

Women as “The Fittest” for a New Post-Pandemic World Order: Christina Sweeney-Baird’s *The End of Men*

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ABSTRACT

As a major invisible global threat causing unprecedented disruptions and restrictions in daily life all over the world, COVID-19 pandemic has been among the most popular subject matters of contemporary fiction. At this point, the first work of fiction focusing on COVID-19 is Lawrence Wright’s *The End of October* (2020), in which coronavirus is fictionalised as the Kongoli breaking out in Indonesia and spreading all over the world. Elaborating on the effects of the virus on daily life, Wright puts emphasis on the need for global solidarity to combat the virus and save the global society. However, different from Wright’s work, Christina Sweeney-Baird discusses the issue of pandemic, reinterpreting COVID-19 from a futuristic perspective, envisaging a post-pandemic world order dominated by women, with men’s death due to a lethal virus showing its effects all over the world in her debut novel, *The End of Men* (2022). In the work, the deaths of Fraser McAlpine, Catherine’s husband, Anthony and the wealthy Mr Tai signify men’s failure in adaptation to circumstances of the pandemic, while women’s survival, the domination of once male-dominated jobs by women, Catherine’s solo impregnation by donor sperm and the use of apps for dating and love just between women embody females as the “fittest species” for survival to bring a new world order dominated by women. Thus, Sweeney-Baird’s work invites reading for the evolutionary transformation of the global society due to a lethal pandemic from male-dominated to female-dominated system with reference to Darwin’s theory of evolution.

1. Theoretical Framework

Globalisation as a major phenomenon has been shaping lifestyles, cultures, societies all over the world in the present century. For Guttal (2007), “the term ‘globalisation’ is widely used to describe a variety of economic, cultural, social, and political changes that have shaped the world [...], from the much-celebrated revolution in information technology to the diminishing of national and geo-political boundaries in an ever-expanding, transnational movement of goods, services, and capital” (p. 523). Globalisation can contribute to the international movement and circulation of goods, services, and capital, but it can also affect socio-cultural

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life in global context, as, in Chandan Sengupta's (2001) words, "global culture is often described in terms of processes such as 'westernisation', 'McDonaldisation, CocaColonisation'" (p. 3140). Hence, globalisation offers a unique lifestyle, diminishing, if not removing, the national boundaries, all over the world. In line with these aspects, McGrew's following definition best explains the characteristics of globalisation: "Globalisation refers to the multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that transcend the nation-states (and by implications societies) which make up the modern world system" (1992, p. 65).

While this interconnection shows its effects in socio-cultural area, it can also have adverse effects in global community. At this point, the perception of the world as a place devoid of security is particularly reinforced in relation to the contagious diseases, with the beginning of the second decade of the present century. Considering interconnection as the basis of the globalising world, the infectious diseases can be spread all over the world. In Shantesh Kumar Singh (2019)'s words, "due to high mobility, infectious diseases [...] move easily from one country to another. [...] An epidemic i[n] one country or region threatens the whole world" (p. 11). The pandemics are a new global threat. However, they are invisible and do not make any discrimination with regard to social status, culture, and nationality. Beginning in late December in 2019 in Wuhan, China, the COVID-19 pandemic is an epitome of how an invisible being can threaten the whole world and cause a feeling of fear in global context. Accordingly, Matthias Rogg (2020)'s argument best explains the extent of the threat COVID-19 pandemic brings about: "The world is caught up in an existential struggle. The opponent is intangible; it spares neither state nor social group and does not stop at any border" (p. 55). As the coronavirus causing the COVID-19 disease travels along the borders, it becomes contagious all over the world, though in different periods. As a matter of fact, "on January 31st, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared a state of emergency, citing the growing cases outside of China, with cases emerging in South Korea and Taiwan. By the end of February, the Italian government started to quarantine northern provinces of Vento and the Lombardy region [...]. By the 14th of March, with China seeing its cases fall, Europe was declared the new coronavirus epicentre" (Chalk, 2021, p. 91). Lawrence Wright's observations in *The Plague Year: America in the Time of Covid* embody the rapid contagion of the virus not just across Europe, but across the USA as well: "Retrospective modelling showed that the disease likely had been infecting at least ten people a day since the middle of the month. That was also true for California, Washington, Illinois, New York, and Florida. By the end of February, there was probable local transmission in thirty-eight states" (2021, p. 75).

The rapid contagion of coronavirus all over the world in a short time arguably derives from interconnectedness. Indeed, the present century is "an era of ever-growing mobilisation of people" (Rashkova and Van der Staak, 2020, p. 837), made possible by international travels. At this point, as the signification of efforts to curb the spread of the virus, strict precautions even by the liberal and democratic Western countries account for the mandatory preference of survival to freedom: "European countries and the US sealed off their borders and turned inward to slow down the spread of the virus. Schools, universities, retail, and catering sectors were closed. Wherever possible, office staff were sent home to telework and, in varying intensities, laws and decrees were enacted to enforce social distancing" (von Münchow, 2020, p. 5). Despite their aim to mitigate the virus contagion, the suspension of daily routines, mandatory remote work, and governmental lockdowns cause dramatic disruptions in the social life in global context. The existence of these restrictions in both poor countries and prosperous Western lands epitomise the coronavirus as a global threat, making no discrimination in terms of race, culture, complexion, economic status.

Coronavirus infects both males and females, but it has different effects in terms of gender. As a matter of fact, "fewer women, both young and old, are dying than age-matched males" (Penna

et.al, 2020, p. 4377) due to infections of coronavirus all over the world. In line with the arguments by Penna et.al, Scully et.al elaborate on the contagion of the virus for both sexes in different parts of the world:

In South Korea, where community testing was widespread, females represented approximately 60% of those testing for positive for SARS-CoV-2, suggesting that females acquire infection, despite having a lower case fatality rate. In the United States, where testing was prioritised for people with symptomatic disease, the diagnostic rates were similar in males and females, but males had a 1.5 times higher mortality (2020, p. 442).

While Penna et.al and Scully et.al focus on the lethality of the virus in relation to gender differences, Giagulli et.al (2020) discuss gender difference in terms of the response to the vaccines: "Women compared with men generate a more robust antibody response against viral [...] vaccine. [...]. Gender difference in prognosis and fatality rate is a relevant clinical issue in COVID-19 pandemic" (pp. 57-59). Thus, in all parts of the world, both sexes get infected with coronavirus and develop a response to vaccines, which are produced to mitigate the spread of the pandemic. However, considering the gender differences in mortality rates and the effectiveness of response to vaccines, women show more resilience to coronavirus than men, though they have similar likelihood of infection. At this point, the following argument by Scully et.al emphasises genetic differences between sexes as the major reason for female resilience to COVID-19: "Multiple dimensions of biological sex, including the sex steroids, sex chromosomes and genomic and epigenetic differences between males and females, impact immune responses and may affect responses to SARS-CoV-2 infection" (2020, p. 442), an argument implying that X chromosome is more resilient to coronavirus than Y chromosome.

Female resilience to COVID-19 despite the global predominance of coronavirus establishes the basis of debates concerning the status of women in social area in the future. "No one knows what the future will bring, but the resilience women have shown during the COVID-19 crisis will be crucial in what comes next" (Kreacic, n.p, 2022). Accordingly, Kreacic's following predictions concerning the future position of women in the social and economic areas embody a major transformation in the social context in the future:

Women today are focusing more on their health, learning new skills to find more secure jobs, and embracing digital technologies faster to remain safe and connected at home and work. As a result, they leave jobs with inadequate pay, prioritise the benefits and flexibility they want and spend more of their time and money on what is important to them. [...]. mainly female and largely millennial, wellness protagonists have decided that self-care is a critical priority, using wearables and other technology to focus on prevention, mental health, and a new sense of wellbeing. [...]. millions of women who once favoured in-person doctor visits, banking and pharmacies have gone electronic, teaching themselves or learning from friends and family how to use everything from video chats to phone payment apps. [...]. Men still dominate the ranks of blue-collar workers overall but globally, 43% of new collars are female. [...]. Some women emerged from the pandemic even more committed to society-improving causes; notably they were disproportionately concerned about climate change. Climate catalysts [...] want businesses and government to do more and are willing to abandon companies that do not (Kreacic, n.p, 2022).

Coronavirus has become not only a major subject of research in social sciences, but it has also been among the mostly discussed subject matters in literature. Especially, Lawrence Wright's *The End of October* (2020) comes up as the first novel focusing on coronavirus and its global effects. Following this work of fiction, the predictions such as those articulated by Kreacic

about the transformation of the social life in favour of women have become among the subject matters of contemporary fiction. At this point, Christina Sweeney-Baird's debut novel *The End of Men* (2021) is a reinterpretation of the COVID-19 pandemic, a major global threat of the present century, from a futuristic perspective, envisaging a post-pandemic world order dominated by women due to the death of men as a result of a lethal virus showing its effects all over the world.

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution offers a scientific explanation for the death of men and survival of women under the pandemic circumstances in Sweeney-Baird's *The End of Men*. Darwin's views are based mainly on his observations concerning the species in the Nature. He argues that there is constant struggle for existence among the species, which he relates to the concept of "natural selection". He defines this term in *The Origin of Species* (1859) as follows: "[A]s more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life.... Th[e] preservation of favourable variations and the rejection of injurious variations, I call Natural Selection" (Darwin, 1968, pp. 116-131).

As a matter of fact, what Darwin labeled as "Natural Selection" has not only shaped the interactions among the species within the Nature, but also among human beings and societies as well. In relation to Darwin's approach, Mike Hawkins elaborates on the effects of natural selection on daily life in the following words:

Darwin's theory of natural selection ... was embedded within and formed part of a wider worldview. This worldview was a configuration of assumptions concerning nature, time and human nature which gave natural selection its relevance and meaning. It consisted of the following elements: (i) biological laws governed the whole of organic nature, including humans; (ii) the pressure of population growth on resources generated a struggle for existence among organisms; (iii) physical and mental traits conferring an advantage on their possessors in this struggle [...] could, through inheritance, spread through the population; (iv) the cumulative effects of selection and inheritance over time accounted for the emergence of new species and the elimination of others (Hawkins, 1997, pp. 30-31).

Hence, just like the species in the Nature, human beings also experience an evolutionary process, getting exposed to struggle for existence. In fact, Sweeney-Baird's *The End of Men* deals with the social evolution of global society as a result of the inevitable effects of the pandemic. So, this paper sets out to explore the evolutionary transformation of the global society from male-dominated to female-dominated system due to a lethal and contagious virus with reference to Darwin's theory of evolution.

2. Women as "The Fittest Species" to Bring a New World Order: Christina Sweeney-Baird's *The End of Men*

The novel is centred upon a deadly virus which kills men upon their infection and does no harm at all to women, as well as a transformation from a male-dominated system to a female-dominated social system in global context. Early in the novel, a strange and unfamiliar virus breaks out in Scotland, and causes the death of a young and married man named Fraser McAlpine in a short time despite the efforts by Amanda Maclean, a doctor at a hospital in Glasgow, pinpointing the fact that he is not fit for survival within the circumstances determined by the virus contagion:

Fiona says he has had the flu, and he was fine when he arrived, just fine! She gave him fluids and paracetamol and had clearly hoped that he would go away after a while, having been convinced that it was in fact, just the flu and nothing more.

By this moment the patient is dying. [...]. His skin has the grey pallor of someone whose bodily systems are shutting down and his temperature is climbing higher and higher. [...]. We strip him and surround him with ice and cold towels. I examine his entire body for a wound, an insect bite, a shaving cut a scratch. Anything that could be causing sepsis. There is nothing. [...]. he is a handsome lad. Dark hair, stubble across his chin, he looks kind. His wife keeps getting in the way, crying and crying, inconsolable. [...]. Three hours after he arrived in A&E, the machine we all have been waiting for begins its long shriek. [...]. 'Time of death: 12.34 pm, 3 November 2025.' [...]. Only a matter of minutes ago she was a wife. [...]. The patient was called Fraser McAlpine (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, pp. 17-19).

The mysterious virus not only kills the young and married patient named Fraser McAlpine, but it also brings about the death of an old man. As a matter of fact, "an older man, sixty-two [...]. had [been] intubated [...] on the helicopter. Kidneys had packed up. [...]. He had died about quarter of an hour after arriving" (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, p. 21). The virus does not make discrimination in terms of social status, age, marital status or general health. However, ironically, the virus just targets men because they are not "the fittest" species to survive within the dominance of the lethal and contagious virus. Indeed, it is "a virus affecting only men. 'This has not been confirmed by officials but has been widely observed in the outbreaks in Glasgow, Edinburgh and along the West coast of Scotland,' they intone on the news" (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, p. 29). Although the virus is on the agenda, keeping people alert about its contagion in different places, the indifference of the global health authorities and even the doctors in the hospital, in which Amanda Maclean fails to recover Fraser McAlpine from the virus, can be considered an ironical situation. In fact, according to the doctors in Amanda's hospital, "two patients are not a pandemic. Two patients do not even comprise a pattern" (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, p. 22). Unlike her colleagues, Amanda's following remarks and her vain efforts to declare the lethal virus to global health authorities embody the lack of sensitivity to the possibility of the virus' transformation to a pandemic:

I've now written to fourteen newspapers around the world. I have sent Health Protection Scotland eight emails, and called twelve times, not a single one of which has been answered. I've emailed the WHO in London and Geneva nine times. I. Am. Screaming. Into. The. Void. [...].

Every minute that my emails go unanswered is another minute away from a vaccine. This Plague is not just going to flit away into thin air. It's only going to get worse, and everybody is wasting time. I'm a doctor, not a pathologist. I can't fix this, but if no-one listens to me then how are we ever going to fix it? (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, pp. 37-38).

In Lawrence Wright's *The End of October*, the first work of fiction about coronavirus, the protagonist, Dr. Henry Parsons' anxieties about the spread of the virus all over the world from Mecca, Saudi Arabia, during the pilgrimage season for Islam embody sensitivity to human health regardless of religious faith, race, culture and country: "'The world is going to experience a pandemic,' Henry continued. 'We can't stop it. As of now, we have been able to contain it in Indonesia. Mecca is different. [...]. By quarantining the pilgrims, you can slow the progress of the disease, and perhaps give scientists a head start to find a vaccine, or even a cure'" (Wright, 2020, p. 139-140). Wright's critical approach to the increase in the speed of coronavirus contagion is epitomised in the novel in relation to Henry's anxieties regarding a possible outbreak of Kongoli pandemic due to the three million probable cases of the virus in Saudi Arabia. Similar to Dr. Henry Parsons in Wright's *The End of October*, Amanda

Maclean's efforts for informing the global and local health authorities by email and phone calls signify her sensitivity to the protection of human health and the recovery of as many men as possible from the lethal disease. At this point, while Amanda makes her efforts to save as many men as possible from the lethal virus, the indifference of the local and global health authorities causes significant delay in finding a vaccine or a permanent cure, leading to the death of more and more people due to the virus.

This indifference on global and local scales against Amanda's efforts not only causes more deaths and delay in finding vaccine, but it also leads to the rapid contagion of the virus across the UK. Accordingly, "an outbreak of an aggressive strain of flu has affected tens of thousands across Scotland after originating from Glasgow in early November. There are also reports of outbreaks in London, Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Birmingham and Bristol" (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, p. 34). The unprecedentedly rapid contagion of the virus across the UK inevitably leads countries to take measures in order to prevent it from the conversion into a pandemic, a situation representing the desperate situation of humankind to find a resolution for combatting and even terminating the virus, and hence an embodiment of human beings' mandatory efforts for survival under the circumstances of the plague. In San Francisco, "there is a huge crowd of people beneath every flight board. The red words, 'Cancelled', 'Cancelled', 'Cancelled' are bleeding down the screens. Every few minutes another flight goes from 'Delayed' to 'Cancelled' and a group of people groan and yell. [...] half the countries in the world have closed their borders so the flights cannot land. The world is closing down" (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, p. 74).

In addition to the USA, Singapore is another country taking measures against the lethal virus in the novel. Indeed, "Singapore is the safest country in the world and they shut the borders to foreign citizens" (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, p. 97). In Lawrence Wright's *The End of October*, "science knows no borders, nor does disease - especially a disease that can literally fly across international boundaries on the wings of a dove" (Wright, 2020, p. 16). Although international travels are an embodiment of the globalisation phenomenon, contributing to the removal of borders all over the world, they can somehow cause the rapid contagion of the viruses. Hence, in the novel, countries such as the USA and Singapore bring travel bans and flight suspensions, not permitting the entrance of foreign citizens to their lands, in order to mitigate the rapid contagion of the virus.

In addition to travel bans and flight suspensions, meetings are held online, as the virus is spread via physical contact. Described as a virologist at the University of Toronto in the novel, Dr. Lisa Michael's following words in an online meeting about precautions against the lethal virus that kills men embody virtual meetings as a precaution to mitigate the virus contagion: "The screen comes alive as one of the AV people finally gets the TV plugged into the laptop, and we are greeted by a patchwork of faces of various pixelations. I immediately start scanning the screen for faces I recognise. It's hard to see anyone. There's so many on the screen" (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, p. 100).

Because the virus spreads through physical contact, one of the major precautions to take is "touch no one, speak to no one" (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, p. 24) in order to survive in the circumstances shaped by the virus. At this point, the most remarkable precaution to mitigate the contagion is the isolation of boys from their families in Scotland and leading them to live in a remote place. The boys are not only isolated physically from their homes, but they are in fact isolated from the family bonds and parental affection due to the predominant virus targeting men of all ages: "This is a Government mandated programme, requiring remote, safe locations to house uninfected boys aged between 14 and 18 for the duration of the Plague. You

have been tasked with caring for 78 boys aged 15 and 16 until a vaccine or cure is found and the boys can be safely reintroduced to their homes” (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, p. 88).

Despite all these precautions to curb the contagion, the virus seems to kill people in different parts of the world. Although Amanda is a doctor and can supposedly help her sons to recover from the virus, “Charlie and Josh are dying in front of me and there’s nothing anyone can do about it” (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, p. 78) because her sons are not “the fittest” species to survive due to their failure in adaptation to the circumstances of the pandemic. A similar case is observed for her colleague, Catherine, who is also a doctor but cannot find a treatment to recover her husband, Anthony because of his failure to adaptation to the pandemic conditions: “‘You have to stay away from me, keep Theodore safe’, Anthony says, his voice cracking within three words. His forehead already has a sheen of sweat. I have been strong for so many weeks, smiled through Christmas, but now on the darkest day of my life I have to say goodbye to my husband and I am not ready. I’m never going to be ready to live without him” (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, p. 82).

While the virus kills Amanda’s sons and Catherine’s husband in the UK, it shows its lethal effects in Singapore as well. In fact, even men who are wealthy cannot become “the fittest species” for survival in the circumstances determined by the lethal virus. In this sense, a rich and old character, Mr Tai’s infection despite all the necessary precautions taken in the country and even in his house (not approving any guests from outside) embodies the impossibility of survival against the dominance of the virus: “Mr Tai is having a fit. His body is shaking and he is foaming at the mouth. [...]. his breathing becomes more and more painful to listen until it stops, just before midnight [...]. It looks like the end of the world. It is the apocalypse” (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, pp. 122-125). The death of thousands of men explains why the narrator views the contagion as the end of the world. In addition to the death of thousands of men in different parts of the world, women’s mandatory farewell to their husbands and their sons, as well as the lack of parental affection to sons and lack of relation and physical contact between wives and husbands account for the apocalypse which the narrator mentions.

What makes men’s death due to the virus apocalyptic is not just the mandatory end of women’s relations with their husbands and their sons. In fact, the dichotomy, men’s vulnerability vs. women’s immunity, accounts for the major apocalypse in the work. Men are vulnerable to the lethal virus because they are not “fit” for survival under the pandemic circumstances. On the other hand, because women are “the fittest” species to survive the pandemic, they not only continue to live, but they can also establish a new social order in global context. So, what seems apocalyptic for men turns out to contribute to the establishment of a new system in favour of women in global area. Making women “fit” for survival, the virus somehow inevitably brings about a dramatic transformation in approaches to traditional social practices and institutions all over the world. In line with this process of transformation, a dramatic change is observed in relation to the male-dominated jobs. In the novel, Clare Aspen, a 29-year-old woman, formerly working as a policewoman, experiences a social mobility. Her election as the Mayor of San Francisco embodies the successful evolutionary process women get exposed to during the pandemic circumstances, a sign of the subversion of male-dominated jobs: “Girl becomes the Mayor of San Francisco in the first election held in her city since the Plague. Girl introduces programmes to recruit women into coding and the police and rebuild the tech industry, determined to make life better and not just focus on the survival. Girl is powerful and unapologetic about that power even though, on a terrifying day, years ago, she ran” (Sweeney-Baird, 2022 pp. 292-293).

As women become “fit” to survive under the pandemic circumstances, the successful evolutionary process they experience also leads to the transformation in the design of cars. The

design of the cars suitable for women's physical characteristics, as stated by Dawn, one of the female characters in the novel, represents the subversion of male-dominated system in relation to car designs as a result of the inevitable process of evolution rendered mandatory by the lethal virus, which makes men almost extinct in the Nature:

The government's new Department of Change has decided to review every bloody thing we use, buy and think about. Normally, I'd think it was an excellent idea, but being legally required to spend nearly a grand for a new airbag (tested on female-modelled dummies), a seatbelt adjusted to my height (rather than the standard male height) and a new head rest (to accommodate my height) makes me pause. [...]. 'These measures are responsible for making driving safer,' the mechanic says, clearly used to disgruntled customers who like the idea of safety in theory but not paying for it. 'Before the Plague, women had a forty-seven per cent higher chance than men of being seriously injured in a car crash' (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, pp. 374-375).

The pandemic in the novel not only subverts such male-dominated aspects of daily life in social context such as the use of cars and employment in jobs, but it also brings about radical transformation in terms of love relations and family structure. Indeed, as a signification of the evolutionary process caused by the virus, love starts to be experienced just between women and by online applications instead of meeting in-person in specific venues because thousands of men die due to the virus:

Adapt is the first unicorn of the post-Plague world and is now, by user count, the world's biggest dating app. [...]. 'The great question of our time: how to find love when there are literally no men left? The phrases single women always used to hear like "there's plenty of fish in the sea" and "as soon as you stop looking for love, it'll find you" do not apply anymore. The sea is empty. [...]. Even in the apocalypse, human beings have the same needs. We all want to feel loved, to be desired, to feel like we are not alone in this insane, terrifying world.' [...]. Even at the beginning stages of the Plague when maybe 5-10 per cent of the male population was sick, women did two things. They started dating less, and if they were dating, they dated women. [...]. 25 per cent [female app users] changed their preferences from "Woman only seeking men" to "Woman seeking men and women" or "Woman seeking only women". I think it made complete sense - why would you open yourself up to grief and sadness? What's the point in dating someone who will almost definitely be dead by the following Sunday? [...]. Women go on Adapt to find love in a new way (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, pp. 309-314).

The inevitable process of evolution caused by the virus contagion not only affects the approaches to love and dating, but it also even leads to the termination of women's impregnation by men. As the new social order in global context is based on the dominance of women, the solution suggested for the reproduction of women is the fertility by means of a donor sperm, which is an alternative way causing the termination of men's biological function for reproduction: "The opportunity to have a child through donor sperm is actually determined by an algorithm taking into account factors including relationship status, socio-economic status and resources in the local area amongst others" (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, p. 317). The dependence of donor sperms on algorithms arguably restricts women's liberty to find a person to father their children to a significant extent. However, copulation by donor sperms, which are found randomly by algorithms, can offer women freedom to become the only parents to care for their children. Hence, the virus terminates men's biological roles as fathers. This is epitomised in the novel in relation to Catherine, who lost her husband, Anthony, due to the virus. In the new world, where there is no man left at all, Catherine's following statements

represent her consideration of herself as a single parent who is able to look after her child with no need for men: "I only want a baby on my own. I can't bear to see a man who isn't Anthony to parent my child. I can't. [...]. The Norwegian pregnant women are my own version of a Disney ending: no prince, no happy ending, but a recovery. A return to motherhood. A return to part of my old life" (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, p. 327).

Catherine views women's solo reproduction without men thanks to donor sperms as a return to motherhood or a return to a part of her old life. However, considering a world order dominated only by women, who change the outlook on love, dating, family relations and even way of reproduction, this is neither a recovery nor a return to old life. On the contrary, all these radical transformations in global social context are the products of the successful evolution of women thanks to their position as "the fittest" beings to survive, as well as men's failure in this evolution because of their inability to survive during the pandemic process. At this point, the words by the female president of China represent women's achievement in transforming the world from apocalyptic order to an alternative social system, whose rules are determined by women, due to their successful evolution process during the pandemic: "We lost great minds who could have changed the world and we lost friends, brothers, sons, fathers, husbands who could have changed our lives. But we made something positive rise from the ashes of despair. We are now free, and that's worth everything we went through" (Sweeney-Baird, 2022, pp. 389-390).

3. Conclusion

Christina Sweeney-Baird's *The End of Men* is not only a dystopian and futuristic reinterpretation of COVID-19 pandemic, but it is also a story of an evolutionary process rendered mandatory by a contagious virus, which leads to the death of men and does no harm to women at all. In the novel, Fraser McAlpine's death at a young age despite his newly married status, Mr Tai's death despite his wealth at an old age due the virus signify men's failure in adaptation to the circumstances determined by the Plague. On the other hand, women's achievement to survive the pandemic, Catherine's solo reproduction and single parenthood, the use of applications for dating and love, the realisation of datings only between women, the domination of formerly male-dominated jobs such as security forces, politics by women and even the car designs suitable for women not only embody women as "the fittest" species to adapt to the circumstances determined by the virus, but they also establish the basis of a new social order dominated by women in global area, an apocalyptical situation for men in the novel. Whether coronavirus will bring a new social order dominated solely by women, as envisaged in *The End of Men*, is open to debate. However, considering the ongoing predictions about the possible effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the future of humankind, it is not wrong to argue that coronavirus has started to change the lifestyle and daily habits of human beings in the present century and it seems it will continue to transform the contemporary life dramatically in the future.

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