(Post)Humanism Outside of Paradice

An Analysis of Posthumanism in Margaret Atwood's The MaddAddam Trilogy

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Abstract

The MaddAddam Trilogy by Margaret Atwood is considered a substantial contribution to field of posthumanist debate through its critique of the contemporary society and scepticism towards anthropocentrism and humanism. This thesis, on the contrary, has argued that Atwood reinforces some of these issues though her privileging of humanist values and human traits in her depiction of characters and societies in the trilogy. The thesis explores the historic and current field of posthumanism to establish a foundation on which to further investigate the trilogy.

Through an examination of the levels of the trilogy, from the genetically engineered creatures that Atwood has included in her narrative, via the narratives she creates to present the story, and finally to a societal level of the pre- and post-catastrophe societies that Atwood has created, this thesis argues that on all levels in the trilogy, the privileging of humanist values and anthropocentrism can be recognised, though with minor exceptions. By failing to recognize these issues, the scholars that acknowledge Atwood's trilogy as a contribution to the posthumanist debate, might unintentionally reinforce the same issues as they seek to resist.

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To my mother, thank you for letting me dive into endless fictionalised universes, and for always encouraging me to push further. And to my brother and sisters: thank you, now let us hang out again.

Sara, thank you for the blissful life we share. Truly, madly, deeply – this one is for you.

It’s not a question of our inventions – all human inventions are merely tools –
but of what might be done with them; for no matter how high the tech,
Homo sapiens sapiens remains at heart what he’s been for tens of thousands of years –
the same emotions, the same preoccupations.

– Margaret Atwood

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Introduction

This thesis explores how *The MaddAddam Trilogy* by Margaret Atwood reflects upon our contemporary society through its portrayal of a doomed society set in the near future, where private corporations run rampant, scientists play God through their ability to create new species, and people are split between those who are protected by the corporations and those left to fend for themselves. Following the demise of this society, human survivors encounter a genetically modified humanoid species, as well as modified non-human animals. The novels enable reflection upon themes under present debate, such as posthumanism, bioethics and anthropocentrism. Atwood appears generally sceptical to the technological enhancements that enable the society she depicts, and offers reflections on our consumption-driven society. As the trilogy comes to an end, Atwood stresses the importance of interrelations between species, the significance of the humanities, and eco-awareness.

Several critics, such as Valentina Adami, J. Brooks Bouson and Valeria Mosca, argue that the trilogy should be considered a thorough contribution to the posthumanist debate, and read the novels primarily as a criticism of our contemporary society as they claim that they function as cautionary tales that emphasises scepticism towards concepts such as anthropocentrism and humanism. However, I will argue that Atwood's depiction of the doomed society reinforces these issues, albeit with a few exceptions. As the survivors struggle to persist, they must create a new society that is dependent on interbreeding and coexistence with other species, but as they build their new civilisation, it proves hard to denounce the legacy rooted in the society they seek to resist. When these issues are not addressed, the critics risk re-establishing the discourse of anthropocentrism and the privileging of humans that the trilogy presumably works against.

I will build my argument through three chapters. The first investigates how anthropocentrism is explored through a selection of the genetically modified creatures that can be found in the trilogy. The second examines a few key narratives in the trilogy, and how they relate to the discussion of anthropocentrism and bioethics through an exploration of the ability in literature to create an awareness around issues that can be perceived as abstract by a broader audience. The third and last chapter deals with the pre-catastrophe society depicted in Atwood's trilogy in an attempt to investigate how it serves to criticise contemporary culture and attempts to raise awareness around issues that are easily recognisable in our contemporary society, such as commodification of various aspects of life. Additionally, the

last chapter will examine the alternatives brought forth by Atwood, such as interbreeding and collaboration across species in order to discuss whether the alternatives are viable for a sustainable future. In order to do this, I will first give a brief outline of humanism and posthumanism, and present the theories of the renowned scholars Cary Wolfe, Neil Badmington and Rosi Braidotti, as well as Tamar Sharon, and relate their theories to my investigation of how posthumanism is represented in Atwood's trilogy. Moreover, I will briefly outline the events in the trilogy, as well as provide a short comment on how it has been received, in order to situate posthumanism within the plan for this thesis.

Margaret Atwood and *The MaddAddam Trilogy*

According to J. Brooks Bouson, a scholar who has studied Margaret Atwood's work methodically, she is unquestionably the best known Canadian writer today; she is the author of more than forty works including novels, short stories, poems, literary criticism and reviews. The topics of her works span from post-colonial issues, to environmental issues, feminism and eco-feminism (*Insights* xi-xii), but I will nonetheless focus on posthumanism, as previously mentioned.

The MaddAddam Trilogy consists of the novels *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009) and *MaddAddam* (2013), written as a direct result of Atwood's exploration of what she refers to as a "what if" scenario. In *Writing with Intent*, Atwood explains how she noted that human civilisation is about to exhaust the planet: "the rules of biology are as inexorable as those of physics: run out of food and water and you die […] no animal can exhaust its resource base and hope to survive" (285). Thus, in Atwood's opinion, the ecological destruction of the planet is closely connected with the inability in the society to reconnect with nature as humanity rather focuses on consumerism and capitalism. In *The MaddAddam Trilogy*, she problematizes the gradual removal from nature that humankind currently experiences and instead introduces an alternative subculture that seeks to re-evaluate the relationship between humans and non-human species.

Atwood questions both humanist and posthumanist concerns in *The MaddAddam Trilogy* through her exploration of how humans may or may not survive an epoch marked by overconsumption, scientific experiments, and the destruction of natural resources. Set on the East Coast of the United States around 2025, Atwood depicts a society that is divided between the privileged scientists who live in gated communities referred to as the

Compounds, where they are secluded from the less fortunate masses who reside in the pleeblands. *Oryx and Crake* opens as the narrator Snowman, apparently the lone survivor of a yet unexplained disaster, wakes before dawn and takes the usual glance at his wristwatch: "a blank face is what it shows him: zero hour" (*Oryx* 3). The narrative is divided between the descriptions of Snowman and his struggle to come to terms with the new existence that he shares with a humanoid species called after their creator Crake, and his pre-catastrophe life as Jimmy, a linguistic-loving but careless person, whose close friendship with Crake has ensured his lonesome survival.

The timeline of *The Year of the Flood* runs parallel to the one found in *Oryx and Crake*, but the story is narrated by the female survivors Toby and Ren, recounting their experiences before and after the man-made (sic) apocalypse. The reader is presented with the society described from the outside of the gated communities, as Toby and Ren spend most of their lives living in the pleeblands as part of the God's Gardeners, a religious eco-cult that have foreseen the catastrophe, and refers to it as the Waterless Flood. Gina Wisker states that *The Year of the Flood* received mixed reviews "due to its post-apocalyptic, sustainability theme and its mixture of the homey arts and crafts, its quasi-religious tone, and its sometimes cartoonish characters" (Wisker 176). However, it is important to note that the novel also serves as a valuable link between the pleeblands and Compounds, not to mention bridge the gap between *Oryx and Crake* and *MaddAddam*. Atwood explains that rather than continuing the narrative, "in order to find out what happened, […] I had to go back and write another book" (qtd. in Wisker 176). In *MaddAddam*, the remaining survivors join forces and attempt to re-build a society with the scarce resources available to them, having survived a "holocaust caused by unscrupulous, unethical genetic engineering and human carelessness" (Wisker 147). *MaddAddam* is for the most part narrated by Toby, although it also includes insight into the stories of several of the previous members of God's Gardeners, as well as a section narrated by Blackbeard, a young Craker boy.

As the trilogy concludes, the reader has been presented with a fictional society whose progress is driven by technological and scientific advances that subsequently lead to its demise. In its place is a diverse group of Crakers and humans, whose continuing existence relies on the rejection of the mannerism that led to the fall of the previous society. Thus, Atwood manages to critique the notion in the contemporary society that technological progress equals overall progress, while simultaneously linking topics found in posthumanism theory to the post-apocalyptic society in the trilogy. Bouson argues that Atwood "intervenes parodically in the contemporary public debate about genetic engineering" ("Game Over"

140), but asserts that Atwood "both expresses alarm at and mocks the idea of a bioengineered posthuman future" throughout the trilogy ("Game Over" 149). Through her portrayal of the situation that initially fostered Crake's wish to eliminate humankind, Atwood stresses the possible danger of embracing technological progress on behalf of sustainable ethics, and offers an alternative through the mannerism represented through the lifestyle of the God's Gardeners.

Atwood and speculative fiction

The novels of *The MaddAddam Trilogy* have proved difficult works to categorise for many critics, in part due to their affiliation with several different genres. Some critics, argue that the novels contain elements of a Bildungsroman (Barzilai 88), whereas others argue that they should be read as stories of the Last Man, or survival stories (Wilson 171). Bouson recognises that the novels touch upon topics that could ensure its position within genres such as feminist or post-feminism novels, as well as trauma novels ("Return" 10). Although the depiction of the post-apocalyptic society set in the future also shares common traits with science fiction, Atwood prefers the term "speculative fiction" to emphasize how her novels can be distinguished from "science fiction proper" because they contain "no intergalactic space travel, no teleportation, no Martians" (*Writing with Intent* 285), but rather "employs the means more or less to hand" (Atwood, "Context" 514). As pointed out by Coral Ann Howells, Atwood balances her role as a moralistic and satiric writer of fiction with her ability to challenge the social and environmental issues of the world by urging the international leadership to pay attention (Howells 5). Thus, Atwood facilities an opportunity to initiate a discussion where the questions revolve around "what is past and passing, but especially of what's to come" ("Context" 515). Traci Warkentin supports this claim, when she states that Atwood "provides a transitional narrative space for the discussion of current biotechnological philosophies and practices in Western society and where they might lead in the not-so-distant future" (83).

In an attempt to define speculative fiction, R. B. Gill argues that the genre "fits uneasily into our notions of standard literature," and although it is comprised of a multiplicity of texts, it "is often considered a commercial rather than a literary category" (71). Nonetheless, Gill maintains that speculative fiction enables an "opportunity to explore systems of classifications and uses of genre" (71), because speculative fiction

"characteristically embraces a wider, more radical vision of alternative conditions" and moves "beyond versions of the standard procedures of this life" (Gill 73). This stands in accordance with Atwood's stance, as she has remarked that: "Every novel begins with a *what if* and then sets forth its axiom. The *what if* of *Oryx and Crake* is simply, *What if we continue on the road we're already on? How slippery is the slope? What are our saving graces? Who's got the will to stop us?*" (Atwood, *Writing* 285-286).

In the wake of Atwood's reflections regarding the 'slippery slope', she raises awareness of the sustainability of humankind in an age where humans have the ability to disrupt the ecological balance of the planet. Thus, Atwood raises posthumanist concerns through a critical exploration of a society where humans are exhausting the natural resources of the planet, engaging in unregulated biotechnological enhancements performed by privileged scientists, and where the spreading of a virus eventually leads to a global pandemic that aims to restore the ecological balance of the planet by replacing homo sapiens with a genetically modified species.

Humanism and posthumanism

As pointed out by several scholars, there is no agreement on the exact definition of posthumanism. Wolfe says conceptions are different and even conflicting (Wolfe, *Posthumanism* xi), whereas Tamar Sharon and Rosi Braidotti point out that the definitions are many and widespread (Sharon 4; Braidotti, *Posthuman* 2). Nonetheless, I will introduce the term by referencing some of the most prominent commonalities found in the available definitions, as well as briefly outline the historical backdrop for its emergence.

In order to define posthumanism, Neil Badmington points to the philosophy of René Descartes, who is defined by Bertrand Russell as "the founder of modern philosophy" ("Approaching" 3) because of his central role in proposing the ideas that would later be known as humanism. In *Discourse on the Method*, originally published in 1637, Descartes declares that the ability to reason is what separates man from animal, and that this "power of judging well and distinguishing the true from the false, which is properly what is called good sense or reason, is naturally equal in all men" (16). He continues to argue that: "the diversity of our opinions arises not because some are more reasonable than others, but only because we conduct our thoughts by different ways" (*Discourse* 16), which can be summarised in his famous phrase *I think, therefore I am* (*Discourse* 19). In other words, Descartes argues that

all humans are capable of reasoning, and although the ability to reason differs in all human individuals, it nonetheless exists. Descartes explains that the human being is at the centre of everything, occupying forever a natural place there, separated from "machines, animals, and other inhuman entities; where it shares with all other human beings a unique essence; where it is the origin of meaning and the sovereign subject of history; and where it behaves and believes according to something called "human nature" (Badmington, "Posthumanism" 374).

The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy defines Cartesian dualism as "the view that the mind and body are two separate substances; the self is as it happens associated with a particular body, but is self-subsistent, and capable of independent existence" (no page). The body/mind dualism is based on the nature/culture divide that modern knowledge is founded upon, subsequently leading to the commonly agreed-upon idea that humans should be considered superior to nature (Jones 310), particularly in the Western epistemology. The dualism between mind and body does not specifically split humans from nature, but it nonetheless gave root to the idea that the mind, language, and the ability to rationalise must be considered entities that separate humans from nature insofar as nature functions through automated systems (Jones 311).

The agreement that language and rationality are the two main components that distinguish humans from other animals continues to be considered "common sense" in the Western contemporary culture, and rationality as a uniquely human trait continues to unify the human race. To illustrate this, Badmington points out that basic Cartesian notions can be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose first Article maintains that humans are all "endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood" ("Approaching" 4). According to Badmington, posthumanism contrasts the humanist views of Descartes, but unlike famous antihumanists such as Althusser, Foucault, and Lacan, whose attempts to destroy the hegemony of humanism are numerous, posthumanist thought derives from the opposite idea: that humans cannot be completely separated from other species, human or inhuman objects. Furthermore, Badmington claims that posthumanism, contradictory to antihumanism, springs from an idea that humanism is unpredictable, and its end therefore inevitable: ""Man" does not necessarily need to be toppled or left behind with a giant leap, because "he" is already a fallen or falling figure" ("Posthumanism" 375).

To further summarise the resistance towards humanism, Badmington then points to the aftermaths of the works of Marx, Engels and Freud as catalysts for posthumanist thinking. Rather than agreeing with the notion that a common human quintessence exists regardless of

history, social relations, and politics, they argue that "an authentic consciousness was the point from which everything else proceeded: first, there is the idea, then comes the material world," and the said consciousness "does not determine a person's social life; it is, rather, social life that determines consciousness" ("Approaching" 5). Subjectivity thus functions as a consequence of the material conditions that the subject is accustomed to. The idea that replaces idealism with materialism is also critiqued by Freud, who disagrees with the possibility that there can be a joint consciousness in a society, as claimed by the Marxists (Badmington, "Approaching" 5). Thus, Freud proceeds to criticize humanism, a process that Jacques Lacan takes one step further when he reformulates Descartes, by stating that "I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think… I am not wherever I am the plaything of my thought; I think of what I am where I do not think to think" (Lacan qtd. in Badmington, "Approaching" 6). Badmington proceeds to conclude that reading Freud is like "witnessing the waning of humanism" due to how Freud points out that there is nothing rational about the ability in humans to make unconscious mistakes, such as slips of the tongue, misplacing items, and forgetting names, mistakes that should rather be considered proof that the ego "is not even master in its own house, but must content itself with scanty information of what is going on unconsciously in its mind" (Freud qtd. in Badmington, "Approaching" 7).

In other words, the humanist idea is challenged by Freud, and subsequently by Lacan through his interpretations of Freud, as a result of their investigations of the many layers of the human mind. Moreover, Badmington takes the argument further, when stating that posthumanism shatters the conventional disciplinary boundaries, and although it still has no permanent or particular place in the modern universities, "its presence is everywhere felt," since posthumanism has been considered and addressed in a wide range of disciplines, ranging from literary studies, through politics and law, to science and technology studies, theology and geography ("Posthumanism" 375). While posthumanism can be found in various academic disciplines, popular culture has been, and continues to be, an essential part of how the connection between man and technology is being explored and reimagined.

"What is posthumanism?" is the question at stake in Cary Wolfe's appropriately titled book, a question that tends to generate definitions that, as previously mentioned, are both "different and even irreconcilable" (xi). Wolfe remarks that although posthumanism as a term has become increasingly widespread in academic circles throughout the mid-1990's, the roots of posthumanist thought can be traced much further back, and can be recognized as an idea in Michel Foucault's premonition that, since man is "an invention of recent date […] then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the

sea" (Foucault qtd. in Wolfe, *Posthumanism* xii). Moreover, the Macy Conferences of Cybernetics, that took place in New York City during the 1940s and 1950s fuelled the birth of systems theory that initiated a new "theoretical model for biological, mechanical, and communicational processes that removed the human and *Homo sapiens* from any particularly privileged position in relation to matter of meaning, information, and cognition" (Wolfe, *Posthumanism* xii). During the past few decades, the increasing interest in posthumanism has initiated different interpretations and branches, subsequently developing sub-divisions such as transhumanism, whose dedication, according to Joel Garreau, revolves around:

> … the enhancement of human intellectual, physical, and emotional capabilities, the elimination of disease and unnecessary suffering, and the dramatic expansion of life span. What this network has in common is a belief in the engineered evolution of 'post-humans,' defined as beings 'whose basic capacities so radically exceed those of present humans as to no longer be unambiguously human by our current standards.' 'Transhuman' is their description of those who are in the process of becoming post-human. (Garreau 231-232)

Transhumanism thus seeks to explore the significance of living in a world and time where the potential of the human body is continuously developing through the possibility of scientific and technological enhancements. Nick Bostrom argues in "A History of Transhumanist Thought" that the interpretation of the transhuman as can be found in the example above, stems from the Renaissance, as well as the Enlightenment's ability to pave the way for intellectual thinking: "Renaissance humanism […] created the ideal of the well-rounded person, one who is highly developed scientifically, morally, culturally, and spiritually" (2). Furthermore, he elaborates by pointing to the Italian humanist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man,* originally published in 1486, whose claim that man is responsible for moulding himself, stands as a landmark for the period (Bostrom 2), as well as Francis Bacon's attempt to apply science in order to dominate science and nature, so that the living conditions of men would experience an improvement (Bostrom 2).

Transhumanism, in the opinion of Bostrom, derives from an understanding of rational humanism. Bostrom argues that the legacy from the Renaissance and Enlightenment Age, combined with the works of influential thinkers such as Newton, Hobbes, Kant and Locke, formed the "basis for rational humanism, which emphasizes empirical science and critical

reason – rather than revelation and religious authority – as ways of learning about the natural world and our place within it and of providing a grounding for morality" (Bostrom 2-3).

Wolfe notes that Bostrom's definition of transhumanism should be considered an "*intensification* of humanism," which stands in opposition to his own interpretation of posthumanism, that rather benefits from an understanding that it comes "both before and after humanism" due to how it "names the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world" (*Posthumanism* xv). Additionally, it identifies a crucial moment in history "in which the decentring of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatics, and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore" (*Posthumanism* xv). Wolfe makes a distinction between posthumanism and posthumanist, noting that the distinction lies not in the transcendence of the body, but rather the "sense that it opposes the fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy inherited from humanism itself" (*Posthumanism* xv). In other words, the structural boundaries that install a binary between human and the other, must be explored and removed.

Moreover, Wolfe insists that it is of utmost importance that there is a radical change in the "nature of thought itself" in order to surpass humanism, and not simply a decentring of man in relation to technology, evolution and ecology. Rather than devaluating the characteristics of humanism, some of which he admits are admirable, Wolfe calls for a change in the "philosophical and ethical frameworks used to conceptualize them" (*Posthumanism* xvi), as he highlights that normative humanism fails to create a space for the beings that fall outside its framework, be it people with disabilities or non-human animals (*Posthumanism* xvii).

Braidotti, whose book *The Posthuman* is currently one of the most recent comprehensive contributions to the posthumanism debate, remarks that the "concept of the human has exploded under the double pressure of contemporary scientific advances and global economic concerns" (*Posthuman* 1). The introduction of posthumanism welcomes a "qualitative shift" that enables an understanding of the "basic unit of common reference for our species, our polity and our relationship to other inhabitants of this planet" (*Posthuman* 2), and important questions are raised to discuss the structure of a shared human identity in a contemporary context. However, Braidotti divides between the discussions that take place in the mainstream culture, and the debates that can be found in academic culture. The mainstream debate generally revolves around human enhancement and discusses themes such as robotics and prosthetics, in addition to vaguer topics such as techno-transcendence, whereas in the academic culture, "the posthuman is alternatively celebrated as the next

frontier in critical and cultural theory or shunned as the latest in a series of annoying 'post' fads" (*Posthuman* 2). In other words, the mainstream debate often focuses on the human enhancement, whereas the academic debate discusses what Braidotti refers to as "the possibility of a serious de-centring of 'Man'" (*Posthuman* 2), as well as the rejection of dualisms such as nature-culture (*Posthuman* 3). Braidotti aims to apply posthumanist theory as a "genealogical and a navigational tool" (*Posthuman* 5) that manages to efficiently engage with the present debate. According to Braidotti, this can enable a reconsideration of what should be the "basic unit of reference" (*Posthuman* 5) for humans in the 'anthropocene', the bio-genetic age that is recognised by the "historical moment when the Human has become a geological force capable of affecting all life on this planet" (*Posthuman* 5). The term anthropocene has been widely accepted after it was coined by Paul Crutzen, winner of the Nobel Prize for Chemistry, in 2002 (Braidotti, *Posthuman* 66). Humans now have the capability to regulate the ecological balance of the planet, and with this capability comes a great responsibility that will benefit from allowing the entry of posthumanism into the debate.

Braidotti claims that the growing interest for posthuman theory should be read in the light of the contemporary community that has an increasingly knowledgeable insight into contemporary issues such as "fast-moving technological advances and also of contemporary political developments linked to the limitations of economic globalization, the risks associated with the 'war on terror' and global security issues" ("Critical Theory" 13). Braidotti, following the arguments presented by Badmington and Wolfe, calls for a redefinition of the status of human subjectivity as the ethical norms and values should be changed to match the intricacy of the contemporary society.

Furthermore, Braidotti argues that posthuman theory holds the ability to influence the Humanities in universities, due to how posthuman research "aims at re-grounding concepts and practices of subjectivity in a world fraught with contradictory socio-economic developments and major internal fractures" ("Critical Theory" 14). Francis Fukuyama, on the other hand, draws a bleak image of posthumanism in his book *Our Posthuman Future*, where he states that the "most significant threat posed by contemporary biotechnology is the possibility that it will alter human nature and thereby move us into a 'posthuman' stage of history" (7). Fukuyama goes on to argue that the importance of identifying the before mentioned threat is fundamental to avoid the altering of human nature, because "human nature exists, is a meaningful concept, and has provided a stable continuity to our experience as a species" (7).

To enable a framework through which to analyse the degree of posthumanism in Atwood's trilogy, I turn to Tamar Sharon, who has identified four types in her essay "A Cartography of the Posthuman". Sharon identifies four types of posthumanism that can be found in the current debate about what it means to be human in a biotechnical age. The four different types are described as: the dystopic approach that is concerned with the appliance of technological modification or enhancement of humans; liberal posthumanism, recognised by its wish to embrace the enhancing of humans where possible; radical posthumanism addresses the foundational discourses around terms such as 'the human' and 'nature,' and the deconstruction of these terms through biotechnology; and methodological posthumanism, that attempts to address the lack of a functioning framework that can be used to discuss the connection between the human and non-human (Sharon 4). Thus, still according to Sharon, the differences between the types can be found in whether or not they are grounded in a humanist foundation, where the humanist foundation denotes to "the view that upholds a foundational ontological divide between humans and the rest of the world" (Sharon 5).

Moreover, Sharon finds that both dystopic and liberal posthumanism should be considered part of the humanist branch. She points to several posthuman scholars as she argues that both types circle around "an ethical debate that hinges on incommensurable views of human nature" (Sharon 5). Dystopic posthumanism arguments circle around the long-term effects of biotechnological enhancements and deems them potentially dangerous for the sustainability of human nature, whereas liberal posthumanism should be considered a humanist type of posthumanism because it argues that the same technology should be made widely available, and that it might even "*alleviate* inequalities that arise from the unequal distribution of biological capacities at birth" (Sharon 5). Sharon connects liberal posthumanism to the transhumanist Bostrom, whereas Fukuyama represents dystopic posthumanism. The radical and methodological types of posthumanism, on the other hand, are "based in a non-humanist understanding of human/technology relations" that considers "the reality we live in […] a complex web of relations between the human, the world and the technologies that mediate between them, a network of human and non-human entities that is constantly in the making" (Sharon 8). Furthermore, the radical and methodological type of posthumanism represent a change in the attitude towards technologies, not unlike Wolfe's demand for a change in the nature of thought itself.

According to Sharon, methodological posthumanism should be recognised by its embracing of the term 'technological mediation,' which can be defined as "a notion that implies that technologies play an active, mediating role in the relationship between humans

and their world" (Sharon 10). In other words, technologies hold the opportunity to impact how humans perceive the environment, thus technological mediation implies that "artefacts can constrain and shape human action, decisions and mobility, that technologies allow humans to perform actions and live experiences, and so help form actions and experiences, in ways that were not previously possible" (Sharon 10). Thus, as Sharon points out, technologies in itself cannot be considered destructive, but should rather be understood as imprints of "the social processes and social biases that have brought them forth […] determined by the interpretive frameworks of the relevant social groups involved in their development" (Sharon 10).

This brief summary of the plentiful and sometimes even opposing definitions of posthumanism has aimed to form a basic understanding of the discourse around the term. Although Cartesian humanism is still valid in the Western society, as exemplified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, posthumanism is gaining increasing ground in popular culture and academic circles. In *The MaddAddam Trilogy*, Atwood is generally considered by many to enable a connection between the popular culture as depicted in the pre-catastrophe society with the discussions recognised on an academic level, such as the de-centring of human in the age of the anthropocene and the re-establishment of subjectivity to include non-human species. I will now move on to argue that for the most part throughout *The MaddAddam Trilogy*, Atwood remains firmly stationed within the approaches that are defined as dystopic and liberal posthumanism by Sharon, and that the trilogy only partly touches upon the radical and methodological approaches to posthumanism. This will form the basis for my argument that the scholars should be careful when the trilogy is described as a thorough contribution to the debate that revolves around posthumanism, due to the danger of overlook the anthropocentrism and humanism that is at the core of the trilogy.

1 Nature Is to Zoos as God Is to Churches

This chapter will explore to what extent Atwood demonstrates that posthumanism can serve as a tool to shift human subjectivity from its traditionally centred position, through which humanity is considered an elevated and privileged species, to a less anthropocentric perspective. Throughout the three novels, various genetically modified species are described, whose creation is enabled by the private corporations that have more or less taken control of society, leaving democracy and governmental rule behind. Several scholars, among them Valeria Mosca and Jay Sanderson, have pointed out how the power of the private corporations in the novels increasingly enables the development of genetically engineered animals. Additionally, Sanderson emphasizes that: "while all aspects of life are commodified by Atwood […], it is the commodification of living organisms, and their applications, that she focuses on the most" (Sanderson 222). This is particularly discernible in the numerous examples of genetically modified animals, whose creation often serve as pastime for the scientists working for the corporations. Although Sanderson's claim remains valid, I will bring the discussion further as I argue that Atwood's attention is mainly focused around the species that share genes with humans, namely the Crakers and the pigoons. To further establish this claim, I will apply theory by Sharon in order to show that the pigoons and Crakers, and subsequently the fictionalised discussion that surrounds them in the trilogy, is recognised by what she defines as posthumanism grounded in humanist thought, specifically dystopic and liberal posthumanism. Thus, in my opinion, Atwood reinforces the anthropocentrism that radical and methodological posthumanism seeks to dismiss, as the genetically modified species in the trilogy serve as examples of a continuation of humanist values.

I will also give a brief introduction to a few of the other hybrid species that can be found in the trilogy. Despite the lack of deep analysis of other species than the aforementioned, these animals should also be mentioned to offer a broader understanding of the extent of genetically modified organisms created by corporations such as OrganInc Farms, as well as situate them within the anthropocentric context that I wish to explore. Moreover, as Sanderson points out in the above quote, Atwood focuses on the commodification of living creatures, and as the examples will show, the hybrid species throughout the novels all serve humankind, one way or the other. Even the Crakers, the ultimate experiment that will outlive humankind, are created so that they can continue to live

in a world where humans have already left a legacy of premises. Donna Haraway points out how "property is the kind of relationality that poses as the-thing-itself, the commodity, the thing outside relationship, the thing that can be exhaustively mapped, owned, appropriated, disposed" (Haraway 8). Pusch, following Haraway's point, argues that the genetically modified animals in Atwood's trilogy lose their subjectivity and rather become objects that the scientists are trying to perfect in order to serve as commodities for humans, regardless of the personality or other individual traits that the specific animal inhabit. However, Pusch argues that the animals regain their agency due to how they "shed their label of commodity and thing-ness and gain identities" after the pandemic (Pusch 64). Although this applies to some of the genetically modified animals, I will argue that the privilege of gaining full agency only applies to the creatures whose genes have been modified to the extent where they are able to communicate their needs to the surviving humans of the trilogy, namely the pigoons. Thus, the mentioning of the other genetically modified animals is necessary to support the argument that the agency of these animals fail to change.

One of the examples of genetically engineered species used for human entertainment can be found in *Oryx and Crake*, when Jimmy recalls that his parents gave him a pet for his tenth birthday. Jimmy's pet was a third-generation rakunk, a crossbreed between a skunk and a racoon. A popular pet in the Compounds, the rakunk was considered more or less a successful experiment compared to other animals, especially following the scientists' accomplishment to remove the skunk odour as well as the ill-tempered characteristics of a racoon: "the rakunks had begun as an after-hours hobby on the part of one of the OrganInc biolab hotspots. There'd been a lot of fooling around in those days: create-an-animal was so much fun, said the guys doing it; it made you feel like God" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* 57). Thus, the scientists are presented as creators with an omnipotent power as they can freely develop new species, regardless of their utility. Moreover, there is a substantial lack of consideration for the moral aspect of combining the genes of two species to create a third animal whose contribution to the planet is of no particular concern, as there already exists a variety of animals that can serve as pets. In other words, the main motivation behind the creation of the rakunk must be recognised as the scientists' wish to "feel like God".

Another example can be found in the wolvogs, an animal that is described as a cute-looking dog-like creature that is "bred to deceive" (*Oryx* 241), apparently used by the privatised security force CorpSeCorpse as an alternative to expensive alarm systems, due to its aggressive disposition. Chicken parts, or ChickieNobs, with the unfortunate comparison to a "chicken hookworm" are creatures with no heads, eyes or beaks where "they'd removed all

the brain functions that had nothing to do with digestion, assimilation, and growth" (*Oryx* 238). Fortunately, they are equipped with a "mouth hole," through which nutrients necessary for growth are inserted. Thus, the ChickieNobs are able to fulfil their purpose as food, and the bird-like creatures have been reduced to what Sanderson refers to as commodities. Additionally, some of the other animals mentioned in *The MaddAddam Trilogy* include the liobams, a hybrid between lion and lamb, created at the request of a religious group, the Wolf Isaiah's, to illustrate the vision of the lion and lamb dwelling in peace, as well as the multi-coloured Mo'Hair sheep, engineered to grow hair in various bright colors, that can be shaved off and used to create expensive wigs. Following the pandemic, the Mo'Hairs provide the human survivors with milk, and the odd bone for a soup, which, in an interesting twist, re-establishes their old status as consumable livestock. The luminous green rabbits in Atwood's novels, whose purpose is not obvious, are eerily similar to two rabbits born at the University of Istanbul in 2013, who "went from being normal, fluffy white to glowing green in the dark" in an attempt to "improve treatments for life-threatening illnesses" in a collaboration between scientists from Hawaii and Istanbul (Holpuch no page).

Although the application of the hybrid animals differs, they are all created by scientists to serve humankind, either as entertainment, protection or for medical reasons, as is the case with the rabbits from Istanbul. In Atwood's novels, the moral implications and risk-assessment are equally non-existent, and the reader is given the impression that, rather than evaluating the dangers in advance, several of the genetically engineered hybrid species "were destroyed because they were too dangerous to have around" (*Oryx* 57). Jimmy rhetorically questions the necessity of these dangerous animals: "who needed a cane toad with a prehensile tail like a chameleon's that might climb in through the bathroom window and blind you while you were brushing your teeth? Then there was the snat, an unfortunate blend of snake and rat" (*Oryx* 57). However, Jimmy nonetheless fails to validate their existence when he simply states that "they'd had to get rid of those" (*Oryx* 57).

Unlike these species, the pigoons and Crakers are given thorough and recurring attention throughout the trilogy. Through an examination of this attention, I will investigate to what extent Atwood privileges these species. I argue that when the species that have been spliced with human genes are given thorough and in-depth attention throughout *The MaddAddam Trilogy*, Atwood fails to give agency to all living species, and rather deploys the Crakers and pigoons as examples of the implications of technological enhancement.

1.1 Pigoons

Jay Sanderson points out that hybrid creatures in literature are used "to evoke images that raise suspicion, apprehension and unease about science, biotechnology, government and human nature" (218). In Atwood's trilogy, the pigoons, or "sus multiorganifer," as they are officially named, are the non-human animals in the trilogy that receive the most attention. The pigoons frequently appear in all three novels, subsequently playing a major role in the narrative both before and after the distribution of the BlyssPluss pill that nearly extinguishes the human race. However, after the humans and Crakers are united against a mutual threat, the status of the pigoons drastically changes as it turns out that they can be considered allies too, following the realisation that the Crakers and Pigoons are able to communicate.

1.1 The pigoons as host pigs that can be reaped rather than destroyed

The reader receives a thorough introduction to the pigoons in the second chapter of *Oryx and Crake*, in the section named "OrganInc Farms". Jimmy's father, an employee at the OrganInc Farms, worked with the mapping and mixing of genes as a well-respected genographer, and apparently one of the most prominent scientists working on the pigoon project. The pigoons serve as hosts for "foolproof human-tissue organs" that can "transplant smoothly and avoid rejection, while concurrently being able to fend off attacks by opportunistic microbes and viruses, of which there were more strains every year" (*Oryx* 25). The pigoons were under constant improvement, and the latter generations were able to hold up to six kidneys simultaneously, saving OrganInc Farms significant amounts of money every year: "such a host pig could be reaped of its extra kidneys; then, rather than being destroyed, it could keep on living and grow more organs" (*Oryx* 26). Furthermore, the organs harvested from the pigoons could be frozen, as well as modified for specific customers through the splicing of human cells, at a much lower cost than creating a full clone (*Oryx* 27). In other words, their human genes are merely a tool to commodify the human race, rather than an attempt to elevate their status from animal to human, thus echoing Haraway as the pigoons function merely as property, or the thing-itself that accommodates humans. Moreover, the pigoons are presented in a positive manner by the scientists and society at large, echoing Sharon's description of the liberal type of posthumanism, that embraces enhancements of humans where possible (Sharon 4).

Liberal posthumanism is further established through Mosca's argument that, in Atwood's speculative future, corporate power and scientific experiments correspond seamlessly, fuelled by the complete lack of risk assessment due to how the corporations are freed from responsibility: "genetic engineering corporations are the richest ones, and they are exempt from having to deal with any unexpected outcome their experiments may have" (40). OrganInc Farms is a prime example of this, for instance in how they attempt to soothe the uneasiness of mixing human genes with the genes of animals usually consumed by humans, by informing the public that "none of the defunct pigoons ended up as bacon or sausages" due to how "no one would want to eat an animal whose cells might be identical with at least some of their own" (*Oryx* 27). However, OrganInc Farms does not find it necessary to inform their customers of what might lie behind the phrasing "defunct pigoons". Contrary to the information offered by the corporation, Jimmy observed as a child how the accumulation of environmental challenges harmonized with an increased offer of bacon, ham and sausages in the staff café (nicknamed "Grunt" by the employees at OrganInc Farms). This would invoke in him a feeling of unease since he was "confused about who should be allowed to eat what," as he "didn't want to eat a pigoon, because he thought of the pigoons as creatures much like himself," recognising in the pigoons the same ability to decide their own fate as Jimmy himself holds (*Oryx* 27). This uneasiness in Jimmy mirrors the views of his mother. Although originally a scientist, at some point during Jimmy's childhood she quit her job due to what she considered the corporations' "moral cesspool[s]" that take advantage of people's willingness to pay to look younger and prettier (*Oryx* 64). Unlike Jimmy's father, who claims that "there's nothing sacred about cells and tissue" (*Oryx* 65), his mother is concerned with the ethics behind the gene meddling: "There's research and there's research. What you're doing – this pig brain thing. You're interfering with the building blocks of life. It's immoral. It's … sacrilegious" (*Oryx* 64).

The conversation between Jimmy's parents can be read as an example of what Sanderson points to when he claims that the development of hybrid animals such as the pigoons is able to thrive due to the power of the corporations. Jimmy's father, in claiming that there is nothing sacred about genes, echoes the desire of the corporations to profit from their customers' wish to "feel better, have more pleasurable experiences and live longer" (*Oryx* 222). Moreover, Jimmy's mother echoes dystopic posthumanism as its critique of technological enhancements "proceeds from the idea that technological intervention for enhancement purposes poses a threat to human nature and the values and virtues that humans have developed as a result of the necessity to deal with the imperfection inherent to this

nature" (Sharon 5). However, as focalised through Jimmy's mother, the technological enhancements pose a threat not only to human values, but to life itself, as the scientists have the ability to impact the circle of life and death.

Through the fictional invention of the pigoons and other genetically modified animals, Atwood not only enables an exploration of the ethical values that revolve around the posthuman, but she also conveys to the reader that these issues are currently happening. Sanderson points out that the terminology that Atwood uses, such as "transgenics" and "xenotransplantation" communicate to the reader that certain characteristics are transferred from one species to another (*Oryx* 230). Accordingly, Jimmy's mother resonates the voice of Atwood and her insistence that the novels she writes are necessary in order to explore the "what ifs" of the slippery slope that we are already sliding down (Atwood, *Writing* 286). Moreover, Sanderson remarks on how the attention drawn to genetic engineering often focuses on whether the genetically engineered animals are beneficial to society, which prompts a debate regarding ethics and moral (Sanderson 234-235). Further on, Sanderson claims that Snowman's mother functions as a "constant dissenting voice" throughout the first novel of the trilogy, although her attempts to protest the experiments have little resonance. However, Sanderson points to how the "corporate dominance and corporate paternalism" (Sanderson 235), materialising in the novels through organisations such as OrganInc and CorpSeCorpse, prevent such voices from being heard.

If Sanderson's remarks are considered within the framework of Sharon's explanation of dystopic and liberal posthumanism, it is obvious that Jimmy's mother resonates the dystopic type as she appeals for a moral consideration of the significance of the invention of species such as the pigoons. Sharon argues that "nature and human nature are categories that cannot be reduced to the sphere of ethics governed by human reason" (Sharon 6), and this can be recognised as the central issue in the disagreement between Jimmy's parents. However, her voice is drowned in a society where technological sophistication has surpassed ethics, and the private corporations that dominate society have recognised that they will not benefit from a conversation that revolves around animal welfare or ethics in biotechnology. The private corporations are motivated by the increasing demand from the population to extend their life expectancy and quality of life. Thus, the corporations are unwilling to govern the ethics of the complicated relationship between humans and nature, and individuals are prevented from voicing their concerns due to the total dominance in society by corporations such as OrganInc. This dominance is further expanded to the individuals that serve them, such as Jimmy's father, who roots for technologically enhancements as he equates it to progress.

In a society driven by the corporations, scientists gather in the cafeteria Grunt and openly joke about the increase in pork on the menu. However, in the section that has been discussed here, both Jimmy and his mother voices their scepticism of the splice between humans and pigs, which suggests that theirs might not be the only dissenting voices in the society fictionalised by Atwood. Thus, Atwood voices her concern about how the private corporations enable a commodification of animals through their monopoly of society, and temporarily rejects the anthropocentric view that the corporation and their scientists represent. The next section will demonstrate that the reflections around the pigoons change significantly as the story progresses, from a debate of a pigoon as an objectified animal to a situation in which the pigoons gain agency following the discovery of their similarities with humans.

1.2 The pigoons as creatures full to bursting of life, life, life, life, life, life

As previously mentioned, the status of the pigoons changes as they encounter a group comprised of both humans and Crakers. *The Year of the Flood* and *Oryx and Crake* give voice to the solitary narratives of Snowman and Toby as told from a post-catastrophe condition, and illustrate how both narrators still relate to the pigoons from a pre-catastrophe point of view as long as they are alone. They show similarities in that they recognise that the pigoons are more intelligent than other pigs, and relate to the pigoons with this in mind. Nonetheless, the real change in the reflection upon the role of the pigoons happen only after it is revealed that they are able to communicate with the Crakers. Thus, regardless of the overarching dominant society that denounced the value of the pigoons, until their similarities with humans are uncovered, the pigoons continue to be considered threats rather than being considered equal species. Nonetheless, by allowing the pigoons agency through values that are traditionally recognised in humans, such as language and rationality, Atwood initially reinforces the anthropocentrism that posthumanism seeks to reject.

Following the downfall of humanity, the pigoons escape from the OrganInc Farms, and roam around the nearby areas. Both Snowman and Toby find themselves threatened by the pigoons, frightened by their intelligence and ability to find solutions to any issue they might encounter. To protect themselves, Snowman sleeps in trees, where he considers himself safe from both the wolvogs and the pigoons, and Toby stays inside the grounds of the AnooYoo Spa building that she worked in at the time of the pandemic. Toby, having spent

her life in the pleeblands, has no concrete knowledge of the "sus multiorganifer" project, but quickly identifies the pigs that she sees as "escapees […] from some experimental farm or other" due to their "plump pinky-grey forms" and how they "glisten like wrestlers," seemingly "too large and bulbous to be normal" (*Year of the Flood* 21). Toby quickly discovers their interest in her supply of vegetables, and realises that although she successfully chased them away one time, they will most likely come back to dig up her garden under the cover of night. Thus, much in the same manner as the childhood experiences of Jimmy, Toby recognises their intelligence and senses an unease at how they "peer back at her," and how the animals seemingly dismiss her warnings that she will shoot them, until she physically retrieves her rifle and shows it to them (*Year* 23).

Snowman experiences similar encounters with the pigoons on his search for food. Atwood emphasises the moment of visual recognition between the man and the pigoons: "when they hear him they stop feeding and lift their heads: they see him, all right" (*Oryx* 275). Snowman's encounters with the pigoons mirrors the ones he had during his childhood, in his recollection that the little pigoonlets were adorable, but "the adults were slightly frightening, with their runny noses and tiny, white-lashed pink eyes. They glanced up at him as if they saw him, really saw him, and might have plans for later" (*Oryx* 30). Toby and Snowman both acknowledge the intelligence of the pigoons when they describe that the animals "are smart, they'll keep her in mind, they won't forgive her" (*Year* 22) because they "have long memories" (*Oryx* 275). Thus far, Atwood presents the pigoons as intelligent animals and establishes that these animals deviate from normal pigs.

This acknowledgement stands in opposition to the traditional list of Cartesian qualities that are said to constitute a human being, that was addressed in my introduction. According to Mosca, rationality and language are the two factors that are most often highlighted, due to how non-human animals have traditionally been considered "biological machines" that are "capable only of instinctive reactions to external stimuli" (46). However, in their solitary encounters with the pigoons, both Snowman and Toby experience how the pigoons are capable of deliberate reflection in order to outsmart human beings. On one of his raids for food, Snowman accidentally walks straight into a group of pigoons who, to Snowman's surprise, display no signs of fear when he raises his stick. This dissonances with his idea that they would be scared of the stick as it resembles an electropod that would have previously been used as a tool to inflict pain upon the animals. Moreover, the descriptions of the pigoons underscores the suggestion that these animals are in fact capable of reflection: "the boar lowers its head […], making up its mind […] the boar thinks better of it […],

marking its contempt by dropping a pile of dung as it goes […] they're staring in his direction […] those beasts are clever enough to fake a retreat, then lurk around the next corner" (*Oryx* 276). However, because Snowman's knowledge of the origin of the animals includes first-hand information that the "brainy and omnivorous animals" may have "human neocortex tissue growing in their crafty, wicked heads" (*Oryx* 276), his concern that their desires include a longing to "bowl over him, trample him, then rip him open, munch up the organs first" resonates with his fearful impression of the pigoons from his childhood in the Compounds (*Oryx* 276). Snowman applies the knowledge from his previous life in the Compounds in order to install a negative attitude in the pigoons, and thus creates a continuity from his past to the situation he finds himself in as the post-catastrophe condition of his life ensues.

Anne Pusch remarks on the reversal of roles, from the manner in which the pigoons are presented in a confined space at OrganInc Farms, to the feral animals that make Toby and Snowman fear for their lives. Pusch points out that: "the features designed to make the pigoons useful for human ends – the size of their bodies to hold all the extra organs and the human brain tissue that can be transplanted smoothly – now function as weapons" (Pusch 58). As previously mentioned, both survivors have experienced the mental and physical capability of the pigoons to outsmart human beings. Further on, Pusch argues that the description of the pigoons, as well as the change in their behaviour, can be read as a critique of our society, more specifically "the methods and goals of bioengineering and technoscientific developments" in contemporary science (Pusch 58). Thus, the analysis of the pigoon project continues to echo dystopic posthumanism that has been carried out in a society marked by a more liberal type of posthumanism that wishes to explore and engage in technological enhancement that benefit humans' increasing need to push towards a transcendence of the body (Sharon 6). As previously mentioned, the pigoons are first introduced as successful, thus profitable, hybrid animals. Pusch notes that it takes a pandemic before the pigoons are considered a threat, rather than an aspect of society that Jimmy can express his uneasiness about. However, Pusch does not take into consideration that groups such as the God's Gardeners, and also individuals like Jimmy's mother, reject the technology behind the development of hybrid species such as the pigoons, and actively attempt to work against it.

In his famous work *Animal Rites* (2003), Cary Wolfe argues favourably for a review of posthumanism from a non-technological perspective, calling for the necessity of a debate that examines the structure of speciesism due to the underlying anthropocentric discourse in

literary and cultural studies. Further on, Wolfe claims that Western humanism thrives from the assumption and permission to preserve the hierarchical binary opposition between 'human' and 'animal' as long as absolute freedom is given to human beings, regardless of race, class or gender (*Animal Rites* 8). However, Wolfe argues that this freedom has "as its material condition of possibility absolute control over the lives of nonhuman others" (*Animal Rites* 7) and maintains that as long as humans uphold control over other species, this will automatically be applied to other humans: "the humanist discourse of species will always be available for use by some humans against other humans as well, to countenance violence against the social other of whatever species – or gender, or race, or class, or sexual difference" (*Animal Rites* 8). In the society presented by Atwood, the hierarchy that positions humans at the very top remains central to the story, both through the obvious hierarchy before most humans die off, and through the narrative of the survivors. In *The Year of the Flood*, Toby kills a pigoon, which prompts ambiguous reactions in someone who had previously followed a vegetarian cult, and is now a lone survivor:

> Toby's hands are shaking. You've snuffed a life, she tells herself. You've acted rashly and from anger. You ought to feel guilty. Still, she thinks of going out with one of the kitchen knives and sawing off a ham. She'd taken the Vegivows when she joined the Gardeners, but the prospect of a bacon sandwich is a great temptation right now. She resists it, however: animal protein should be the last resort. She murmurs the standard Gardener words of apology, though she doesn't feel apologetic. Or not apologetic enough. (*Year* 23)

Having spent a decent amount of time with the cult that called itself God's Gardeners, she acknowledges that she should feel remorse for taking another life, human or not, but she fails to fully embrace the pigoons, regardless of her realisation that the animals will not forget her actions. In comparison, a conversation between Zeb, another member of God's Gardeners, and Toby, can be found in *MaddAddam*, following Toby's failure to kill two men known as the Painballers, who represent an obvious danger to both herself and other living creatures around her: "'I'm sorry,' says Toby. 'About what?' says Zeb. 'We caught them, night before last,' she says. 'We tied them to a tree. But I didn't kill them. It was Saint Julian's, I just couldn't. They got away, they took their spraygun'" (*MaddAddam* 63).

In stark contrast to the episode where she defended her food supply, on this confrontation Toby is unable to take the life of a fellow creature. She substantiates this

unwillingness by expressing that her failure partly had to do with the celebration of Saint Julian and All Souls, a holiday that celebrates not only Saint Julian, but also all other living creatures: "All Souls is not restricted to Human Souls: among us, it encompasses the Souls of all living Creatures that have passed through Life" (*Year* 507). Moreover, Toby's further reflections upon this reveals that she is of the opinion that "once the Gardener Adams and Eves taught you something, you stayed taught," resulting in her decision to let the Painballers live: "it would be next to impossible for her to kill the Painballers on that particular night – butcher the in cold blood, since by that time the two of them were firmly roped to a tree" (*MaddAddam* 19). Instead Toby offers them soup cooked on the bone of a rakunk that she makes sure to apologise and pardon for having to eat, an action that she finds necessary because "it wouldn't feel right unless somebody did" (*Year* 513), which contrasts her unwillingness to apologise after shooting a pigoon. Following the logic that the pigoons, at this particular stage of the narrative, are still considered to be 'only' animals, they are deemed more killable than the worst imaginable humans, regardless of the danger Toby puts the rest of the group in as she fails to find it in herself to kill them.

However, this reluctance in Toby to kill again can be traced back to an incident that occurred when Toby was still alone at the AnooYooSpa. Upon discovering that the pigoons had eventually managed to dig under the fence and uproot her garden, in what she observes looked "less like a feeding frenzy than a deliberate act of revenge" (*Year* 383), Toby registers five pigoons in the meadows, whom she believes are obviously celebrating their victory over the vegetable garden, due to how the pigoons are "snorting in derision," with a hint of "juvenile squealing" (*Year* 384): "they've been watching for her: it's as if they want to witness her dismay" (*Year* 383). Desperate for food, Toby considers her options, and eventually decides to go outside the fence in search of something edible, preferably larvae or eggs, rather than a "fellow mammal" (*Year* 384). She cautiously crosses the meadow, approaches the dead boar and realises that the carcass has been adorned with various plants, such as roses and fern fronds. Toby immediately identifies the flowers as alien to the natural flora of the meadow, which prompts her to reflect upon old tales of elephants mourning their dead. However, the idea that the pigoons have deliberately brought memorial bouquets for a funeral, rather than eating the dead animal, like most pigs would, truly frightens her, until she remembers the words of Adam One from the God's Gardeners: "But why not? […] We believe the Animals have Souls. Why then would they not have funerals?" (*Year* 394). Pusch points out that the solitary confinement that Toby finds herself in triggers her to reflect upon her status as a human being superior to nonhuman animals, because this status alone cannot

protect her unless she is armed with a lethal weapon (Pusch 65). The representation of an act performed by the pigoons that resembles something human marks the beginning of a shift in Toby's attitude towards the pigoons. However, Pusch fails to notice that the status of the pigoons changes only after Toby realises that they are capable of expressing feelings that have traditionally been confined to the emotional scope of humans, such as expressions of sorrow and empathy. Thus, Toby's reflections are clearly motivated by a sense of fellowship with the pigoons, triggered first as she realises that their emotions might be more similar than she had previously attributed to the pigoons.

MaddAddam describes how the survivors of the pandemic virus join forces with the Crakers in an attempt to rebuild a community where they can co-exist. Throughout the novel, the image of the pigoons changes dramatically, from the previously discussed description of the animals as feral, deadly, and extremely intelligent creatures that pose a danger to the human beings, to one where mutual respect is eventually established. The previous members of the God's Gardeners live with the Crakers in a camp, attempting to survive in a world where food is scarce and two ruthless Painballers are roaming the woods. The humans have disposed of their previous dietary principles, which brings meat back on the menu. During the first pages of the novel there are several references to ChickieNobs, dogribs, as well as pork meat, or "pig in three forms: bacon, ham, and chops" (*MaddAddam* 46). Although the re-entering of meat on the menu is deemed necessary for survival, terms such as "Frankenbacon" resonates the complex feelings that the former vegetarians experience when they have to eat the hybrid animals (*MaddAddam* 29). The Crakers constantly express dubious feelings towards the human consumption of meat, which emerges through their persistent referring to the meat, regardless of type, as "smelly bone". Pusch remarks upon this development when she argues that through the reunification of previous members of the God's Gardeners, the pigoons are yet again outnumbered, and although the hybrid animals still appear threatening to the group, their status has yet again been degraded to stomach filler (Pusch 59).

Moreover, Toby's unease regarding the pigoons ceases to disappear, despite the fact that her bacon cravings have been satisfied. Upon an encounter with what Toby believes is the dead boar's children and spouse, standing only a stone's throw away from her, she urges Zeb not to shoot the animals, and instead she observes how the sow defies the rifle, and turns sideways so that she becomes the perfect target: "She looks at Toby out of her eye. The five little ones gather in her shadow, under the nipples, which are all in a row too, like vest buttons. Her mouth upturns in a smile, but that's only the way it's made," which fills Toby

with a sensation that what she is observing is: "Life, life, life, life, life, life. Full to bursting, this minute" (*MaddAddam* 273). Later, upon recalling the events, Toby describes how the sow "gave me a very strange look" prompting Toby to "get the feeling that she knew I'd shot her husband" at the AnooYooSpa (*MaddAddam* 317).

After this incident in *MaddAddam*, the status of the pigoons changes. The transformation that begins with Toby's observation of the pigoons continue to develop through various remarks from a Craker boy named Blackbeard, as well as her own reflections regarding the animals. Furthermore, Toby learns that the pigoons and Blackbeard are obviously able to communicate, because Blackbeard has shared information with the other Crakers about the incident where Toby had to kill a pigoon. According to Jimmy, "the pigoon gal *told* Blackbeard" (*MaddAddam* 321, my italics). The Crakers, as it turns out, use their Craker language to sing to the pigoons, and the pigoons reply by grunting. Much like in previous examples, Toby observes that the pigoons exchange grunts as if they are having a conversation: "It must be information exchange; but God knows what sort of information. Are they saying, 'We're scared?' Or 'We hate them?' Or possibly just a simple 'Yum, yum?'" (*MaddAddam* 323). However, the pigoon parade of more than fifty sows, boars and piglets that have approached the camp are simply asking for help to kill the remaining Painballers in order to protect their piglets. Blackbeard, functioning as a translator, due to how it is "easier for them to talk to us" (*MaddAddam* 328), explains to Toby that:

> In return, if you help them to kill the three bad men, they will never again try to eat your garden. Or any of you. […] Even if you are dead, they will not eat you. And they ask that you must no longer make holes in them, with blood, and cook them in a smelly bone soup, or hang them in the smoke, or fry them and then eat them. Not any more. (*MaddAddam* 328)

Following an intense battle between the Painballers and the remaining humans and pigoons, the two parties honour their agreement, and confirm to one another that the pact will remain valid for generations to come (*MaddAddam* 451), an agreement that is enabled by a mutual understanding that both parties are morally obliged and intellectually capable to respect it. According to Pusch, this twist in the narrative ensures that Atwood can successfully re-establish the morality and decency of the previously corporation-fighting, vegetarian members of the God's Gardeners, as well as justify the role that the pigoons have played throughout the trilogy, giving them the agency that they deserve. Moreover, I would argue

that Atwood strongly emphasises this through one of Toby's sudden epiphanies: "The Pigoons were not objects. She had to get that right. It was only respectful" (*MaddAddam* 427). By letting a truce be agreed to between the two species, Atwood echoes Wolfe's wish to eliminate the hierarchical differentiation between human and non-human animals by enabling the two species to agree not to regard one another as food. However, the pigoons are the only hybrid animal in the novels that are endowed with such a truce, according to Pusch, the common peace is based on "their shared gene pool and shared sense of moral community" (Pusch 60), grounded on the humans' capability to learn to "respect their nonhuman others through the entanglement and necessary cooperation" (Pusch 73). The shared gene pool, particularly the pigoons' "human neo-cortex tissue" that is repeatedly referred to, accentuates their close resemblance with human beings. It is striking how, although the pigoons' agency is reinstated, other spliced species are denied the same agency, exemplified by how both human and pigoons are free to consume or domesticate other animals, such as the Mo'Hairs that coexist with the humans.

However, it is important to note that Atwood uses her speculative fiction to investigate and explore a possible future in which genetically engineered animals such as the pigoons have gained agency through their actions. Although *The MaddAddam Trilogy* attempts to reduce the gap between species, it fundamentally fails to do so when it merely grants the privilege of discussion to those species that share DNA with human beings.

It is interesting to note that Atwood gives the pigoons agency only after their communicative skills have been disclosed. The pigoons function as a good example of a genetically engineered creature as it evokes terror in its role as a hybrid animal, creating a dubious neither-nor space in the humans that encounter it. However, the role of the pigoons intensifies as they are revealed to inhabit many of the same emotions that can be recognised in humanist thought, such as communicative skills and rationality. Thus, Atwood reinforces the anthropocentrism that is resisted in posthumanism, as the role of the pigoons must be analysed in the light of a dystopic posthumanism, and it cannot be neglected that this role is only strengthened following the discovery of their human-like characteristics.

1.2 The Crakers

After having explored the role of the pigoons, I will now investigate the other hybrid species that is given comprehensive attention in *The MaddAddam Trilogy*, namely the genetically

altered humanoid species that is created to survive in the increasingly hostile environment on the planet: the Crakers. They are left in the care of Jimmy/Snowman by their creator and Jimmy's childhood friend, Crake, in the hope that Jimmy will take care of them and lead them out from the Paradice dome (sic), where they have lived since they were created. Crake's intention was to create a perfectly adapted species, free of the human characteristics that, in his opinion, are at fault for the degrading status of the planet. Jimmy's interaction with the Crakers cumulates into a creation story, complete with spirits and the story of before and after. After the narratives of *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* merge, *MaddAddam* presents the reader with a society in which the Crakers and humans co-exist. Although the Crakers are considered "eugenically superior to humans" (Adami 258), and the ultimate posthuman creatures (Mosca 45), I will nonetheless argue that Atwood reinforces the perception of anthropocentrism, as she juxtaposes the intention behind the Crakers with the actual result of Crake's experiment as they are exposed to characteristics traditionally recognised in humanism following their communication with the surviving humans. To contextualise the arguments within the framework of this thesis, I will first question Crake's motivations for creating a new species as explained to Jimmy, before I analyse the social interaction of the Crakers that has previously been limited to Snowman, but is eventually expanded to the other survivors.

1.2.1 The Crakers as exquisite individuals: sound of tooth, smooth of skin

The Children of Crake, or Crakers, as they are commonly called, are a humanoid species bioengineered by a group of scientists led by Crake, Jimmy's childhood friend. The first individuals were developed from altered human embryos, but the individuals that are presented in the trilogy are, as explained by Crake: "*sui generis*, they're reproducing themselves, now" (*Oryx* 356). Their engineered attributes include a "rapid-growth factor" that makes them "drop dead at age thirty – suddenly, without getting sick" (*Oryx* 356), apparently to avoid the concerns that follow with old age. To ensure that the Crakers will never have the need for clothes, their skin has been made UV-resistant, and to protect them from insects, they have been fitted with an internal insect-repellent. Additionally, they possess "an unprecedented ability to digest unrefined plant material" (*Oryx* 358), as well as a general lack of interest in engaging in war, or conflicts triggered by issues regarding race, sexuality or territorial disputes:

> Racism – or, as they referred to it in Paradice, pseudospeciation – had been eliminated in the model group, merely by switching the bonding mechanism: the Paradice people did not register skin colour. Hierarchy could not exist among them, because they lacked the neural complexes that would have created it. Since they were neither hunters nor agriculturalists hungry for land, there was no territoriality: the king-of-the-castle hard-wiring that had plagued humanity had, in them, been unwired. They ate nothing but leaves and grass and roots and a berry or two; thus their foods were plentiful and always available. Their sexuality was not a constant torment to them, not a cloud of turbulent hormones: they came into heat at regular intervals, as did most mammals other than man. (*Oryx* 358-359)

In Crake's opinion, the modifications he has performed on the Crakers have conditioned them for sustainable living, and the alterations that have been made in order to ensure their sustainable condition have been spliced from other mammals. Thus, Crake has created a species that simultaneously celebrates the diversity of sustainable characteristics in other animals and critiques the human qualities that have enabled the deterioration of the planet. Adami argues that the Crakers can be considered the "superior to humans, insofar as they combine the best genes of different species in order to be perfectly fit for survival in the harsh twenty-first century, especially in the very hostile post-apocalyptic world" (258). Her argument echoes one made by Crake, remembered by Snowman in his solitary existence after the plague hits: "Think of an adaptation, any adaption, and some animal somewhere will have thought of it first" (*Oryx*, 194). In Crake's opinion, the simplicity of the animal instinct and adaption to their environment by far surpasses humanity's symbolic thinking, and he considers the latter to be the key to the problems that humanity faces, which leads to his attempts to contain any hint of symbolic thinking as he designs the Crakers.

In a simplified explanation of posthumanism, Mosca differentiates between the branch of posthumanism that concentrates on transhumanism (human co-evolution with machines), to "make sense of what it means to be human in times when human capabilities are constantly enhanced by scientific and technological means" (Mosca 45), and a different branch that examines the corporeal and biological issues that aim at "questioning the cultural constructs that contribute to the definition of 'human', and exploring the fine line that separates humans from animals" (Mosca 45-46). This resonates with Sharon's division between the scholars that seek to separate posthumanism from humanism, and those who see

it as a prolongation of a humanist philosophy. Mosca points out that although there have been several contributions to the list of exactly what constitutes human nature, two of the qualities that are always highlighted are language and rationality (46). The role of the posthumanist is to support, as well as observe, the figure of human falling from their central position, or as Mosca points out: "posthumanism, broadly speaking, aims at relocating humans from their self-assigned position of centrality in the world" (45). In order to secure the survival of *someone*, Crake designs a humanoid species that can inhabit the planet without simultaneously burdening it. Thus, he allows for a reconsideration of who we are as human beings, as he replaces one human species with a humanoid species. Nonetheless, Crake is unable to remove certain traits from the Crakers, and the fact that they are able to communicate through the use of language ensures their introduction to the traits that distinguish them from animals.

Although Mosca states that "according to their creators' intentions, the Crakers are a post-human population – literally and chronologically, since they are supposed to become the 'new' humans after the 'old' ones disappeared" (45), the sustainability of their posthuman condition fails, as they become increasingly aware of the potential of communication through language. Further on, Mosca points out that Atwood "dramatize current philosophical thinking about the emergence of a post-human condition" through her novels (45). In other words, Atwood creates a universe that forms a framework for discussing posthuman issues, not only through the Crakers and the society that preceded their existence, but also by juxtaposing the contemporary Western society with the one created in her novels. Thus, Crake's attempts to remove the parts of the human brain that distinguishes humans from animals are noteworthy, but he nonetheless creates a humanoid species that is moulded in the image of a physically perfect human being, free of faulty attributions: "Each one of them is admirably proportioned. Each is sound of tooth, smooth of skin. No ripples of fat around their waists, no bulges, no dimpled orange-skin cellulite on their thighs (*Oryx* 115). As Jimmy first witnesses them, he finds the Crakers to be incredible, their beauty incomprehensible: "they were naked […] there was no self-consciousness, none at all. At first [Jimmy] couldn't believe them, they were so beautiful. Black, yellow, white, brown, all available skin colours. Each individual was exquisite" (*Oryx* 355), in other words the definition of a perfect human being.

The Crakers are customized to survive on a planet where the natural resources have been exhausted by the civilisations that preceded theirs, following Crake's opinion that this is a civilisation that cannot be rebuilt. In Crake's estimation, the few survivors of a plague

would be scattered around, unable to rebuild what they had lost due to the lack of tools and electricity: "All it takes […] is the elimination of one generation. One generation of anything. Beetles, trees, microbes, scientists, speakers of French, whatever. Break the link in time between one generation and the next, and it's game over forever" (*Oryx* 262). Moreover, the future he envisions for the Crakers, will never require the need for electricity or a second iron age to wield tools and weapons, houses or clothes, due to how the Crakers are designed to ensure a self-sufficient existence (*Oryx* 359).

Crake strongly rejects the idea that he should be considered an altruist who cheers for the human race when he voices his opinion that humankind finds itself in a position where its only options are to "sink or swim" (*Oryx* 347):

> "As a species we're deep in trouble, worse than anyone's saying. [The Corps are] afraid to release the stats because people might just give up, but take it from me, we're running out of space-time. Demand for resources has exceeded supply for decades in marginal geopolitical areas, hence the famines and droughts; but very soon, demand is going to exceed supply *for everyone*." (*Oryx* 347)

Thus, as Crake points out how humans have drained the natural resources of the planet, making it impossible to rebuild the civilisation that has developed over the past centuries, Atwood deploys Crake to engage in a discussion of what Badmington calls a "careful, ongoing, overdue rethinking of the dominant humanist or (or anthropocentric) account of who "we" are as human beings" (Badmington 374). Florence Chiew elaborates these points by remarking that "posthumanism calls into question the apparently obvious coherence of 'human nature,' and aims to destabilize the basic premises of human exceptionalism" in order to demonstrate that humans have no privilege over how "non-human entities – e.g. computers, animals, plants, microorganisms, minerals, and fossils encounter and apprehend the world" (Chiew 52). Moreover, Chiew emphasises that this angle needs to be addressed in order to undermine the idea that there is a shared and fundamental human identity.

Accordingly, in the following conversation between Jimmy and Crake, Crake expresses his disbelief in the link between nature and the reality experienced by humans. Following Crake's logic that there is no opposition between reality and the natural, the need for containment is applicable to both nature and the ideas of ungraspable concepts such as religion. Crake expresses his disagreement that specifically modified creatures should be

considered less natural than species that have evolved through time, because the human conceptualising of nature as an isolated entity is simply a product of the mind:

> "Nature is to zoos as God is to churches."
> "Meaning what?" said Jimmy. […] Why is it he feels some line has been crossed, some boundary transgressed? How much is too much, how far is too far?
> "Those walls and bars are there for a reason," said Crake. "Not to keep us out, but to keep them in. Mankind needs barriers in both cases."
> "Them?"
> "Nature and God."
> "I thought you didn't believe in God," said Jimmy.
> "I don't believe in Nature either," said Crake. "Or not with a capital N." (*Oryx*, 242)

This conversation takes place after Jimmy has been exposed to wolvogs and ChickieNobs on Crake's campus, but the example nonetheless applies to the difference in opinion regarding the Crakers. As Jimmy expresses his disbelief that there is severe gene manipulation in order to serve humankind, thus echoing the dystopic posthumanism as discussed in the previous section, Crake consider these things differently. In his opinion, there are no boundaries between human and nature, real or unreal, because humans are able to fluctuate between the inside and the outside of the barriers, the real and the imagined. Moreover, this can also be read as the root of the problem, and his solution is to create a species that is seemingly unable to transgress the boundaries. Thus, Crake and Jimmy's conversation is at the heart of what Sharon identifies as the central difference between liberal and dystopic posthumanism: liberal posthumanism applies technology to master nature, whereas dystopic posthumanism considers technology a threat. Nonetheless, they are both rooted in the humanist dualist paradigm that discusses the relationship between humans and technology, and so are Jimmy and Crake.

According to Crake, "misplaced sexual energy" (*Oryx* 345) should be considered the principal catalyst for war, placed well above the official reasons that often take the blame, such as racial, religious or economic conflicts, especially because the misplaced sexual energy tends to lead to "contagious diseases, especially sexually transmitted ones" as well as "overpopulation, leading […] to environmental degradation and poor nutrition" (*Oryx* 345). Thus, Crake creates the BlyssPluss Pill whose official aim is to protect the user from sexually transmitted diseases, provide an unlimited supply of libido in combination with a general

sense of feeling energized and well, as well as prolong youth (*Oryx* 346). Additionally, the pill would have a fourth feature undisclosed to the public, that would "act as a sure-fire one-time-does-it-all birth-control pill" to lower the population rate (*Oryx* 347), a quality that Jimmy wrongly assumes will revolve around sterilisation of some sort. However, as it turns out, the pill and the Crakers were linked together, fulfilling Crake's intended role as cause and solution: "The Pill would put a stop to haphazard reproduction, the Project would replace it with a superior method. They were two stages of a single plan, you might say" (*Oryx* 358). Narkunas points out that the BlyssPluss Pill "fulfils the transhuman promise of redesigning human nature to allow for the satiation of unlimited libido" due to how it enables endless orgies without causing unnecessary overpopulation (Narkunas 13). "With the BlyssPluss Pill the human race will have a better chance of swimming," Crake argues (*Oryx* 347), and thus takes the chore of removing humans from their position rather seriously when he decides to distribute the pill widely around the planet. Oryx, upon realising that the outbreaks of a "rogue haemorrhagic" that was recognised by symptoms such as "high fever, bleeding from the eyes and skin, convulsions, then breakdown of the inner organs" and ultimately death, were happening in the same cities that she had travelled to in order to distribute the pill, admits as much to Jimmy: "It was in the pills. It was in those pills I was giving away, the ones I was selling. It's all the same cities, I went there. Those pills were supposed to help people! Crake said…" (*Oryx* 380).

Narkunas argues that Crake "exhibits faith that by altering certain biological characteristics of the human, he will be able to alter the population's behaviour and rewire the human to improve its efficiencies and quality of life" (Narkunas 13). Although Crake's intentions are clearly articulated and emphasised, and thus stands in accordance with Narkunas argument, there is great dissonance between the intention behind the Crakers, and the outcome of their continuing existence on the planet. In the grand finale following the spreading of the deadly virus he has designed in order to rid the planet of the destructive force of humanity, Crake slits Oryx' throat and thus prompts Jimmy to kill him. And so Jimmy is left with the responsibility for the Crakers, a situation that will be discussed in the next section of this thesis. Thus far, the Crakers fulfil their creator's intention as well as Mosca, Narkunas and Adami's idea of posthuman creatures as there is nothing faulty in their genetically modified design. However, what has been discussed in this section is the intention and rationale that lies at the core of their creation, namely that the Crakers will represent the continuation of the human race. I will now move on to discuss how their interaction with other individuals will drastically change them, arguably to the worse, in the opinion of their

deceased creator, due to the increasingly similarity with the human nature that Crake attempted to eliminate.

1.2.2 The Crakers as walking potatoes with no aggression, no jokes even

Following Oryx' unknowing distribution of the BlyssPluss Pill, and hers and Crake's death, Jimmy rises to the occasion and realises that the most important issue at stake is to protect the Crakers. Although the Crakers are engineered to survive in the increasingly harsh environment of the American East Coast, their experience with humans is limited to Oryx, who served as a teacher to them, teaching them "simple concepts, no metaphysics," such as "botany and zoology […] what not to eat and what could bite […], what not to hurt" (*Oryx* 363). As Jimmy and Crake share this conversation, Jimmy is still uninformed of Crake's plan, and thus fails to question the necessity of the teachings. Oryx's human features are disguised on her visits; she is naked and has taken precautions to disguise her human pheromones, and she slips through a concealed door to enter the Paradice dome. Thus, the Crakers are unaware that they are constantly being observed. On their first encounter with Jimmy, they ask for Oryx, but are content with his explanation that he will lead them to a new place where food will be plentiful (*Oryx* 363). Jimmy has observed the conversations shared between Oryx and the Crakers, but as the Crakers leave Paradice, their universe expands and consequently a need for a greater understanding increases. This section will discuss how the limitations of Crake's experiment are revealed as the heritage from humans is growing increasingly noteworthy in the Crakers as they expand their understanding of the world through communication with humans. As Atwood offers a detailed description of the intention behind the Crakers, she nonetheless maintains her opinion that there are certain human characteristics that prove impossible to remove. Through their encounter with survivors such as Jimmy and Toby, human traits such as imagination and creativity are privileged and encouraged, and the Crakers are thus given agency through the characteristics that likens them to the humans, rather than the characteristics that set them apart.

As previously mentioned, the Crakers are inspired by a variety of noteworthy characteristics from nature, and the different advantages are emphasised in the descriptions of the Crakers. Upon discovering that felines purrs at the "same frequency as the ultrasound used on bone fractures and skin lesions," resulting in "their own self-healing mechanism" (*Oryx* 184), Crake perfects this ability over years, and eventually manages to implement this

gene into the DNA of the Crakers. This is exemplified in *Oryx and Crake* following an incident where a Craker child is injured by a bobkitten in the forest (*Oryx* 185), and the Crakers also attempt to apply their healing mechanism to Snowman after he injures his foot (*MaddAddam* 49). Combined with the men's potent urine that contains chemicals that are efficient in scaring away predators such as wolvogs, rakunks, bobkittens and pigoons, the Crakers have no enemies that they should not be able to protect themselves from, at least as long as they stay inside the "invisible line that marks their territory" (*Oryx* 182). The urination ritual is carried out twice a day, and is a task carried out by the Craker men. Crake allocated the chemical filled urine to the men, in order for them "to have something important to do, something that didn't involve childbearing, so they wouldn't feel left out. Woodworking, hunting, high finance, war, and golf would no longer be options, he'd joked" (*Oryx* 183). The women, by comparison, spend their mornings "doing the things they usually do" which limits themselves to "tending the central fire" and "squat around" as well as helping catch a fish every now and then, to cook for Jimmy (*Oryx* 186).

In accordance with Crake's idea that the endangered state of humanity can be blamed on wars based on misplaced sexual energy, he ensures that the Crakers are wired differently with regard to copulation. When the female Crakers are ready to copulate, their abdomens turn blue, "a trick of variable pigmentation filched from the baboons, with a contribution from the expandable chromophores of the octopus" (*Oryx* 194). Although Crake rejects the idea of "unrequited love" and "thwarted lust" (*Oryx* 194), the courtship rituals of the Crakers are inspired by various parts of animals: the flowers the males present to the females represent the stones male penguins present to their chosen ones; they sing like songbirds, and dance in a manner similar to the signals through which eager crabs communicate their sexual readiness. Eventually, the female selects four males to copulate with, undisturbed by the rest of the males whose disappointment is non-existent, until the blue shade of her abdomen fades to indicate pregnancy (*Oryx* 194). The female is well taken care of by the men, and due to her "ultra-strong vulva" equipped with "extra skin layers, extra muscles" (*Oryx* 194-195) she can endure these breeding marathons once every three years (*Oryx* 193). It is reasonable to conclude that the passive role of the accepting female in the copulation ritual between the Crakers must be read as wry criticism of their creator, as Atwood is widely acknowledged as a feminist writer (Wisker 2). Narkunas comments on the link between Crake and the patriarchal society he has been brought up, and argues that the link is clearly demonstrated through the difference between the tasks carried out by the Craker men and women. Whereas the men are allocated important tasks to protect the women and children, the responsibility of

the women is restricted to traditional female tasks. Narkunas argues that the Craker project is clearly carried out from "within the known human world and field of male and patriarchal experience" (15), which is further manifested through the connection between the penis and the territorial boundaries that protect the women and children. Thus, Atwood illustrates that Crake's critique of anthropocentrism is rooted in the system in which he grew up, and that his "ethos is determined by his instrumental and anthropocentric views of life as the culmination of its biological elements" (Narkunas 16).

Evidence of this can be found in the persistence of splicing genes from other animals to create the Crakers, which displays that Crake creates nothing new, but rather excels in his modification of applying genes that are already available from other animals, collecting the genes that he finds favourable: "he merely adapts previous genetic coding sequences from species, and extrapolates and hopes that their behaviours will gloom onto the next creation" (Narkunas 15). Further on, Narkunas argues that the driving force behind the creation of the Crakers mirrors their inventor's "instrumental and anthropocentric views of life as the culmination of its biological elements" (Narkunas 16). In other words, the person who decided to rid the planet of human beings, also functions as the creator of a humanoid species that is based on carefully handpicked qualities from other animals, in order for it to be able to survive life on a planet where human beings have made physical survival close to impossible due to the extensive draining of natural resources.

Moreover, Narkunas recognises that Atwood critiques Crake's inability to acknowledge that his premises are wrong, as his desire to base a new species on the human genome while simultaneously excluding the characteristics that distinguishes humans from animals, such as the complexity of human reason and language, proves unsuccessful.

Anne Pusch remarks that the posthuman condition of the Crakers functions as a reminder to the readers of the trilogy to reflect upon their own behaviour in a society where many of the ethical issues evoked by Atwood are important to address. She argues that the Crakers are "true pacifists" due to their "veganism and compassion" (68). The Crakers can thus be consider a sustainable option in the continuation of a civilisation on the planet, but she nonetheless raises an important question when she asks: "should the boundaries between species be crossed for the purpose of prolonging the life of one singular species among the great variety of natural life?" (68). Moreover, her reading of the Crakers questions the liberal and dystopic types of posthumanism that have been evident in the exploration of the Crakers and pigoons, as she problematizes the challenge of the binary opposition between humans and nature, rather than attempt to situate the Crakers within either category. Reading the

trilogy optimistically, she emphasizes Atwood's ability to show the reader that the differences between species might be fewer than we think, pointing to how the Crakers develop over time. A pessimistic reading, on the other hand, displays a future society where the Crakers' interaction with humans is what denies them their childlike innocence. The analyses provided by Pusch both underscore the mutual impact the humans and Crakers have on one another, as they revolve around whether or not the Crakers should be encouraged to develop their understanding of concepts rooted in humanity.

In accordance with Pusch's reading of the Crakers, Bouson argues that Crake ignores the "limits of nature and the boundaries separating species" when he creates a species based on his personal preferences and opinion on what an impeccable version of a new human race should consist of ("Game Over 149). Moreover, Bouson points out that the Crakers represent a "social construction of human reality," and that this draws the reader to reflect upon the "active role of genetics and biology in shaping human behaviour and culture" ("Game Over" 149). Although Crake successfully eliminates some accurately unnecessary traits, such as the human fondness for meat, he fails to remove all the characteristics that he deems superfluous, such as the Crakers' insatiable curiosity regarding their origin. Thus, Atwood illustrates that the hardest parts to alter in the human brain are equivalent to a selection of the human characteristics that frustrate Crake the most, such as imagination. Through the ability to imagine, humans are able to visualise death, and this ability to imagine the termination of life "acts like an aphrodisiac" for humanity, according to Crake (*Oryx* 139). In his opinion, the humans are the only creatures on the planet that expresses a wish to "stick their souls into someone else, some new version of themselves, and live on forever," opposed to other animals that, upon encountering external causes that threaten their survival, choose the more reasonable option as they "put their energy into staying alive themselves until times get better" (*Oryx* 139). However, as Crake decides to create an entirely new species to *replace* the current human population, he demonstrates that he is culpable of entertaining the same desires that he critiques, namely to create a new and better version of himself, and thus secure his eternal existence.

Imagination is also closely connected to what Crake refers to as "the G-spot in the brain" (*Oryx* 186). The G refers to God, and this spot is supposedly located in an area that should not be meddled with due to the possibility that the person whose G-spot is interfered with can turn into either a psychopath or a zombie (*Oryx* 186). However, as much as Crake insists that these characteristics must be removed in order to create the perfect species to inherit the planet, the removal of the G-spot proves unsuccessful. Atwood demonstrates this

through the Crakers, for example when Snowman discovers that the Crakers have plans to conduct a ceremony through which they apologise to Oryx after they saw it necessary to kill a bobkitten to protect a Craker child (*Oryx* 185). According to Crake, "symbolic thinking of any kind would signal downfall" (*Oryx* 419), and thus the Crakers are nearing what he considers downfall as they turn to their mythology and creation stories to justify the killing of an animal. Whereas some might consider the Crakers' expression of guilt a positive attribution, their ability to conceptualise an apology as well as a vague entity to apologise to represents creative reflections, which marks the beginning of the downfall: "next they'd be inventing idols, and funerals, and grave goods, and the afterlife, and sin, and Linear B, and kings, and then slavery and war" (*Oryx* 420). Thus, as the Crakers are subjected to human contact, first through Snowman and later through the remaining survivors, they gradually develop the characteristics that have traditionally distinguished humans from animals. According to Crake, these traits enabled the creation of religion, territorial disagreements and individualism, and eventually caused humans to commit atrocities on both individual and societal levels. As the flaws of Crake's intentions for the Paradice project is revealed, the status of the Crakers is simultaneously lifted from passive to active as their human characteristics are recognised and appreciated by the human survivors.

However, following the reunification of the Crakers and a group of scientists that assisted Crake on the Paradice project, the scientists voice their negative inclinations towards the Crakers. Their intention was obviously never to live side by side with the genetically engineered Crakers, whom the scientist Swift Fox refers to as "Crake's Frankenpeople" (*MaddAddam* 28):

> "I don't know why you brought them with you," said Swift Fox. "There's too many of them. We can't feed them."
> "We won't have to," said Manatee. "They eat leaves, remember? That's how Crake designed them. So they'd never need agriculture."
> "Right," said Swift Fox. "You worked on that module. Me, I did the brains. The frontal lobes, the sensory-input modifications. I tried to make them less boring, but Crake wanted no aggression, no jokes even. They're walking potatoes."
> (*MaddAddam* 29)

Through a conversation with Crake, Jimmy asks about their ability to talk, and Crake explains that the Crakers are not very humorous, due to the necessity for "a certain edge, a

little malice" in order to make jokes. Crake explains how "it took a lot of trial and error […], but I think we've managed to do away with jokes" (*Oryx* 359-360). The remarks from the scientists and Crake echo the descriptions of the processes of creating the modified animals that have previously been discussed, in which the scientifically developed individuals are designed to represent a perfected version of humans. Although Crake was of the opinion that the Crakers would be considered a superior race by a broader public, the wry comments from the scientists stray from this idea. Despite the fact that the Crakers are self-sufficient, they continue to be considered objects by the scientists as they "initially reject and ridicule" them, regardless of their own role in the creation of Crake's superior role (Pusch 67).

Following his idea that every great trait has already been thought of and implemented in one animal or another, Crake goes to great lengths to integrate many of these into the ostensibly seamless copulation ritual of the Crakers. Nonetheless, the attempt to biologically remove any inclination to acts of violence from the Crakers fails to stop the males from copulating with two human survivors. During one of their first encounters with the Crakers, who approach them with their "bright blue and unnaturally large penises wagging from side to side like the tails of friendly dogs" (*MaddAddam 20*), the two girls are swiftly submerged in "a flickering thicket of naked limbs and backs" (*MaddAddam* 21). This involuntary sexual interaction between the girls and the Crakers, defined as a "major cultural misunderstanding" by Toby (*MaddAddam* 22), results in pregnancies, and both Amanda and Ren eventually give birth to babies whose biological fathers are Crakers (*MaddAddam* 461). Upon learning from the human survivors that impulsive "rambunctious group copulation" with humans is unacceptable, the male Crakers are nervous around the younger women of the group, and they start questioning the differences between themselves and the others: "*Is she blue? One is blue. Two others were blue, we joined our blue to their blue but we did not make them happy. They are not like our women, they are not happy, they are broken. Did Crake make them? Why did he make them that way, so they are not happy*" (*MaddAddam* 123). Their naïvety is displayed through these snippets of Craker conversation, although they also display to the reader that the Crakers are able to self-discipline and attain a level of understanding that trumps their biological impulses:

> "*If she is blue […] should we mate with her? No, we should not. Do not sing to them, do not pick flowers for them, do not wag your penis at them. These women scream with fright, they do not choose us even if we give them a flower, they do not like a*

> *wagging penis. We do not make them happy, we do not know why they scream*." (*MaddAddam* 124)

Narkunas, Pusch and Bouson all point out that the introduction of cross-breeding between the species was not intended in Crake's original vision for their future, but it nonetheless represents a major change in their position, as they change from "a kind of mad scientist joke" to "the best hope for the genetic survival of some vestige of homo sapiens" (Bouson, "Romp" 344) following the interbreeding between species.

In light of Sanderson's argument that "all aspects of life are commodified by Atwood," and particularly the application of living organisms (Sanderson 222), the Crakers are a good example. Atwood remarks that the Crakers are "well behaved from the inside out not because of their legal system or their government or some form of intimidation but because they have designed to be so" (Atwood, *Other Worlds* 94). Following Atwood's logic, Crakers' original behaviour can thus be considered natural, whereas the changes that are demonstrated throughout *The MaddAddam Trilogy* are influenced by humans. In other words, the remaining humans serve as their government as they explain to the Crakers that certain of their impulses are unacceptable, such as mating with the female survivors simply because they are blue. Despite Crake's desire to replace humans with the environmental-friendly, compassionate Crakers, his attempts to replace essential human traits fail. Thus, the Crakers inhabit the ability to imagine, dream and communicate, and through their interaction with humans they continuously expands these qualities. Crake's purpose to release a posthuman species in a world where imagination and language would be second-rate qualities fails, as the Crakers are developing increasingly intellectual qualities. Consequently, the Crakers, however pacifistic and compassionate, are likely to continue to cultivate their intellectual capacity through the language and symbolism partly given to them by their human mentors. Although they are designed to treat other animals differently than the previous population did, the Crakers are intellectually capable of much more than Crake envisioned.

Pusch remarks that the Crakers are given agency towards the end of the trilogy due to their explicit communication skills with humans, non-humans and nature, Atwood "turn[s] them into the ultimate decision-makers" (65). Nonetheless, although the Crakers, like the pigoons, experience increasing acceptance and agency towards the end of the trilogy, they have also become dependent on guidance from humans such as Jimmy and Toby to answer the increasing amount of questions that they have regarding themselves and their creation. Moreover, the importance of the Crakers undoubtedly increase as they interbreed with

humans, and will be further emphasised as they are taught how to read and write. Thus, throughout *The MaddAddam Trilogy*, Atwood promotes the Crakers from their intended condition as harmless creatures with no imagination, but as she illustrates that the characteristics that develop in the Crakers are crucial in order to be allowed agency, she simultaneously ensures that either the Crakers, or the Craker/human hybrid species will remain on top of the hierarchy.

2 Beware of Words. Be Careful What You Write. Leave No Trails.

After having examined the representation of anthropocentrism in the previous chapter, I will now turn my attention to a few key narratives in *The MaddAddam Trilogy*. As stated in my introduction, this chapter will explore how Atwood uses the different narratives in the trilogy to enable a discussion of issues frequently debated in posthumanism, such as the destabilising of humans from their privileged position, bioethics and technological enhancements. In order to do this, I will begin with an analysis of Jimmy/Snowman, divided between his pre- and post-catastrophe condition to demonstrate that Jimmy's obsession with the binary opposition between real and artificial initially prevents Snowman from develop past the legacy of humanism. Thus, the option provided by Atwood through her depiction of the relationship between Snowman and the Crakers fails to ensure a sustainable future for the Crakers, as imagined by Crake. Because the Crakers are dependent on Snowman to satisfy their curiosity with regard to their creation, the premises for the ensured survival of their species are at risk. Moreover, as Snowman provides them with a cosmogony in order to stagger their insatiable hunger, Atwood implements the continuation of humanism.

In the second section of this chapter, I will analyse the representation of religion and storytelling through examining the God's Gardeners in order to argue that they, although ridiculed in the pre-catastrophe society, illustrate the trilogy's best option for a sustainable future. Following Sharon's division between the types of posthumanism as rooted in humanism or not, the God's Gardeners represent the first demonstration of a type of posthumanism that is not rooted in humanism. The God's Gardeners destabilise stories from the Bible as they implement science to the parts of the Bibles that no longer correlates to modern knowledge. However, as they simultaneously preach the importance of respect and compassion for nature and non-human animals, their principles stand out as the most sustainable alternative for the future following the pandemic caused by the BlyssPluss Pill. The cosmogony of the Crakers further expands through their encounters with Toby and the other survivors, and the Crakers evolve past the intended purpose of their creator as they embrace the art of storytelling.

In order to situate my arguments within the framework of the thesis, I will apply the strands of posthumanism as pointed out by Sharon, and further discuss how the narratives

presented in Atwood's trilogy have the possibility to contribute to the debate regarding abstract issues such as bioethics and biotechnology as she fictionalises what it means that man should be removed from its privileged position.

2.1 Jimmy/Snowman: hang on to the words

As previously discussed, Jimmy's opinion towards the technologically enhanced creatures that was explored in the previous chapter, places him within the realm of dystopic posthumanism. Through his interaction with the Crakers, Snowman provides answers to satisfy their requirement to understand their origin, and subsequently places humanist values at its core as he creates elaborate metaphors of chaos and order, creator and the created. His desire to distinguish between the real and constructed have followed him since childhood, and continues to be of importance as he finds himself alone with the Crakers. In order to provide a framework for the discussion of Jimmy and Snowman, I will provide a brief introduction to bioethics to demonstrate how literature holds the ability to solidify abstract moral issues encountered in technology.

Bioethics explore the ethical problems that arise from genetic research and technological enhancements, and have become increasingly relevant following the progress in science. In 2003, the US President's Council on Bioethics emphasised the importance of recognising the link between humanities and bioethics when it was argued that literature "can contribute to a richer understanding and deeper appreciation of our humanity, necessary for facing the challenges confronting us in a biotechnological age" (Kass qtd. in Adami 249). Valentina Adami elaborates as she points out that literature holds a unique opportunity to contribute to minimizing the gap between intangible ethical principles and specific instances of bioethical decision-making:

> Literature can provide relevant insights into issues of bioethical concern by enhancing our sensitivity to the narratives of others and our ability to see connections between apparently disparate situations, by developing self-awareness and a broader outlook to human identity, and by opening our eyes to the ethical importance of the particular situation. (250)

Adami points out that literature and science both strive to investigate what it menas to be human in a technological age, literature as the ability to "transmit universal values," thus enabling a discussion regarding issues such as unregulated development in the technological and scientific field, as well as reflect upon the balance between technophobia and technophilia (251). Dunja Mohr agrees with Adami, as she argues that literature has the ability to reflect upon contemporary and future issues by functioning as a "seismograph for socio-cultural and technological developments" (283). She claims that, from a utopian perspective, technology holds the ability to perfect the human body, or implement technology as part of the body, whereas the dystopian perspective presents a cultural fear of merging the body with technology. As such, the general exploration in contemporary dystopias revolve around the possibility of applying technology or biology in order to remove the human species as the dominant species (Mohr 286). Moreover, Mohr states that the post-apocalyptic biotechnological dystopias are often used to explore themes that can be found in *The MaddAddam Trilogy*, such as the ethical inquiry into what it means to be human or posthuman, gated communities, social inequalities, over-population, genetic engineering etc., combined with dystopian tropes such as totalitarianism, surveillance, and criticism of language, religion and media (286). With this in mind, I will continue to explore how the division between Jimmy and Snowman as presented by Atwood contribute to the discussion.

2.1.2 Jimmy as an archaic waste of time

As previously mentioned, language and words, the power of rhetoric and the dualism between real and artificial are important themes in *The MaddAddam Trilogy*. One of Jimmy's first memories includes a huge bonfire consisting of "an enormous pile of cows and sheep and pigs" and a conversation with his mother about preventing viruses from spreading (*Oryx* 17, 22). However, the dramatic backdrop is provided by Jimmy's red rubber boots that are decorated with smiling duck's faces on each toe. As he walks through a pan of disinfectant, Jimmy is told that he should refrain from splashing as the disinfectant was poisonous: "He was worried that the poison would get into the eyes of the ducks and hurt them. He'd been told the ducks were only like pictures, they weren't real and had no feelings, but he didn't quite believe it" (*Oryx* 17). Thus, Atwood establishes that Jimmy has been on a quest to distinguish between reality and the artificial since he was five years old. This section will explore how Atwood establishes dualisms between Jimmy and Crake, words and numbers,

real and artificial, and that the dualisms initially enables the survival of values traditionally recognised in humanism. Although Atwood's depictions of the pre-catastrophe society must be read as a critique, she nonetheless maintains its survival as she ensures Jimmy's survival and later appoints him a mentor to the Crakers. In order to explore the dualisms presented by Atwood, we need to look at the compassion for language and words that Jimmy has been held accountable for his entire life.

Throughout *Oryx and Crake*, Jimmy's predilection for words is repeatedly reduced to a somewhat less worthy type of intelligence than the one his friend Crake inhabits. Unlike Crake, whose excellent grades secure him a spot at one of the leading science institutes, Jimmy's grades limit his future prospects. However, Jimmy is eventually offered a place at the Martha Graham Academy, whose waning status as a renowned educational institution is highlighted several times in *Oryx and Crake*. The Martha Graham Academy was founded by "a clutch of now-dead rich liberal bleeding hearts" whose aim was to educate students within the scope of "Arts-and-Humanities" (*Oryx* 219). However, as Atwood describes that the Academy is as outdated as the subjects it used to teach; the buildings are set at the edge of the "tackiest kind of pleeblands," the are covered in graffiti; surrounded by a swimming pool that stinks; the electricity is non-functioning and the food horrible; and the lawns "were mud, either baked or liquid depending on the season (*Oryx* 218). The art subjects are reduced to joke, as the interest in performing live quickly vanished following "the sabotage panics during the early twenty-first century," in which the performers on the heavily lit stages were considered easy targets for acts of terrorism. Thus, performance has been reduced to singalongs and the odd wet T-shirt contests, and the energy has gone out of subjects such as dancing and singing. Jimmy compares the status of the subjects taught at Martha Graham with Latin or book-binding as they were "pleasant to contemplate in its way, but no longer central to anything" (*Oryx* 219). Clearly, Arts-and-Humanities has lost its appeal in a society where science is considered superior.

This statement is supported by the goodbye Jimmy receives from his father, which includes an awkward encouragement that "this was the hand life had dealt him, and now [he] would just have to play it as well as he could" (*Oryx* 218). The society at large "had filed him among the rejects" (*Oryx* 229), which collaborates with Jimmy's idea that his studies represents "an archaic waste of time" (*Oryx* 229). The Arts-and-Humanities have been reduced to an education with "utilitarian aims," coining the motto: "Our Students Graduate With Employable Skills" (*Oryx* 220). Crake, on the other hand, mingles with "brilliant weirdos," whose "demi-autistic" personalities matches their "single-track tunnel-vision

minds" (*Oryx* 228) at the Watson-Crick Institute, fittingly nicknamed Asperger's U. by its students. The elevated status of the students at Watson-Crick is further emphasised by their use of the nicknames "nonspecifics" and "neurotypicals" to describe people, including Jimmy, that lack the "genius gene," whereas the nickname "conspecific" refers to themselves (*Oryx* 245, 228). This further establishes the dualism between Jimmy and Crake, based on the proposition that Atwood introduces early in the novel when she creates a binary opposition between "numbers people" and "word people" (*Oryx* 28), and thus emphasises that their dominant society privileges science over humanities.

Although the reminiscence of Jimmy's youth at the Academy can be read as the complaints of a privileged boy who finds himself in an environment that holds lower standards than the compound where he grew up, it is also important to reflect upon Atwood's portrayal of the Academy as critique of the privileging of science in the society that she depicts. Jimmy's privileged background restricts his ability to contemplate over the problematic development in society at large, and although he expresses his dismay at genetically modified animals such as the ChickieNobs, he constantly diminishes these feelings on behalf of expediency. An example of this can be recognised as he brings home a bucket of ChickieNobs from a recently opened joint nearby, having concluded that "the stuff wasn't that bad if you could forget everything you knew about the provenance" (*Oryx* 284). Upon being condemned by his girlfriend's roommates, Jimmy expresses ambiguous feelings of disapproval, but the feelings are limited to a self-consciousness about their judgment of him. Thus, Jimmy fails to validate his own disapproval of the society that he partakes in, although he has previously acknowledged similar denunciation in himself. From a bioethical point of view, this is an interesting example, as Atwood points to the absurdity of the situation as Jimmy willingly consumes food whose production makes him question whether technological enhancements have crossed the invisible line, as pointed out in the previous chapter. However, Atwood employs Jimmy as an example of how society at large closes its eyes to the dangers of failing to apply a sustainable ethics to the regulation of bioethics.

Mohr reminds us that post-apocalyptic biotechnological dystopias are often used to explore themes that can be identified in *The MaddAddam Trilogy*, as they consider the ethical inquiry into what it means to be human or posthuman, gated communities, social inequalities, overpopulation, genetic engineering is combined with dystopian tropes such as criticism of language, totalitarianism, surveillance, religion and media. However, the general exploration of contemporary dystopias revolves around the possibility of applying technology or biology

in order to remove the humans as the dominant species (Mohr 285-286), as is also the case in *The MaddAddam Trilogy*.

In a conversation with the same acquaintances, they voice their opinion that agriculture must be considered the initial spark for the poor condition of the planet. In their understanding, the human experiment should be considered doomed due to how humanity has drained the planet of resources. Rather than reflecting upon their answers, Jimmy challenges them to present a viable option to the current society, owing to how "he'd come to enjoy needling them, because who are they to judge?" (*Oryx* 285). The artists reply that "the correct analysis was one thing but correct solutions were another, and the lack of the latter did not invalidate the further" (*Oryx* 285). Thus, Jimmy's acquaintances recognise that the situation is severe, but they do not claim ownership to the ultimate solution, and thus resonances Atwood's critical voice as she allows for a space through which an exploration of these issues is made possible. As Jimmy engages in conversation with his artist friends, they imply that the possibility of developing species such as the ChickieNobs is only the tip of the iceberg:

> Maybe there weren't any solutions. Human society, they claimed, was a sort of monster, its main byproducts being corpses and rubble. It never learned, it made the same cretinous mistakes over and over, trading short-term gain for long-term pain. It was like a giant slug eating its ways relentlessly through all the other bioforms on the planet, grinding up life on earth and shitting it out the backside in the form of pieces of manufactured and soon-to-be obsolete plastic junk. (*Oryx* 285)

Although their arguments echo those voiced by Crake, Jimmy fails to give their opinions comparable agency as he considers the artists arrogant and uneducated based on their pleebland background. By illustrating Jimmy's unwillingness to acknowledge the arguments brought forth by the artists, some of which he has previously voiced during his upbringing in the Compounds, Atwood illustrates how the power of the dominant society remains in control of Jimmy. Thus, Jimmy is able to reflect around the matter, but he is unable to draw the line, as it would include a denouncing of his Compound background and its inherent privileges.

Jimmy acknowledges that his love for linguistics is not considered important at the "decision-making levels, the levels of real power" (*Oryx* 229), but he nonetheless decides to embrace the world of language. For Jimmy, "words of precision and suggestiveness that no longer had a meaningful application in today's world" inflicts in him "a strangely tender feeling" as he likens the redundant words to "children abandoned in the woods and it was his

duty to rescue them" (*Oryx* 230). Regardless of their lack of value in the current society, Jimmy embraces the words because they are full of meaning in a society where little else is of coherence. He compares his future prospects to "a long-winded sentence with a lot of unnecessary subordinate clauses" (*Oryx* 221) as he imagines that his work tasks will consist mainly of "decorating the cold, hard, numerical real world" (*Oryx* 221) with catchy language. Thus, Jimmy imagines a future where he is only appreciated in terms of being a "words person" if he can apply his skills to serve the scientists and their creators through writing advertisements for their variety of products, many of which he clearly recognises as bogus since their commercials have been authored by himself (*Oryx* 298).

As Jimmy defines value based on whether or not he can identify an inherent meaning to what he attempts to define, he echoes the sentiments found in dystopic posthumanism. This is further emphasised through the conversations he shares with Crake, in which they discuss the difference between reality and nature. Upon one of his visits to Watson-Crick, Jimmy asks Crake about a butterfly whose beautiful, pink wings are the size of pancakes: "so, are the butterflies – are they recent?" to which Crake answers "you mean, did they occur in nature or were they created by the hand of man? In other words, are they real or fake?" (*Oryx* 235). Crake subjects Jimmy's need for authenticity to ridicule several times during their adolescence and early twenties, calling into question what exactly *real* and *reality* means. The incidents are small and far apart, and the quasi-philosophical answers voiced by Crake are usually called out as pompous and "bogus" by Jimmy (*Oryx* 88, 95). The conversations are important nonetheless, insofar that they underline Crake's opinion that "the process is no longer important" (*Oryx* 235), as long as the result fulfils the goal of the project: "these butterflies fly, they mate, they lay eggs, caterpillars come out" (*Oryx* 236). For Jimmy, the artificialness of the butterfly suggests that it is no longer linked to reality, whereas Crake and his peers celebrates the human interference in its creation since the butterfly continues to fulfil the role of a butterfly. After having been marked as a neurotypical with a Cro-Magnon brain (*Oryx* 239), Jimmy's opinion on the matter obviously holds less value in a society where students such as those at Watson-Crick are celebrated and encouraged to continue to create species "by the hand of man" (*Oryx* 240). Moreover, Jimmy's preoccupation of what is "real" and not, resonates the judgment expressed by his mother as she questions and deems immoral the scientific experiments carried out by her husband, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, both Jimmy and his mother are unable to define an exact definition of the immorality of the situation, as pointed out in the example where Jimmy enjoys a meal of

ChickieNobs because of its convenience. Thus, Atwood illustrates the need for a discussion around these issues, and emphasises that the necessity is long overdue.

Crake, on the other hand, follows a selection of the notions found in liberal posthumanism as he attempts to explain to Jimmy that the difference between nature and reality is insignificant as long as Jimmy fails to express a reasonable argument of where the boundaries should be placed. Liberal posthumanism embraces the "dynamic and transformative essence" of human nature, and Sharon argues that: "if enhancement is understood as something that allows human beings to expand their capacities in ways that humans before them were not able to, then as a species humans have been pursuing enhancements for most of their existence" (Sharon 6). Hence, as Atwood employs Jimmy and Crake to debate the differences between real and artificial, she simultaneously expresses the conflicting views of dystopic and liberal posthumanism. While Crake shrugs over Jimmy's inability to leave his notion of reality behind, he represents a significant disciple for liberal posthumanism, and thus transhumanism, and the idea that humans constantly strive towards self-improvement. Through the invention of the Crakers, Crake echoes liberal posthumanism insofar as he successfully manages to prove his ability to create a species that "coevolves with its environment and constantly integrates new technologies into its experience, rather than being explicitly fixed and distinct from its surroundings" (Sharon 7). However, the Crakers are already perfectly conditioned for their environment, and thus serves as a flawless fulfilment of liberal posthumanism.

Human identity and the human condition are central concerns of both bioethics and literature. Imagination and creativity have often been posited as important characteristics for setting human beings apart from non-human animals. The creation of works of art is an important aspect of what it means to be human: rejecting this aesthetic faculty thus means rejecting part of what makes us human (Adami 259). Following Adami's argument that literature manages to bridge the gap between abstract bioethical concerns and specific cases explored in laboratories, the reader is enabled to participate in the moral reasoning around issues that may not occur in the immediate personal sphere of the reader (Adami 250-251). This further relates to *The MaddAddam Trilogy* as Atwood discusses these issues through juxtaposing Jimmy and Crake, and subsequently arts and humanities with science. However, as Atwood pits these categories against each other, she also enables the discussion of a bigger debate, namely how the dominant views of societies such as the one depicted in the trilogy have the ability to create the binary oppositions that Atwood explores.

2.1.2 Snowman as a scarecrowlike effigy

Oryx and Crake opens as Snowman wakes to the sound of waves hitting the beach in the same rhythm as his heartbeat. Although his wristwatch is broken, Snowman looks at it only to be reminded that "nobody nowhere knows what time it is" (*Oryx* 3). His beer bottles are empty, his sunglasses are missing one lens, and he keeps an ice pick for "no particular reason" (*Oryx* 4). Snowman's few belongings are as pointless and broken as the passages he quotes out loud, such as the first reminder he gives himself this particular morning: "It is the strict adherence to daily routine that tends towards the maintenance of good morale and the preservation of sanity" (*Oryx* 4-5). His thoughts wander, before he cuts himself short when he realises that his memory fails him; he cannot remember the rest of the sentence. The uselessness of the few belongings that surround him contributes to the absurdity of the situation as they are contrasted with an eerie description of the landscape and nature around him:

> The offshore towers stand out in dark silhouette […] rising improbably out of the pink and pale blue of the lagoon. The shrieks of the birds that nest out there and the distant ocean grinding against the ersatz reefs of rusted car parts and jumbled bricks and assorted rubble sound almost like holiday traffic. (*Oryx* 4)

In Snowman's new existence, nature is slowly re-claiming its territory, and his previous ability to use language as a tool to distinguish himself from nature is slowly waning. In accordance with Mosca's argument that language and reality has lost its connection (48), he appears to have lost control of both the situation and his sanity. Snowman is the name Jimmy has chosen for himself in his post-catastrophe presence, comparing himself to the Abominable Snowman and their shared destiny of both "existing and not existing" (*Oryx* 8).

For the reader, the name serves as a helpful tool to divide between the post-catastrophe and pre-catastrophe world presented in the narrative. However, the re-naming also quickly reveals to the reader that the situation Snowman finds himself in, is not his own choosing: "[the] rules no longer apply, and it's given Snowman a bitter pleasure to adopt this dubious label" (*Oryx* 8). As previously mentioned, language, the power of rhetoric and words are important themes in Atwood's trilogy. Words have been an essential part of Jimmy/Snowman's entire life, either as a rescue or a shield, and they continue to be so after

he finds himself alone with the Crakers. Hengen remarks upon Snowman's ambivalence to language when she states that "we witness [his] difficult relationship with words […] as he rethinks his entire life experience in an effort to discover where and how he has failed, seeking not only to articulate that failure but also to find ways to describe what we might call his redemption" (137). In Snowman's existence, his old fondness of words and the subsequent desire to rescue the words that are about to go extinct is juxtaposed with Atwood's description of his observations when he first introduces himself to the Crakers. He carefully picks out his outfit and prepares himself beforehand to be able to answer their questions in a manner that would not cause confusing among them. Jimmy abandons his old identity and introduces himself as Snowman, because he "needed to forget the past – the distant past, the immediate past, the past in any form" (*Oryx* 406-407), recognising that he "needed to exist only in the present, without guilt, without expectation" (*Oryx* 407). Thus, the name that Snowman has chosen for himself holds no meaning to anyone besides himself. In an attempt to hang on to the words that only he can understand, he nonetheless clings to their meaning. Again, the power of rhetoric can be recognised as an important motif throughout the trilogy. For Snowman, this particular knowledge both terrifies him, and implements a sense of responsibility in him as he tells himself to "hang on to the words": "The odd words, the old words, the rare ones. *Valance. Norn. Serendipity. Pibroch. Lubricious.* When they're gone out of his head, these words, they'll be gone, everywhere, forever. As if they had never been" (*Oryx* 78). Atwood illustrates how Snowman is torn between the knowledge of these forgotten words from an old society that no longer exists, and his new existence in a world where his old categorisation is no longer of any value following the elimination of mankind.

For the Crakers, the name is incomprehensible due to their lack of knowledge of the phenomenon snow. The imaginative skills of the Crakers are limited, and they struggle to grasp the meaning of words that they cannot relate to specific physical objects. By appointing Snowman as the protector and mentor of the Crakers, Atwood thus challenges his previous obsession with the link between natural and artificial, as she twists the narrative in order to display how his previous quest for authenticity is now his guideline through his interaction with the Crakers. The straightforward behaviour of the Crakers thus resonances an exaggerated form of Jimmy's previous desire to be able to recognise entities and incidents based on their authenticity. However, as Snowman struggles to come to terms with his new role as the Crakers' guide to the world, he finds himself unable to relate to the situation within the framework of his old behaviour.

In his first conversation with the Crakers, he makes sure to "keep the sentence structure simple, the message clear," (*Oryx* 407), and quickly realises that the Crakers can be compared to blank pages. Although at first the prospect of being able to "write whatever he wanted on them" seems amusing to Snowman, he quickly concludes that the Crakers will not be a very challenging audience:

> Snowman marvelled at his own facility: he was dancing gracefully around the truth, light-footed, light-fingered. But it was almost too easy: they accepted, without question, everything he said. Much more of this – whole days, whole weeks of it – and he could see himself screaming with boredom. (*Oryx* 408)

In his past, the words that Jimmy "rescued" would be used as tools that would initially benefit him in one way or another, either as words he could apply in every day conversation in order to harvest laughter and goodwill from his fellow student as part of his "great stand-up routine" (*Oryx* 230), or as helpful material to ensure that he would receive good grades at the Martha Graham Academy. Both applications of language are reminiscent of a dance, where Jimmy takes the lead. As de Marques comments: "it is precisely the central role of language in the construction of humanity [that] Atwood's trilogy introduces" (141). As pointed out by Adami, the Crakers are curious creatures, and Snowman quickly learns to take advantage of their curiosity (Adami 259) as he uses allegories to teach them to connect the complex relationship between reality and imagination. The Crakers are quick to learn, and they memorise the stories that Snowman tells them. In a particularly interesting exchange, Snowman attempts to teach them about abstract thinking, whose concept is something that the Crakers struggle to understand: "They'd struggled with pictures, at first – flowers on beach-trash lotion bottles, fruits on juice cans. *Is it real? No, it is not real. What is this not real? Not real can tell us about the real*" (*Oryx* 118). Snowman illustrates the chaos that eventually led to the creation of the Crakers by applying substances that are familiar to them, such as sand and water:

> "In the chaos, everything was mixed together, he says. "There were too many people, and so the people were all mixed up with the dirt." The pail comes back, sloshing, and is set down in the circle of light. He adds a handful of earth, stirs it with a stick.
> "There," he says. "Chaos. You can't drink it…"
> "No!" A chorus.

> "You can't eat it…"
> "No, you can't eat it!" Laughter.
> "You can't swim in it, you can't stand on it…"
> "No! No!" They love this bit.
> "The people in the chaos were full of chaos themselves, and the chaos made them do bad things. They were killing other people all the time. And they were eating up the Children of Oryx, against the wishes of Oryx and Crake […] And then Oryx said to Crake, *Let us get rid of the chaos*. And so Crake took the chaos, and he poured it away. Snowman demonstrates, sloshing the water off to the side, then turns the pail upside down. "There. Empty. And this is how Crake did the Great Rearrangement and made the Great Emptiness. He cleared away the dirt, he cleared room…" (*Oryx* 118-119)

As previously mentioned, rationality and language are often considered key characteristics to separate humans from non-human animals. Two important aspects of language and rationality are imagination and creativity, as has also been noted by Adami whose arguments include the claim that the rejecting of arts equals the rejection of some of that which makes us human (Adami 259). Adami's statement echoes the arguments voiced by Jimmy in a conversation with Crake, when he states that: "When any civilization is dust and ashes […] art is all that's left over. Images, words, music. Imaginative structures. Meaning – human meaning, that is – is defined by them" (*Oryx* 197). Consequently, when Snowman uses sand and water to exemplify and explain an abstract idea to the Crakers, he enables them to enter the human civilisation by teaching them how to think symbolically, and concurrently rejects Crake's idea that the Crakers should be unable to create "harmful symbolisms" (*Oryx* 359).

Bouson points out that Atwood comments on genetic engineering through her illustration of the Crakers as "a kind of bizarre spectacle and extended authorial joke" in relation to how she presents Crake as "a scientist-imperialist but also a trickster-jokester figure who, not unlike the author-jokester, creates a grand game-like illusion that becomes the horrifying and bizarre post-catastrophe reality inhabited by Snowman, who stands as the reader's surrogate in the text". In other words, where Snowman functions as the moral compass of the Crakers, teaching them about the world, he subsequently lectures to the reader about the possible outcome of engaging in unregulated scientific experiences. Bouson argues furthermore that Crake "uses science not to conquer the natural world but to control human nature by creating his bioengineered and environmentally friendly hominids […] as a

replacement for humanity" (Bouson, "Game Over" 141). However, what Crake fails to anticipate is the Crakers' inevitable evolution as they cross paths with humans. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Crake proved unsuccessful in removing the "G-spot" in the genetically engineered Crakers. As they are left in the care of the wordsmith Snowman, he invents a cosmogony to satisfy their insatiable hunger to learn about their origin:

> *Crake made the bones of the Children of Crake out of the coral on the beach, and then he made their flesh out of a mango. But the Children of Oryx hatched out of an egg, a giant egg laid by Oryx herself. Actually she laid two eggs: one full of animals and birds and fish, and the other one full of words. But the egg full of words was hatched first, and the Children of Crake had already been created then, and they'd eaten up all the words because they were hungry, and so there were no words left over when the second egg hatched out. And that is why animals can't talk.* (*Oryx* 110)

Regardless of his feelings towards Crake, Snowman portrays Crake as a creator and a saviour. The appraisal of Crake is done partly in spite, as Snowman imagines that Crake would be "disgusted by the spectacle of his own gradual deification" (*Oryx* 120). Nonetheless, the stories invented by Snowman have generated a basic need in the Crakers that he did not anticipate as he considered them unable to use their imagination, and he considers it dangerous to cut the supply. In creating the stories, Snowman has also created an audience, and so he is required to continue to pose as the prophet of both Oryx and Crake in order to maintain the Crakers' interest: "He couldn't stand to be nothing, to know himself as nothing. He needs to be listened to, he needs to be heard. He needs at least the illusion of being understood" (*Oryx* 120). In other words, the stories of creation can be read both as revenge, and as a method for Snowman to resurrect himself in order to once again bring meaning to the words that were considered lost in the pre-catastrophe society.

Mohr points out that Snowman, and later Toby, both attempt to bridge the gap between themselves and the Crakers through their attempts at explaining "incomprehensible cultural practises, machinery and poetic/abstract concepts of the past" in an effort to develop "shared references and a minimal understanding of foreign cultural concepts" (292). According to de Marques, Snowman "allows the Crakers' entry into the symbolic world of culture, and subsequently a return to humanity (or humanism), the very traces of which Crake tried to erase in his creation" because "language is, thus, both restorative and creative, as it creates the Crakers' myths of origin and, by doing that, restores their human position" (de

Marques 140). Snowman compares the restoration of the Crakers' status with the process of dealing with indigenous people, as he quotes an old passage that states that it is of importance to: "attempt to respect their traditions and confine your explanations to simple concepts that can be understood within the context of their belief systems" (*Oryx* 112). However, there are several incidents where Snowman abuses the power he has over the Crakers, for example in his demand that they catch, kill and prepare one fish for him every week, despite their fundamentally unwillingness to kill other species. Snowman recognises that Crake wished to eliminate this kind of "human predation" (*Oryx* 116), and compares himself to a lion gorging itself in a cage, as the Crakers observes his monstrousness: "the people keep their distance and avert their eyes while he crams handfuls of fishiness into his mouth and sucks out the eyes and cheeks, groaning with pleasure […] the spectacle of depravity is of interest to them, it seems, purified by chlorophyll though they are" (*Oryx* 117). This specific incident separates Snowman from the Crakers and presents him as the lesser adapt creature in the environment that they find themselves in. The incident resonates well with Adami's argument that the reader is enabled to participate in moral reasoning as Atwood underlines the importance of relational interdependence (Adami 253). Although partly motivated by Snowman's insistence that the weekly fish is one of Crake's wishes, the Crakers defy their nature in order to present this offering, thus defying the hours spent in laboratories in order to create a self-sustainable species.

As mentioned in my previous chapter, Crake made an attempt to remove the parts of the brain that would enable the development of creativity and humour, among other characteristics. However, it proved impossible to eliminate the ability to dream and sing: "*We're hard-wired for dreams*, [Crake] said. He couldn't get rid of the singing either […] *We're hard-wired for singing*. Singing and dreams were entwined" (*Oryx* 411). In Crake's opinion, singing and dreaming are characteristics equal to downfall, as they suggest symbolic thinking. Upon returning from the Paradice dome, Snowman hears "an odd crooning, high voices and deep ones, men's and women's both – harmonious, two-noted". The Crakers are gathered "in a semi-circle around a grotesque-looking figure, a scarecrowlike effigy", the women chanting "Ohhhh" and the men responding with a "mun," resembling the sound of Snowman's name: "Clank. Ping-ping-ping-ping. Boom. *Ohhh-mun*". Through the use of improvised instruments and rubbish found on the beach, the Crakers have created their first piece of art: "We made a picture of you, to help us send out our voices to you" (*Oryx* 418). Following the return of Snowman, the statue is no longer necessary, so the children take the statue apart and return the pieces to the beach, as a consequence of one of the teachings of

Oryx that "after a thing has been used, it must be given back to its place of origin" (*Oryx* 422). However, this specific teaching of Oryx is not part of Snowman's creation, and as he observes the children carry away the imagined body parts, he feels as if "himself has been torn apart and scattered" (*Oryx* 422). The Children of Crake have evolved, and as they are now creating their own myths and teachings, they have surpassed the ones offered by Snowman. Thus, Crake's attempt to remove imagination and creativity in order to avoid the development of art, and in its extension, another downfall, fails. However, Atwood manages to provide the reader with a sense of hope that suggests that the arts and humanities is invaluable in order to understand and maintain the balance that is crucial for co-existence between species. By allowing the words-person Jimmy/Snowman to be a formative person for the Crakers, Atwood rejects the privileging of science that permeated the pre-catastrophe society and emphasises that imagination is needed in order to enable compassion for other living species.

Atwood's rejection of the privileging of science that permeates the pre-catastrophe society in *The MaddAddam Trilo*gy is highlighted through juxtaposing Jimmy and Crake, words and numbers, natural and artificial. However, whereas Jimmy is concerned with the difference between the real and constructed, Snowman struggles to conceptualise his former concerns in the post-catastrophe world as he finds himself in a situation where the principles that he cohered to in his previous existence prove worthless. As Snowman's stories expand and play an increasingly important role in the Crakers' understanding of their existence, Atwood emphasises the importance of language and imagination, creativity and the ability to perform arts, and thus reinforces the notion that these exclusively human traits are necessary to diminish the gap between humans and the Crakers. By pointing out that the Crakers are developing as they are exposed to traits traditionally recognised in humanism, Atwood underscores that the humanist values are the prevailing standards in the communication between Snowman and the Crakers.

2.2 God's Gardeners: it is better to hope than to mope!

After having discussed Jimmy, Snowman and Crake in relation to dystopic and liberal posthumanism and ultimately humanism, the attention will now turn to the God's Gardeners. Atwood's emphasis on the lifestyle of the Gardeners is often attributed to her attempts to raise eco-awareness and the importance of a sustainable lifestyle (Mohr 292, Bouson "Romp"

342). However, as I investigate the God's Gardeners, I will argue that in addition to regarding the Gardeners as promoters of environmentally friendly politics, their rejection of humanism and anthropocentrism renders the eco-cult a viable example of posthumanism in *The MaddAddam Trilogy*. Although the doctrine of the God's Gardeners is firmly rooted in the Bible, the leader of the Gardeners, Adam One, complements the stories from the Bible with applied sciences, and thus enables the continuation of biblical principles in order to ensure its relevance in the society depicted in the trilogy. The Gardeners preach interconnectedness with nature and non-human animals alike, and thus echo the posthuman predicament as they attempt to provide and spread a new basis of understanding. The Gardeners reside in the pleeblands, and therefore function outside the periphery of the dominant pre-catastrophe society, but as they have foreseen the pandemic, several of the members of the Gardeners survive the catastrophe. In Atwood's representation of the God's Gardeners and their subsequent rejection of anthropocentrism, she presents a viable option for sustainable ethics.

The God's Gardeners are best described as an "eco-religious cult and resistance group" (Bouson, "Return" 11) whose principles stand in stark opposition to the technology and wealth that surrounds the people from the Compounds. According to Bouson, the God's Gardeners "actively resist their society with its rampant consumption and environmental and social exploitation" ("Return" 19). Thus, the God's Gardeners are enabled to create a subculture within the dominant culture, which allows them to criticise the dominant society and revolve against the capitalist, science-driven culture of the dominant society. Moreover, the resistance enables them to prepare for and eventually survive the Waterless Flood, due to their ability to combine an ethical consciousness gained through their scriptures with the practical skills they have acquired while preparing for a catastrophe. They are introduced to the reader in *The Year of the Flood* by the female narrators Toby and Ren, as their storylines alter between the past and the present: Ren spent her childhood with the Gardeners after her mother decided to leave the Compounds to pursue her love for a Gardener named Zeb, and Toby was rescued by the group following the sexual and physical abuse carried out by her previous boss Blanco. The two women both survive the plague caused by the BlyssPluss Pill, due to their ability to recognise the pandemic that spreads as the Waterless Flood. Ren was already isolated as it happened, whereas Toby quickly made sure that she was confined from other humans in order to protect herself from the disease. The flood is characterised as a "massive die-off of the human race […] due to overpopulation and wickedness" (*Year* 56) and is fairly easily recognised by the Gardeners as it happens: "[…] it travelled through the airs as if on wings, it burned through cities like fire, spreading germ-ridden mobs, terror and

butchery. The lights were going out everywhere, the news was sporadic: systems were failing as their keepers died" (*Year* 24).

Prior to the catastrophe, the Gardeners reside in the pleeblands, on a rooftop that they refer to as Edencliff Garden, where they grow plants and keep bees, recycle and provide their own compost. These are actions that in sum secure their ability and desire to be a self-sustainable community independent from the dominant society whose lifestyle and moral collapse is rejected by the Gardeners. The Gardeners follow a strict set of rules that ensures a sustainable lifestyle, and the rules are supplemented with sermons delivered by their leader Adam One as well as hymns from *The God's Gardeners Oral Hymnbook*. The children are taught subjects such as Holistic Healing with Plant Remedies, Wild and Garden Botanicals and Fabric Recycling in order to be prepared for the inevitable Waterless Flood. Moreover, they are instructed to never write anything down, to "beware of words" and "leave no trails" in order to avoid a scenario where "your enemies could trace you […], and hunt you down, and use your words to condemn you" (*Year* 7). Unlike Jimmy, the God's Gardeners have no intention of ensuring the continuation of the written word, as they believe that it is unreliable because "the Spirit travels from mouth to mouth, not from thing to thing: books could be burnt, paper crumble away, computers could be destroyed" (*Year* 7), and they additionally consider the use of paper sinful because it is "made from the flesh of trees" (*Year* 72-73). Thus, the Gardeners reduce the necessity of using natural resources to write something down, and as the value of material objects is reduced, the Gardeners denounce the overconsumption that their society is marked by. More importantly, they denounce written testimonies in favour of oral storytelling, and emphasise the importance of verbal communication.

Furthermore, the Gardeners consider themselves "a plural Noah," as they claim to have been "forewarned" (*Year* 110) of the impending disaster. Through the narrative voice of Toby, the reader is offered a description of how the Gardeners are planning to survive the flood, complete with references to the Bible:

> "The Gardeners exempted themselves: they intended to float above the Waterless Flood, with the aid of the food they were stashing away in the hidden storeplaces called Ararats. As for the floatation devices in they would ride out this flood, they themselves would be their own Arks, stored with their own collections of inner animals, or at least the names of those animals. Thus they would survive the replenish of the Earth. Or something like that." (*Year* 56)

With the exception of the first chapter, all fourteen chapters in *The Year of the Flood* opens with a sermon by Adam One, followed by a hymn. Thus, the narratives of Toby and Ren are complemented with the teachings of the Gardeners, beginning with the Creation Day, and ending with the celebration of Saint Julian and All Souls, where Adam One speaks to "the few of us who remain," underlining the teachings of the Gardeners that insist that: "All Souls is not restricted to Human Souls: among us, it encompasses the Souls of all the living Creatures that have passed through Life" (*Year* 505). The Gardeners resonance Wolfe as he urges for a removal of the structural boundaries between humans and animals (*Posthumanism* xvi). This is further exemplified in the sermons and hymns of the Gardeners, as they all emphasise the connection between anthropocentrism and the atrocities committed by humans throughout history:

> What is it about our own Species that leaves us so vulnerable to the impulse of violence? Why are we so addicted to the shedding of blood? Whenever we are tempted to become puffed up, and to see ourselves as superior to all other Animals, we should reflect on our own brutal history. (*Year* 373)

Through God's Gardeners and their preaching of interspecies connectedness, Atwood enables a discussion of an approach to posthumanism that removes itself from the legacy of humanism in favour of a discussion where anthropocentrism does not lay at its core.

Through his sermons, Adam One interweaves the teachings of the scriptures with science, supplementing the scientifically improbable sections of the Bible with his own interpretations. Rather than discard the parts of the Bible that stand in opposition to the scientific discoveries of modern times, the Gardeners customise and reinterprets the scripture in order to enable its reading with modern lenses. In Adam One's opinion, the Gardeners must find a middle way that enables them to achieve their goal of "reconciling the findings of Science with their sacramental view of Life," (*Year* 287) without overriding the rules of science. Adami points out that the interspersing of the hymns and sermons contribute to the understanding of the theology of the Gardeners, which comprises around the reinterpretation of the Bible as an eco-scripture that focuses on the relationship between man and animal (254):

> We pray that we may not fall into the error of pride by considering ourselves as exceptional, alone in all Creation in having Souls; and that we will not vainly imagine

> that we are set above all other Life, and may destroy it at our pleasure, and with impunity.
>
> We thank Thee, oh God, for having made us in such a way as to remind us, not only of our less than Angelic being, but also of the knots of DNA and RNA that tie us to our many fellow Creatures. (*Year* 63-64)

Although the God's Gardeners officially denounce technology, they are nonetheless using technological terms when preaching the interconnectedness between human and nature.

Sharon notes that methodological posthumanism enables a rejection of the traditionally pessimistic view of technology as a destructive force that can be identified in dystopic posthumanism (10). Methodological posthumanism encourages a different approach, and understands technology from a non-humanist and non-essentialist point of view, which thus enables a reading of the technological advances as being constantly influenced by whoever initiated their development. Thus, technology must be understood to hold "an ambivalent, contingent status," rather than being considered an entity that holds the ability to either be destructive or empowering (Sharon 11). The Gardeners welcome the understanding of science as a supplement to their teachings, and an example of this can be found as Adam One delivers a sermon to the Gardeners. This is evident in a reference to the extinction of the dinosaurs, when Atwood describes that the Gardeners have gathered to "mourn the carnage that took place among the Animals," which is linked to God as Adam One states that "God was evidently willing to do away with numerous Species, as the fossil records attest" (*Year* 108). Thus, Adam One effectively corroborates the scientific evidence that proves the existence of dinosaurs, but nevertheless manages to stay somewhat loyal to the Bible.

The cosmogony of the Gardeners and Adam One angers their surrounding society due to how the Gardeners support "the Divine agency that has caused us to be created in the way that we were" (*Year* 62). In a society where science has become the new religion and scientists its preachers (Hengen 138), the Gardeners' middle stance attracts criticism from both the religious extremists that follow scripture more closely and "arrogantly persist in evolutionary denial" (*Year* 62), as well as the "scientific fools [who] claim to prove non-existence of God because they cannot put Him in a test tube and weigh and measure him" (*Year* 62). By pitting these two fictionalised stances against one another, Atwood efficiently comments on current debates recognised in our own contemporary society, and employs the God's Gardeners as a tool to emphasise the importance of allowing science to destabilise

religion without necessarily having to sacrifice the cultural heritage from religion that have undoubtedly shaped our contemporary culture.

The following quote is spoken in one of Adam One's sermons, Of God's Mythology in Creating Man. Adam One draws a parallel between the current condition of the planet and the consummation of the apple of knowledge in the garden of Eden:

> What commandment did we disobey? The commandment to live the Animal life in all simplicity – without clothing, so to speak. But we craved the knowledge of good and evil, and we obtained that knowledge, and now we are reaping the whirlwind. In our efforts to rise above ourselves we have indeed fallen far, and are falling farther still; for, like the Creation, the Fall, too, is ongoing. Ours is a fall into greed: why do we think everything on Earth belongs to us, while in reality we belong to Everything? We have betrayed the trust of the Animals, and defiled our sacred task of stewardship. God's commandment to "replenish the Earth" did not mean we should fill it to overflowing with ourselves, thus wiping out everything else. (*Year* 63)

As Adam One points out that man is falling far, and farther still, Adam One echoes the voices of critics such as Badmington as he points to how the fall of man is always already happening ("Posthumanism 375). By pointing out that the Creation and Fall are both ongoing, Atwood connects Adam One's sermon to the unpredictability of human nature, and particularly to the inherent desire in humans to constantly develop. Starting with Adam and Eve, whose consummation of the apple caused them to obtain knowledge and self-awareness not originally intended by their creator, the greed that Adam One discusses is of a more current kind. Thus, Atwood engages Adam One as a mouthpiece to voice her concerns regarding of the carelessness with which humans treat the planet.

Not unlike Crake, the God's Gardeners similarly acknowledge "the need for a cleansing renewal of humanity and the creation of a new social and moral order" (Bouson, "Return" 17). Thus, the Gardeners echo the methodological posthumanism as presented by Sharon, as it represents "an attempt to develop better conceptual tools and methods for studying the relations between humans and technology rather than developing a new posthuman ontology" (Sharon 9). Although the Gardeners draw a direct line between the fall of man and technological development, the emphasis is on the fall *from* nature, which means that what Adam One refers to as "the fall into technology" stands as a direct result of humanity's distance from nature:

> According to Adam One, the Fall of Man was multidimensional. The ancestral primates fell out of the trees; then they fell from vegetarianism into meat-eating. Then they fell from instinct into reason, and thus into technology: from simple signals into complex grammar, and thus into humanity; from firelessness into fire, and thence into weaponry; and from seasonal mating into an incessant sexual twitching. Then they fell from a joyous life in the moment into the anxious contemplation of the vanished past and the distant future. (*Year* 224)

Moreover, Adam One expresses his dismay with the dominant society as he proclaims that the Gardeners "must be ready for the time when those who have broken trust with the Animals – yes, wiped them from the face of the Earth where God placed them – will be swept away by the Waterless Flood" (*Year* 110). Atwood presents the Gardeners as a viable alternative whose aspiration is to "push popular sentiment in a biosphere-friendly direction" (*Year* 288) through their ability to recognise that the dominant society mistreats the planet and its decreasingly numerous variation of species. However, since the God's Gardeners are considered "twisted fanatics who combine food extremism with bad fashion sense and a puritanical attitude towards shopping" (*Year* 58) by the Corporations, the Gardeners are dependent on the Waterless Flood to destabilise the dominant society from its position of privilege. Bouson notes that Atwood expresses Western civilisation's deep fear that the scientific progresses of the recent decades will eventually "result in humanity's reversion to a savage dystopian (even pre-human) past" ("Return" 16). Through the God's Gardeners, Atwood voices these concerns, and offers an option that represents hope for the future.

"The Gardeners' rejection of capitalist individualism and biomedical commercialism in favour of an eco-philosophy of interdependence and care," Defalco argues, "turns out to be a savvy choice" (447), due to the vulnerable position the remaining survivors find themselves in following the Waterless Flood. However, the Gardeners' lessons of interdependency and responsibility increase their chances of survival as they join forces with various species. Thus, in Defalco's opinion, as the trilogy comes to an end, it is implied that certain hybrid species will survive, and that their survival subsequently marks the end of the "anthropocentric exceptionalism that was the foundation of the predisaster, biocapitalist world" (447). Moreover, Defalco argues that the society depicted by Atwood represents the dangers of extreme anthropocentrism. Adam One reminds the Gardeners that God made a Covenant not only with man, but also with the animals, which he considers proof that the

animals must be treated as equals: "For a Covenant to exist, there must be a minimum of two live and responsible parties to it. Therefore the Animals are no senseless matter, not mere chunks of meat. No, they have living Souls, or God could not have made a Covenant with them" (*Year* 109). Through his sermons, Adam One preaches the concerns that Atwood herself have voiced, and consequently serves as an instrument to rouse a debate concerning not only the fictionalised condition of the planet in *The MaddAddam Trilogy*, but also the Western contemporary society. Atwood thus emphasises the necessity to abandon the traditional anthropocentric humanist paradigm through the voice of Adam One, and although the range of their actions might be limited, Atwood through Adam One emphasises that "it is better to hope than to mope!" (*Year* 107).

The Gardeners echo methodological posthumanism in the sense that they acknowledge Sharon's claim that "technology may reduce certain forms of engagement with reality, but it also creates new ones" (Sharon 11). The definition of technology, in this sense, must be understood as scientific knowledge, and therefore encompasses scientific advances in general, rather than specific techno-gadgets that constantly surround us in our contemporary culture. In this light, technology cannot merely be understood as complicated technological objects, but it also applies to the genetic modification of species such as the Crakers, pigoons and rakunks, as well as to the development of the pandemic that the Gardeners refer to as the Waterless Flood. Consequently, the non-essentialist and non-humanist approaches to posthumanism as presented by Sharon echo both Adam One and Wolfe's call for a change in "the nature of thought itself" (Wolfe, *Posthumanism* xvi). Adam One expresses the necessity for humanity to understand that it is not elevated above nature, and therefore should not be depending on the "elaborate intellectual frameworks Humankind is endlessly constructing for itself" (*Year* 279). Defalco points out that the fictional pre-catastrophe society in Atwood's novels fulfil "the transhumanist fantasy of human perfectibility that disassociates the human animal from its social, ethical and ecological coordinates" (448), through its extreme commodification of living organisms, ranging from the flora of the planet to the human body. The God's Gardeners represent a glimmer of optimism, as the survivors of the plague continue to preach interdependency and respect in an environment where they are increasingly dependent on other species to survive.

Through the God's Gardeners, Atwood provides an exploration into the doctrines of a religious eco-cult. Their principles include interconnectedness with other species, and they condemn humanity's maltreatment of the planet. The previous section discussed the binary oppositions represented through Jimmy and Crake as well as the dualism between the

narrative voices that Atwood presents through the division between Snowman and Jimmy. Whereas these characters are unable to fundamentally remove themselves from an anthropocentric, humanist perspective, the God's Gardeners represent an option for compassionate ethics where humans have been removed from their privileged position. Thus, the Gardeners come closer to a representation of a posthuman option that is not intrinsically rooted in humanist values.

After having discussed these narratives, I will now return to the pre-catastrophe society as I investigate how Atwood criticises contemporary culture through her depiction of commodification of various aspects of life. Additionally, I will investigate the alternative she proposes in the fictionalised future of *The MaddAddam Trilogy.*

3 Winning Meant You Inherited a Wasteland

As stated in my introduction, this chapter will investigate how Atwood, through her description of the bleak society in which Jimmy, Crake, Amanda and Ren grow up, mirrors aspects of contemporary society that by their own logic lead to catastrophe. In particular, she focuses on the obsession with technology, unregulated scientific progress, and increasing neglect of the environment. I will analyse how these aspects create a trajectory of dehumanization, which result in sadism, described by Atwood with brutal precision. By examining the pre-catastrophe society depicted in the trilogy we may understand why Atwood calls for a different approach to the technological advancements discussed in the previous chapters. In order to examine how the post-catastrophe society initially embraces some of the concepts traditionally linked to humanism, I must first turn to the pre-catastrophe society to investigate the basis for the epistemology that permeates the society in which Jimmy and Crake grow up.

Additionally, I will examine the alternative Atwood offers in her depiction of the post-catastrophe society, namely an interbreeding of species resulting in a hybrid mix of Crakers and Homo Sapiens, and how the Craker Blackbeard is introduced as a storyteller for future generations, inheriting from Toby and Snowman an ability encompassing the mythology of Oryx and Crake, and of everyone he has encountered. Initially, Blackbeard serves as a tool to secure the continuation of the humanist legacy, but the presence of Toby and the other Gardeners now enable a balance that stresses interspecies compassion absent in the pre-catastrophe society.

Atwood describes a pre-catastrophe society run by Corporations and policed by a private security force, where easy access to pornography and violent video games shapes the privileged youth of the Compounds, while the less fortunate layers of society are exposed to trafficking and sexual exploitation of children and women. By setting the story in the near future, exaggerating these recognisable issues and making the majority of the inhabitants oblivious to the consequences, Atwood reflects on problematic societal issues in a way the reader can recognize. In the world of the trilogy, all aspects of society have become commercialised and nobody halts to question the motivation behind the excessive manipulation and splicing of genes, the practice of turning criminals into modern gladiators who fight to death in the Painball arenas, the broadcasting of live executions and sexual

abuse of children, or the construction of walls to prevent climate fugitives from entering the few remaining inhabitable places.

I will recount here how the connection between contemporary humanity and the emergence of posthumanism is explored by providing a theoretically framework based on the works of Braidotti, Schmidt and Marotto, and Sharon. Additionally, I will discuss how Foucauldian epistemology can help explain that the lack of strong critical voices in *The MaddAddam Trilogy* can be read as a consequence of the omniscient epistemology that penetrates the pre-catastrophe society.

In *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, Michel Foucault turns to the term 'episteme' and explains that all "fundamental codes of a culture," such as language and values, contribute to how a person relates to the surroundings (Foucault xxii). These codes form an order, or a "system of elements," that unconsciously governs people's correlation with others, as they function as a "hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language" (Foucault xxi). Thus, the fundamental codes are invisible to the people operating within it, and reveal order in the blank spaces of the grids, creating an episteme:

> What I am attempting to bring to light is the epistemological field, the episteme in which knowledge, envisaged apart from all criteria having reference to its rational value or to its objective forms, grounds its positivity and thereby manifests a history which is not that of its growing perfection, but rather that of its conditions of possibility; in this account, what should appear are those configurations within the space of knowledge which have given rise to the diverse forms of empirical science. (Foucault xxiii-xxiiv)

Through the substantiation of a non-empirical, or "historical a priori," (Foucault xxvi), knowledge and its discourses are grounded in an episteme, and thus represents the possibilities situated within a particular epoch: "I am concerned here with observing how a culture experiences the propinquity of things, how it establishes the tabula of their relationships and the order by which they must be considered" (Foucault xxvi).

Foucault explains that the Western episteme has changed twice: first with the beginning of the Classical Age, and then at the start of the nineteenth century. It is the second shift that is relevant to this chapter, as it symbolises the beginning of the modern age and

continues into our time. Foucault argues that the shifts had little to do with progress in rationality: “it was simply that the mode of being of things, and of the order that divided them up before presenting them to the understanding, was profoundly altered (xxiv). Moreover, since Foucault expresses relief that “man is only a recent invention, a figure not yet two centuries old, a new wrinkle in our knowledge” (Foucault xxv), the study of man is also a new set of knowledge that follows the modern episteme. Foucault argues that man “will disappear again as soon as that knowledge has discovered a new form" (xxv). Thus, Foucault describes how a new episteme is ushered forward by the common knowledge in a modernised world.

In *The MaddAddam Trilogy*, Atwood echoes Badmington and his premonition that man is already a falling figure, and illustrates that death of humanity as we know it, is inevitable. However, whereas Foucault points out that the death of man is inevitable due to a newly acquired form of knowledge, Atwood creates a new species within the same episteme as the fallen man in her depiction of the Crakers, particularly exemplified through Blackbeard. The epistemology characterising Atwood’s pre-catastrophe society follows the privileging of anthropocentrism and technological enhancements above anything else, resulting in a society that has no fundamental moral rules.

Linking this observation to posthumanism, Braidotti points to Foucault’s infamous announcement of the death of Man, and his arguments that the humanities were based on an embedded understanding that placed humanity at the centre of its understanding (*Posthuman* 151). Braidotti further argues that the emergence of posthumanism forces a reconsideration of “human subjectivity, ethical relations, norms and values” that balances the intricacy of modern times, and subsequently impacts the structure of critical debates in the academic field of the humanities (“Critical Theory” 13). Atwood debates similar issues in *The MaddAddam Trilogy*, as she brings forward the relationship between scientific advances and society’s disregard for traits such as language and reason that have traditionally contributed to enable humanity to elevate itself above nature. Braidotti further argues that posthuman thinkers offer to challenge the perceived authenticity of history through a straightforward argument:

> If the proper study of mankind used to be Man and the proper study of humanity was the human, it seems to follow that the proper study of the posthuman condition is the posthuman itself. This new knowing subject is a complex assemblage of human and non-human, planetary and cosmic, given and manufactured, which requires major re-adjustments in our ways of thinking. (Braidotti, *Posthuman* 159)

By way of meaning, the posthuman subject confronts humanism's conventional criterion for subjectivity, namely that a knowing subject is dependent on rational consciousness. A change in how history is perceived is necessary in a society where "we are contemplating the possibility of human and other species extinction and hence the end of recorded historical human time, and also the end of the future" (Braidotti, *Posthuman* 160). Thus Braidotti applauds the many contributions to the humanities, such as studies combining environmental and socio-economic history in order to understand the many layers of inter-dependence on the planet (*Posthuman* 160). Drawing a link between the epistemic structures of the posthuman subject and the ability to co-exist and communicate with human and non-human others alike, Braidotti calls for a "a strong ethics of eco-sophical sense of community" (*Posthuman* 169). In her opinion, change is needed in order to adjust the current episteme without neglecting the historical value of aspects recognised in the humanities, such as the role of arts and language. In my view, this is highly applicable to *The MaddAddam Trilogy*.

As the narratives of the novels unfold and backpedal, Atwood manages to arrange the events in a seemingly logical order so that the variation of warning signs appears to follow a chain of events up until the moment when the BlyssPluss pill has been distributed and has nearly eliminated humans from the planet. According to Bouson, Atwood "conveys her uneasiness as she describes the degradation of culture in a society where violence and pornography have become cheap and readily available forms of entertainment" ("Game Over" 97). The novels are packed with satiric references to the Western society, and as Atwood explores various aspects of the fictional society in *The MaddAddam Trilogy* that are easily recognisable in our contemporary culture, she implements a feeling of uneasiness as she prompts her readers to reflect upon how to recognise the point of no return. Thus, as the survivors of the Waterless Flood resurface, Atwood seems to remind the reader of the importance of ethics in order to avoid a society where technological advancement is constantly evolving and privileged over the disadvantaged humanities.

3.1 Pre-catastrophe concerns

In order to investigate Atwood's critique of the Western contemporary society, I will now explore how she portrays a pre-catastrophe society in which no one stops to question the tendencies of degradation that constantly manifest themselves. First, I will discuss the video

games and web pages that serve as pastime for Jimmy and Crake during their adolescence and argue that these indicate the increasing loss of culture in the society they are part of. Subsequently, the most appalling dark corners of the Internet are presented as entertainment for the boys, representing not only a commodification of life, but also an undermining of ethics. As Atwood casually describes Jimmy and Crake's encounters online, she interweaves the various horrors with their lack of ability to recognise the abhorrence of what they are doing. Additionally, I will examine how ethics and lives are denounced on a societal level. This will be exemplified through the game Painball, a fight club for modern gladiators that have been picked from prisons.

Atwood echoes Braidotti, who claims that "co-presence, that is to say the simultaneity of being in the world together, defines the ethics of interaction with both human and non-human others" (*Posthuman*, 169) and adds that this allows for a mutual consciousness to collectively emerge. In the examples I highlight from the pre-catastrophe society in *The MaddAddam Trilogy*, societal ethics are non-existent and therefore obstructs the mutual consciousness that Braidotti calls for. This also underlines the anthropocentrism that has become the episteme that Jimmy and Crake are intrinsically submerged in, and that contributes to its continuation following the pandemic.

3.1.1 Video games as an attempt to change history

As previously pointed out by Bouson, Atwood shows her concern with the decreasing status of culture in *The MaddAddam Trilogy* as she focuses on violence and sadism in her exaggerated version of the Western society. The normalisation of a violent culture is noticeable in multiple aspects of the Compound childhoods of Jimmy and Crake, particularly as they become adolescents and start playing video games and explore the Internet. During their youth, Jimmy and Crake spend hours in front of their computers, engaging in a broad array of video games such as Barbarian Stomp (See If You Can Change History!), Blood and Roses and Extinctathon. These games are primarily concerned with the elimination of mankind and other species, or the re-enactment of historical battles, particularly the bloodiest clashes. Barbarian Stomp is developed in a fashion that ensures that "one side usually had the cities and the riches and the other side had the hordes, and – usually but not always – the most viciousness" (*Oryx* 88). Thus, while playing this game, the primary goal for Jimmy and Crake was to obscure the pairings of ancient civilisations in the custom they found the most

entertaining as they engaged their virtual warriors in endless slaughtering. However, after Crake loses his players to Jimmy, he prefers to play Blood and Roses, a game he considers to be more "cosmic" due to how the "field of battle was larger, both in time and space" (Oryx 89). Blood and Roses revolves around trading away historically renowned pieces of arts and scientific advances in order to avoid historical massacres to take place, and becomes one of the most formative games that the boys play together. The players are divided in two, where one side represents Blood, and the other represents Roses:

> The Blood side played with human atrocities for the counters, atrocities on a large scale: individual rapes and murders didn't count, there had to have been a large number of people wiped out. Massacres, genocides, that sort of thing. The Roses side played with human achievements. Artworks, scientific breakthroughs, stellar works of architecture, helpful inventions. Monuments to the soul's magnificence, they were called in the game. (Oryx 89)

The link between humanity and the items that are referred to as Roses is further emphasised by Atwood as she refers to them as testimonials of human brilliance. In retrospect, Snowman denounces the game and refers to it as wicked (*Oryx* 91), due to his disapproval of how the game pitted the value of renowned pieces of art, such as the Mona Lisa, famous symphonies, the pyramids in Egypt or important works of literature against genocides and crimes against humanity carried out through warfare or by despots such as Hitler, Pol Pot and Stalin. Jimmy suffers from nightmares following his newly acquired knowledge of endless bloody massacres, and also struggles to grasp the meaning of the game: "the Blood player usually won, but winning meant you inherited a wasteland" (*Oryx* 91). However, the concerns of young Jimmy, and later Snowman, revolve around the fact that the wasteland that is inherited has been emptied of the human legacy, either in the form of humanity or its cultural impression. Nature is robbed of an active role in the game, and simply serves as the backdrop to which human atrocities are prevented on the behalf of humanity's cultural legacy. Crake, on the other hand, echoes the current episteme of his society, in which science is privileged over the humanities, but he nonetheless recognises the value of nature as he explains the point of the game to Jimmy: because art, and thus the cultural legacy of humans, holds no value in itself, the "monuments to the soul's magnificence" are worthless if there are no humans left to admire them:

> You rolled the virtual dice and either a Rose or a Blood item would pop up. If it was a Blood item, the Rose player had a chance to stop the atrocity from happening, but he had to put up a Rose item in exchange. The atrocity would then vanish from history, or at least the history recorded on the screen. The Blood player could acquire a Rose item, but only by handing over an atrocity, thus leaving himself with less ammunition and the Rose player with more. (Oryx 90)

As the cultural achievements acquired by humans are juxtaposed with the atrocities that have scarred humans throughout their history, the players are forced to reflect upon which is more significant: human culture, or human survival? Crake points out that the wasteland does not necessarily equal a pointless victory, and thus pinpoints the contradictory nature of humanity as he recognises that the point of the game is to balance a cultural civilisation, represented through the valuable pieces of art, with the value of human lives: "the exchange rates – one *Mona Lisa* equalled Bergen-Belsen, one Armenian genocide equalled the *Ninth Symphony* plus three Great Pyramids – were suggested, but there was room for haggling" (*Oryx* 90). For Jimmy the value of art is measured by their historical value and subsequently assists in defining humanity, and thus what it means to be human, even after a civilisation is gone. Their playing methods resemble the skills they exhibit as they first start spending time together and engage in rounds of tennis: "Crake combined method with lateral thinking and hated to lose, and Jimmy was impetuous and lacked finesse," a combination of skills that proved unproductive for the two of them (Oryx 88). Through pointing out the differences in their ability to engage in games, be it tennis or video games, Atwood also comments on their ability to reflect upon their role as participants. Whereas Jimmy is a clumsy player, Crake is constantly evaluating his moves in order to anticipate the next round. Unsurprisingly, the video games also prove unsuccessful for the boys to play together, as Crake continues to develop his skills, while Jimmy suffers emotionally as he executes millions of virtual lives.

Years later, when Snowman finds himself alone, he recounts the endless human atrocities that have occurred over the past millennia: "that was the trouble with Blood and Roses: it was easier to remember the Blood stuff" (*Oryx* 91). Atwood's illustration of the boys' involvement with video games such as Blood and Roses shows how they are caught in the episteme of their society in *The MaddAddam Trilogy*. Through her description of Blood and Roses, Atwood links cultural development to history, and pits the two components against each other as she demonstrates how easily human achievements can be reassessed. The lack of overarching ethics in the society prevents the boys, Jimmy in particular, from

reflecting upon the broader meaning of the game, and the question is thus reduced to whether human culture or human survival is more important. As Atwood pits these two components against each other, she risks that her commits the same mistake as Jimmy, and thus fails to recognise the value of nature.

The boys move on to a new game that catches Crake's interest as it differs methodologically from the previous games they have played. "An interactive biofreak masterlore" (*Oryx* 92), Extinctathon connotes a connection between the words extinction and marathon, and so further emphasises Atwood's stress on the limited timeframe of the diversity of species on the planet. Jimmy and Crake engage in contests with Grandmasters of the game, using hints to quickly narrow down specific species that have already been extinguished. "Adam named the living animals, MaddAddam names the dead ones" is the slogan of the game, where the boys are given a choice between two chat rooms: Kingdom Animal and Kingdom Vegetable:

> *Begins with, number of legs, what is it?* The *it* would be some bioform that had kakked out within the past fifty years – no T-Rex, no roc, no dodo, and points off for getting the time frame wrong. Then you'd narrow it down, Phylum Class Order Family Genus Species, then the habitat and when last seen, and what had snuffed it. (*Oryx* 92)

The only assistance available consists of a couple of printouts a hundred pages each, in which all the extinct species are listed by their Latin names. Jimmy quickly tires of the game, but Crake finds it amusing "because [he's] good at it" (*Oryx* 93). What separates Extinctathon from the other video games played by the boys is mainly its affiliation with science. Whereas the other games have been rooted in the humanist legacy, either by twisting history or destroying pieces of art, Extinctathon is scientifically informative: "it was like some tedious pendant you got trapped beside on the school van" (*Oryx* 93). The Grandmasters are recognised by a small symbol next to their name, a coelacanth, and information about the species: "*Prehistoric deep-sea fish, long supposed extinct until specimens found in mid-twentieth. Present status unknown*" (*Oryx* 93). According to a newspaper article in *The Independent*, the coelacanth is described as having been left behind by evolution, only to be rediscovered in 1938: "the coelacanth […] was once known only from its fossils and so was thought to have gone extinct […] it is one of the few species to have hardly changed in tens of millions of years" (Connor no page).

The application of the coelacanth as the symbol for a Grandmaster is no accident. The intelligence of the Grandmasters attracts the attention of Crake, who yearns to become a Grandmaster in the game. The few, but specific details provided about the coelacanth is noteworthy, as the information subsequently serves to characterise the Grandmasters. Their knowledge of extinct species such as bugs, weeds and frogs "that nobody had ever heard of," according to Jimmy, demonstrates that they have "brains like search engines" (*Oryx* 92), which suggests that their knowledge is considered obsolete in a digitalised society. However, the descriptions of the coelacanth also suggest that the Grandmasters' wisdom should not be underestimated, since there is always a possibility that it can unexpectedly resurface with renewed relevance. Because the status of the coelacanth is currently unknown, the symbol next to the Grandmasters' codenames also serves as a foreshadowing of the Waterless Flood, and subsequently hints at their role in releasing the Flood. As Crake becomes a grandmaster in the future, he uses his knowledge of the scientists behind the nicknames to pressure them into collaborating with him on the Paradice project.

The scientific knowledge that the Grandmasters exhibits is combined with the critique of the conditions that led to the extinction of the animals. The challenges in the game require the players to seek knowledge about the cause of extinction for the specific species, and the list of examples include: "pollution, habitat destruction, credulous morons who thought eating its horn would give them a boner" (*Oryx* 92). Through employing the voice of the adolescent Jimmy to casually describe the reasons for extinction, Atwood efficiently points out his indifference to the extinction of species, whose doom has now been reduced to a game, and likens it to the indifference in the contemporary society at large. Additionally, Jimmy's indifference to the fate of the animals is juxtaposed with his inability to engage in deciding the fate of virtual pre-historic tribes in Barbarian Stomp, or the obliteration of cultural heritage in Blood and Roses. Thus, Extinctathon serves as an important example of how Atwood calls for a broader implementation of ethics in the contemporary society that can serve as guidelines for how humans relate to the natural flora and fauna.

The participants in the game have codenames taken from extinct animals: Komodo, Black Rhino, Manatee, Hippocampus Ramulosus, Crake, and Thickney, Jimmy's codename, which is "a defunct Australian double-jointed bird that used to hang around in cemeteries." Crake deems the name Thickney fitting for Jimmy, and in the novels it moreover foreshadows Jimmy's sad future as a survivor of the pandemic (*Oryx* 92-93). The Grandmasters identities of the scientists will later be revealed as belonging to the "brain slaves […] the captive science braniacs, working the evolution machine for Crake"

(*MaddAddam* 56), the scientists that assisted in developing the Crakers. Her use of the coelacanth as the symbol of the Grandmasters might symbolise the resurfacing of a sleeping entity, working away in the dark, as this turns out to be the case with the Grandmasters. The species that are used as codenames have been extinct for some time as the novels unfold, and the listed causes of extinction serve as examples of humankind's interference with nature. However, the species identified through the codenames above, still exist on the planet as of today. In *The MaddAddam Trilogy*, Atwood exemplifies how quickly extinction can happen by linking well-known reasons for concern in today's world, such as habitat destruction and pollution, to the extinction of species in a fictionalised near-future society.

Through Atwood's depiction of the video games played by the boys, compassion for other species and the value of arts and language is underscored. Moreover, the videogames that are presented all serve to symbolise the dynamic nature of history, as they strive to change the limitations of the commonly agreed-upon representation of history. The utter lack of critical voices illustrates to the reader that the pre-catastrophe society has been deprived of the ability to reflect upon the degradation of its culture. Subsequently, as Atwood depicts a society where ethics are non-existent, the degradation of culture is further transferred to apply to the nature. Atwood presents the reader with a society that is trapped in a system where science is privileged over the humanities, and implies that the discussions around ethics that are enabled through the humanities, are neglected. This extreme anthropocentrism creates the backdrop for the actions to come, and therefore represents the "what if"-scenario that Atwood has stated that she imagines prior to writing a novel.

3.1.2 Internet as a good show to prevent people from getting bored

Atwood takes well-known elements from contemporary society to their extreme in another way as well: she displays the enormous amount of time Jimmy and Crake spend online, and how their entertainment becomes increasingly brutal and dehumanizing. Referring to this, Wisker argues that: "not surprisingly, neither developed any sense of morality or empathy for others" (148). When they tired of the games, the boys would smoke marijuana and surf the Internet, quickly growing tired and moving on to the next spectacle. There are plenty of pitiful examples: The more innocent ones include Noodie News, starring naked broadcasters "good for a few minutes because the people on it tried to pretend there was nothing unusual going on and studiously avoided to look at one another's jujubes" (*Oryx* 93), and web pages

that displayed the killing of animals: “Felicias Frog Squash and the like […] grew repetitious: one stomped frog, one cat being torn apart by hand, was much like another" (*Oryx* 94). Then they move on to watching human executions in Asia and the Middle East on pages like hedsoff.com or alibooboo.com:

> There they could see enemies of the people being topped with sword […] while thousands of spectators cheered […] or they could watch alibooboo.com, with various thieves having their hands cut off and adulterers and lipstick-wearers being stoned to death by howling crowds, in dusty enclaves that purported to be in fundamentalist countries in the Middle East. The coverage was usually poor on that site: filming was said to be prohibited, so it was just some desperate pauper with a hidden minivideocam, risking his life for filthy Western currency. (*Oryx* 94)

Crake, however, finds that the American webpages demonstrate the ability to combine style with production, as they are more commercialised with their brightly painted background walls and advertisements for batteries and tranquilizers, starring commentators that add to the resemblance with sports events: “Here he comes now! Yes! It’s Joe ‘The RatchetSet’ Ricardo, voted tops by your viewers!” Then a rundown of the crimes, with grisly pictures of the victims” (*Oryx* 95). Pages such as shortcircuit.com, brainfrizz.com and deathrowlive.com display electrocutions and lethal injections, and after live coverage was legalized, “the guys being executed had started hamming it up for the cameras” (*Oryx* 95), in exchange for bonuses that would be distributed to their families: “the sponsors required them to put on a good show because otherwise people would get bored […] the viewers wanted to see executions, yes, but after a while these could get monotonous, so one last fighting chance had to be added in” (*Oryx* 95).

Through the description of these websites, Atwood demonstrates how the viewers, including Jimmy and Crake, are feeling an increasing numbness and indifference. This reflects back on society, and is exemplified through the entertainment aspect of the sites that the boys frequent. On the Queek and Geek Show, the contestants consume live animals and birds in the hope of securing prizes of rare food, prompting Jimmy to react with amusement: “it was amazing what people would do for a couple of lamb chops or a genuine Brie” (*Oryx* 97). The webpage nitee-nite.com offers to arrange assisted suicides, complete with interviews with the remaining relatives, family albums, and “taped testimonials from the participants themselves, stating why they’d chosen to depart” (*Oryx* 95). Subsequently, assisted suicide is

turned into big business, resulting in a lottery that draws winners from a long line of participants who are "willing to pay big bucks for a chance to appear on it and snuff themselves in glory" (*Oryx* 96) while dying. Jimmy and Crake differ in their opinion of nitee-nite.com. Whereas Jimmy finds it disagreeable, Crake considers the concept hilarious, arguing that "it showed flair to know when you'd had enough" (*Oryx* 96). Thus, Crake's destiny is foreshadowed as the adolescent Crake expresses his admiration for people who have the ability to recognise the limitations of the society they are a part of. Moreover, Crake voices his disapproval of the human species, hinting that he considers humankind outdated as he applauds those who decide to end their lives.

The boys steal Crake's stepfather's passwords to access the sites with age limits, and smoke his marijuana while surfing, and the drugs seem to distort their impression of what they encounter online:

> They'd roll a few joints and smoke them while watching the executions and the porn – the body parts moving around on the screen in slow motion, an underwater ballet of flesh and blood under stress, hard and soft joining and separating, groans and screams, close-ups of clenched eyes and clenched teeth, spurts of this or that. If you switched back and forth fast, it all came to look like the same event. Sometimes they'd have both things on at once, each on a different screen. (*Oryx*, 99)

Thus, the boys blur the line between extreme violence and pornography, often combining the two so that they are intertwined. Crake is seemingly unaffected by what they witness online, whereas Jimmy is described to "wobble home" with a sense of not being in control of his own body. Ignoring a lingering feeling that they were "doing something they were too grown-up for, like middle-aged guys cruising the pleeblands teeny clubs" (*Oryx* 102), the boys dutifully visit various porn sites online, including "Superswallowers," "Tart of the Day," and a Russian page that stars ex-acrobats.

A turning point materialises for Jimmy during one of their numerous visits to HottTotts, an online "sex-kiddie" page that is described as a "global sex-trotting site" (*Oryx* 102, 104):

> "The next best thing to being there," was how it was advertised. It claimed to show real sex tourists, filmed while doing things they'd be put in jail for back in their home countries. Their faces weren't visible, their names weren't used, but the possibilities

> for blackmail […] must have been extensive. The locations were supposed to be countries where life was cheap and kids were plentiful, and where you could buy anything you wanted. (*Oryx* 102-103)

The rapid adjustment from watching Russian ex-acrobats to seeing how children are exploited and abused is neither reflected upon nor further explained by the characters in the novel. This reinforces Bouson and de Marques' arguments that Jimmy and Crake are part of a system enabling the exploitation of marginal people in entertainment for the privileged people in the Compounds ("Game Over" 97, de Marques 137). Thus, their casual interaction with hard pornography such as the one found at HottTotts demonstrates how they partake in a society where no one questions their behaviour. Nonetheless, on this particular occasion, a young girl around eight catches their attention, and Crake freezes the frame and prints a picture of her. She will later reappear in their lives and be known as Oryx (*Oryx* 104):

> None of those little girls had ever seemed real to Jimmy – they'd always struck him as digital clones – but for some reason Oryx was three-dimensional from the start. She was small-boned and exquisite, and naked like the rest of them, with nothing on her but a garland of flowers and a pink hair ribbon, frequent props on the sex-kiddie sites. She was on her knees, with another little girl on either side of her […] the act involved whipped cream and a lot of licking. The effect was both innocent and obscene: the three of them were going over the guy with their kittenish tongues and their tiny fingers, giving him a thorough workout to the sound of moans and giggles. The giggles must have been recorded, because they weren't coming from the three girls: they all looked frightened, and one of them was crying. (*Oryx* 103-104)

Although the boys have explored the darkest corners of the internet from behind their screens, this particular episode marks a turning point for Jimmy. As he witnesses Oryx and the two other girls, he becomes aware of the dehumanizing situation that the girls are placed in, and is subsequently forced to reflect upon his role in enabling such situations. Atwood further emphasises this as she describes that the girl on the screen is nameless, "she was just another little girl on a porno site" (*Oryx* 103).

Jimmy and Crake have obviously visited HottTotts before, since it becomes clear that they are fully aware of how the children in the sex industry are treated. They know that the children will be punished on camera if they refuse to do as they are told, which adds to the

entertainment aspect for the viewers: "there were at least three layers of contradictory make-believe, one on top of the other. *I want to, I want to not, I want to*" (*Oryx*, 104). Thus, the boys are aware that they represent an audience, and that the treatment of the girls is customised to suit their desires. Oryx is prevented from verbally communicating with the viewers by the dubbed giggles that serve as a sound effect. She therefore turned towards the camera to peak at her viewers:

> "Oryx paused in her activities. She smiled a hard little smile that made her appear much older, and wiped the whipped cream from her mouth. Then she looked over her shoulder and right into the eyes of the viewer – right into Jimmy's eyes, into the secret person inside him. *I see you*, that look said. *I see you watching. I know you. I know what you want.*" (*Oryx* 104)

Jimmy experiences her piercing look as incredibly disturbing, premiering in him an understanding of the immorality of the commodification of human lives and bodies: "Jimmy felt burned by this look – eaten into, as if by acid. She'd been so contemptuous with him […] for the first time he'd felt that what they'd been doing was wrong. Before, it had always been entertainment, or else far beyond his control, but now he felt culpable" (*Oryx* 104). In contradiction of Bouson argument that "Jimmy unquestioningly accepts the rigidly divided social world he inhabits" ("Game Over" 143), this imagined moment of connectedness changes Jimmy's perception and causes him to question what they are partaking in, at least temporarily. Thus, Jimmy realises that the entertaining aspect of their online surfing actually include real people, and that they are dehumanised through the demands from privileged people like Crake and himself who have the possibility to seek this kind of entertainment on behalf of other living beings. Atwood critiques the commercialised systems that enables the commodification of lives by pointing out that Jimmy and Crake's mindless surfing on the internet maintains industries like HottTotts. Although Jimmy was nudged out of his ignorance, the two other girls remain anonymous girls on a porno site, and prompts the reader to reflect upon the numerous fates that the boys have witnessed without conjuring the same reaction.

Atwood's satirical naming of the various online pages provides a comical approach to their grotesque online encounters. This demonstrates her discontent with culture, both the culture that is depicted in the fictional pre-catastrophe society and in our contemporary society today. As Atwood commercialises the names of the online pages, she normalises the

incidents that are displayed and creates a distance to the horrors that are broadcasted for the entertainment of an increasingly eager audience. Through rapid shifts between various kinds of commodified beings, ranging from animals to children to criminals, and descriptions of incidents blurred together in a haze of drugs, Atwood underlines how the boys are detached from what they encounter online. Thus, in displaying the normalisation of the situation, Atwood efficiently critiques the commercialisation of both humans and animals, which are seen to hinder a system of sustainable ethics, and continues to turn the attention towards the inevitable catastrophe. The last example from the pre-catastrophe society discusses the role of Painball in *The MaddAddam Trilogy* in order to show how criminals are dehumanised in order to serve as entertainment for the rich and privileged members of the Compounds.

3.1.3 Painballers as missing big chunks of the empathy module

"The ruthless behaviour and predatory cannibalism of the Painballers" can be read as a direct consequence of the "hyperconsumption of the corporate elite" in a society marred by corruption, violence and greed (Bouson, "Romp" 345). Although originally illegal, "like cockfighting and the slaughter and eating of endangered species" (*MaddAddam* 360), Painball gradually became an increasingly popular pastime for the rich: "spectator positions were reserved for the upper echelons, who liked to watch duels to the death involving skill, cunning, ruthlessness, and cannibalism: it was Corp life in graphic term" (*MaddAddam* 360). The contestants for the Painball arenas were picked from prisons, and since there were bets involved, the private corporations indirectly funded the infrastructure, the construction of the arenas, and thus the illegal spectacle. Hidden cameras ensured online access to the arenas, and although stealthy at first, the Painballers would eventually provide the spectators with the show they yearned for: "After a while […] you wouldn't just cross the line, you'd forget there ever were any lines. You'd do whatever it takes" (*Year* 118), Toby explains. Serving as modern gladiators, the prisoners were given a choice between serving their time or electing the Painball option to fight their fellow prisoners. After the players had been divided into a Gold and a Red team, they were subsequently let loose in a gated forest referred to as the Painball arena:

> […] the alternative to winning was death. That was why it was so much fun to watch. Those who survived it did so through guile, the ability to wrongfoot their opponents,

> and superior murderousness: the eating of gouged-out eyes was a favourite party trick. In a word, you had to be prepared to knife and fillet your best friend. (*MaddAddam*, 361)

The price, according to Zeb, was considered "perks all round": wealthy wives from the gated communities would reimburse the Painballers in return for sexual services, they were considered "a thrill" at barbeques hosted by the husbands of the aforementioned women, there would be possibilities for "landing a stint as a pleebland grey-market enforcer" (*MaddAddam* 360-361), and the modern gladiators would naturally be released from prison with a tolerable amount of money in their pocket. Unsurprisingly, the surviving Painballers were considered extremely dangerous following their release from the arena. Thus, as they participated in parties, the Painballers would be guarded by security forces in order to prevent the situation from getting out of hand, whereas the bouncers in the pleeblands would recognise them from their physical attributions such as big facial scars. Subsequently, the Painball option must be considered a choice for life at any cost, as the contestants have practically no opportunity to be reintegrated in society.

The Painballers are described as seriously damaged on an emotional level, with blank facial expressions, a key characteristic of psychopaths: "some of their human mirror neurons had gone missing, along with big chunks of the empathy module: show a normal person a child in pain and they'd wince, whereas these guys would smirk" (*MaddAddam* 361). Toby notes that: "anyone who'd survived Painball more than once had been reduced to the reptilian brain" (*MaddAddam* 17), which further dehumanises the Painballers.

In *The Year of the Flood*, the reader learns that most female and political prisoners choose to be killed rather than enter the arena, where they do not stand a chance of survival, since they will be pitted against criminals "hooked on adrenalin" whose methods include cannibalism and the removal of heart and kidneys in order to intimidate the other, or "just to show how mean you were" (*Year* 118). Thus, the aspect of entertainment must be considered important in Painball as it rewards the contestants' willingness to show brutality. The Painballers are an important example of what Bouson refers to as Atwood's "alarm and moral disgust for our contemporary culture of sadism" ("Romp" 345). By situating them within a confined space and urging them to kill in a manner that pleases a paying crowd, Atwood displays how a group of people are reduced to commodities as they serve as entertainment for the rich. The Painballers are thus reduced from subjects into objects who serve a purpose for the dominant society.

With the exception of Blanco, who is put to death by Toby in *The Year of the Flood*, the Painballers are not referred to by name, but rather by the colour of their team. Thus, they remain embodiments of evil throughout the novels, referred to as less-than-human "alpha-chimps" (*MaddAddam* 362) with reptilian brains, whose deeds are written into history as "cruel and hurtful" (*MaddAddam* 467) by the survivors. The notion of the Painballers as worthless human beings is further emphasised as Zeb explains that in his former job as a bouncer, he would sometimes have to dispose of the Painballers:

> Hit first and hit dirty, was our rule for those Painball assholes […] As soon as they started to get twitchy. Sometimes we'd spike their drinks, but sometimes we took them out permanently, because if we didn't they would come back for revenge. We had to be careful what we did with the bodies, though. […] Let's just say there was always a demand in the deeper pleebs for condensed protein packages, to be utilized for fun, profit, or pet food. (*MaddAddam* 362)

After Toby remarks that "you make it sound like a leisure-time amusement," arguing that "these were human lives, whatever they'd done," Zeb elegantly creates a division between the Painballers and himself when he answers that: "Yeah, yeah, I know, slap my wrist, we were bad. Though you didn't get into Painball unless you were already a multiple killer" (*MaddAddam* 362). After having described the Painballers as wild animals whose human characteristics are left behind when they enter the Painball arena, Zeb deems them killable creatures whose worth is reduced to pet food, and thus robs them of what might remain of their humanity.

"In an even more strident critique of the contemporary culture of violence," Bouson argues, "Atwood conjures up a barbaric, cannibalistic world of human cruelty and predator-prey in *The Year of the Flood*" ("Romp" 344). However, as Toby and Zeb debate these issues, it is evident that Toby is unable to show the same disregard for the Painballers as Zeb, regardless of her personal experiences with them. Blanco was Toby's boss, and she was victim of his repeated sexual abuse before she was rescued by the Gardeners, thus rejecting his warning that he would "snap her like a twig" if she crossed him (*Year* 45). Thus, as Toby summons more empathy for Blanco and his fellow Painballers than Zeb regards them worthy of, she cements her role as true Gardener and promoter of forgiveness and compassion. More importantly, Toby suggests that she harbours an understanding of the Painballers as

commodities, when recognising that their fates were in the hands of the corporations that control the society.

The MaddAddam Trilogy depicts a society in which the intellectual superiority of the science-driven society has bypassed its moral consciousness, as shown in the previous chapter, and where entertainment based on the abuse of nature and living species is readily available and enjoyed by the masses. Atwood describes a culture in which the values that have allowed for humans to situate themselves above nature pierces all layers of society to such an extent that nature is considered a commodity, along with human ethics.

Shannon Hengen points to the ethicists Lawrence Schmidt and Scott Marratto when she argues that "our faith in and our reliance on technologies have replaced our belief in a transcendent code of human conduct" (Hengen 139). In their book *The End of Ethics in a Technological Society,* Schmidt and Marratto argue that the lack of ethical guidelines directed towards the increasing innovation in the technology field leaves us with "the implicit nihilism at the heart of the modern project" (164), creating in us a sense of hopelessness because it does not matter what we do. Furthermore, they call for an "ethic of responsibility" (174) in order to urge caution whenever the consequences of applying innovative technology are uncertain. Hengen remarks that their suggestion stands in stark opposition to the unregulated science that is applied in the society in which Jimmy and Crake are raised. Subsequently, this leads to a lack of ethics in Jimmy and the society in which he is placed, whose pre-catastrophe existence is reduced to cater to the "body and its demands" (Hengen 138), exemplified through his eternal mission to engage in meaningless sex, alcohol and drugs while ridiculing himself and his fondness for linguistics. Hengen notes that, in the pre-catastrophe world, "scientists act as God while "word people" like Jimmy act as their preachers" in a society where "consumers come to worship eternal health and vigour, which they believe they can achieve by buying the right products, just as humans once believed in eternal spiritual rewards for having lived balanced lives" (Hengen 138). Atwood illustrates a society where the scientists, recognised by their privileged lifestyle in the Compounds, are enabled to maintain their role as "Gods" and thus expand their power into the rest of society, which creates an opportunity for the rich to commodify not only the creatures residing inside their laboratories, but also the marginalised people on the periphery of society.

Through the use of elements known from our contemporary society, albeit exaggerated to illustrate a future scenario, Atwood uses her narrative to express disdain for the current condition of Western culture. She then moves forward to present an alternative, post-catastrophe society, where language, interconnectedness and compassion for all species

are emphasised as essential traits to ensure the continuation of the planet and the species that reside on it. Thus, the pre-catastrophe society depicted by Atwood demonstrates the dangers of continuing down the current "slippery slope," whereas the post-catastrophe society illustrates Atwood's determination to merge the science- and technology-oriented episteme with basic values, such as language and empathy. Instead of replacing the humanities completely, Atwood liberates her new society of what she considers the most ethically immoral aspects and instead highlights the ones she considers worth keeping. As a result, the characteristics that form the grounds for the new society, risk destabilising its future.

3.2 Post-catastrophe survival

After having looked at the pre-catastrophe society in *The MaddAddam Trilogy*, I will now look at the options that Atwood provide for the future. I will argue that her post-catastrophe society manages to successfully rid itself of a range of previously unsustainable traits and unethical aspects, but that it nevertheless ends up as a society marked by the humanism that preceded it. As the chapter concludes, the interconnection between the Crakers and the remaining humans lays the ground for an interesting discussion on the possibilities Atwood presents for the future.

As previously noted, the pre-catastrophe society is largely recognised by the dualism in opinion between dystopic and liberal posthumanism as defined by Sharon, and this mannerism is brought forth by the survivors of the Waterless Flood. Dystopic posthumanism critique of technological enhancements springs from the idea that the improvements "pose a threat to human nature and the values and virtues that humans have developed as a result of the necessity to deal with the imperfection inherent to this nature" (Sharon 5). Liberal posthumanism is often compared to transhumanism, and thus echoes Wolfe's notion that the possibility to enrich the body should be considered an intensification of humanism as noted in my introductory chapter. However, as the approaches are both rooted in humanism, liberal and dystopic posthumanism are concerned with attempting to define human nature in a world where technology is an increasingly important part of society. Fukuyama writes that the concept of human nature has grown increasingly controversial following the 1800's, and defines it as "the sum of the behaviour and characteristics that are typical of the human species, arising from the genetic rather than environmental factors" (Fukuyama 130). Braidotti, on the other hand, points out that "the human is a historical construct that became a

social convention about 'human nature'" (Braidotti, Posthuman 26). Sharon argues in Braidotti's favour, when she states that nature, and thus human nature, is defined "mainly in opposition to that from which they must be defended" because its definition is rooted in a "lexicon of authenticity, unpredictability and givenness, as opposed to that which can be produced, perfected, or chosen" (Sharon 6). Thus, following the logic of dystopic posthumanism, human nature should not be meddled with from fear that one or several of the undefinable, yet undeniably human characteristics that Fukuyama refers to, will be disturbed. Sharon further argues that radical and methodological posthumanism recognise the "intricate enmeshing between humans and technological artefacts," which allows for an understanding that "technology is something that is always already part of the experience of being human" (14).

As *MaddAddam* unfolds, Toby, Ren and Snowman are part of a society that consists of previous God's Gardeners, Crakers, and a few of the scientists that worked with Crake on the Paradice project. A few of the survivors are pregnant as a result of the mass-copulation that was briefly discussed in the first chapter, but the question as to whether the biological fathers are Crakers or Painballers, remains uncertain until the very end. This prompts a discussion of the possible implications of mixing genes with the Crakers, and the possibility of junior Painballers initiates reflections upon the heritage of evil. Both of the alternatives create uneasy conversations about nature and nurture, and Zeb jokingly proclaims that the children must be drowned like kittens if they are children of the Painballers (*MaddAddam* 265). However, as the children turn out to have Craker fathers, this fate eludes them, and the discussion thus revolves around which Craker characteristics they might inherit. As the trilogy comes to an end, most of the protagonists have passed away, and Blackbeard has taken over the role of storyteller and narrator, holding on to the traditions passed on to him by Snowman and Toby. Through introducing reading and writing to the Crakers, they create a book where all the stories of Oryx, Crake and the survivors have been collected for the future generation, and Atwood thus reintroduces them to the realm of humanism.

3.2.1 Hybrid children as little pioneers brought into a brave new world

Wisker comments that "it seems unlikely that there will be any procreation at all following this particular holocaust, itself engendered by a valueless playfulness and lack of consideration of humankind, Crake treating the world like a kind of eco-oriented computer

game" (153). However, as the stories merge towards the end of *The Year of the Flood*, the Crakers mate with Amanda and Ren, which results in pregnancies. As previously mentioned, Toby refers to the incident as a "major cultural misunderstanding" (*MaddAddam* 22), which Bouson attributes to a satirical reminder from Atwood. In Bouson's opinion, this is Atwood's method to comment of Crake's warped sense of humour as he ensures that the sexuality of the Crakers is likened to animal instinct, since the men can smell when a woman is in heat ("Romp" 352). The problematic aspects of the incident, that most certainly would have been considered rape in modern culture, proves complicated to contextualise for the Crakers, as was discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. With this in mind, the first interaction with human females outside the Paradice dome is marked by the differences between the Crakers and humans, as their limited understanding of human culture is emphasised (de Marques 142-143). Although Snowman has introduced them to their cosmogony, he has refrained from explaining concepts that he cannot clearly illustrate, so when the Crakers meet Amanda and Ren, they have no inherent way of knowing why they should abstain from copulating with them. The unwillingness of the females, as we saw in the first chapter, is later explained to the Crakers, and although they do not necessarily understand the rationale behind the human female's unwillingness to mate with them, they are programmed to display empathy, and so they follow the instructions provided. In de Marques' opinion, Toby's understanding of this as a cultural misunderstanding highlights her willingness to consider the Crakers as a human species, and additionally reflects on her ability to recognise that the premises to consider the incident as rape are insufficient, because the Crakers lack the knowledge of this culturally constructed problem (142). This further reflects back on Toby's previous role as a highly respected Gardener, as it displays that she still acknowledges that the Gardeners promoted the destabilising of anthropocentrism.

Following the repeated rapes and abuse by the Painballers, Amanda and Ren cannot know when the babies were conceived, which further complicates the situation: "'Terrific', says Ren, 'Great choices! An ultracriminal or some kind of gene-spliced weirdo monster. [Amanda] wasn't the only one, anyway, with the cultural misunderstanding or whatever you want to call it. For all I know, I've got one of those Frankenbabies inside me too'" (*MaddAddam* 265). Ren's negative connotation established that the human survivors consider the genetically modified Crakers to adhere from their definition of human nature, but the prospect of harbouring a baby whose father is a Painballer, is defined as equally disturbing. Moreover, the survivors discuss the implications of giving birth to a hybrid-human baby, and states that this can be possibly devastating for the mothers. Since Crake considered

childrearing and childhood a waste of time (*Oryx* 187), he ensured that the Crakers are "on a different developmental clock" that includes different fetal growth rates, and thus bigger heads as the babies are born, and so the survivors have to worry not only about blood incompatibility, but also of having to possibly perform C-sections (*MaddAddam* 264-267). In Toby's attempt to reassure Amanda and Ren, Atwood initiates a discussion around the concept 'human nature':

> Toby thinks of something to say – something upbeat and soothing. Genes aren't a total destiny? Nature versus nurture, good can come of evil? There are the epigenetic switches to consider, and maybe the Painballers just had very, very bad nurturing? Or how about: the Crakers may be more human than we think? But none of it sounds very convincing, even to her. (*MaddAddam* 265-266)

Although Toby's reflections include an expansion of the limits of the human species, and subsequently the connection between nature and nurture, Toby nonetheless defines the Crakers from their otherness. Although she is open to the possibility that the Crakers and humans might share enough DNA to mate, Toby initially measures the likeness based on how comparable the Crakers are to the human, rather than reverse the question and ask how comparable humans are to Crakers. As has been previously discussed, the Crakers are modified for the increasingly hostile environment of the planet, and the possible hybrid children would therefore benefit from inheriting the physical features of the Craker. As Toby balances the different outcomes, Atwood engages the reader in a discussion reminiscent of the arguments brought forth by Braidotti and Fukuyama in the introduction to this chapter, namely whether human nature derives from a sum of human characteristics that have developed throughout history, or if human nature should be considered a fluctuating term. Toby seems to be inclined to agree that human nature should be considered a human construct as she notes that good can come out of evil, and as Zeb exclaims, the babies will become "little pioneer[s] born into our brave new world" (*MaddAddam* 267) regardless of their biological fathers.

In an interesting twist, Atwood resolves Toby's uncertainty of the future of the babies through an interaction with the pigoons and Crakers, rather than through discussion with the other human survivors. This provides further evidence to the Gardeners' ability to reject anthropocentrism and include non-human animals in their understanding of who can contribute through meaningful interactions. This is exemplified twice, first through

Blackbeard, as he notices Toby's uncertainty and sadness when she considers the possible outcomes of the pregnanices:

> 'Oh Toby, do not be sad,' says a child's voice: Blackbeard, nudging up beside her. He takes her hand, pats it. 'Oryx will help, and the baby will come out of the bone cave, and then Amanda will be happy. Everyone is very happy when there is a baby that has just come out.' (*MaddAddam* 266)

Thus, Blackbeard reinstates the notion that a pregnancy should be a joyful event, and that the birth of these babies should be as eagerly anticipated as the ones born by Craker women. The second interaction with a genetically modified creature takes place following Toby's decision to consume 'magic' mushrooms in order to enable a spiritual visit to her old mentor Pilar, whose body is buried under an elderberry bush nearby: "*I know you're here […] I need your help. […] Will this baby kill [Amanda]? What should I do? Send me a message. A signal*" (*MaddAddam* 272). Soon after, a pigoon sow with five babies appears, and Toby witnesses an interaction between Blackbeard and the pigoon, where Blackbeard stretches his hand out towards the pigoons as he sings to them. The mother is unwavering, and stands her ground despite Zeb aiming his rifle at the pigoons. As Toby notices the pigoonlets staring at her, she finally receives what she interprets as a sign from Pilar: "The pigoonlets freeze in place. Their eyes red-purple berries. Elderberry eyes" (*MaddAddam* 273). Although this example has been discussed in the section on pigoons and their acquired agency in chapter one, it also serves as an example of the increasing reliance on interspecies connectedness. As Toby acknowledges this as the sign she needed, she is assured that the pregnant women will be fine, and the babies should be welcomed regardless of their origin, because they too will be "full to bursting" of "life, life, life" (*MaddAddam* 273). Thus, the hybrid children of the future serve as an example of the unpredictability of human nature. By presenting this situation through Toby, whose role in the trilogy has been to bridge the gap between humans and non-human animals, Atwood asserts that the understanding of human nature as always already changing, relies on a prerequisite that rejects anthropocentrism.

Nonetheless, the next and last section will investigate Toby's role in obscuring the prospect of a future where the Crakers gather to hear stories of their creation that have been orally transferred from one generation to the next.

3.2.2 Blackbeard as the voice of writing

Although the God's Gardeners were encouraged to never write anything down, Toby keeps a diary following her time in isolation after the outbreak of the pandemic, and continues to do so after she is united with the other survivors (*MaddAddam* 247). For Toby, the diaries represent a long-term goal as they are collections of testimonies for the future generations: "There's the story, then there's the real story, then there's the story of how the story came to be told. Then there's what you leave out of the story. Which is part of the story too" (*MaddAddam* 70. All these aspects of a story are important to Toby, and although she is uncertain whether anyone will be able to read them in the future, she turns to a proverb that is worthy of the Gardeners when she decides that "maybe acting as if she believes in such a future will help to create it" (*MaddAddam*, 166-167). In Jane Bone's opinion, the diaries imply that Toby, despite her effort, is still rooted in humanist tradition (634). The diaries keep track of everyday observations on the weather, "noteworthy occurrences," and the different feasts and celebrations based on the Gardeners' calendar. On *Saint Bob Hunter and the Feast of Rainbow Warriors*, Blackbeard enters the room as she is writing, and asks her: "What are you making, Oh Toby? […] What are those lines?" (*MaddAddam* 248), to which Toby replies:

> 'I'm doing *writing*: that is what these lines are. I'll show you.' […] *This is paper, it is made from trees. Does it hurt the tree? No, because the tree is dead by the time the paper is made* – a tiny lie, but no matter. *And this is a pen. It has a black liquid in it, it is called ink, but you do not need to have a pen to do writing*. Just as well, she thinks: those rollerballs will run out soon. *You can use many things to make writing. You can use the juice of elderberries for the ink, you can use the feather of a bird for the pen, you can use a stick and some wet sand to write on. All of these things can be used to make writing*. […] Each letter means a sound. And when you put the letters together they make words. And the words stay where you've put them on the paper, and then other people can see them on the paper and hear the words. Blackbeard looks at her, squinting with puzzlement and unbelief. 'Oh Toby, but it can't talk,' he says. 'I see the marks you have put there. But it is not saying anything.' 'You need to be the voice of the writing,' she says. 'When you *read* it. *Reading* is when you turn these marks back into sounds. Look, I will write your name.' (*MaddAddam* 248-249)

In accordance with de Marques' argument that Snowman moved the Crakers into the symbolic world by introducing them to the "symbolic world of culture" (de Marques 140), Toby is now ensuring that the similarities between humans and the Crakers will be further developed. Blackbeard is initially sceptical towards writing and reading, and protests that the symbols on the page are reminiscent of Toby's explanation of what their meaning are. Due to Blackbeard's inherent inability to use symbolic thinking, he fails to grasp the concept of literacy, and for Blackbeard a B is not a *B* is not a bee. Toby writes down his name and asks him to have Ren read it out loud to him. Upon his return, Blackbeard confirms to Toby that the note "told [his] name to Ren!," a revelation that sparks a flame in the young boy: "Blackbeard nods: *now he's grasping the possibilities*. 'I can keep this?' he says. […] Show me again." (*MaddAddam* 250, my italics). However, as Blackbeard learns to read and write, Toby regrets her decision:

> Later […] she finds him at the sandbox. He has a stick, and the paper. There's his name in the sand. The other children are watching him. All of them are singing. Now what have I done? she thinks. What can of worms have I opened? They're so quick, these children: they'll pick this up and transmit it to all the others. What comes next? Rules, dogmas, laws? The Testament of Crake? How soon before there are ancient texts they feel they have to obey but have forgotten to interpret? Have I ruined them? (*MaddAddam* 250)

In posthumanism, the dominance of the written text is not apparent, according to Francesca Ferrando, as it can be considered one of many ways to communicate, rather than functioning as an essential part of communication, and alternative ways can include "oral history, proverbs and songs" (11-12). In other words, as Blackbeard is exposed to reading and writing, Toby lifts him out of illiteracy and back into one of the essential legacies from humanism, and subsequently diminishes the gap she had previously created between herself and humanism. By introducing the art of the written language to Blackbeard, Toby subsequently exposes them to creating the art that Crake detested so much, and although she questions her actions, she nonetheless maintains her education of Blackbeard. As de Marques also notes, as Blackbeard is exposed to writing, he is simultaneously given the opportunity to embrace the role as the prophet and communicator of their cosmology (143). This role has previously been limited to their human mentors, most notably Toby and Jimmy. Following

their deaths, Blackbeard explains to the other Crakers the process of learning to read, and thus justifies his role as their new mentor, as he is currently the one who holds the key to their freshly transcribed testimony:

> And she showed me, Blackbeard, how to make such words, on a page, with a pen, when I was little. And she showed me how to turn the marks into a voice, so that when I look at the page and read the words, it is Toby's voice that I hear. And when I speak those words out loud, you too are hearing Toby's voice. (MaddAddam 467)

Blackbeard has inherited Toby's diaries where she authored the stories of the human survivors, and he teaches the Crakers about the rules that have been written down, as well as the mutual understanding that appeared following the understanding that the pigoons can communicate with the Crakers. Blackbeard emphasises that there are differences between the humans and Crakers, but maintains that "we and the two-skinned ones are all people and helpers, though we have different gifts, and some of us turn blue and some do not […] we must be respectful […]" (*MaddAddam* 468). He also instructs the Crakers of Toby's warnings regarding the book itself, namely that it can be broken due to the fragility of paper, and must therefore be copied into several versions in order to ensure its survival: "Each time a person came into the knowledge of the writing, and the paper, and the pen, and the ink, and the reading, that one was also to make the same Book, with the same writing in it. So it would always be there for us to read" (MaddAddam 469).

Bone points out that as Blackbeard takes on the role of storyteller, he also embraces the customs of his human predecessors, such as the practise of wearing a red baseball cap, or eating a fish that the Craker women have prepared, putting aside his lack of understanding of the customs: "he repeats the act of eating the smelly fish despite vomiting […] Blackbeard can reproduce meaning, but there is no evidence in the text that he can go beyond that" (Bone 634). However, I would propose that Blackbeard is indeed capable of moving beyond reproduction of attained customs, as there are several examples in the last section of *MaddAddam*, named *Book*, where Blackbeard openly explains how he twists the narrative. Although his changes are minor, his recollection of Toby's death proves that he is not only capable of changing the story, but also of reflecting upon the several interpretations of the stories:

> Where she went I cannot write in this Book, because I do not know. Some say that she died by herself, and was eaten by vultures. The Pig Ones say that. Others say that she was taken away by Oryx, and is now flying in the forest, at night, in the form of an Owl. Others said that she went to join Pilar, and that her Spirit is in the elderberry bush.
>
> Yet others say that she went to find Zeb, and that he is in the form of a Bear, and that she too is in the form of a Bear, and is with him today. That is the best answer, because it is the happiest; and I have written it down. I have written down the other answers too. *But I made them in smaller writing*. (MaddAddam 473-474, my italics)

As Blackbeard reflects upon the various possibilities of Toby's fate, he connects the stories he has collected from humans and non-humans, giving both parties equal agency. Nonetheless, as he presents his favourite, which is the story he assumes that would make Toby happiest, he also displays how he is able to emphasise certain parts of history, whereas the other versions are reduced to smaller writing, and thus given less importance. Blackbeard explains to the crowd of Crakers that he has passed on the art of writing: "And I have taught all these things about the Book and the paper and the writing to Jimadam, and to Pilaren, and to Medulla and Oblongata, who were born to Ren and Amanda and Swift Fox, our Beloved Three Oryx Mothers" (*MaddAddam* 469). He continues to explain that these four children, born of Craker fathers and human mothers, have been chosen to further teach the writing to the future generations of Crakers. The four hybrid children are thus given a role of mentors, not unlike that of their human ancestors.

As *The MaddAddam Trilogy* nears its end, Blackbeard tells The Story of Toby, and recalls the last events leading up to her passing. Blackbeard concludes his session by explaining the concept of hope to the Crakers:

> The three Beloved Oryx Mothers cried very much when Toby went away. We cried as well, and purred over them, and after a while they felt better. And Ren said, Tomorrow is another day, and we said we did not understand what that meant, and Amanda said Never mind because it was not important. And Lotis Blue said it was a thing of hope. (*MaddAddam* 474)

To conceptualise hope, Blackbeard reveals that Swift Fox is pregnant again, and that he has been chosen by her as one of the 'Fourfathers', before he concludes: "that is a thing of hope" (*MaddAddam* 474). These last incidents are important in the sense that they serve as examples of the continuous development of the Crakers. Through their interaction with humans, they have developed beyond naïve but compassionate humanoid creatures, whose every sentence starts with a question. Towards the end of the trilogy, the Crakers display an ability to reason, communicate and reflect upon current happenings. *Book* also reveals that the differences between humans and Crakers are diminishing, and by announcing that he will become a Fourfather, Blackbeard establishes that he is looking forward to becoming a father. This stands in opposition to Crake's attempt to prevent family trees, marriages and divorce and the feuds over heritage that follow the intricacy of family issues (*Oryx* 359). Although the newly acquired characteristics of the Crakers are reminiscent of the privileging of individualism in humanism that posthumanism serves to reject, Atwood concludes the trilogy with an optimistic nod towards hope, which might imply that the compassionate Crakers are a better alternative for caring for the diversity of the planet, be it nature, human or non-human species. The question that remains is whether the considerations in the post-catastrophe society will revolve around an approach similar to ideas proposed in posthumanism, or function as continuations of the humanist legacy adjusted to apply to the post-catastrophe society.

Conclusion

This thesis has analysed Margaret Atwood's *The MaddAddam Trilogy* in order to investigate how the novels can be situated within the field of posthumanism. As stated in the introduction, the general opinion is that the trilogy is a thorough contribution to the posthumanist debate, and that it functions as a cautionary tale that emphasises scepticism towards concepts such as anthropocentrism and humanism. The aim of this thesis was to argue that although Atwood criticises the consumption-driven society, promotes eco-awareness and offers reflections on current issues of bioethics, she is still firmly rooted in an anthropocentric and humanist episteme.

To be able to present this argument, I divided my analysis into three parts, working my way through the levels of the trilogy. In my first part, I examined the genetically engineered species that Atwood has created in her fictional society. The chapter displayed how the pigoons and Crakers are presented in comparison to other genetically modified species, and that their presentations is linked to the number of genes they share with humans. These two species are amounted increasing agency by the survivors of the pandemic, an agency that further intensifies as their human traits are revealed. Although the Crakers must be considered an intended posthuman species, literally and chronologically, Atwood highlights the characteristics that are reminiscent of Homo Sapiens, and assigns an increasing importance to the shared human traits as the trilogy progresses. In my first chapter, I therefore argue that Atwood promotes an anthropocentric and humanist view through her genetically engineered species.

In my second chapter, I intended to explore a few key narrative voices in the trilogy, in order to debate how Atwood manages to present narrative voices that are able to decentre man from his previously privileged position. The narratives function as useful lenses through which the society in the trilogy can be explored, and provide an opportunity to examine the views that are presented. This exploration proved that Jimmy, rooted in a pre-catastrophe world, and Snowman, apparently a lone survivor of the pandemic, were unable to rid themselves of their humanist values. Through Snowman's close affiliation with the Crakers, this initially contributed to influence their cosmogony and understanding of the world. The second narrative that was given attention explored the views of the God's Gardeners. Although the Gardeners are often depicted as "eco-freaks" whose religious views are considered fanatical and archaic, they nonetheless provide an interesting perspective. This

thesis argued that through their complete cosmogony, the God's Gardeners are able to establish a perspective that is removed from anthropocentrism, and that their compassion and respect for nature and non-human animals provides the most sustainable option for a future where man is no longer in a privileged position. The God's Gardeners come closest to denouncing the legacy that the society at large is based on. In relation to my main argument, the God's Gardeners are the most viable option for a removal from the anthropocentrism that posthumanism seek to reject, and that scholars such as Adami, Mosca and Bouson claim that the trilogy should be read in light of.

The final part of this thesis takes a step further back into the pre-catastrophe society to enable an exploration of the backdrop through which Atwood's trilogy is set, and provides an understanding for the reasoning behind Crake's radical decision to distribute the BlyssPluss pill. The thesis argues that Crake deems the pandemic a necessity through his observations that the technological progress has reduced not only nature, but also humans and non-human animals, into commodities. The separation between the Compounds and pleeblands, the culture of violence and the increasing disregard for moral and dignity is given far more attention than the encompassing, fundamental destruction of nature. The rationale behind replacing one human species with another can be read as a way of securing the continuation of the human race, in one form or another. The impact that the remaining humans have on the Crakers is extensive, and gives reason to argue that Atwood's recurring attention to the agency of humans functions as another example of the trilogy's inability to rid itself of a strong humanist legacy. Thus, in *The MaddAddam Trilogy*, Atwood is not fully able to present a universe where the humanist and anthropocentric discourse is thoroughly challenged as a whole, with the exception of her depiction of the God's Gardeners.

This thesis is not a critique of Atwood's fiction, as she has provided a thorough contribution to the exploration of the slippery slope that humankind is heading down. Instead, the thesis should be read as a critique of the scholars that praise Atwood's trilogy as a viable contribution to the field of posthumanism. These scholars, and possibly Atwood herself, are part of the same episteme that places humanism and anthropocentrism at the centre of everything, and their incapability of pointing out the overarching privileging of these values in the novels prevents a proper discussion of the necessity to enable a shift in how humankind perceives itself, and consequently how humanity considers non-human entities on the planet.

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