



A Study Of Apocalyptic Fiction Genre With Reference To Science And Religion

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Abstract

The literary discourse regarding climate change in the apocalyptic fictions derives its roots from the dominant religious myths that formulate the psychological structure and the actions thereupon of the literary characters in the fictional narratives. The binary opposition of prominent religious myths and the physical laws of science in the postmodern world create the flux between faith and rationality. The age of Anthropocene is a major factor in creating the atmosphere of anxiety and despair that leads the human civilization into the world of apocalypses and this apocalyptic world is not a distant future and therefore is not fictional but it is present in the anthropocentric world of the contemporary geological age. Hence, the discourse of the apocalyptic fiction becomes essential to be assessed, which the paper will focus, in terms of the construction of a narrative which includes the confluence of science and religion and the inevitability of climate crisis. The pervasive sense of fear and shifting ideological, as well as philosophical conformities in the apocalyptic world, ultimately reflect the importunity to prevent anyhow the mass extinction of human survival and the research paper engages itself in the deconstruction of the same discourse.

Keywords: Apocalyptic Fiction, Climate Change, Deconstruction

The beginning of a novel with the sense of an immediate crisis that does not affect only a particular region of the world but it engages the homo-sapiens across the continents with a certain kind of survival threat depicts the trait of apocalyptic fiction. The plot does not unfurl it with time but the crisis is an essential part of the narrative since the inception. The deadly-storm or the fatal flood sets the postmodern tone of the existential crisis that in turn poses the deep questions on the epoch of Anthropocene culture. For Adam Trexler, in *Anthropocene Fictions*, the age of Anthropocene is the epoch of paradox as on the one hand, it engages itself in the dominant role of transformation through scientific temperament but on the other hand, it is functionally paralytic in facing the severe threats of climate change which in reality are the backlashes of the human interventions in the natural world (4).

Consequently, the human world shifts its focus towards the religious discourse where it can hope for a sigh of relief through mythical interpretations of the natural phenomenon in the form of references such as the Biblical flood or the mythical stories like Noah's ark or the whole concept of Pralay in the Hindu Mythology. The whole narrative of Srijan (Creation) and Vinash (Destruction) through Pralay or the Doomsday creates a parallel narrative with the scientific discourse of the rationality and objectivity.

Even in the classical literary theories, the perception of the physical world as Aristotle and Plato propagated, is possible only through the sense of objectification of all the substances or matter present around us. Plato's ideal world can only be perceived and sensed through the object present in this world and so the spiritual ramifications of the environmental crisis are not possible even in the literary discourse.

The technical interpretation of thinking provides a glimpse of post-human world which believes in the transformation of the natural world through the epistemological discourse but remains unanswerable to the complexities of the affectations produced in its nature through the natural disasters. These disasters are conceptualized in the apocalyptic fictions as the monsters and like the mythical monsters; the natural calamities create an atmosphere in which the humans become outmoded or failed species.

Frank Kermode underlines in *The Sense of An Ending*, that the formulation of the whole atmosphere of crisis structurally derives its roots from the structural derivation of the Biblical narrative where the beginning and the end of the world remains inevitable and it is propagated in the sense that it captures the central imagination and core understanding of the universe; which with its essence waits for the inevitable end of the world and that is the subject matter which apocalyptic fictions engage with (67). The narrative of the novel, therefore, takes its structural semblance from the narrative of the religious texts. This sense of the ending of the world in apocalyptic fictions is prophesied in the Meta narratives like religion and science which also engages itself with the 'End of the world' narrative in the era of climate change crisis.

The engagement with the religious narratives regarding the origin and the end of the world can be traced in JG Ballard's *The Drowned World* where Kerans, the protagonist and a scientist in the novel ponders over the gradual pace of cosmic time and latently amuses himself with the idea of reaching the origin of the universe. The narrator records it as:

Kerans leaned against the window, waiting as the minutes passed...

The slower a clock, the nearer it approximated to the infinitely gradual and majestic progression of cosmic time in part, by reversing a clock's direction and running it backward one could devise a timepiece that in a sense was moving even more slowly than the universe. (63)

The whole narrative, here, highlights the process of demystification of the cosmic creation in the reverse order. The reverse pace of time unfolds the secrets of the evolutionary lineages from the pinnacle to the origin and this approach towards polar narratives is the significant aspect of the fictional works that are weaved under the anxiety of the future which is threatening in terms of evolutionary aspects.

Another very vital aspect of apocalyptic fiction is that predictions which the science tries to create with the help of technologies become non-working and the complete failure to predict the occurrence of natural disasters again shifts the narrative towards the religious and mystical interpretations of the world and here the faith takes over the scientific temperament which is evident in Liz Jensen's *The Rapture*, where Bethany Krall's prophecies become true about catastrophes and it intensifies the puzzles. Bethany says:

I can see things, Wheels. Disasters. I've made notes.... I can see stuff happening before it happens. I feel it.... the planet in meltdown. This freezing stuff, pouring from the cracks. Then it heats up like some kind of magma. (Jensen 26)

The whole discourse here provides a glimpse of climate crisis but the problem is that it is not substantiated by the facts but by the fantasy or vision of a neurotic patient and this causes a sense of restlessness and despair which the apocalyptic world depicts in its physical settings also.

In the novel *The Rapture*, one can identify the critique of meta-narratives like religion and science at the same time, when the narrator meditates upon the character of Bethany:

"She can quote the Bible extensively, but is as scathing about God as she is about doctors, repeating the question she raised when we first met: what has God ever done for her? (Jensen 53)

It enunciates the idea of Lyotard who in *The Postmodern Condition* conceptualizes that the postmodern world has been witnessing the loss of the credibility of meta-narratives and Science has become just one language game among others 'theorizing its evolution as discontinuous, catastrophic, non-rectifiable, and paradoxical' (60).

The whole setting of *Man in the Holocene* by Max Frisch also depicts the explicit trait of the apocalyptic fiction in which the protagonist is as helpless as the homo sapiens in the dilapidated anthropocentric era; not able to comprehend his existence within the larger apocalyptic condition of rain and flood. His life in the home is like a crippled, meditative, and secluded being that is unable to decipher the meaning of his existence and ponders over the mythical stories which he has listened in his early days of life.

Max Frisch in *Man in the Holocene* builds up the atmosphere of doubt, anxiety, dilemma, and crises of individuality, the protagonist Geiser is in the state of losing his memory, and to prevent this he reads notes related to the Biblical flood, the creation of the world, and the evolutionary process on the Earth. His act of reading, amidst the flood around him in the geological present: The Age of Holocene produces the contrast. It is the juxtaposition of the biblical order and its conformity and the present crisis of the climate change, in which the non-linearity and the fractured narrative is prominent.

The absence of causality in the novel, the state of seclusion, and meditation upon the state of the present which is categorically gloomy and meaningless raises the doubt on the project of Enlightenment. The blending of the biblical and the scientific notes which Geiser reads in his captivity inside the home, as the outside world is going through natural catastrophes, makes him more incoherent in the sense that he can't relate himself to the Biblical references, their linear progression from nothingness to creation.

Geiser continuously reads the notes but he 'does not believe in the flood (Frisch16), the biblical flood, there is a very deep sense of doubt which prevails in the novel *Man in the Holocene*:

The Bible and the fresco of the Virgin Mary do not prove that God will continue to exist once human beings, who can not accept the idea of a creation without a creator, have ceased to exist; the bible was written by human beings (78).

The last statement that 'the bible was not written by human beings' is very significant as it raises the questions on the discipline of Epistemology and the questions on the meta- narratives and apocalyptic fictions deal with these pertinent questions.

Therefore it can be assessed through much deliberation and careful access to the texts that apocalyptic fictions engage themselves with the idea of origin, evolution, scientific and religious ramifications of the puzzle of life, the flux between religious explanations of the creation and the scientific interpretations of the origination of the world and these issues occupy the significant space in apocalyptic fictions.

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