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ABSTRACT

of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**FEMINIST IDEAS AND DYSTOPIA
IN THE CREATIVITY OF MARGARET ATWOOD**

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GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESEARCH

The actuality of the theme and the degree of research. The policy of Western integration pursued by the Republic of Azerbaijan as a state priority after gaining independence has covered not only the political and economic life of the country, but also the scientific and educational spheres. Thus, the statement of the President Ilham Aliyev: *“Integration with the West is one of the main directions of Azerbaijan’s foreign policy”*¹ – in fact, reflects the development priorities of our republic in all important strategic areas. This, in turn, is clearly reflected in science and education, as in all areas of social activity. In this sense, the rise of European and Western culture and literature in Azerbaijan to a new level of quality in recent years seems logical. If we take into account that Margaret Atwood, whose works systematically are analyzed from a number of aspects in this dissertation, is one of the leading representatives of modern Western literary thought, in this context, the study of important aspects of the author’s literary activity in terms of studying the Western thought model that’s the study of the points that resonate with the issues warring the West, of course, is important.

One of the most important factors in the dissertation’s relevance is the author’s important role in guiding Western society, especially modern feminism, in the context of the greatness of the creative personality of Margaret Atwood, one of the most prominent figures not only in modern Canadian English literature but also in world literature. Thus, M. Atwood is a great talent who is able to move far enough from the cliché “art for art’s sake”, to direct not only literary thought, but also the development priorities of society as a whole by the power of her word (in a broad sense, both creative and civic) and has a creative mind. As a writer who was able to “catch the pulse” of the processes taking place in society, the study of the work of M. Atwood is also important in terms of determining by what “breathes” Western society in general, what worries it.

Another important point that determines the relevance of the

¹ President: Integration with the West is one of the main directions of Azerbaijan's foreign policy. <https://az.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/832342.html>

study of M. Atwood's work is directly related to the description of the processes and events that outline the near future in dystopias and their transformation into reality over time. In this sense, the analysis of the fact that the prophetic facts in the work of M. Atwood, known as the "The Prophet of Dystopia"², resonate with the real life of society, gives additional relevance to the work.

Another important point of the dissertation, which is the object of research – the issues raised by the author in many of her novels – the ban on abortion, full objective coverage of gender discrimination against women ("Surfacing", "Cat's Eye") and a strong protest against the perception of women as a means of satisfying the needs of the opposite sex ("The Handmaid's Tale"). It is known that M. Atwood has been a defender of women's rights from a very young age, almost all her sensible life. As the child of a rebellious woman, it would be a mistake to expect a different pattern of behavior from Atwood. However, M. Atwood is reluctant to describe herself as a mere feminist writer, or even to use the feminist label ("I don't know if I am a feminist"). Such a confession from the author of the classic of feminist literature, of course, could not fail to surprise researchers³. But the important point here is that the spiritually free M. Atwood doesn't fit into any division or grouping. Her creative understanding is so independent that it can't be confined to such conditions; it is so vast that it can't fit into divisions. On the other hand, in principle, M. Atwood opposes the hanging of labels and, as a man of speech who glorifies freedom and independence of choice throughout her career, doesn't consider it acceptable to be a "prisoner" of a term. It should be noted that M. Atwood, in general, was formed as a person far from the charm of any kind of labels. In this sense, radical feminists, who justify women in any situation because they are women, accuse Atwood of taking an anti-feminist stance (a living classic of feminist literature), no matter how absurd it may seem at first glance, when they expect the same approach and

² Mead, R. Margaret Atwood, the Prophet of Dystopia // The New Yorker, – 2017, 17 April.

³ Khaleeli, H. Martha Gill and Hazelann Williams. Are you a feminist? // The Guardian, – 2009, 9 September.

their expectations are dashed. M. Atwood clearly states that feminism does not mean that a woman is a priori right in any situation, regardless of the context. She even avoids the label “feminist novels” for her works, noting that feminism, as a universal term, has lost its original meaning in the context of other meanings that branch from it (from the term feminism – A.A). The writer admits that in any discussion of the “feminist” definition of her work, she first asks her opponent what she means by this term⁴.

The paradox is that while the most radical factions of the MeToo movement accused her of surrendering to the esteemed adherence to the rules of male chauvinism, those who took the opposite position, that is, those who “defended the privileges and rights” of men, claimed the exact opposite. Thus, as M. Atwood herself admits, due to some of the images she created, her opponents portray her as a woman who hates men. However, as the author points out, men may hate this or that image she created, not her (‘The character is a man-hater for sure, but that doesn’t mean that I am,’ she says)⁵. All this not only serves as a source of ideas for the modern feminist movement, but also as a writer who has been criticized and even openly criticized and persecuted by ultrafeminists. In other words, M. Atwood, as one of the intellectuals who formed the ideological face of the modern feminist movement, continues to “shape” modern Western gender doctrines as a thinker who opposes any kind of radicalism. In this sense, the dissertation is also relevant because, thanks to this research, we are able to study the formation of ideas of feminism, not post-factum, but directly in parallel with these processes, in their “core”.

It should be noted that various aspects of M. Atwood’s creativity have been studied in the works of modern researchers

⁴ Oppenheim M. Margaret Atwood: Feminism is not about believing women are always right // Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/margaret-atwood-handmaids-tale-author-feminism-women-not-always-right-a7847316.html>

⁵ Thomson, G. Every time I write a new novel I wonder what kind of trouble I’ll get into: Margaret Atwood on being called offensive and man-hating // The Daily mail, – 2014, 23 August.

H.Bloom⁶, S.Bjerke⁷, N.Cooke⁸, A.Coral⁹, H.Macpherson¹⁰, G.Wisker¹¹, I.Taranenko¹², Y.Jarkova¹³ and others. In recent years, M.Atwood's works have been systematically studied for the first time in the history of Azerbaijani literature.

The object and subject of the research. While Margaret Atwood's many-branched creativity is the main object of study, the genre specifics of her dystopian works and the expression of the author's feminist ideas in that context, as well as the author's exploration of the feminist worldview throughout the author's many-branched creativity, form an artistic form.

The purpose and objectives of the research. The main objective of the research is to study the peculiarities of the reflection of feminist ideas in the works of Margaret Atwood, one of the prominent representatives of world literature, and the peculiarities of the expression of these ideas throughout the author's work, especially in the context of dystopian genres. In order to achieve this goal, the following tasks have been determined in the research work:

- Generalize the stage of formation of M.Atwood's creative personality and the main outlines of feminism ideas;
- Evaluate M. Atwood's childhood as a factor determining his

⁶ Bloom, H. Margaret Atwood. / H.Bloom. – Yale University, – 2009. – 204 p.

⁷ Bjerke, S. Reviewing Margaret Atwood Gendered Criticism in American Book Reviews. / S.Bjerke. – Oslo: The University of Oslo, – 2008. – 94 p.

⁸ Cooke, N. Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion. / N.Cooke. – Greenwood, – 2004. – 192 p.

⁹ Coral, A. Howells. Margaret Atwood. / A.Coral. – Publisher: Palgrave, – 2005. – 224 p.

¹⁰ Macpherson, H.S. The Cambridge Introduction to Margaret Atwood. Chapter 1, / H.S.Macpherson. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, – 1stedition, – 2010. – 158 p.

¹¹ Wisker, G. Margaret Atwood: An Introduction to Critical Views of Her Fiction. / G.Wisker. – Publisher: Palgrave, – 2011. – 248 p.

¹² Taranenko, I.V. Lexical representation of socio-cultural space in the genre of dystopia: /Dissertation of candidate of Philological Sciences/ – St. Petersburg, 2001. – 206 p.

¹³ Zharkova, E.P. Dystopias by M.Atwood “The Handmaid's Tale” and “Mad Addam's Trilogy” in the context of tradition and the latest trends in the development of the genre: /Abstract of dissertation Candidate Philological Sciences/ – Voronezh, 2017. – 24 p.

creative future;

- Identify the geniuses who "shed light" on M. Atwood's creative path;

- Analysis of the novel "Alias Grace" on the level of feminism problems;

- Clarify the specificity of the dystopia genre in M. Atwood's work;

- Evaluate the ideas of genetic engineering and artificial selection as a transition from utopia to dystopia in the novels "Oryx and Crake", "The Year of the Flood" and "MaddAdam";

- Generalize the unique features of feminism and dystopia in M. Atwood's novels;

- Evaluate the anti-utopia of "The Handmaid's Tale" as an anti-symbol of feminism and the utopia manifesto;

- Investigate and analyze the female characters as victims of social stereotypes in the novel "The Blind Assassin"

The research methods. The sources of the research are M. Atwood's many-branched creativity, in particular, a series of novels written in the genre of dystopia, as well as other samples of novels and poems reflecting the ideas of feminism. As for the methods of research, comparative-historical, typological and analytical methods were used on the basis of research on the dissertation.

The main provisions for defense: Systematic investigation on the research work has allowed the following provisions to be defended:

- M. Atwood's family, close circle, the region where she spent her childhood and youth had an exceptional role in the formation of her creative identity, and in many works of the author (for example, "Cat's Eye", "Surfacing", etc.) this or other details of her biography were explicitly or implicitly described.

- In the novel "Cat's Eye" M. Atwood wrote about the traumas of childhood, which he avoided to admit, and analyzed in detail the issues of women's independence and identity within the conditions of society.

- Many of her predecessors (Joyce Barkhouse, George Orwell, Susanna Moody, and others) and contemporaries (Jack Kerouac, Sylvia Plath, Angela Carter, etc.) had an exceptional role and

influence in M. Atwood's success in making her own "path" here, as well as in her literary molding of feminist ideas, while preferring the dystopian genre.

– In the novel "Surfacing", the author continued to analyze the problem of identity and assessed this issue in the context of the problem of female identity. For the first time in this novel, the author focuses on the root of women's tendency to be "victims" and emphasizes the point of "avoidance of being a victim".

– M. Atwood, in the novel "Alias Grace" in the genre of historical fiction, once again touched upon the problem of women's avoidance of being a victim, and expressed her protest against the weakness of women in the narration of the protagonist Grace Marks. The novel tells the life story of a woman who was arrested on suspicion of murder and lived a long life in prison. Throughout the novel, the author objectively exposes the situation that led her to this situation, which led to her psychological condition, i.e. cruel discrimination against women.

– As one of the brightest representatives of the genre of dystopia today, M. Atwood uses the opportunities of this genre with the highest skill to warn mankind of environmental disasters and social cataclysms and for this unique skill pays for the status of "Prophet of dystopia" in full.

– In M. Atwood's dystopia "Oryx and Crake", she warns that the artificial restoration of the disturbed balance of mankind, interference in the natural development of the universe can lead to serious consequences. The author points out that any artificial intervention is a "boomerang effect" weapon, primarily aimed at the people who carried it out.

– In the dystopia "The Year of the Flood", M. Atwood reveals the futility of genetic engineering, which aims to "purify" humanity. The author demonstrates that the struggle between good and evil is eternal and indispensable, that real selection is the result of that struggle: artificial idealization is in itself a utopia, and this utopia is codified as a dystopia at its core.

– M. Atwood reveals the erroneousness of the ideal in the dystopia "MaddAddam", shows that the "purified" gene carriers as a

result of artificial selection don't embody the "highest" and "sterile" level of humanity.

– In M. Atwood's novel "The Handmaid's Tale" the identification of women, their deprivation of socio-psychological identity is exposed; the essence and chronology of the process are followed; this fact is characterized as an initial and decisive manipulative tool of gender inequality (asymmetry).

– In the dystopia, "The Handmaid's Tale" the writer warns of one of the greatest dangers of a totalitarian society, namely the deprivation of women's rights; in accordance with the rules of the dystopian genre, reveals her predictions through a negative-sarcastic assessment.

– In the novel, the author explains that the most powerful tool of manipulation in the management of a totalitarian society is religion; it is clear that the rebels, who claim to be believers, are, in essence, using religion as a means of manipulative rule against humanity.

– In M. Atwood's novel "The Blind Assassin", a woman is described as a victim of social stereotypes. A woman deprived of her right to choose is forced to continue the "imitation of life" condemned by social conditions.

– The protagonist of the novel "The Blind Assassin" exposes the unnecessary sacrifices of women, in fact, as an escape from the real struggle; reveals the inevitability of the mechanism of Divine Justice, such as "being a victim" as "punishment" with life itself.

The scientific novelty of the research. The scientific novelty of the research is primarily due to the fact that in the dissertation, the creativity of Margaret Atwood, for the first time in Azerbaijani literary criticism, is the object of systematic analysis. On the other hand, the scientific novelty of the dissertation research is the fact that for the first time not only in Azerbaijan, but in world literature studies (specifically, in world "Atwood studies"), the writer systematically explores feminist ideas in the context of his dystopian genre.

The theoretical and practical significance of the research. The theoretical significance of the research work is primarily due to the fact that for the first time in the history of Azerbaijani literature, the work of M. Atwood, the flagship of modern world literature, was

subjected to a systematic analysis. The theoretical significance of the research is justified by the appeal in the form of a dissertation to the creativity of this great writer, who didn't gain the "recognition" of a sufficiently comprehensive study in Azerbaijani literary criticism, and the emphasis on feminist aspects of her creativity. Systematic analysis of the form of expression of the dystopian genre in M. Atwood's creativity is of great theoretical importance both in terms of studying the author's literary heritage and in terms of investigating the evolutionary features and directions of the dystopian genre in modern world literature. As the first research work in Azerbaijan aimed to systematical analysis of M. Atwood's creativity, the dissertation can serve as a useful theoretical source for the next generation of research works, which can cover the investigation of the author's many-branched literary heritage, and may serve as a primary form for the field of Atwood studies for the investigation of a new generation of researchers.

As for the practical significance of the research work, the scientific results and generalizations obtained during the work on the dissertation including "History of Canadian Literature", "Modern World Literature", "Modern World Women Writers", "Feminist Literature" and etc. can be used in the teaching of such basic and optional subjects, as well as in the teaching of related subjects taught at the master's level.

Approbation and application. The main provisions of the dissertation were presented at international and national conferences on the basis of scientific results obtained during the research. Scientific articles on Margaret Atwood's feminist ideas and the problem of dystopia have appeared in local and foreign media.

Name of the organization where the dissertation is performed. The work was performed at the Department of Literature of Foreign Countries at the Azerbaijan University of Languages.

The total volume of the dissertation with a sign including a separate volume of the structural units of the dissertation. The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters each of which contains some subchapters, a conclusion and a list of references. The introduction of the dissertation consists of 8 pages, 15 214 characters,

Chapter I 36 pages, 70 316 characters, Chapter II 28 pages, 53 992 characters, Chapter III 39 pages, 74 465 characters, Conclusion 4 pages, 7 924 characters. The total volume of the dissertation, excluding the list of used literature consists 221 911 characters.

MAIN CONTENT OF THE RESEARCH WORK

In the **introduction** of the dissertation the relevance and degree of development of the topic are substantiated, goals and objectives are defined, research methods, main provisions, scientific novelty, theoretical and practical significance of the research, approbation and structure of the research work are presented.

The first chapter of the dissertation, entitled “**The formation stage of Margaret Atwood’s creative personality and the genesis of the ideas of feminism**”, consists of three sub-chapters. The first section of the first sub-chapter entitled “*Childhood traumas "hidden" in the background of feminist ideas as a return to self*”, states that despite many studies tracing the impact of M. Atwood’s life and career, as H.S.Macpherson¹⁴ noted, almost none of them managed to fully reflect the life of the writer. However, against the background of general information that can be collected from different sources, it is possible to follow the way of life that played an exceptional role in the formation of the writer’s creative identity.

M.Atwood’s father, Carl Edmund Atwood, a professor at the University of Toronto, was a member of the Canadian Society for the Protection of Nature and an active citizen-intellectual in the environmental movement. Graeme Gibson, a prominent Canadian writer with whom she has been married for 36 years, heads the Birdlife International – Rare Bird Club, an international environmental organization that aims to protect rare birds¹⁵. As

¹⁴ Macpherson, H.S. The Cambridge Introduction to Margaret Atwood. Chapter 1, / H.S.Macpherson. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,– 1stedition, – 2010. – 158 p.

¹⁵ Jackson-Houlston C.M. Margaret Atwood woos and wows scientists at ornithological congress in Vancouver // Vancouver Courier, <https://www.vancourier.com/news/margaret-atwood-woos-and-wows-scientists-at-ornithological-congress-in-vancouver-1.23408926>

M. Atwood herself noted in an article about her mother in 2007, her mother, Margaret Dorothy Killam Atwood, played an important role in her formation as a creative person, a defender of women's rights, and a lover of nature. M. Atwood inherited the ability to fight without hesitation from his rebellious mother. This point played an exceptional role in the creative identity of M. Atwood and played an exceptional role in the formation of her ecological views, in establishing a principled civic position on the protection of nature.

In the novel "Cat's Eye" by M. Atwood, Elaine, the heroine of the work, talks about her adaptation to a big life, a new environment, finding her female identity, a female beginning, and the difficult path to reconciliation with it (that beginning) in the background of her life story. It should be noted that until M. Atwood was twelve years old, their family also had two children. The protagonist, Elaine, lives far away from the city with her brother Stephen and her parents, just as M. Atwood did in her childhood. Deprived of close contact with her peers, Elaine has difficulty communicating and expressing herself. It substantiates the idea that the events described in M. Atwood's novel "Cat's Eye" are a reflection of the moral shocks experienced in the writer's life. In fact, Elaine's struggle with the outside world, as well as with her own inner complexes, is part of a struggle to find her identity. The author emphasizes that the core of a woman's identity was laid in the earliest childhood. Noting that Elaine is helpless and incompetent in front of her peers, who have more feminine features, Atwood attributes the vast majority of childhood traumas to living outside society and having to adapt painfully. This, in turn, visually confirms the writer's stereotypes about writing her life story, her inner fears and anxieties, her hopes and dreams.

Acquaintance with the biographical information about M. Atwood sheds light on many factors that shape her creative identity, and allows to identify the people who played a role in her formation as a writer (during reading). The fact that her aunt Joyce Barkhouse was a children's writer didn't play the last role in Atwood's motivation to write. Since the embryos of a creative personality are formed from childhood, it is undeniable that what any creative person, M. Atwood, will create and in what style and genre is

known at an early stage, at the stage of formation of individual tastes and priorities. Among the authors who influenced the creativity of M. Atwood is the English-Canadian writer Susanna Moody. For the first time in the novel "Alias Grace", the author presented the real historical events described in the novel "Life in the Clearings Versus the Bush" by S. Moodie in a different author's interpretation.

The next sub-chapter entitled "*On the Homogeneity of M. Atwood's Contradictory Identity with Canadian Identity or the Architectonics of Women's Struggle*", notes that although the Ontario region where Atwood was born was dominated by an English-speaking population, the Atwood family lived in the French-speaking provinces of Canada for many years due to the objective necessity of his father's experiences. The serious confrontation between the two cultures and the failure to take appropriate political measures to stem the tide (which had not yet taken place at the time of Susanna Moodie's magazines) turned Quebec into a kind of explosive gunpowder barrel. The protagonist points out in her memoirs that the lack of French in Quebec, as well as in Quebec after her return, created a somewhat deplorable situation. The author, however, continues to insist on her approach to the difference between a U.S. identity and a Canadian identity. Therefore, just as the American identity is characterized by great and powerful arrogance, so the Canadian identity, as well as the mood of the country's women, is characterized by duplicity and internal strife. In the words of Susanna Moodie M. Atwood, "by finally revealing her inner world, she becomes the spirit of the land she once hated"¹⁶. Therefore, the work is directly dedicated to the identification of the Canadian national identity, the ideological core of Canadian nationalism.

M. Atwood's "Surfacing" deals with the depiction of Canadian realities. The content of the events in the work, which consists of three parts and reflects the events that took place over two weeks, allows determine the relativity of this time limit, their role in the internal metamorphoses of the protagonist. The protagonist, who set

¹⁶ Bilan R.P. Margaret Atwood's "The Journals of Susanna Moodie" <http://www.canadianpoetry.ca/cpjr/vol02/bilan.htm>

out on a journey with an inner world and a spiritual burden, acquires a new “I” at the end of the two-week journey, in fact, he regains the “I” she lost under certain conditions. The protagonist’s mother died of cancer. Her father is missing. Finding a missing father is the starting point of the journey. However, the image of the missing father also appears here as a symbol of the missing “I”, the search for the missing identity. The protagonist also enters a new phase of life with new strength, using her inner strength, which she didn’t believe in at the beginning of the work. Going back to Canada, going back to her childhood, seems to be restoring her lost generational ties and, consequently, her inner source of strength. The work turns into a manifesto of a woman’s identity. In this sense, it can be said that M. Atwood is not only a feminist writer, but also a speaker on women’s issues and a defender of women’s rights.

The section, *“The Humiliated Woman’s Inner Aggression, or a New Story of Old History: “Alias Grace”*, discusses the nature of a woman’s trials and tribulations, and sometimes even the path of suffering and deprivation that changes her outlook and values, the anatomy of metamorphoses inspired by her psyche is analyzed. The writer “descends” into the subconscious and emphasizes the identification of a woman in the most different situations, the “keys” of the model of behavior in those conditions. M. Atwood presents the possibility of judging the story created on the basis of deep psychologism. The writer ruthlessly criticizes the problem of woman’s being “victim”, the problem of gender asymmetry, social injustice, but doesn’t apply the sentence “guilty” or “innocent” to anyone. She invites each reader to look at the events from her own point of view, and everyone sees herself, her relatives and the problems of her society in these events. M. Atwood evaluates the work from the point of view of revealing a woman’s choked, drowned voice. Helen Davis, who evaluates the sounds, words, and speeches of M. Atwood “put on others”, says that *“everyone who comes in contact with Grace actually” puts “her speech into her language”, speaks “it with her own speech; Grace says what they want to hear”*¹⁷.

¹⁷ Gender and Ventriloquism in Victorian and Neo-Victorian Fiction: Passionate Puppets. / – Publisher: AIAA, – 2 Oct. – 2012. – 220 p.

Also, in this paragraph we see that M. Atwood adapted to the tendency of multi-genre, which seeks to get rid of its belonging to one genre, and can easily switch from one literary form to another when necessary¹⁸. It is these adaptive passages that make the novel “Alias Grace” even more readable and effective. Thus, the work is written in the form of both poetry and prose, and is distinguished by the richness of Gothic and fiction elements. In terms of both poetic passages and prose form, M. Atwood makes “references” to her predecessor Susanna Moodie’s novel, which reflects the same events. The principle of such an interpretation allows the writer to give realistic interpretations of real events. Along with real historical characters, the creation of fictional images results in a new, different idea-content.

M. Atwood doesn’t offer a new perspective on women’s rights and freedoms from a historical perspective. At the same time, Atwood wants to show the vitality of the double standards faced by women, that is, the immutability of years, even centuries. It is impossible to determine what kind of Grace is, on the one hand, a naive fool, and on the other, a cunning, cunning, cowardly and helpless victim, as well as a cold-blooded, ruthless murderer, drawing a real psychological image of her based on dry historical facts. Grace, in fact, includes all these stages, and this section emphasizes that the weight of the burden was so heavy on the “shoulders” of the sixteen-year-old girl, or more precisely on her psyche, that Grace’s dual identity was inevitable. Grace was ready to be a kind of “victim” because of the circumstances in which she was born, the environment in which she grew up, and the difficult life she lived. The choice of a woman who crosses the “red line” in the work of M. Atwood is, more precisely, a matter of lack of choice. Specifically, here, as in her other novels, the issue of abortion is raised. It no longer focuses on the legal side of the issue, but on the issue of sin in the eyes of society, in the eyes of the woman herself. For this reason, the novel “Alias Grace” is considered a work that reveals the social aspects of the gender problem.

¹⁸ Shead, J. Margaret Atwood: Crime Fiction Writer: The Reworking of a Popular Genre. / J. Shead. – Farnham: Ashgate, – 2015. – 232 p.

Chapter II of the research work, entitled “**Dystopia in Margaret Atwood’s creativity - as a warning of disasters awaiting mankind**” consists of three sub-chapters. In the first sub-chapter, entitled “*The Prophet of Dystopia*” or *the realization of the writer’s predictions: as fear signals about future threats*”, M. Atwood is estimated in modern English literature as the “Prophet of Dystopia”¹⁹. Thus, the ideas voiced in her dystopian works (“The Handmaid’s Tale”, “The MaddAddam Trilogy”), no matter how unrealistic they may seem at the time, have proven their worth over time. In this sense, it can be said that researchers who evaluate the author’s dystopia as a kind of “warning” manifesto addressed to humanity are not far from the truth. M. Atwood’s sharp intuition about the course of historical events gives a great deal of reality to her “predictions”. In her works, M. Atwood skillfully predicts the political, environmental, economic and social processes that may take place in the near future, so that her dystopia doesn’t seem so far away. For this reason, the creativity of M. Atwood doesn’t fit into the limits of time and space. She is beyond any conditions. Despite the author’s modest objections, it is acknowledged among researchers that speculative fiction works are strangely predictive²⁰.

Then, in order to understand the essence of the writer's anti-utopia, the chronology of its formation, it is explained what the form of his incitement is based on, what narrative unity it refers to. The form of speculative fiction isn’t limited to the description of today’s problems in the context of unrealistic world models, but is characterized by foresight and predictability of the future. In her various works, M. Atwood tries to warn the public about the expected bitter consequences of the policy of discrimination against women, gender discrimination, ranging from religious fundamentalism. Also, as a person with strict environmental principles, M. Atwood tries to awaken the world on the basis of the description of the terrible

¹⁹ Mead, R. Margaret Atwood, the Prophet of Dystopia // The New Yorker, – 2017, – 17 April.

²⁰ Larson, J.L. Margaret Atwood and the Future of Prophecy. // Religion and Literature. Religious Themes in Contemporary North American Fiction, – 1989. Vol. 21, № 1, – p.27-61

ecological tragedies of the countries invented in connection with the impending danger. Therefore, she expresses the terrible predictions of the spiritual, ecological, social and political cataclysms that await mankind in the future with sarcasm and bitter irony.

Also, in this paragraph speculative fiction reflects the realities that can be realized, not just inventing unreal worlds, unreal heroes, but referring to issues that ring a “death bell” for humanity. It is these aspects, as well as the more “serious” and sharply satirical side of speculative fiction, as well as its reflection of unrealistic reality, that puts it in a more distinctive position than science fiction. This section discusses the differences in the form of speculative fiction, the separation of science fiction as an independent genre and the right to exist independently, and compares the work of M. Atwood and Ursula K. Le Guin in this genre. M. Atwood creates her own unreal reality without the need for unnatural, extraordinary beings and objects. Here people are human, animals are animals. They can simply live in fictional worlds and undergo genetic modification. However, as beings living in spaceships and living in the underworld, they do not belong to situations devoid of full reality. Namely, the factor of genetic modification confronts the two writers in the genres of speculative fiction and science fiction. According to Atwood, the problem of genetic engineering, in many cases characterizing speculative fiction, is that “*for the science fiction genre, space and other galaxies are the main distinguishing markers*”²¹.

The sub-chapter, “*The novel “The Heart Goes Last” - as a New Form of dystopia*”, states that M. Atwood herself, while describing the novel, acknowledged that it was “*a novel of bitter laughter and deep concern for the near future*”²², here the legitimate ones are blocked, and lawlessness and illegality are taking place. At first glance, her writings may seem very sarcastic, her expressions

²¹ Evans C.L. Margaret Atwood and Ursula K. Le Guin debate science fiction vs. "realism" <https://io9.gizmodo.com/margaret-atwood-and-ursula-k-le-guin-debate-science-fi-5650396>

²² Margaret Atwood's new novel, *The Heart Goes Last*, to be released in September, – 2015, March 13: [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/arts/margaret-atwood-s-new-novel-the-heart-goes-last-to-be-released-in-september-1.2994293>

very sharp, and her parables absurd. However, she tries to convey the seriousness of the situation to people by thickening the artistic “colors of description”. As Canadian critic H.John²³ points out, as the Atwood-like dystopian plot unfolds, it becomes a surreal adventure, exposing the problems of self-deception and corporate control. The critic notes that the satirical impulses of M. Atwood’s work come to the fore, “rough” – contrasting creative “discoveries” create chaotic plot, but emphasizes that the author differs enough from other dystopian novels, the urgency of the issues raised.

The novel “The Heart goes Last” describes that a young family with a very low income and therefore have to live in a car is considering possible options to get out of trouble, even making money through slot machines has to evaluate the probability. The helpless couple decides to join “the Positron project” as a way out. As the plot unfolds, horrific facts emerge, and it becomes clear that those responsible for “the Positron project” use social control for dishonorable activities²⁴.

“The Positron” project aims to dominate people’s thinking, control their desires and aspirations, as well as regulate the sexual lives of men and women. The work not only answers many questions related to human psychology, but also raises new questions and raises thought-provoking issues. But it also warns of what the dystopian world is capable of.

Interesting aspect of M. Atwood’s work is that in this novel, as in her other dystopias, she connects futuristic ideas with new information and predictions. The richness here is not limited to technological innovations. M.Atwood successfully uses the innovations of scientific thought while realizing the dystopian description of the near future. If we take into account that the project of scientific experiment described in the novel (“social experiment”) is related to the study of behavioral differences of individuals in the

²³ John H.J. The Heart Goes Last by Margaret Atwood review – rewardingly strange // The Guardian, – 2015, – 23 September

²⁴ Johnstone, D. The Heart Goes Last, by Margaret Atwood – book review: Travels in Dystopia, with Doris Day and Marilyn // The Independent, – 2015, 27 September

relevant social conditions. Throughout the work, M. Atwood focuses on the unity and struggle of biological identity with spiritual identity. As in her other works, the body is valued not only in terms of physiological processes, but also as a factor that plays a role in the regulation of mental and emotional state. Here, M. Atwood exposes the “brainwashing” operations that are characteristic of modern media and advertising technologies. This technology, which targets the manipulation of the human mind and realizes control by addressing the control levers of mass psychology, somehow automates people’s orientation. In her dystopian description of the near future, M. Atwood predicts that the psychological directional potential of verbal coding will be even stronger.

The dystopian world created by the author in the paragraph entitled *“Genetic engineering and artificial selection ideas in the MaddAddam trilogy: a step from utopia to dystopia”* doesn’t seem real at first glance, but when read carefully, real events on the background of the world we live in are understandable and clear. On the other hand, it is possible to see a sad irony in the author’s description of the desperate situation in the world. The artistic world of the work tells about the unimaginable troubles caused by genetic engineering and the tragic end of human hunting. The frontiers of genetic engineering described in the book are endless: these include mutations in animals and the resulting acquisition of new species, experiments on all living things, and countless experiments to find the elixir of eternal youth.

The dystopia of “Oryx and Crake” begins with an episode of a catastrophic planet. Epidemics, terrorism, and the chaos caused by genetic engineering are destroying all social institutions. It turns out that a friend and beloved woman with a scientist, burning with incredible ideas, dragged the society in which they lived, and then the whole world, into the absurdity of consumption, and ultimately led to its destruction. The fact that the planet is on the verge of disaster, epidemics, terrorism, and the chaos caused by genetic engineering predicts that it will destroy all social institutions, as a result of dystopia.

M. Atwood reveals the futility of genetic engineering, which

aims to “purify” humanity in the dystopia “The Year of the Flood”. The author demonstrates that the struggle between good and evil is eternal, that real selection is the result of that struggle. It is clear from the work that artificial idealization is in itself a utopia, and this utopia is codified as dystopia in its core. The novel “The Year of the Flood” is about biblical motives that seek to create a utopia, but ultimately drag society and the world into dystopia. Events “come out” of the model of society that the protagonist wants and take on the ugliest form. Members of the so-called “Gardeners of God” sect carry out a “waterless flood” plan to avenge human immorality. By describing the consequences of the road to crisis, the book sheds light on the situations in which genetic engineering can lead to human disasters. In other words, it warns that the progress of science, technology and progress will lead to the destruction of the world in the hands of ignorant people. The epidemic in the work leads to massacres, mass deaths, but at the same time makes people think.

The dystopia of “MaddAddam” exposes the erroneousness of the ideal, showing that “purified” gene carriers don’t embody the “highest” and “sterile” levels of humanity. The inability of the new “geniuses” who are not ready for real life to enter “Paradise” with their artificial “flawlessness” proves once again that this idea is a big mistake. The writer reveals that any artificiality, no matter what one’s intentions, is the greatest flaw. Cartwright writes of this part of the trilogy: *“It was a description of the life of the planet that was devastated by the pandemic and many unimaginable disasters. No one knows how many people will survive here”*²⁵. Indeed, the human race must continue to do genetic engineering, or it will not be as sustainable as manipulation. These questions also make M. Atwood think, and therefore the work sounds like a warning of future disasters.

Chapter III of the dissertation is entitled **“Features of the reflection of feminism and dystopia in the novels of Margaret Atwood”**. This chapter is divided into two sub-chapters. In the first sub-chapter, *“Anti-symbol of feminism and utopian manifesto in dystopia “The Handmaid’s Tale”*, the male-dominated world of

²⁵ Cartwright, J. MaddAddam by Margaret Atwood – review// The Guardian, – 2013, – 8 September.

women takes on a horrible picture in the author's depiction of dystopian elements. It is as if the writer warns women who dream of a utopian society of the horrors that await them in the event of dystopia, and draws unprecedented forms of oppression against women in an authoritarian-totalitarian society. Describing the "unbelievable" aggression against women, the author speaks of the horrors of the problems facing the human race in a world where moral and ethical values are lost and social and political chaos exists. To do this, the writer describes the radical change in the political, economic, cultural and social life of the world and its subsequent state. Women in the working-class in the state of Gilead are at the bottom of the social ladder. Even women from the upper classes are one step below the men of patriarchal society. Servants give birth to women for the upper class, thus covering up their infertility. A servant who is unable to have children in one family is given to another family, renamed in a new family, and called by the name of her new master. Civil servants in Gilead have been sexually and physically abused, but they can't protest. To protest was to oppose the state, and in the end to be punished, and often to say goodbye to life. In this regard, the work is considered a dystopian novel that describes the most painful consequences of violence against women²⁶.

Then, it discusses the rise of religious radicals to the Old Testament, the rebuilding of a patriarchal society based on the Bible, and the governance of the country in accordance with ancient traditions. The new society is noted as a clear example of a totalitarian-patriarchal system. In such a system, they execute people who think differently, intimidate society, and punish anyone who opposes the system. The laws of the state of Gilead are based on Christianity, and any member who deviates from it is punished with the most severe punishment. Invisible fear and apprehension among the people make Gilead mythical. The government, which forcibly

²⁶ Deer, G. *The Handmaid's Tale: Dystopia and the Paradoxes of Power* // Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. / G.Deer. – Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, – 2001. – p.93-112; McCarthym, M. *The Handmaid's Tale* // *The New York Times*, – 1986, – 9 February.

restores the traditions of the Old Testament, enforces the law of reproduction by force, and promotes violence against women as a matter of life and death. In the work, the most insulting events against women are dressed in legal garb and the events are based on traditional religious rules. In Gileadian society, women are divided into castes, and each caste has its own function. The highest caste belongs to the places allocated to the wives of commanders. The presence of Marpha in the caste replaces the working women in the family, who provide food for the house. They are only useful to this society as workers, and no one cares about their human qualities. The most feared members of the Gilead community are the handmaids. They chase everyone, give “denunciations” to the relevant authorities, and when the time comes, they come face to face. The hope of the women of Gilead was to be patient, to live in restraint, and to obey the laws of the upper caste. The patience of women belonging to the lower caste of Gilead is shown to be the only way for them to survive.

In the sub-chapter entitled *“The Revival Narration of the Symbol in “The Handmaid’s Tale” - Colors exposing Women’s Pain”*, colors are defined as symbols that determine the social status of the characters. Thus, the color of the black commander is the color of the commander’s wife, and the color of the servants is red. The green-swamp color symbolizes Marpha, brown Aunts, and dark brown color symbolizes midwives. A caste society exists symbolically in the form of color. If the red color of the servants symbolizes their ability to give birth, it can also be the color of blood wars. On the other hand, the state created as a result of the coup can also symbolize a stillborn child in the mother’s womb. In this regard, the end of the work remains unclear, and religious radicals fighting for the symbol of the red-servant, in the end, in essence, under the name of the Republic of Gilead, can only get a servant (woman – A.A). In this approach, red becomes the color of irony.

The color black comes to life in the face of the Commander throughout the work as a symbol of evil, corruption, betrayal and treachery. He wears black, holds a high position in government after the coup as a member of the organization “Sons of Jacob” and fulfills

his “black” desires. Black helps to reveal his identity. As a symbol of white hope, trust and purity, the protagonist's memories come to life in the form of his daughter, his childhood and memories of his daughter are often confused, but in both cases they are depicted in white clothes.

The writer expresses her thoughts with a color association that “revives” women’s pain, and manages to describe women’s suffering in the meaning of each color.

A sub-chapter entitled *“Woman as a Victim of Social Stereotypes in the novel “The Blind Assassin”* provides an analysis of a work that revolves around a family history that was rich in the past and later went bankrupt. Against the background of semi-mythical, semi-real events, unrealistic images of the old woman’s unfulfilled dreams come to life. Interestingly, a fantastic story about a blind assassin and his dumb lover takes place on an unknown planet. The happy lives of a blind and dumb couple resonate with the writer’s ideal search. The other plot line is a love story of two lovers hiding from reality, escaping from the real world, secretly opposing the laws of society that surround them. M. Atwood’s writing skills and uniqueness lies in the fact that he can bring together the unwritten laws of society, the love story of a victim of social stereotypes, the history of Canada, its real past and present. The third plot line is a family tragedy described by an old woman. This part, reminiscent of a biographical novel, is about the retelling of events that lived in the memories between the past and the present, sometimes forgotten in old age, and sometimes deliberately erased from memory. The writer addresses the old woman’s past to the future hoping that the “lifelessness” of the woman, who suffers of the dictates of people and society, will one day end and get rid of social stereotypes.

The Mythical-Fantastic World as an Interpreter of the Modern World reflects the dire fate of all women. Almost all of the women, who were doomed to live by the laws of society and became more and more spiritual and physical “victims”, lived alone with social stereotypes. They were forced to choose a life they didn’t want to play, to play the game of “looking good” at any cost. As a result,

each of them suffered from emotional trauma, and some of them couldn't overcome them at all and committed suicide. One of the plot lines, which is rich in magical and mythological elements, is a novel actually written on behalf of two sisters under the title "Blind Assassin". The protagonists of the novel are anonymous women and men. According to the investigation, one of the customs of the city, where these young people live in the fantasy world, is the sacrifices to the gods - beautiful girls: *"They cut the girls' throats, the blood flows calmly, give strength to the waning moon, which in turn prevent it from withering away and disappearing completely"*²⁷. Apparently, the mythical plot speaks of the use of "sacrificial" girls as inanimate objects, as "unnecessary" objects for "bigger" deeds. During the ritual, their tongues are cut off so that the victim doesn't make a sound, thus ensuring that the victim is a volunteer. On the other hand, such a description is a sign that the writer is talking about real women who have been silenced by society.

In the novel "The Blind Assassin", the protagonist's isolation from the world at an early age is the only reason for her isolation from the world around her. It is clear from the work that she is often misunderstood; she does not have the opportunity to "be like everyone else". In fact, the mask of "invisibility" created for the hero helps her to escape, at least in part, from the pain of life, not to "infect" what is happening around her. On the other hand, the stigma of being "different" from everyone else doesn't relieve her of her inner suffering, becoming alienated she becomes lonely, and eventually leads to suicide, which results in assassination. If the older sister's escape from reality takes place by hiding in a rich life, the protagonist achieves this by remaining silent. When she isn't strong enough, when she can no longer fight for her life, she commits suicide on the day when her hopes are dashed.

The work ends with the author's appeal to the readers – the idea that a woman's freedom and identity will be achieved not by dumb and silent, but by fighting for her.

²⁷ Atwood, M. The Blind Assassin. / M.Atwood. – Rosettabooks LLC, – 2003. – 54 p.

In the **Conclusion** of the dissertation we present the main scientific provisions and conclusions of the research as follows:

– M. Atwood's childhood - her family environment, socio-geographical landscape, education, close circle left indelible traces in her creative identity, and these traces, throughout her career, in separate works ("Surfacing", "Cat's eye") reflected. Thus, M. Atwood's sensitivity to environmental problems and its reflection in her work stems from the influence of the life priorities of her father, an entomologist. M. Atwood's mother played a significant role in the rise of feminist ideas to the creative leitmotif. M. Atwood's aunt Joyce Barkhaus is one of the prominent children's writers of Canada, and this fact didn't play the last role in the formation of M. Atwood's creative identity.

– M. Atwood, as a carrier of feminist values, doesn't want to see her female heroes as "victims". The silence of a female heroine who has been oppressed, deprived of her rights, and subjected to certain deprivations is often a prelude to a sudden resurrection ("Surfacing"), or "self-locking" and inner accountability ("Cat's eye"), or pre-revenge ("Alias Grace") is a temporary confusion. In short, M. Atwood's female protagonists are often arrogant about weakness and helplessness; they even avoid being victims without accepting themselves decisively in such a situation.

– A certain ambiguity in M. Atwood's works and in her creative identity in general, appears as a continuation of the "paranoid schizophrenia" of the Canadian identity, as the author herself admits in Susanna Moodie's Magazines. In "Susanna Moodie's Magazines" and "Surfacing", M. Atwood tries to solve the problem of Canadian identity and assesses the complex traces of this dual identity in women's psychology with full objectivity.

– Although M. Atwood's novel "Alias Grace" is a fantastic detective based on an individual interpretation of real historical events, it mirrors the real social problems of society. Psychological research to determine the level of involvement of the protagonist in the murder of the work reveals the drawing of a psychological portrait of Grace Marks, her hatred of women victims.

– The reality of the events described in M. Atwood's dystopias

rightly gave her the status of “Prophet of Utopia”, which is primarily due to the fact that the gender problems reflected in her works appear as historical facts of environmental disasters over time.

– It turns out that M. Atwood got into an argument with many colleagues on the issue of genre of her dystopias and insisted on distinguishing the genre in which she operated as a genre of speculative fiction, which is far from science fiction. M. Atwood argued that science fiction could not become a reality, and speculative fiction reflected the near future that could be realized. In her dystopia “The Heart Goes Last”, M. Atwood gave a serious warning about the dangers that await humanity thanks to “brainwashing” technologies and other manipulation mechanisms.

– The analysis of M. Atwood’s dystopia “Oryx and Crake” gives grounds to say that the management of real, natural development dynamics, selection by artificial “purification” of humanity can lead to serious complications. The author reveals that this artificial intervention, the imposition of the artificial mission of Divine Justice, first destroys the person who claims to be “Godhead” and then, contrary to the expected balance, brings a violation of harmony to humanity.

– In the dystopian “The Year of the Flood”, M. Atwood proves that the idea of “purification of the human race” through genetic engineering is “born dead” from the nucleus. The author unequivocally proves that even the most “successful” selection that is, artificial utopia, is essentially “pregnant” with dystopia, and will sooner or later face a crisis.

– M. Atwood’s analysis of the dystopian “Oryx and Crake” allows us to say that any artificial idealization, any kind of selection that takes place outside the struggle of natural good and evil, is flawed in its result: the paradise claim of the sterile “man” is impossible as a direct artificial derivative. Artificial utopia is, at best, an incomplete, incomplete utopia that does not allow dreams to come true, that is, in fact, dystopia.

– In the dystopian role of the author in “The Handmaid’s Tale”, the author exposes the view of women as objects, property, goods in a totalitarian society, reveals the horror of using them (women)

simply to meet certain needs and requirements of a society subject to masculine laws, as a restriction of their rights.

– It is not accidental that M. Atwood's parallels with the “dumb women” in the myth, which she uses as an allusive background in her novel “The Blind Assassin”, that is, with helpless women deprived of the opportunity to protest by cutting their tongues, are not accidental. M. Atwood reveals the tragic resemblance of the situation of these women, who were sentenced to eternal silence, to women who were sentenced to “sacrifice” by being deprived of the right to choose at the request of the conditions of society.

The main content and scientific provisions of the dissertation are reflected in the following articles and theses of the author:

1. The problem of gender inequality and women's freedom in Margaret Atwood's novel “The Handmaid's Tale” // – Baku: ANAS, “Philological issues”, – 2018. № 20, – p.302-308.
2. Margaret Atwood's novel “Cat's Eye” as an reflection of feminist ideas // – Baku: Baku State University, “Language and literature (theoretical, scientific, methodical journal)”, – 2018. №1(109), – p.226-228.
3. Dystopia in Margaret Atwood's creativity as a warning man kind of forth coming disaster // – Ukraine, Virtus scientific journal, – 2019. April Issue, №33, – p. 139-145.
4. Architectonics of women's struggle in Margaret Atwood's novel “Surfacing” // – Baku: ANAS, “Philological issues”, – 2019. №5, –p.338-345.
5. Problems arising from gender inequality in Margaret Atwood's novel “Alias Grace” (new interpretation of the old history) // – Baku: Baku Slavic University, Actual problems of studying the humanities, – 2019. №1, – p.168-172.
6. A look at Margaret Atwood's novel “Alias Grace” (in the context of the feminist problem) // “II Republican scientific-practical conference of young researchers” Azerbaijan University. – Baku: – 2019, – p.90-92.
7. On the question of the genesis of the idea of feminism in the creativity of M. Atwood // – Scientific and practical Conference

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 9. Colors that speak of women’s pain (based on Margaret Atwood’s novel “The Handmaid’s Tale”) // – Baku: Azerbaijan University, “Silk Road” magazine, – 2020. №2, – p.144-151.
 10. New world model in Margaret Atwood’s novel dystopia // – Baku: Baku State University, “Language and literature (theoretical, scientific, methodical journal)”, – 2020. №1 (113), – p.281-284.
 11. The problem of female identity in the creativity of Margaret Atwood // International Conference on Gender problems & Modern Azerbaijan. – Baku: – November 27, – 2020, – p. 25-27.
 12. On the specificity of Margaret Atwood’s dystopia // – Science and society – Methods and problems of practical application. Proceedings of the 9th International conference. Accent Graphics Communications & Publishing. – Vancouver, Canada. – 15 February, – 2020, – p. 40-44.

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