

Destructive Shadow: A Psychoanalytic Study in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*

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Abstract

Shadow, a Jungian Archetype, is the hidden or repressed part of ourselves that may contradict ethical beliefs of the person. Carl C. Jung talks about the conflict that arises from overlooking the shadow or the dark side of our nature because at the smallest suggestion this shadow tries to break free and take control of the mind. In *Oryx and Crake*, Crake is controlled by his shadow. The shadow for him is destructive. This paper sheds light on part of psychic problems and analyzes the destructive power of shadow as discussed by Jung and its relation or influence on a human life and how it distorts the reality of these characters and others. Crake tries to make new creatures who are without faults. He has such an ego that makes him try to turn the world better but he does not see his own shadow. The other characters in the novel in one way or another are also controlled by the psychic troubles. The novel is a good example of portraying characters with psychic problems. It has such profound significance which can be easily compared to our life. Sometimes, mastering the sciences gives humans fake pride and arrogance to try to defy nature and control the whole world and Crake is a symbol of such ideology whose destructive shadows aims to destruct the world.

Key words: Shadow, Jung, *Oryx and Crake*, Psychoanalytic

الظل المدمر: دراسة تحليلية نفسية لمارجريت آتوود أوريكس وكريك

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وزارة التربية/كلية التربية المفتوحة

المستخلص

الظل هو ذلك الجزء الخفي أو المكبوت للنفس البشرية الذي قد يتعارض مع المعتقدات الأخلاقية للشخص. يتحدث كارل سي يونج عن أهمية هذا الجزء ويؤكد ان ثمة صراع قد ينشأ إذا حدث التفاضل عن هذا الجانب المظلم للإنسان. الشخصية التي تجسدت فيها ملامح هذا الظل المدمر بشكل خاص هي شخصية كريك في الرواية المختارة لهذه الدراسة "Oryx and Crake". يصنع كريك مخلوقات جديدة محاولاً جعلها بلا عيوب. يمتلك كريك هذه الأنا التي تجعله يحاول تحويل العالم بشكل أفضل ؛ لكنه لم يغير نفسه. الشخصيات الأخرى في الرواية بطريقة ، أو بأخرى تتحكم فيها أيضاً مشكلات نفسية. الرواية هي مثال جيد لتصوير تلك الشخصيات مع مشاكلها النفسية. و لدراسة هذه الرواية أهمية عميقة من حيث يمكن مقارنتها بسهولة مع حياتنا. تبين الرواية إن إتقان العلوم يمنح البشر فخراً وغروراً مزيفين لمحاولة تحدي الطبيعة والسيطرة على العالم بأسره ، ويعد كريك رمزاً لهذه الإيديولوجية التي تهدف إلى تدمير العالم. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على جزء من المشكلات النفسية ، وتحلل القوة المدمرة للظل كما ناقشها يونج وعلاقتها أو تأثيرها في حياة الإنسان وكيف تشوه حقيقة هذه الشخصيات وغيرها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الظل ، يونج ، أوريكس ، و كريك ، التحليل النفسي

Introduction

Margret Atwood wrote *Oryx and Crake* during the September 11 attacks in 2003. It was a discomfoting event to her, since this event affected natural world in her dreamed world and the existent ones (Hall, 2015, p. 179). The novel depicts two different stories about the same person but with different names. The first one is about Jimmy and the second about Snowman. The actions of the first story are led to present Snowman after a massive deadly plague smeared the human population of Earth. The only survivors of this crisis are the manipulated creatures "crakers" and Snowman who keeps an eye on them. The second story is about Jimmy (Snowman before the crisis) and how the plague happens and why he and the crakers survive (Winner, 2015). Atwood drew her writing about topics like 'environmental crisis,' 'genetic engineering,' and 'bioterrorism' from contemporary issues headlines (Howells, 2006, p. 179). The power over nature responsibly cannot be exercised by many characters in this novel. The most extremist one of this kind of transgression is Crake. In order to apply his plan, Crake invents a "Viagra-like super-pill" called "ByssPlus." This pill is supposed to give health and happiness to people while in fact and secretly causes sterilization in order to address overpopulation. Crake's introduction of a dreadful virus into the human population and his transmutation of the Crakers appear as a horrible product of the progress of natural science in *Oryx and Crake*.

As a matter of realization to the mankind problems, Carl Jung ensures that people must increase their consciousness, since it is the only solution to face the danger which settles inside them. Then he suggests the actual danger is the man himself (Daniels, 2011,p.2). Jung

introduces the archetype of shadow which refers to the unconscious side of human psych. Shadow is the manifestation of one's desires or hidden beliefs. For Jung, shadow can be negative or positive depending on the way the person lives his life. Shadow is the instinctive side of human being that is irrational. If the "psychological projections" of human mind are not realized, shadow takes over the person's actions by guiding the person towards certain unconscious decisions. (Jung, 1951, p. 147)

On the same vein Jung believes in the interior uniqueness of the human beings. Unfortunately most of the human beings lost their coherence with the important parts of themselves. To solve this disconnection, they must listen to the voice of their dreams and stir their imagination in order to get their wholeness with all their parts. The human beings must be aware that individuation is the aim of their lives because through individuation, humans can reach wholeness. This process of becoming whole is fulfilled when the person realizes his true and singular nature and calling while the conscious and subconscious merge in unison. If this unity is not reached, the body and soul suffer. (Daniels, 2011 ,p.2)

Crake affirms that the purpose of this creation of the crakers is to make new creatures who are without faults. His ego leads him to think about enhancing the world by his own hand. While trying to make good society, Crake forgets to perfect himself. This paper sheds the light on human's failure to be mighty like God and how the destructive shadow makes the human beings as murderers. Different types of human; sexual, romantic and familial relationships are scrutinized in the novel. Moreover, it depicts how these relationships are influenced by the scientific and cultural shifts arranged in the world of *Oryx and Crake*. It arises the question of the effects made by the scientific manipulation, whether or not the human relationships are free and safe from corporation in scientific manipulation. (Winner, 2015)

According to Crake, the crakers are the best creatures who are perfect, attractive, good-looking with gleaming green eyes. They gather the traits of plants and animals which Crake bred into them in order to make them flawless, with no desire or lust, no attachment and no sexual disappointment. Moreover, Crake tries to breed into them, religion, art, and philosophy. Gradually one can know that Crake fails to achieve his goal. (Winner, , 2015) . He introduces Jimmy to the crakers. The craker world is the reflection of the pretentiousness diminution. It contradicts the cultural impact of the humanities of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. It is a world of scientific development of biology.

The novel features genetically spliced animals like the snats, a blend snake and rat, and the pigeons. Jimmy's mother criticizes Jimmy's father because he used the animals in his experiments. Moreover, he does illegal research projects on them; she said "You're interfering with the building blocks of life. It's immoral. It's . . . sacrilegious."(Atwood, 32) The novel shows the disgraceful behavior of a number of scientists to produce their various experiments using plants, animals and humans. A great deal of resources and manpower are spent in HealthWyzer, therefore, the scientists devise and release new viruses into the population in order to sell new cures. Sharon, Jimmy's mother describes her sadness about the excitementst done in "HealthWyzer". She says "I know all that"; then she adds "I smoke because I'm depressed. The tobacco companies depress me, you depress me, Jimmy depresses me"(33). She continues her opposing to her husband. They often argue about Jimmy's father work which includes genetic exploitation of animals, and it is implied that Sharon knows about the abuse which happens at HealthWyzer and at other companies. For all these reasons, Jimmy's mother decides to leave the company and her family, taking with

her only “the killer”, Jimmy’s pet. She justifies her leaving by writing a note, explaining that she cannot bear it any longer. Thereafter Jimmy lives with his father who stays in the compounds and invites Ramona, his co-worker to live with them.

With this surrounding weird situation of his parents, Jimmy “started having sexy dreams and suffering from lassitude. He thought about girls a lot in the abstract, as it were – girls without heads – and about Wakulla Price with her head on, though she wouldn’t hang out with him.” (p.33-34) Atwood presents characters that reflect their illness, Jimmy’s father is ambitious; Jimmy’s mother is depressed. Crake who apparently appears as an intelligent scientist young man is the most defective character that decide the crisis. He was the only friend to Jimmy in his childhood. He has strange moods. He sees Jimmy as a version to science looking to him as numbers, unlike Jimmy who is being fascinated “word person.” Much time is spent by Jimmy and Crake in playing computer games and watching pornographic at which they saw “Oryx” or violent video. One of their games is called Extinctathon at which cataloguing the long list of extinct species are involved. They are affected by these games and video in the sense that the name “Crake” is taken from the vanished “Red-Necked Crake.” (Winner).

The events of the novel fluctuate between past and the present; once he is Jimmy, then he becomes Snowman. Once he tells the Craker that he needs to be alone in order to talk to Crake, then threatening them saying that if they don’t leave him, they will become toast. Unfortunately, the crakers wonder what is a toast. Snowman recognizes his mistake that he can not talk metaphorically with the crakers since he can not manipulate using the words. He says to himself . “Let’s try again.” thinking what is toast “Toast was a pointless invention from the Dark Ages. Toast was an implement of torture that caused all those subjected to it to regurgitate in verbal form the sins and crimes of their past lives.” Then he keeps his thought on the past “ Toast was a ritual item devoured by fetishists in the belief that it would enhance their kinetic and sexual powers. Toast cannot be explained by any rational means.” After that he is sad again exhausted by his thoughts saying “I am toast.” (p.57) He cannot leave his thinking about the past , he is the only one who knows what is the past , and how was the life that time? He thinks that his responsibility is to inform the crakers with the way that they can understand it “on some non-conscious level” then he says “I’m your past, he might intone. I’m your ancestor, come from the land of the dead. Now I’m lost, I can’t get back, I’m stranded here, I’m all alone. Let me in! (p.62) He feels his responsibility towards the crakers since he is the only human who survives. Hence , he tries to have good behaviour and explains whatever vagueness, the crakers may find.

Snowman is concerned with the physical creating, especially the ones who are related to sexual desire. He discusses this idea (creating) looking to each part carefully. “Who gives a rat’s ass?” He mocks whatever he sees ignoring the important details of the creation of the surrounding, “he doesn’t care about the iron in his blood or the calcium in his skeletal frame” Snowman is not satisfied and he criticizes everything, looking exhausted even with himself, “he’s tired of being himself”. He wants to manipulate each part of his body, “turn over all his cells, get a chromosome transplant, trade in his head for some other head, one with better things in it. Fingers moving over him, for instance, little fingers with oval nails, painted ripe plum or crimson lake or rose-petal pink.” (p.66) Snowman is shocked with the surrounding atmosphere of the city and people “the city was a chaos, filled with people and cars and noise and bad smells and a language that was hard to understand”. (p.74) Added to his unsatisfied feeling towards everything, he remembers the words of Crake to people and how his speech

reflected his dictatorship, he always says “watch out for the leaders, ... First the leaders and the led, then the tyrants and the slaves, then the massacres. That’s how it’s always gone.” (p.91) Snowman represents the other side of the destructive shadow which can be found in Crake. His actions reflect how much he is confused and how he refuses his existence once with his past and then his present.

On the other hand, Crake seems to have clearer thoughts than Jimmy. He is not ashamed of what he has done, his actions do not fluctuate between kindness and evil, he declares that he is “sadist” and he adds “I like to watch you suffer.” (p.102) His pleasure is caused by touching other people. This self-recognition of Crake defines himself that he is ‘sadist’. He confesses his desire to hurt the other people. Therefore it is a great evidence for his destructive shadow. Jung regards the shadow as being natural and unreasonable which is susceptible to ‘psychological projection’. The shadow of his ego feels his superiority upon other people, therefore, he justifies his opposing to other people and hurting them to their inferiority to him. (Jung, 1951, p.147) Once Crake suggests that human kind must be put in prison “Those walls and bars are there for a reason, not to keep us out, but to keep them in. Mankind needs barriers in both cases.” (p.122) He puts himself in a superior position feeling that he has the role to control the world and be a master who suggests what they must do!

Unlike other children who like to watch action movies and fairy tales, Crake and Jimmy used to watch the terrible real events, “There were protests and demonstrations, with tear gas and shooting and bludgeoning... This went on day after day. There hadn’t been anything like it since the first decade of the century. Crake said it was history in the making.” (p.110) One can say that the boredom in modern life makes life pointless and stripped of significance. The repeated violence paves the way to make darkness ordinary and dull and as M-L von Franz points out it is “as if the initial encounter with the Self casts a dark shadow ahead of time”.(Franz, 1978, p.170) As if it has been preordained for the shadow in these two persons to grow.

The way of introducing Jimmy to others by Crake is irritating, “This is Jimmy, the neurotypical.” He can show the other characteristics of Jimmy since he knows him. Moreover, he calls him “a Cro-Magnon or something. As a result of that “they’d be putting him in a cage, feeding him bananas, and poking him with electroprods.” (p.120)

Crake declares his ignorance to God and nature; once Jimmy tells him “I thought you didn’t believe in God,” he answers him “I don’t believe in Nature either.” (p.123) This shows how the shadow in Crake disregards any power but himself. He refuses to confess that the world is guided by God who gives beauty and life for the whole creatures and plants.

On the other hand Jimmy appears reflective of the bad matching between his father and mother. He is the product of their unhappy marriage. “Jimmy had a cold feeling, a feeling that reminded him of the time his mother had left home: the same sense of the forbidden” (p.129). He just thinks about the negativity of being with such parents. He remembers “a stream of secret lives, running underground, in the darkness just beneath his feet.” Then he wonders “What was all that about?” (p.129) Then he keeps shouting and screaming, because he has no words that explain his situation. He is alone, left to fend himself oblivious of his surrounding in a post-apocalyptic world as one of if not the only human survivor.

“All it takes,” said Crake, “is the elimination of one generation. One generation of anything. Beetles, trees, microbes, scientists, speakers of French, whatever. Break the link in time between one generation and the next, and it’s game over forever.” (p.133) Crake believes that the increasing of the population is the main reason of human suffering. He cannot keep

himself silent toward this problem, therefore he invents “BlyssPluss” the tablet that is used to destroy the exasperation of sexuality. On the other hand this pill is used to sterilization, and this is the hidden purpose that Crake hides. He tests this pill on poor workers and animals, then gets positive results. Anyone takes “BlyssPluss” becomes sterilized. “No Man’s Land, Crake used to call it. No trees here: they’d mowed down anything you could hide behind, divided the territory into squares with lines of heat-and-motion sensors.” (p.134)

Other justifications Crake gives beside ‘overpopulation’ are ‘war’, and ‘contagious diseases.’ He said war makes people lose their “sexual energy” which in his opinion, this energy is a bigger part than “the economic, racial, and religious causes often cited”. (p.173) The hidden power of the destructive shadow masters the mind of Crake and misleads his action towards the ending of peoples’ lives and creating other creatures to occupy the earth.

“The BlyssPluss Pill was designed to take a set of givens, namely the nature of human nature, and steer these givens in a more beneficial direction than the ones hitherto taken.” Crake decides to end the existence of human beings on earth by giving them that medicine. “It was based on studies of the now unfortunately extinct pygmy or bonobo chimpanzee, a close relative of Homo sapiens sapiens”. (p.73) “Blyssplus” is what satisfies his pride and helps him to master the whole world. It kills all people. Hence, no human is still alive except three; Crake, Jimmy and Oryx, with the crakers who are living in the world now empty of people. Moreover he tricks Jimmy by describing this medicine as a beneficial one. He said, “Would you kill someone you loved to spare them pain?” (p.192) He tries to persuade Jimmy about the medicine, describing it as a reason of recovery of any pain.

Conclusion

The reading of this novel demonstrates the idea that it is not the science which destroys the environment. Rather it is the pride inside the human being. As a result of the destructive shadow by Crake, Jimmy appears as a trigger who opposes Crake, then kills him at the moment of Crake’s murdering Oryx. Crake’s ego puts him in a position by which he takes the responsibility of the lives of other people. Crake ignores any power of the surrounding world, putting himself in a higher position to decide what should be done and what will happen.

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