum in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*" asserts that Atwood's characters dangle between "binaries of "masculine" and "feminine" in a third realm of gender" (2). When they are in dire need, being masculine and feminine is not important. They shelter regardless of gender and save the humanity from apocalypse.

Another aspect of duality and the creation of the "third thing" is conceptualized in the field of "*to kill or not to kill*." Skibo-Birney in "'Bright Side:' Atwood's Post-apocalyptic Post-Anthropocentrism" refers to Atwood's conversations with Gibson as mentioned before and focuses mainly on Sherrill Grace's theories. Atwood in her interview with Gibson argues that:

> You can define yourself as innocent and get killed, or you can define yourself as a killer and kill others. I think there has to be a third thing; the ideal would be somebody who would neither be a killer or a victim, who would achieve some kind of harmony with the world (1). (Qtd. in Gibson 27).

Skibo-Birney comments on Atwood's theory to depict the third condition in which entities refuse to be killer and turn out to be moral ones who give what they have to all living things and are concerned with the others. As stated by Skibo-Birney, Grace asserts that for Atwood, the greatest crime…is "the rejection of responsibility" (1). Also for Levinas, the source of any crime is disregarding the responsibility for the other. The third thing is the state of recognizing the responsibility for the other or the third party that includes the whole humanity.

Anthropocentricism deals with human related issues and their influence upon the environment. Since human beings are considered to be the central and dominant entity of the universe, they can be both constructive and destructive; they can create dystopia and utopia. There are anthropocentric elements in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and *MaddAddam* trilogy. Skibo-Birney in "Post-apocalyptic Storytelling and Post-anthropocentric Ethics in Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy" claims that the end of the trilogy "leads to a revelation of a potential new post-anthropocentric ethical framework and moral guidance" (2). Atwood depicts a new aspect of anthropocentricism in the form of apocalypse; the survivors' storytelling becomes the only reason for the priority of humanity. Through language they provide a moral system in which the protection of the other is of prime importance. Marques in "Human after All? Neo-Transhumanism and the Post-Anthropocene Debate in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy" claims that "the Anthropocene is posthuman. Posthumanity is a direct result of technological capitalism" (186). Atwood's trilogy obviously contains posthuman thoughts like genetically-defined Crakers.

Muhic in "Dystopian Literature and the Contemporary Problems in Cultural Anthropology" states that "much of the contemporary problems that anthropology deals with in the 21st century, fall within the realm of dystopian literature" (5); since Atwood's work is dystopian, one can consider this trilogy anthropocentric; it scrutinizes technological effects, moral issues and their interaction. Anthropocentric elements are significantly visible in Atwood's trilogy since the main theme is the effects of technology on humanity and its environment. Will human beings still be dominant after apocalypse? The possible answer that Ferwerda offers is this: "Anthropocene pasts and post-Anthropocene futures" (14). It means that post-apocalyptic world

parallels post-Anthropocentric world and the survivors are set in the midst of the consequences of their own inventions and their dominance is put into question.

Levinas's connection with Anthropocentric ideas can be clarified with respect to the saying and the said. In *Facing Nature: Levinas and Environmental Thought*, it is claimed that "Language emerges from my subjection to the other human's ethical address" (3). In Levinas's words the environment is considered as the other and our responsibility to the other means the responsibility to the environment. Language emerges only when we respond to the other and an ethical relation is constituted.

2. The World of Margaret Atwood and the Other

As far as there is the other, there will be the notion of responsibility and subjectivity since we are doomed to be knotted with the node of the other. In line with Philippe Nemo and Levinas's conversations in *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, Levinas goes to great length to enhance upon preconditions of his ethics. He indicates that he speaks "of responsibility as the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity." For Levinas, subjectivity means responsibility and there is no way to refuse its incumbency upon us; even in the negligence towards the other and our irresponsibility, we are responsible, and this responsibility or subjectivity also extends into the field of the others' faults. In his conversations with Nemo, Levinas evidently associates his most important concept with a quotation in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* that "we are all guilty of all and for all men before all, and I more than the others" (*Ethics and Infinity*, 98). It means that we are guilty for what we have not done and guilty of what others did and the extent of the guilt and responsibility is more than the others for me.

The most perceptible form of responsibility in Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy resonates after apocalypse in the case of the man-made Crakers and Jimmy. Jimmy knew that the Crakers were in danger; that is why he says in the *Oryx and Crake* "I'm here! I'm here." Like the Levinasian responsible subject who responds to the call of the other by saying 'here I am,' Jimmy also shouted 'I'm here' and ready to serve the others and save the Crakers. After the annihilation of the world, Jimmy had an inner struggle and felt responsible for the Crakers and the present downfalls. "What right does he have to foist his postulant, cankered self and soul upon these innocent creatures" (169). When Jimmy was left with the Crakers, he could have killed them and freed himself from trouble but he needed the existence of the other; therefore, he became their hostage and prophet and took care of them despite threatening forces since he had heard the call of the other. Jimmy's concern was for the past, for his irresponsibility, "if I'd killed Crake earlier, thinks Snowman, would it have made any difference?" (276).

Jimmy thinks if he had killed Crake earlier, this catastrophe would not have happened despite the fact that Jimmy disobeyed the command of the face and killed Crake.

Crake assigned Jimmy to the responsibility, and his assignation was like an order in which there was no escape and choice. "If anything happens to me, I'm depending on you to look after the Paradice project. Any time I'm away from here I want you take charge. I've made it a standing order" (320). Before his death, Crake knew that he was approving his death; it was part of his plan or group's plan; thus, there should have been someone to take care of the naive Crakers and he chose Jimmy to take the burden. Oryx asked him to rear the Crakers too.

> I could leave them behind, he thought. Just leave them. Let them fend for themselves. They aren't my business. But he couldn't do that, because although the Crakers weren't his business, they were now his responsibility. Who else did they have? Who else did he have? (350)

In the novels, subjects realize their responsibility just after apocalypse. Jimmy says "it's your own fault" and "we are faulty one" (147, 166). According to Levinas, our responsibility is not just for our own faults, but for others' faults too, for what they did and were unable to do. Jimmy, with his rekindled sense of responsibility after apocalypse, considers himself a faulty subject as an alternative to others' faults. "I'm your past, he might intone. I'm your ancestor, come from the land of the dead" (106). Jimmy is himself, his ancestor, his past and his ancestors' past and their faults are his own and he is responsible for their downfalls. He was aware of the fact that the Crakers' "descendants will ask" how the end of the world happened, "who made these things? Who lived in them? Who destroyed them?" (222). Jimmy is also the survivor and the descendant of the human race and representative of the previous generation and it is incumbent on him to justify their downfalls for the new generation; in consequence, he is lost in the ocean of the past and memories by the wave of responsibility.

Emmanuel Levinas known as 'the philosopher of the other' founds his ideas upon the relationship between the 'self' and the 'other' which is the foundation of his ethics. In order to constitute an ethical relation, the other arrives and ruptures the self's freedom. After this encounter, it is impossible for the self to live for his or her own benefits and moves towards meeting the other's needs and the other becomes the center of attention. The arrival of the other requires the sacrifice and dedication of the self without giving time for the self to choose through the 'face' he/she commands. The command is that the self does not have the right to kill the other: 'thou shall not kill the other.' Escape from this command is impossible since even if one turns away from the command and disobeys or kills the other, his/her life will be deformed.

According to Levinas, an ethical relation is one in which we face (*an)other*. The other is the key term in his system of ethics. For him, ethics is possible in relation to the other. In this state of affairs, you are not free any more, but under the influence of the other's demand for responsibility. In *Totality and Infinity*, he asserts that without the Other, "possibly murder, comes. The unwonted hour of its coming approaches as the hour of fate fixed by someone" (228). We find the Other in the form of the face; it is the representation of the other. The face of the other is like a tunnel through which we pass and approach infinity. By attending the face of the other, one is able to avoid killing him/her because it gives the order not to kill. On the contrary, killing is possible when one misses the face, when the face is not recognized.

The dedication or sacrifice for the other is considered as being responsible toward the existence of the other and being 'hostage.' The self's needs are not of prime importance anymore and the other becomes significant in this field. It is worth noting that this relation is not between two members; it consists of all humanity because the other also becomes responsible for the other. There is no absolute master or absolute slave and the self is slave in the hands of the master other, the master other also becomes the slave self for the others. The freedom of the self is called into consideration by being responsible. In other words, the self becomes the 'subject' in relation to the other. This process is sudden; it is like a 'trauma' and it leaves its trace by making the subject aware of the other forever.

According to Levinas, when we encounter the suffering of the other, we feel the responsibility to act; we take a messianic role to help the other. Yet, forgetting the face makes responsibility impossible. Levinas further develops his theory of responsibility in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, where he remarks, "[r]esponsibility is a bond. It is a bond with an imperative order, a command. All subjective movements are under an order, subjectivity is this subjection" (8). Dystopia is the result of forgetting responsibility towards the other; utopia, on the other hand, is the result of feeling responsibility for the other and betterment of his/her life. As Lisa Guenther puts it,

> What is absolutely new in the epiphany of the absolute Other is that now I have been commanded to extend hospitality to Others. I am no longer only welcomed into the home and given the chance to dwell there as if in my own domain; now I am commanded to open my home to Others, and to give what I possess. (67)

The "epiphany" is an event through which the face of the other is revealed and summons the subject to respond to his/her plea for compassion or help. Responsibility causes passivity, since it limits freedom. Not only are we responsible for our own past, present and future, but also for the Other's past, present, and future. Responsibility is not merely responding and remaining open to the call of the Other; it is an obligation

to the past as well. The inclination of our experience to the past or its past-oriented essence is one aspect of this responsibility. The present time contains past experiences in the form of remembering. We are unable to free ourselves from this confinement within time and the past is always readily present in the present. As John Llewelyn reminds us in *Emmanuel Levinas and Genealogy of Ethics,* "[t]he present has the past as memory, but it is itself a tearing in two" (41). In Atwood's *MaddAddam*, there is a constant shift of time; the tensions are resolved and, in retrospect, one can read *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* from another perspective.

In order to be responsible, one should be put under the reflection of the face in the face to face encounter, but in this encounter "there is a commandment in the appearance of the face, as if a master spoke to me. However, at the same time, the face of the other is destitute; it is the poor for whom I can do all." Here the face of the other is like a poor master who needs help and, on the contrary, gives me a serious order to obey, the poverty and mastery coincide with my "submission and wealth" (*Ethics and Infinity,* 98). Consequently, the other disrupts me of my wealth to overcome his/her poverty; the other as a poor master and I, as a wealthy subject constitute an ethical relation since the Other as a master commands in a non-violent way.

This is the first and the last master who is poor and gives a non-violent order to the wealthy subject. But there is a significant point in relation to this discussion that I am also the other for the others and I also become a poor master. In Levinas's words, the other's "command can concern me only inasmuch as I am master myself; consequently, this command commands me to command" (*Totality and Infinity* 213). When I become a poor master, I also command the others not to kill; this is the reflection of the other's command which commands me to command; I also tell the other not to kill. Of course, this process becomes possible in the presence of the "third party."

> The poor one, the stranger, presents himself as an equal. His equality within this essential poverty consists in referring to the third party, thus present at the encounter; whom in the midst of his destitution the other already serves. (213)

By the presence of the third party, the poor other equals him/herself with me in my wealthy state and I also convert to the poor master who urges the other or the third party not to kill. Subsequently, the relation of master and slave is not absolute in accordance with Levinas's ethics and is a reversed process. With regard to the reversal of the roles, Waldenfels in "Response and Responsibility in Levinas" points out that:

> Responsibility for the other operates in the field of gravity of the other's demand. In the course of this displacement of weight, certain ambiguities we have attributed to the self; seem to come up again in the reverse direction. (47)

In the gravity field of the Other, forces work in reverse directions, and Masters and slaves lose their absolute status. This floating status of the master/slave relationship is indicative of an ambiguous and simultaneously moral position. Man comes down from being the center of the universe since the other in his/her mastery disrupts man's wealth and through commandment and presence of the third party, assigns to poverty. But what is the relation between Atwood's apocalyptic novels and the command of the face? The face in poverty orders not to kill and calls for help. How is it possible to violate this command and kill the other? Kenaan in *The Ethics of Visuality: Levinas and the Contemporary Gaze* states that "like the face the ethical command is vulnerable. Not only can this command be breached, but the very background for its emergence is the possibility and the inclination to breach it" (71). Several reasons may engender the command of 'thou shall not kill,' for instance, the prevalence of evil and genocide. But it is also possible that this evil which was the agent of the emergence of the command, results in transgression and breach on the command of and killing the other.

Now with regard to the apocalypse that occurs in this trilogy, we come to the conclusion that by killing the other and the occurrence of apocalypse, a breach emerges in the command in order to cease the power of the evil upon the world. Existence of the evil gives significance to Levinas's ethics, and Atwood's apocalypse equals with demand for Levinas's humanism of the other and putting an end to the imperialism of human being and also being thrown in the gravity field of the other. As Burggraeve in "Violence and the Vulnerable Face of the Other: The Vision of Emmanuel Levinas on Moral Evil and Our Responsibility" claims:

> Were each of us spontaneously and, as it were, inherently non-violent, there would exist neither ethics nor prohibition against murder and were there always and everywhere respect for the otherness of the other person, then there would also be no ethics. (34)

In line with the purpose of the discussion in this part regarding the master and slave relation, the fact should be indicated once more that by being a responsible subject, "the ego is stripped of its pride and of its dominating imperialistic and is driven to expiation" (Gross 57). By being stripped of the imperialist qualities and being responsible, the subject hears the call of the other who suffers in poverty; thus, he/she gives the wealth of the self to the poverty of the other, while at the same time the responsible subject becomes a poor other for the others with the third party.

The poor responsible subject urges the help and wealth of the third party. This is an ongoing chained process that involves the whole world and decries the absolute dialect of the master and slave. In this trilogy, decrying the absoluteness is done by apocalypse since the survivors turn to the responsible subjects completely, but the

responsibility has begun before rendering the annihilation of the universe with the purpose of eradicating the evil. The apocalypse does not end up with complete death and it is a preordained plan about who the survivors will be. In Margaret Atwood's apocalyptic world, the whole humanity will not evaporate. It is a kind of apocalypse which does not lead to complete annihilation and it intentionally paves the way for a new life devoid of unethical relations. According to Waltonen:

There are several definitions of apocalypse. One is extreme—an ELE—extinction level event. Others are end times, which can be defined more specifically—the end of a civilization, population, world, time, relationship or individual life. The older definition is of revelation—truth revealed in a time of darkness. (x)

Atwood, however, materializes prophesies in relation to the apocalypse in a radically different way. Sheinfeld in "Apocalyptic Literature" claims that "Atwood's MaddAddam trilogy explores the ramification of an increasingly unethical society that is finally wiped out through a viral pandemic" (35). Indeed, it is not a completely catastrophic event since it is man-made and the survivors are left to narrate a dystopian pre-apocalyptic and a utopian post-apocalyptic world. Another significant point about Atwood's apocalypse, according to Cuadrado and Lidia, is "the coexistence between human and posthuman life forms before and after the apocalypse" (10). Beside human survivors, there are also the man-made Crackers which are representative of posthuman life form and a thought-provoking fact is their alliance for survival. The apocalypse occurs through the epidemic virus that acts like a 'waterless flood.' Atwood strives to formulate a kind of apocalypse which is considered as a reaction against the environmental and scientific misuses. Atwood's apocalypse is rendered by a religious cult named 'God's Gardeners' and its members prepare themselves for the approaching end of the world. They are aware of the apocalypse for the reason that some of the members are scientifically manipulating with nature and are making Crakers to act as survivors. This kind of apocalypse does not reveal anything or it does not end all the possibilities. It strives to reach a utopia.

After the end of the world, apart from Jimmy, Toby was the most responsible subject in carrying the burden of responsibility of the Crakers, Amanda and Ren. She knew that they were alive in some corners but are threatened by unknown dangers. It was her duty to find them as expressed in the *The Year of the Flood*: "we had a duty to look after one another" (297). Toby was also left with the responsibility to form moral codes for the Crakers and shunned any kind of violence since they were not violent genetically. She ceased the poverty of the Crakers by responding them and also provided an ethical explanation for them. Through storytelling she confirmed that Crake set Jimmy to take care of them and keep them safe from the external wounds.

The Crakers attempted to be a source of help and kindness mutually because they became others for the others and hence responsible subjects as survivors. Receiving response to the call and temptation to kill are hidden within the face. Levinas proclaims that "[t]he face of the other in its precariousness and defenselessness is for me both the temptation to kill and the call for peace" (*Alterity and Transcendence* 163). The Crakers in their defenseless situation after apocalypse, demanded protection and help and the survivors like Jimmy and Toby bestowed peace upon them and the Painballers were tempted to kill others.

The subject is subjected to the infinity of the other despite his/her inability to understand the transcendence of the other. The subject is, therefore, under the burden of a command released from the infinite being despite its need and poverty. Commanding and being in need of help by the subject seem controversial. "The face is that possibility of murder, that powerlessness of being and that authority that commands me: 'thou shalt not kill'" (126). The other with its infinity and command subjugates the wealthy self and the subjection is possible in the epiphanic encounter. It is also significant to note that obeying the command is not absolute and it can result in disobeying and killing the other; therefore, weakness and power coincide; that is why Kenaan claims that "The weakness of the face then, is also the source of its strength" (71). To put it in Levinasian words, obeying the other and inflicting murder are only possible in the case of a being with face.

Expressing the concept of apocalypse in Atwood's novels in terms of master-slave relation and killing despite the command of the other, Kenaan takes this point into consideration that "the slave must be in a state of absolute terror. Without absolute terror, the slave does not know the hostility of the natural world and becomes a reformer" (71). The leaders of the apocalypse annihilated the world in order to end dystopia and reform the whole universe. The other or others in their mastery, and the slaves or the subjects in their slavery, created a kind of reversal dialectic. Indeed, the subjects or slaves responded to the universal poverty of the others in a terrorized dystopia. To state it clearly, "the injunction to not murder, as expressed in the face of the Other, is lost in a universal political discourse where everyone is subsumed as a faceless particular." Through ending the world, the other's face became faceless since a decree by the other for not killing was disregarded and the slave obtained the power of mastery over the others and a kind of inversion occurred in the dialectic communion of the master and slave. "It is through its countenance and its naked poverty that the face can be killed" (Pepitone 39). Poverty of the face presupposes a call and results in the subjection of the subject and hence responsibility. Without need and poverty of the

other, there will be no relation and no command. The other is poor since he/she can be killed by the subject and the other is a being with a face.

The other's command is not absolute; it is like an "unarmed authority." He/she orders like a master but due to its lack of arms and its need for the help of the subject, is unable to decree totally. The world in Atwood's novels is in "extreme vulnerability," suffering from extreme immorality, facelessness; therefore, it stimulated the subjects' reactions (Burggraeve 31). According to Alecxe, "it is through conflict, but in extreme vulnerability that the other first appears to me fully expressed to death, violence, and murder" (Ibid). This trilogy resonates with exposure to death, the subject's temptation to kill the other or obeying the command of 'thou shall not kill the other.'

In *MaddAddam*, Atwood depicts a post-apocalyptic world in which characters assemble in order to create a new group, and fortify themselves against their probable death in an uncertain and unpredictable future. The story revolves around Zeb, Toby, Jimmy and the Crakers along with the others whom they fight and, at the same time, help whenever needed. This makes sense, since negating the other and responding to their call for help are both in the essence of the responsible subjects. Survivors of the apocalypse have to encounter a harsh new world and the Pigoons, clever man-made pigs with human brain, who terrorize the MaddAddam club.

The notion of responsibility resonates as the plot proceeds from the beginning to the end of the novels. Toby was one of the most significant subjects who tempted to kill the other but resisted killing and obeyed the command. Several times she was left with the temptation to kill. After apocalypse, Toby found Ren in a terrible condition; she had escaped from the Painballers' grip but her leg was wounded due to falling down and she had scars on her forehead and cheek. Toby started to heal Ren's wound by pouring honey on the wound but she had a terrible fever. Despite her help for Ren, she was tempted to kill her because of shortage of food supplies and said that "[w]hen Ren recovers, there will be two people eating instead of one. So the food stash will be gone quickly" (357).

Toby also wished "Death Angels" would take her away and release her from her feeble physical condition and her suffering. In the face of temptation, she heard the call for help; Ren was in a terrorized condition and her vulnerability simultaneously led her both to the temptation to kill and to the need to obey the command, and in her powerlessness and poverty Ren demanded Toby's help. "'I'm an unworthy person.' Toby thinks. She's come to you for help; she has every right to trust you" (*The Year of the Flood* 357). Toby took the responsibility of Ren's health and avoided killing her since by dedicating her wealth to Ren, she became subjected to respond to her demand and vulnerability.

After rescuing Ren, they left to find food and in one of the buildings they found Blanco wounded and decaying. Blanco was her cruel boss whom she was in pursuit to kill. She gave a poppy to him in order to kill him in a peaceful way. "Still, she's just committed a murder. Or an act of mercy: at least he didn't die thirsty" (382). She justified killing by considering her murdering as a mercy for the evil and the rest of the chaos. In the case of Pillar, her best friend in God's Gardeners, she helped her to die. Pillar was old and ill and was suffering from cancer; she asked Toby to give her poppy to render death in silence and peace. Toby did it against her will; "I'm killing her. No: I'm helping her to die. I'm fulfilling her wishes. Toby sat behind Pillar until she stopped breathing" (189). The subject finds the other in his/her destituteness and two possible ways are the outcome of their relation: negation or attention.

In *Oryx and Crake*, it was Jimmy's duty to nurture the Crakers but now Toby should bear this burden. She weaves various stories in order to justify the new world to the Crakers for whom the concepts of death, violence, fear, and trauma are meaningless. Furthermore, she tackles a dilemma of killing the Painballers and avoids killing them. Thus, it is possible to relate her behavior with Levinas's principle 'Thou Shalt Not Kill.' As John Llewelyn explains:

> The lesson taught by the indiscrete face of the Other is "Thou Shalt not kill," when killing is to be understood in its widest sense as the *ethically impossible* suppression of the other's alterity, the reduction of the other to the same. (88)

With regard to the state of being 'indiscreet' and 'discreet,' Llewelyn identifies the 'feminine' with the notion of being discreet; "the feminine presence is discrete because it is presence in the home" (87). According to Levinas, the 'feminine' is the manifestation of the 'ethical' relation; she is considered as the 'home' and welcomes the 'other' by giving 'shelter' to the 'masculine other' and giving birth to the child. The 'discreet' feminine self and 'indiscreet' other constitute the ethical relation which Levinas proposes. "The discrete presence welcomes me privately. I welcome the indiscrete face that approaches and commands me from above" (88). The face of the other is 'indiscreet' because it commands from 'above' or a higher position which cannot be understood. It is ungraspable. On the other hand, the 'feminine' who is the representation of the 'self' and the 'other' relation, is 'discreet.' She does not evade from representation or being understood and gives meaning to Levinas's ethics.

In a disorderly post-apocalyptic world, Toby avoids killing the Painballers even though she is not bound by any established law. It means that Toby acts upon the call 'Thou shalt not kill.' The Painballers are part of the chaos. They torture Toby before she attends the God's Gardeners, torment and rape Amanda and kill many people, but since it is Saint Julian's evening, she avoids killing the Painballers. In fact, we encounter

a world which is dominated by an ethical system that avoids violence and vengeance. This is a substantial humanist achievement in a world superseded by violence and on the verge of annihilation. Notably, Toby responds to the call, even though murderers are concerned:

> Forgiveness must be offered, loving kindness must be offered, loving kindness must be practiced, circles must be unbroken. All souls means all, no matter [what] they may have done. It would have been next to impossible for her to kill the Painballers on that particular night--butcher them in cold blood, since by that time the two of them were firmly roped to a tree. (*The Year of the Flood* 10)

Toby both negated and was necessarily aware of the other in a world that is simultaneously pre-apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic. As discussed above, obeying the command of the 'face' is not absolute and it may also be disobeyed by 'temptation' to kill the other. Toby both negated and paid attention to the other in the pre-apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic worlds. In *The Year of the Flood*, the life of God's Gardeners before the apocalypse has been described at length. Her reaction in the pre-apocalyptic world was when she negated the command of the 'face' and killed Pillar to free her from the pain of cancer. In the post-apocalyptic world, she both obeyed and disobeyed. In the case of boss Blanco, she killed him because he was wounded and was suffering. Regarding the Crackers, Painballers and Ren, she resisted the 'temptation' and did not kill them due to the responsibility she felt for them. Therefore, she paid attention to the other's command. In fact, the command before the apocalypse and disobeying after the apocalypse coincide. The climax of Toby's obeying the command "Thou shalt not kill" is in the case of the Painballers. She hesitated to kill them and this action paralyzed Ren, for they were both threatened by the Painballers. Ren asserts that "I hate them so much. I wonder why Toby's waiting. Why doesn't she just kill them? Then I think, she's old Gardener- She can't do it, not in cold blood. It's against her religion" (418). Toby's resistance to kill the Painballers was on account of the command of the face and the lesson in God's Gardeners regarding the importance of the other. But they were the MaddAddamites' enemies and a part of the chaos that was left after apocalypse.

Even when they caught the Painballers in *MaddAddam* and roped them to a tree, she resisted to kill them since it was 'Saint Julian's day and she learned from the Gardeners that it is prohibited to kill the other on such a day; "it would have been next to impossible for her to kill the Painballers on that particular night- butcher them in cold blood" (10). The Crakers released the Painballers that were roped to a tree and this caused Toby to feel responsible for the survivors; what if their enemy kills her lover Zeb or other members. She felt the burden of the responsibility that was put on Toby by the faults and naivety of the Crakers.

The MaddAddamites seized the Painballers once more and made a decision to clear away the rest of the chaos for the sake of their utopia. Before killing them, they sought several ways to perfect them but they came to the conclusion that they should disobey the command of the Face and kill them in order to end the evil and complete the universal mission of establishing a utopia. They could "try rehabilitation" in their moral system but decided to "pour away the Painballers, as Crake poured away the chaos" (369, 371). The decision to disobey the command of the face and to clear the Painballers is done due to the fact that there is no hope in the moral emancipation of these vengeful criminals. According to Levinas the subject finds him/herself in relation with the other and it is the essence of the other which invites the subject to action and this invitation is done through the face; "the face is exposed, menaced, as if inviting us to an act of violence, at the same time, the face is what forbids us to kill" (86). The subject's subjectivity is the result of this unwanted invitation which the subject accepts without decision and responds in accordance with the situation. "The mastery of the Other and his poverty, with my submission and my wealth, becomes primary" condition of this invitation from a higher position (*Ethics and Infinity,* 98). By taking these quotations into the positions of the characters in the trilogy, we realize that characters took the stance of master-slave relation.

Zeb also disobeyed the command of thou shall not kill and killed his coworker whose name was Chuck and was hired by his father to kill him. After the crash of their helicopter, he cut Chuck's body into pieces and wrapped them in a cloth and kept them to overcome the hunger in the mountains. Zeb develops the story by telling the history of the various identities he had been given. Thus, he makes a connection between the past and the present. After the apocalypse, he cannot get rid of his past; even Toby endures a disorder of time in the post-apocalyptic world "[t]though it's hard to concentrate on the idea of a future. She's too immersed in the present: the present contains Zeb, and the future may not" (*MaddAddam* 136). Fear of an unknown future is the result of face to face encounter and the epiphany of the face of the other.

This encounter and the subsequent fear render the subject responsible for shaping the future. Toby is in love with Zeb, but she is afraid of the unknown future and death that will probably take Zeb away from her. She is locked within the cage of time and is unable to escape this fear. In the case of teaching the Crakers, Toby, who fears facing the unknown future, fabricates diverse kinds of stories regarding the existence of other people. The Crakers are under the control of the survivors who protected them from outside threats and probable death: we find this concern in the words of Toby, when she says, "so we can't let these people go wondering off on their own too much. They'd most likely be killed" (265). In the fight proceeding towards the end of the novel

between the MaddAddam club, the Crakers and Pigoons, an alliance is made among friends and foes.

The Crakers cannot be killers, but human beings can. When the request is to kill, the Crakers are unable to offer help; they cannot fight, and violence is meaningless for them. That is why their fight results in peace, instead of violence: "'You think it's a message to us'? Says Zunzuncito. 'Sort of like a challenge,' says Shakelton. 'Like they're calling us out'" (272). This dialogue is clearly calling to 'thou shall not kill the other.' Even the Crakers feel responsible. It seems that they see the face of the other; they have an epiphany of the face of the other. They want to help the whole world overcome the remnants of the chaos before the apocalypse:

> We will help Snowman-the-Jimmy, they say. We will help Zeb. We will help Crozier; he is our friend, and we must help him to piss better. We will help Toby, she will tell us a story, Crake wants us to go there, and so forth. (277)

Fear of death and fear of future affect only human beings; for the Crakers, these are meaningless. The Crakers were indeed created to resolve this fear, to establish a utopia, a world without chaos, without fear. As Toby puts it, "they've never learned real fear. Maybe they can't learn it" (293). At the end of the novel, the MaddAddamites decide to kill the Pianballers in order to clear the chaos. Killing the killers, however, cannot be justified within the framework of Levinas. The MaddAddamites are chosen to survive the apocalypse, to be responsible for founding the utopia. They realize that deciding the proper penalty for the Painballers is a significantly necessary stage towards their goal of clearing the chaos in the newly established society. They are required to act according to justice and knowledge. They form a law court to determine the penalty. Their decision to kill, which means negation of the existence of the other, is caused by their determination to sustain and protect the Crakers for whose production the whole world and human beings have been cleared away. Levinas observes that "[t]he actual plurality of human beings calls for justice and knowledge; the exercise of justice demands courts of law and political institutions and paradoxically a certain violence that is implied in all justice" (*Alterity and Transcendence* 194).

In the world of *Maddadam*, no social workers exist to refine the personality of evildoers; no established moral codes have remained. It should be mentioned that the behavior of the Paintballers and their tendency to rape and to kill is, for the most part, the result of what was done by the others. They killed two bad guys who survived the chaos and thus cleared out wickedness from the earth. Roger Burggraeve proclaims, "[i]n committing the possible overcoming of evil, through ethical choice for the good, Levinas certainly realizes how vulnerable this overcoming of evil is" (42). Overcoming the evil is not absolute and cannot be totally eliminated as the Painballers were left

from the chaos. At the end of the novel, Zeb is killed by an unknown evil which means that even after the apocalypse, a total disappearance of evil is impossible.

> Zeb told us that there might be others- more people from before the chaos, from before Crake cleared the chaos away. But would they be good people, or would they be bad and cruel men that would hurt us? There was no way to tell. (*MaddAddam* 388)

There is always the other who might negate or respond to a call for help. The Crakers and the MaddAddamites are responsible subjects, but negation and committing murder are always possible. Levinas proposes that "[t]he Otherness of the Other is the extreme point of 'Thou shalt not commit murder,' and in me, it is also a fear of all the violence and usurpation which my very existence, despite its intentional innocence, risks committing" (*Entre-Nous* 149). This is indicative of the fact that the proposed world is not absolute. Thus, the Atwoodian world is a non-absolute community. At the end, the preplanned utopia is established through a newly-regenerated society and a new generation of human-Craker babies.

3. Conclusion

The protagonists of Atwood's trilogy can be considered as Levinasian responsible subjects who act upon the call of the world and aspire to overcome evil and to annihilate suffering. The existence of the Painballers and the Crakers in the post-apocalyptic world of Atwood's novels has created a moral dilemma for the main characters, and has made it possible for Atwood's readers to evaluate and interpret her world from a Levinasian perspective. In the beginning, they provide shelter for the Crakers but decide to kill the Painballers and risk committing murder. We should pay close attention to this point as the Other commands the subject in his/her time of need. "Disobedience" and "subjection" are two possible outcomes: the subject either becomes a subject or kills the/its Other. This is how the subject or slave can disobey the order of its/her/his Master (Other) and thus guarantee the ongoing oscillation of the master-slave dialectic.

Those who take the responsibility of nurturing the Crakers are the ones for whom the concepts of death, violence, and fear are alien; this means they can inflict no harm on the rest of the human race. Since there is no possibility of practicing free will and making ethical decisions for the Crakers, there is no ethical code of behavior to regulate their behavior. Indeed, if human beings naturally and necessarily respected each other and treated each other with compassion and understanding, ethics and prohibitions would be pointless. Levinas sees the Face's essential command as the prohibition of evil. Bewildered by the loss of time in their post-apocalyptic world, Toby, Zeb, and other survivors feel they need to stay with the Crakers and to contemplate killing the

Painballers. Burdened with this responsibility, they reconsider the past which, for Levinas, is the essence of responsibility. Subjection to the Other and taking responsibility for the other have come from a remote past. Awakened to his sense of responsibility in an epiphanic encounter with the Other, the subject becomes responsible for the future.

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