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## Old Beginnings: the Re-Inscription of Masculine Domination at the New Millennium in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*

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OLD BEGINNINGS:  
THE RE-INSCRIPTION OF MASCULINE DOMINATION AT THE NEW  
MILLENNIUM IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S *ORYX AND CRAKE*

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LACIE M. SEMENOVICH

ABSTRACT

This essay analyzes the role of masculine domination in the twenty-first century as portrayed in Margaret Atwood's 2003 novel of speculative fiction, *Oryx and Crake*. I argue that Atwood's uncharacteristic choice of male primary characters highlights the masculine/feminine and the human/nature binaries in order to critique the destructiveness of a continued masculine domination of nature and the feminine. I utilize Donna Haraway's theory of speculative fiction as an alternative space in which we can begin to explore new relationships with nature to critique Atwood's novel. In my first chapter, I posit that Atwood utilizes Judeo-Christian allusions to situate the novel within the framework of biblical hierarchy. In my second chapter, I show that Atwood inverts the symbol of the monster in order to illustrate the continued domination of nature and the feminine and to designate the masculine as monstrous through its appropriation of nature and the feminine. My third chapter explores the boundary crossing of the genetically altered Crakers as an attempt to reconstruct the social body that ultimately fails because of Crake's embeddedness in a culture of masculine domination. While some critics read Jimmy/Snowman as the possibility for humanity's redemption, my fourth chapter argues that he actually reinscribes an ideology of masculine domination into the Craker culture through his mythologies and ritualistic teachings. I contend that Atwood's characters fail

to realize the true possibility of change in the “elsewhere” she creates by virtue of their inability to cross the boundary of their own Judeo-Christian centered ideology which acts as a critique of the West’s current culture of consumer driven environmental degradation.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

“When one contemplates the conquest of nature by technology one must remember that that conquest had to include our own bodies. Calvinism provided the determined and organized men and women who could rule the mastered world. The punishment they inflicted on non-human nature, they had first inflicted on themselves.”

– George Grant, *Technology and Empire*

“...literature...represents the ultimate coding of our crises, of our most intimate and most serious apocalypses.”

– Julia Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror*

Margaret Atwood’s 2003 novel, *Oryx and Crake*, addresses the scientific and technological issues that affect the world at the millennium in their social, economic, and political contexts by presenting the dangers of scientific advancement as a tool of global capitalism untempered by ethical restraints. Her novel highlights the division of science and the humanities while engaging our fear of domination, repression, and self-annihilation. Atwood illustrates the subtle continuation of the feminine as other and monster within contemporary culture as a foundation to explore the ideology of

domination. She creates many new monsters in her rendition of an apocalyptic future: the mad-scientist Crake; the commodity driven, capitalist, Jimmy and his post-apocalyptic alter-ego Snowman; and Crake's genetically engineered project meant to replace humanity: the Crakers. Through these monstrous representations, Atwood creates a feminist critique of a world destroyed by male domination, the objectification of nature, and the global domination of capitalist consumer culture. This is her first novel to be told from the point of view of a singular male protagonist with a central focus on another male character. Oryx, her primary female and titular character is secondary to Jimmy/Snowman and Crake. Atwood's unusual focus on the masculine draws attention to the masculine/feminine binary. I posit that she employs two male primary characters in order to illustrate that the history of technology, religion, and Western ideology that continues, even into the twenty-first century, to endorse masculine domination of the feminine has led to the current destruction of humanity's environment and that this ideology hinders any efforts to make changes that promote the survival of both humanity and the environment. In this novel, religion, gender, environmentalism, multi-nationalism, and capitalism come together in a complex mixture that illustrates Atwood's fear for humankind's survival. As can be seen from the critical analyses of Atwood's writing, social and political issues, environmentalism, and survival are predominant themes throughout much of her work but especially in her second novel of speculative fiction<sup>1</sup>, *Oryx and Crake*.

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<sup>1</sup> For my purposes speculative fiction and science fiction will be used interchangeably. Atwood defends her novel as speculative fiction, because it takes place on earth in a futuristic context that is technologically based on contemporary science. However, many science fiction critics do include *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Oryx and Crake*, and *The Blind Assassin* in readings of feminist science fiction. See Dunja Mohr, *Worlds Apart? Dualism and Transgression in Contemporary Female Dystopias*, page 7, and Lucie Armitt, *Where No Man Has Gone Before: Women and Science Fiction*, page 3.



In her essay “*The Handmaid’s Tale* and *Oryx and Crake* in Context,” Atwood notes that speculative fiction “can speak of what is past, passing, but especially of what’s to come” (515). I maintain that Atwood structures *Oryx and Crake* to reflect these elements of speculative fiction, both through its narrative structure and through the historical context(s) of the novel. She situates the novel within the context of the Judeo-Christian tradition through her use of religious allusions, thus, also, situating the novel within the context of Western history and the past. She then draws a relationship between the present and the world of the novel by alluding, several times, to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century as the scientific foundation for the technologies existent in the novel. She also draws parallels between the novel and today through Jimmy/Snowman’s “senior dissertation on self-help books of the twentieth century” (245). His experience acts to differentiate the past from the present and at the end of the novel he is struck with the uncertainty of the future. By placing the novel in a futuristic context her text is forward looking and explores the possibilities of a future based on an historical grounding in the heritage and ideology of Western domination.

*Oryx and Crake* is also reflective of four<sup>2</sup> other elements of speculative fiction that Atwood outlines in her essay: exploring “the consequences of new and proposed technologies”, exploring “the nature and limits of what it means to be human”, exploring “the relation of humanity to the universe” (which leans toward the mythic and religious), and exploring “changes in social organization” (515). She bases the technology of the novel on science that is available or is becoming available today. In this context speculative fiction allows the author to explore the arguments for and against new and

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<sup>2</sup> Atwood lists five elements of speculative fiction. While she does explore the “realms of the imagination” through Jimmy/Snowman’s character, I do not find this element particularly pertinent to my discussion of *Oryx and Crake*.

emerging technologies. In the case of *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood does not appear to endorse or to demonize technology, per se. Her condemnation lies in the appropriation of technology by corporations through the capitalist system. Humankind's relationship to one another and to the earth is changed by technology and by the ways in which choices are made in the use of technology. As humankind moves into an era of experiencing his environment and indeed much of his life through technology Atwood examines how this shift affects both humanity and the environment. Thus, the novel explores humankind's relationship to his self-created world(s) and the pre-existing (non-human-constructed) universe through technology. As our world changes, so to does our concept of what it means to be human. *Oryx and Crake* poses the questions, what does it mean to be human? and how far can we push our boundaries (social, genetic, and cultural) before becoming something other than human? It is arguable whether the novel answers these questions, but it appears to instigate an opening in which discourse can take place to find viable and acceptable answers. And finally, while *Oryx and Crake* does not provide a complete overview of the social structures of the not-so-distant future, it does offer insight into the social structures through the various characters and their experiences. Atwood explores the consequences of a manufactured and restrictive human social structure through the drastic division between the Compounds and the Pleeblands and through the extreme differences between the Martha Graham Academy and the Watson Crick Institute. When this structure appears less-than-desirable, she then complicates the issue of changing social structures by introducing the engineered social structure that Crake designs for the Crakers, but does so without endorsing the new structure as

favorable to the human structure. Atwood's ambiguous ending engages the reader as an active participant in forming a vision of humanity's future.

Coral Ann Howells further explores *Oryx and Crake* within its speculative fiction context in her essay "Margaret Atwood's dystopian visions: *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake*," in which she argues that Atwood's two novels of speculative fiction reflect the "political, social, and environmental concerns" of the author (161). She posits *Oryx and Crake* as an amplified illustration of the concerns first portrayed in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Howells notes the similarities of the novels as they both depict environmental degradation. The environmental destruction is limited to a small part of the United States in *The Handmaid's Tale*, whereas it has a global reach in *Oryx and Crake*. Howells also points to the dramatic differences in cultural values depicted in both novels. Even though one is extremely repressive as regards sex and drug practices (*The Handmaid's Tale*) and the other (*Oryx and Crake*) is extremely loose in comparison, both portrayals are social extremes based on the control of the many by a few through religion in the former and consumer goods in the latter. Howells asserts that Atwood's social, political, and environmental concerns have magnified tremendously from the publication of *The Handmaid's Tale* in 1984 to the publication of *Oryx and Crake* in 2003.

However, I maintain that while her concerns have grown, Atwood's certainty in our ability to address our concerns before they overwhelm humanity has greatly diminished, as is evident in the ending of *Oryx and Crake* which leaves the reader questioning whether traces of humanity in any form will survive the apocalypse.

Howells maintains that *Oryx and Crake* is a much darker representation of the future than *The Handmaid's Tale* "where the post-catastrophic world of Snowman and

the Crakers is preceded by Atwood's ferocious satire on late modern American capitalist society" (164). She contends that in the time between the two novels, Atwood "moved through political and social satire to a satire against mankind" (169). Howells reads the novel both as a castaway narrative and a journey narrative in which Snowman must discover the complexity of his humanity through confrontation with his past (170). She touches on the relationship between Jimmy/Snowman and the Crakers that allows for a re-creation of ideology and the teaching of symbolic thought (171).

Like Howells, Helen Mundler in her essay, "Heritage, Pseudo-Heritage and Survival in a Spurious Wor(l)d," draws comparisons and contrasts between *Oryx and Crake* and *The Handmaid's Tale*. Language and intertextuality in the context of heritage and cultural survival are a main focus of the essay. She touches on the religious allusions in the novel through the intertextual allusions to *Paradise Lost* and Jimmy/Snowman's myth-making, but does not explore the implications of these references in situating the novel within the Judeo-Christian context. She concludes that "Jimmy/Snowman's mission is the reinscription of the creative subject, after Crake has attempted its wholesale removal" (98). Indeed, Jimmy/Snowman's character dually represents the destructive force of technological excess and also the redemptive power of human compassion and imagination. His character's internal conflict drives the search for truth, redemption, and survival in the novel. However, I believe that his "reinscription of the creative subject" results in the reproduction of an ideology of masculine domination which defies Atwood's attempt to subvert the structure that posits the feminine and nature as monstrous.

Earl Ingersoll approaches the novel from a more feminist angle than Howells and Mundler. In his essay “Survival in Margaret Atwood’s novel *Oryx and Crake*,” Earl Ingersoll states that “Atwood has emphasized that the novel functions as a ‘book end’ to *The Handmaid’s Tale*” (1). His argument is centered on Atwood’s “authorial intent.” He reads survival in the context of Atwood’s national identity, gendered identity, and her role as a writer. He contends that her early struggle to identify herself as a female Canadian writer in a Western literary tradition which gave no recognition to Canadian writers or female writers greatly informs the basic themes of survival and identity with a nationalistic and feminist bent that is not always obvious, but is nonetheless subtly masked in her satire, imagery, and language. Ingersoll likens the creation of new species, such as the rakunk and the snat, to a “boyish” game which represents a “gendering of genetic engineering as a masculinist pursuit of a goal, regardless of the consequences” (5). He continues to draw a gendered distinction between science and the arts by positing Jimmy/Snowman in a “feminized” humanities role to Crake’s “masculine” science role (6). Though Ingersoll does not draw the distinction, the fact that Crake attends an institution named after two male scientists, James Watson and Francis Crick, while Jimmy attends an institution named after a woman, Martha Graham, further emphasizes the gendered distinctions between the two fields of study and reinforces the historical grounding of both the novel and the gender binary.

While I agree with his feminist reading of the novel, I disagree with his argument that the novel suggests that if the basic parts of humanity must be altered in order for our survival, then survival may not be worth the costs to the very meaning of being human. I maintain that the novel addresses the fact that humankind is a technological species and

that technology changes our interactions with the world and even how we define what it means to be human. In fact, the definition of human has evolved to include women and racial/ethnic minorities who at different times in Western history have been viewed as less-than-human or not fully human. The novel shows that technology distinguishes us from the natural and animal world, though often times to the detriment of ourselves and nature. Change, advancement, and evolution define human history. I believe that all of Atwood's novels illustrate that change is fundamental to survival. The question is "what kind of change?" *Oryx and Crake* juxtaposes two kinds of change: social change and technological change. The difficulty lies in that we cannot forgo our technological inclinations, but we also cannot allow ourselves to be ruled by them to the detriment of the natural and animal world, either.

Building on Ingersoll's question of the value of survival at any cost, J. Brooks Bouson begins her essay "It's Game Over Forever': Atwood's Satiric Vision of a Bioengineered Posthuman Future in *Oryx and Crake*," by asserting that Atwood is strongly against the use of bioengineering technology to alter humans, particularly in the context of the modern "reductionist mind-set that is blind to the social and historical context of science and to the ethical and ecological implications of radical interventions into natural processes" (139-140). She discusses Atwood's critique on cultural degradation through the websites Jimmy/Snowman and Crake visit and the games that they play, all of which glorify violence, death, and pornographic/pedophilic sex in some way. Similar to Ingersoll's discussion of science as a "boyish game," she maintains that Crake views the world and science as a game that he is intent on "winning" (146). Bouson notes that Crake "uses science not to conquer the natural world but to control

human nature” through what she calls a “strange twist on the idea of scientific imperialism” (141). She also contends that Atwood tries to redeem Jimmy/Snowman through his defense of the arts and literature and through his attempts to retain his humanity by honoring the words/language that will die with him (152).

Another Jimmy/Snowman redeemer, Danette DiMarco, in her essay “Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained: homo faber and the Makings of a New Beginning in *Oryx and Crake*,” maintains that “[t]oo much a product of a profit-driven world who mirrors its economy of self-interest, Crake emerges as the quintessential homo faber, making it unlikely that any kind of positive social change will happen directly through him.” Instead she sees Jimmy/Snowman “as a potential site for change” (1). Utilizing Aristotle and others, DiMarco illustrates that the modern use and development of technology has hindered democracy instead of creating a more participatory political system as Aristotle had hoped. This commercialization of knowledge has led to what DiMarco presents as a modern “slavery;” one that is obvious in the case of Oryx who is sold as a sex slave and one more subtle, in which people are driven by consumerism and thus become trapped in a social structure that replaces free time for personal, cultural, and social development with the “need” to work in order to fulfill monetary and material goals. She also maintains that Crake uses Jimmy/Snowman and Oryx as tools in the attainment of his goals. She builds upon Ingersoll and Bouson by utilizing game theory to explore Crake’s actions. In contrast to Crake’s obsession with technology, she highlights Jimmy/Snowman’s early identification with nature to denote his potential to change the direction of human society.

In contrast, Chung-Hao Ku's essay "Of Monster and Man: Transgenics and Transgression in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*," maintains that Jimmy/Snowman becomes a Frankenstein's monster through a dehumanizing relationship with the Crakers and the pigoons. He argues that the use of human DNA in the creation of the Crakers and the pigoons and their mimicry of human attributes disrupts the relationship between humans and non-humans. He builds on DiMarco's reading of homo faber in the text, arguing that it takes "monstrous form...when science colludes with capitalism" (107). He builds on the survivor discussion of Atwood's work by exploring the novel in contrast to *Robinson Crusoe*. Ku touches on the likelihood that the Crakers will "evolve" into a hierarchy and notes that Abraham's leadership resembles patriarchy. He maintains that the message of the novel is "that of the necessary coexistence of, and need for tolerance, between and among self and other (selves and others)" (130). Snowman's role as storyteller identifies communication and social-knowledge (not technological knowledge) as vital tools for a social revolution that is sustainable for humanity, the earth, and all other creatures.

Building on Ku's argument, I will use Donna Haraway's writings on the "monsters" of scientific inquiry, and the ethical and social implications of scientific institutions and their construction of knowledge as a tool for understanding the scientific, social, economic, and cultural context of Atwood's novel. Utilizing a Marxist-Feminist lens, Haraway maintains a "discourse of science studies as cultural studies" ("Promises" 64) in the same way that Atwood, in *Oryx and Crake*, utilizes science to critique current cultural and social trends. As Haraway notes, science does not exist as an "objective" study of nature as many scientists claim. The scientist exists within an ideological



framework, and thus his science is forced to conform to that framework. Haraway contends that all knowledge is “situated knowledge” and therefore cannot be “objective” or construct an “objective” understanding of the world (“Promises” 89). Rather, knowledge is an ideological construction of the culture and time which “creates” it. Knowledge and how humankind uses that knowledge is a primary theme of *Oryx and Crake*. The “discovery” of scientific knowledge drives the economic market by creating products to be consumed by an ever growing human population.

Scientific knowledge is often represented as the “discovery” of the nature of objects in the natural world. According to Haraway, the Western scientific use of nature posits nature as “other” in relationship to humankind (“Promises” 64). The evolution of scientific study has relied heavily on the Judeo-Christian ideology set forth in Genesis that gives humankind dominion over all of creation. Science objectifies nature as a tool for the human domination of the planet. Haraway maintains that:

Productionism and its corollary, humanism, come down to the story line that ‘man makes everything, including himself, out of the world that can only be resource and potency to his project and active agency.’ This productionism is about man the tool-maker and -user, whose highest technical production is himself; i.e., the story line of phallogocentrism. (“Promises” 67)

Haraway contends that humankind must discover a new way of relating to nature that will allow both humans and “nonhumans” a place in the construction and sharing of knowledge. She promotes “articulation” rather than representation as a means of creating collective relationships between humans and nonhumans (“Promises” 89). Haraway’s

model of articulation reinscribes nature with agency and a subject position, rather than the current model which maintains the claim of the scientist to speak for nature through the “discovery” of knowledge which is merely an anthropomorphic representation of nature.

Haraway cites science fiction as the ground on which new ways of interacting and experiencing the world can be explored. She calls this imaginative sphere “elsewhere” (“Promises” 63). Haraway maintains that

[s]cience fiction is generically concerned with the interpenetration of boundaries between problematic selves and unexpected others and with the exploration of possible worlds in a context structured by transnational technoscience.... SF – science fiction, speculative futures, science fantasy, speculative fiction – is an especially apt sign under which to conduct an inquiry into the artifactual as a reproductive technology that might issue in something other than the sacred image of the same, something inappropriate, unfitting, and so, maybe, inappropriated. (“Promises” 70)

Atwood utilizes the place of speculative fiction to comment on the monstrosity of technology used to dominate “others” which she identifies as feminine in her novel. She creates a similar (to the present) but dissimilar (from the present) future to explore the continued dangerousness of the masculine/feminine binary as it still affects Western ideology without directly chastising the reader for his own complicity in the social structure. Utilizing speculative fiction as a medium, Atwood creates a possible future through which to rupture the present symbol of the monster in order to create a space in which appropriation of nature can cease and a new human/nature relationship can be

developed through a blurring of the social boundary that currently separates the human and the nonhuman.

Atwood's characters in *Oryx and Crake* cross ethical, genetic, and social boundaries throughout the novel. She establishes Crake as a representation of the masculine domination and exploitation of scientific knowledge and technology through his work altering and combining genes. His character foregrounds the opening of a discourse on the ethical balance of human and nonhuman interests in the context of a masculine hegemony that treats nonhumans as resource and product. Atwood contrasts Crake with Jimmy/Snowman who for several critics represents a site for the salvation of humankind. I, however, read Jimmy/Snowman as a representation of and a perpetuation of Western cultural ideology. He characterizes the tenuousness (in many cases, nonexistence) of the boundary between the human and the monstrous. His existence in Atwood's construction of an "elsewhere" illustrates the difficulty of transcending ideology in order to create a rupture that allows for a reconfiguration of humanity's relationship with nature. While Atwood identifies Jimmy/Snowman as the feminine artistic binary to Crake's scientist role, he only acts to identify a masculine domination of all aspects of culture, even those deemed inferior to the masculine science. Atwood invokes the monstrous feminine through Sharon, Jimmy/Snowman's mother, and his pet rakunk, Killer. Sharon crosses the boundary between science and ethics, finding herself opposed to the dominant culture. Killer is a genetic abomination who comforts Jimmy/Snowman as his pet, but whose "species," when feral, becomes pestilent. The most important example of crossed genetic boundaries, the Crakers appear to transcend the human and the natural by way of their identification as both and neither. They are

hominid but their human genes are spliced with those of various animals and even citrus fruit. While they appear to have a more harmonious and “collective” relationship with nature than humanity, by the end of the novel they have begun to exhibit qualities of hierarchy and domination which betrays the ineffectiveness of a technological solution to what is inherently an ideological problem.

Utilizing Haraway, I will explore four major themes in Atwood’s novel as they relate to one another and to Atwood’s overarching critique of current cultural conditions through the characters in *Oryx and Crake*. I will begin with Atwood’s treatment of the Genesis story and religious allusions throughout the novel and relate this background topic to the ethical dilemma of creating knowledge and the use of knowledge within a social, economic, and cultural context, in Chapter Two: “Re-Writing Genesis at the Millennium: Humankind’s Monstrous Creation Story.” The distinctions between male and “Others” (nature, animals, and the female) in Genesis provide the foundation of an ideology of masculine domination. The dual creation stories in the Genesis text as explored by Anna Acosta illustrate a divisive link between unifying social theory and that of multiplicity and difference.

Building on the gender dynamics of both Genesis and the novel, and the relationship between woman and nature as monstrous signifiers, I will discuss the position of the “Other” as represented by woman and nature within *Oryx and Crake* in the chapter: “Oryx, the Mother: Nature, the Female, and Otherness.” While there are several female characters in the novel, none figures as predominately as Oryx who represents both a commodified female sexuality and a commodified third world. The lack of power and depth of the other female characters in the novel belies what Atwood

presents as a feminist backlash at the turn of the twenty-first century which is intrinsically tied to the technological destruction of nature. In the novel Atwood presents the feminine struggle with domination and capitalism through Jimmy's mother and his female pet rakunk, Killer. Atwood contrasts these female portrayals with that of Jimmy's father's assistant/girlfriend, Ramona who conforms to the Compound feminine ideal.

I further explore the monstrous signification of social fears and desires through the generation of the Crakers in Chapter Four "Re-Writing the Body: Genetic and Cultural Identity." The physical transformations of the human form and of the Earth are Atwood's commentary on the dangers of our current reliance on technology and our displacement from the natural environment. Atwood's portrayal of Crake as a mad-scientist character that condemns humanity while at the same time trying to perfect humanity through genetic alterations reveals the possibility for a union of the natural and the man-made. Ultimately, though, his design is tainted by his position as an ideological subject and his position at the top of his cultural hierarchy

While Atwood's male characters seem to have good intentions and appear to have successfully merged the human and the natural into a harmonious non-destructive relationship via the Crakers, Chapter Five "Post-Apocalypse: Ideological Re-inscription" argues that Jimmy/Snowman and Crake perpetuate the very ideology of masculine domination that Atwood critiques in the novel. Ideological changes do not occur without the participation and subjectivity of those adopting the changed ideology. Thus, for the human/nature relationship to change Jimmy/Snowman and Crake need an ideological shift, not a scientific solution. Otherwise, the Crakers will accept the ideology from which they are created and through which they are exposed to the world external to their

selves. Our ideological development impacts our relationship with nature just as much as our technological advancements and when these two cultural aspects develop divergently from one another both humanity and nature suffer.

Connecting these themes is Atwood's overarching critique of the West's neglect of and failed attempts to control spirituality, nature, human nature, and "Others" through commodity driven capitalist values. The very notion of "Other" developed in Genesis and used throughout history to enslave and control those people/animals/entities that are different from those who hold the power to name, to punish, and to destroy sets the stage for the futuristic drama played out in *Oryx and Crake*. Ideology propagates the conditions which corrupt humankind. While many critics view Jimmy/Snowman's position as humanity's redeemer, I argue that Atwood portrays him as the monstrous representation of our currently failing ideological system because he ultimately is so narrowly concerned with his own survival that he perpetuates domination and manipulation through his relations with the Crakers. She illustrates that while we have made great strides in scientific advancement, as a culture we have not made great enough social advancements to protect us from our own destructive inclinations.

CHAPTER II  
RE-WRITING GENESIS AT THE MILLENNIUM:  
HUMANKIND'S MONSTROUS CREATION STORY

Monsters have signified social, political, and cultural concerns since the beginning of the Judeo-Christian tradition, starting with biblical representations in the book of Genesis. The utopian tradition from which dystopia extends is rife with examples of the re-writing of Genesis in order to comment on contemporary ideologies and cultural conditions. Atwood employs religious allusions and imagery to situate her narrative within the context of the Judeo-Christian tradition. To illuminate the importance of Genesis in *Oryx and Crake*, I will employ Anna M. Acosta's reading of Genesis which she applies to *Frankenstein* in her book, *Reading Genesis in the Long Eighteenth Century*. Acosta's reading of Genesis focuses on the two creation stories that differ greatly in their construction and emphasis. The "P," or Priestly, creation story is the more abstract of the two stories and is also more utopian (13). It emphasizes gender equality and harmony with nature. The "J," or Yahweh, strand is Earth-centered and establishes the ideological formation of the social structure. It explains human suffering

through the story of Adam and Eve and the “fall” from grace through the acquisition of knowledge (14). Similar to the dual versions of Genesis, Atwood’s novel juxtaposes the utopian image of the Crakers with the earth-bound, physical existence of Jimmy/Snowman and the culture that creates the Crakers.

Though Atwood does not directly engage in religious commentary, the novel rests on multiple biblical references as a backdrop to the narrative. The title evokes Adam and Eve; though Atwood’s title inverts the male/female hierarchy by placing the female character first and the male character second<sup>3</sup>. In the story, as well, it is Crake who ultimately destroys humanity by utilizing his specialized knowledge thus paralleling Eve’s transgression by eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It is Oryx who willingly follows Crake’s lead without question as Adam does Eve’s, thus making them both unknowing accomplices to the downfall of the human race. By inverting the gendered responsibility for the “fall” Atwood designates the masculine as responsible for the scientific and technological destruction of humankind and the environment, and thus attempts to project monstrosity that has historically been identified as feminine onto the masculine. Crake’s monstrosity lies in his appropriation of power over life and death. Judeo-Christian culture has used Eve’s transgression in the creation story to justify the subjugation of the female to the male by demonizing the female. Haraway maintains that science and the notion of nature have been constructed by a masculinist domination of science; therefore one can connect the masculine with the encroaching powers of science and technology. Male scientists dominate the field and so are situated to construct

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<sup>3</sup> The artwork on the dust jacket of the American edition of the novel illustrates the parallel between Adam and Eve and Oryx and Crake. The image appears to be a mirror image of two naked people, one male and the other female. There are leaves covering the genitals and the male is holding a piece of fruit to the mouth of the female. Thus, symbolically it is the male who transgresses the boundaries of knowledge and tempts the female just as Eve tempted Adam with the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.



scientific ideologies and the natural world through a lens of domination and objectification.

The “J” version of Genesis also serves as ideological precedent to situate the masculine above the feminine and above nature. This ideology as adopted by Western culture posits the euro-centric white male as subject and all other humans and nonhumans as Other and monstrous because not fully human. Atwood suggests that a new relationship with nature and the feminine could lead to a better path to the future than the one the West is currently treading. By inverting gender responsibility in the destruction of the human race in *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood subverts the dominant hierarchy. Through Crake’s monstrosity, Atwood clears the way, though ultimately fails, for the “Others” – the feminine and nature – to re-write the ideology which governs humans’ relationship with the natural. However, in the novel, the lingering influence of the dominant culture mires any attempt by the feminine and nature to create a new relationship that is not built on dominance and proprietorship.

Crake and Eve are both enchanted by knowledge that is the domain of God. The serpent seduces Eve into eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil by tempting her with the promise of attaining God’s knowledge for herself. Similarly, the scientists in the novel are seduced by knowledge that gives them godlike abilities to create new species by splicing genes together. Within the novel knowledge is situated as both a product of and a tool for a consumer culture that proliferates the globe. It can be argued that Crake is nothing more than a product of his culture. “Numbers” people, those adept at math and science, are valued above “word” people, essentially anyone who is not a “numbers” person. Atwood explores this distinction with the contrasting character of

Jimmy/Snowman and Crake. Crake is the penultimate “numbers” person while Jimmy/Snowman is a mediocre “word” person. After high school Crake is “purchased” at a high price by the prestigious Watson-Crick Institute, while Jimmy/Snowman is only chosen by the Martha Graham Institute “after lackluster bidding” because his father intervenes on his behalf (174). Through these two characters Atwood presents a cultural obsession with knowledge and scientific understanding, fueled by a disregard for the arts and humanities. While humankind may have the ability to attain godlike knowledge, as a species we lack the maturity to responsibly and ethically utilize such knowledge because of the hierarchical system that fails to equally value science and the humanities.

In the novel, the misuse of knowledge leads to the production of consumer goods that claim to prolong human life and the enjoyment of physical pleasures. Knowledge alone causes no harm; however, when capitalism and greed are applied to the search for scientific advancement, ethical lines blur and often times are trampled. Jimmy’s mother, Sharon, represents a muffled and soon deadened cry against these developments. She says to Jimmy’s father, ““You hype your wares and take their money and then they run out of cash, and it’s no more treatments for them. They can rot as far as you and your pals are concerned”” (56-7). She represents a feminized attempt to change the social and economic structure through conscious actions and activism rather than through technological solutions. Through her dialogue with Jimmy/Snowman’s father Atwood utilizes her character to illustrate that youthful ideals of saving the world and helping others can be perverted by a culture centered on profit and consumerism.

Atwood’s clever naming of Crake’s unit, Paradise, is intended to immediately evoke biblical connections. Atwood’s spelling of Paradise with a “c” rather than the

proper spelling with an “s” tells the reader that we are not dealing with the untouched and pure Eden of the Old Testament. Indeed, we are in a corrupted and wholly improper place. The name also invokes the image of the gamble (Pair-a(of)- Dice) that Crake takes through his megalomaniac manipulations of science. He tells Jimmy/Snowman that the goal of his project is immortality. The notion of immortality clearly represents a desire to become godlike. Crake, a modern day Dr. Frankenstein, tries to manipulate the boundary between life and death. Crake’s immortality is one that resides in death, not only human death, but the death of the intellect and knowledge. Crake maintains that “[i]mmortality is a concept. If you take ‘mortality’ as being, not death, but the foreknowledge of it and the fear of it, then ‘immortality’ is the absence of such fear” (303). By removing the capacity and desire for complex knowledge from the Crakers, Crake hopes to return them to the blissful state prior to the acquisition of knowledge in the “J” version of Genesis. In the biblical story death is not mentioned until God forbids Adam from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Religious immortality is not introduced into the Judeo-Christian tradition until the promises of Christ that those who believe in him will live forever in Heaven. Rather, in Genesis, God banishes humankind from Eden when they eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil so that they cannot “take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (Genesis 3.22). In a sense, mortality is a by-product of knowledge. Knowledge and immortality can only coexist in the sphere of the Gods. If *Oryx and Crake* is situated within this tradition, then Crake’s notion of immortality as an absence of knowledge of death succeeds. On a grander scale, Crake ensures the immortality of life on earth because the novel presents human knowledge as the greatest

hazard to all life forms. Singular entities will not live forever, but life itself will continue to flourish without the threat of humankind's destructive technologies.

Atwood situates Crake as an omniscient overseer of his plan to destroy and regenerate humanity to enforce the monstrosity of technology without ethical boundaries, annihilation of humanity at the hands of human technology, and birth without the feminine. The dome where Crake conducts his secret experiment is completely sealed off from the world. Only he, Oryx, and Jimmy/Snowman know about the Crakers and only he knows the complete truth of his project. Perhaps the most biblical reference surrounding the idea of Paradise is that ultimately the Crakers are forced from their Paradise in order to survive. Their removal from Paradise reflects a retreat from a man-made construction of the world and a return to the natural. Paradise is not intended to be a permanent home for the Crakers; it does not have the vegetative capacity to fulfill their nutritional needs on a long term basis, nor does it provide them with their greatest task, to restore hominid harmony with nature. Just as a snake leads humankind into a world that they must create through hard work and labor in Genesis, Crake leaves Jimmy/Snowman alive so that he can lead the Crakers to safety outside of the dome where they can survive amongst the remaining forest-like parks.

Atwood contrasts the social reality of her primary narrative with Crake's utopian creation, the Crakers, who adhere to the utopian notion of the "P" creation story. "The utopianism of P comes to the fore in the next verse, in which God specifically indicates that Adam and Eve are to be vegetarian and will have no need to kill in order to eat ... free of the need to dominate nature in order to survive..." (Acosta 13). Crake genetically enhances the Crakers so that they have "an unprecedented ability to digest unrefined

plant material” and they are able to recycle their excrement as a food source, as well (304-5). These two characteristics distinguish the Crakers from a social structure that dominates nature as a resource and commodity. Because they will not have to hunt or to develop agriculture in order to feed themselves, they will not enslave the earth or animals. Crake believes that they will never enslave one another because they will not learn to dominate nature. By deleting the need for work, he believes that he has destroyed that quality which makes humans dominate other humans and non-humans.

As Atwood’s primary character Jimmy/Snowman acts as a symbol of the physical human-created world, thus representing the “J” creation story in an analogy between *Oryx and Crake* and Genesis. He transmits ideology to the Crakers through mythologies, rituals, and by virtue of his very existence as an outsider and a symbol of difference. His existence depends on a set of known events that situate him in a physical history and social system. Jimmy/Snowman’s role in the “fall” of humankind inextricably ties him to the re-creation of the “J” version of Genesis. The Crakers have seen Oryx and know of Crake, but Jimmy/Snowman is intimately familiar with both title characters who become gods in the Craker mythology; and he is complicit in a shared history with them. He is a living reminder of the monstrousness of the time preceding the Crakers. His condition is physical and visceral, whereas the Crakers maintain the allure of an idea, an experiment in utopian ideals, removed from the reality of everyday human life. Atwood continuously reminds the reader of his physical suffering and monstrosity in relation to the harmony and beauty of the Crakers, though she denotes that both are monstrous in their own right.

Acosta notes that “the existence of evil is decisive for “J,” whereas “the omnipotence and goodness of God are axiomatic in P” (15). Jimmy/Snowman is a relic and reminder of the evil that can be brought forth in the world. He and the Crakers understand that he is of the time before when there was chaos, though the Crakers have no understanding or experience with evil. The narrator notes “[o]n some non-conscious level Snowman must serve as a reminder to these people, and not a pleasant one: he’s what they may have been once. *I’m your past*, he might intone. *I’m your ancestor, come from the land of the dead*” (106). It can be argued that Jimmy/Snowman’s life represents all that Crake sees as vile and tries to remove from humanity. Jimmy/Snowman leads a salacious life that he cannot escape even in the utter loneliness of post-apocalypse where he is haunted by lustful hallucinations.

Jimmy/Snowman’s job in marketing at AnooYoo uses his liberal arts education to manipulate buyers into purchasing goods that they do not need and that, in many cases, do not work. He defends the importance of art and literature to Crake while in college, but afterward, he uses his skills to economically enhance his own lifestyle, while preying on the weaknesses of others. Jimmy/Snowman is a cog in the wheel of consumerism and he is not even conscious of or remorseful for his contribution to the decline of human civilization. He is too concerned with his own pleasure, mortality, and aging to comprehend the larger global issues impacting the environment and human rights as illustrated in his mother’s struggle and Oryx’s experience in the child sex trade. He produces ads that are so good that “he’d convinced even himself” (252). He is so much a product of his culture that he is trapped in the cycle of domination as a means of his own survival in the technological capitalist system.

Through the juxtaposition of utopian and dystopian characters, Atwood re-writes the Genesis myth in order to illustrate the relationship between the contemporary desire for social and environmental change and the reality of achieving that change. The drastic differences in the “J” and “P” stories exemplify that Western culture is founded on the symbiosis of two extreme relationships with our own existence, the ideal and the real. The tension between the two is necessary for the functioning of human society. If one extreme gains dominance then the system is out of balance. The utopian ideals and equality projected in the “P” story are just as vital to our condition as the historical and social grounding of the “J” story. Ideals cannot be born and thrive without the historical background to hold them in place; and the physical and social reality can be dominated by physical desires without the notion of an ideal existence toward which to strive which can lead to monstrous significations of imbalance. Thus, Atwood closes her novel with a scene that invokes questions regarding the viability of the Crakers’ system, the possibility and problems of humankind’s coexistence with the Crakers, and intimates that science cannot provide a solution to the problems created by technology.

### CHAPTER III

#### ORYX, THE MOTHER: NATURE, THE FEMALE, AND OTHERNESS

The industrial and technological advancement of the twentieth century and as we enter into the twenty-first century has created a sense of immediacy for humankind to discover a new relationship with nature. Nature has always stood as the feminine binary to the masculine culture. Nature represents the Other, that which must be dominated in order to be made “safe.” Haraway maintains that nature is the place where we need to “rebuild public culture” (“Promises” 65). I assert that Atwood portrays nature and the feminine as fundamental ingredients in changing the tides of human destruction of the planet. Nature must no longer be identified as a monstrous presence that must be tamed by humankind, rather it is humanity who must enter into a new relationship with nature as a solution to our own destructiveness and thus save ourselves and our environment.

Traditionally (within Western ideology), the monster represents the “other,” those dispossessed by the dominant cultural paradigm. As Russel Kilbourn and others point out, “the root of ‘monster’ is the Latin verb *monstrare*, ‘to show’” (170). The monster is



always a symbol and points beyond itself. Jeffery Cohen maintains that the monster serves

...as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment – of a time, a feeling, and a place. The monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy.... The monstrous body is pure culture. A construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read: the *monstrum* is etymologically 'that which reveals,' 'that which warns,' a glyph that seeks a hierophant. Like a letter on the page, the monster signifies something other than itself: it is always a displacement, always inhabits the gap between the time of upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received, to be born again. (4)

As cultural symbols, monsters are the living bodies of their authors' intentions. The monster exists within a "double narrative": the story of its creation and the cultural purpose it serves. According to Cohen, this purpose most often is prohibitive, warning of the boundaries that should not be crossed (13). Monsters often reflect the fears and anxieties of the culture that produces them. Atwood's characters most certainly emanate from and illustrate the contemporary fears of overpopulation, the dwindling of the world's resources, the onslaught of global warming, the misuse of scientific knowledge, and ultimately what these changes to our environment mean for the future of humankind. Atwood portrays the "Other" as monstrous to the dominant culture as well as transfiguring the dominant culture into a monstrous institution that must be changed in order for humanity to survive.

*Oryx and Crake* portrays a necessary shift of the monstrous designation. Atwood illustrates a masculine social structure that dominates the feminine and deems it monstrous. “Monstrosity” gives a dominant subject power over a less dominant subject and leads to objectification as in man’s domination of woman and nature. Beginning with the serpent’s trickery and Eve’s transgression in Genesis, nature and woman have been inextricably linked and demonized. Nature has served as a danger and monster in relation to humankind throughout history. Per Schedle points out that

[t]o early humans, without scientific knowledge and with a very simple technology, nature was a formidable “Other.” From the vantage point of early scattered groups of human beings, nature was a vast, mysterious, dangerous, and uncontrollable chaos, which humans, because they cannot live with chaos, anthropomorphized. In other words, humans created a counterintellect to mirror their own. They populated nature with gods, monsters, spirits, trolls, mermen, and other humanlike, but not quite human, creatures. (14)

Thus our “knowledge” of nature and our science is based on how we can force our external world into a likeness of humankind. In effect, human beings do not understand nature within a context that acknowledges both humanity and nature as active agents. As Haraway would note, we do not participate in a dialogue *with* the other life forms with whom we share the earth, rather we participate in a monologue of representation which “depends on possession of a passive resource, namely, the silent object, the *stripped* actant” (“Promises” 89; emphasis Haraway’s). Our semiotic use of language to create social relationships creates a problem in Haraway’s collective design. Though she notes

that “for our unlike partners, well, the action [communication] is ‘different,’ perhaps ‘negative’ from our linguistic point of view, but crucial to the generativity of the collective” (“Promises” 89). Haraway does not provide a solution to the challenge of direct communication with Nature but she does insist that the creation of a “collective” relationship between humans and the many nonhuman actors is vital to recognizing the subject status of the other beings with whom we share the Earth.

Atwood critiques the contemporary Western culture in which people tend to not only experience nature as a product, but also are more isolated from nature than at any other time in human history. Our tenuous relationship with nature is no less fearful despite our greater understanding of science. Even though science has allowed us to develop technologies that protect us from the imminent dangers of nature such as extreme heat, extreme cold, and virulent viruses that have caused mass death and disfigurement in the past, humankind still finds itself in a contentious relationship with our environment. Through scientific study, humankind has “learned” more about nature, but we have not come any closer to understanding our relationship with nature. Indeed, it can be argued that the divide between nature and humanity which allows humankind to objectify nature has led to the environmental degradation and scientific/technological advancement that threatens humankind in *Oryx and Crake*. Atwood harnesses the masculine ideology of science and representation of nature in order to show its monstrosity and its inability to save the environment that it is destroying. She utilizes female characters to demonstrate the masculine domination of feminine “others” both within nature and within society which she then identifies as monstrous.

Atwood uses Sharon, Jimmy/Snowman's mother, to demonstrate the oppression of ideas and values contrary to the objectives of Compound life. A former Compound scientist, Sharon no longer believes in the goals of Compound science. She alludes to a time when scientific goals were different: "'Don't you remember the way we used to talk, everything we wanted to do? Making life better for people – not just people with money. You [Jimmy/Snowman's father] used to be so...you had ideals then'" (57). Atwood implies that Sharon's scientific values and those of dissidents around the globe are those that could save the environment if an honest dialogue is allowed by the controlling corporations. Sharon's desire to return to science with social values is hindered by the economic and social pressure to conform to the capitalist ideal. Atwood contrast's Sharon with Jimmy/Snowman's father who states that he still has the same ideals but he can no longer financially afford to support them. His own place as a consumer binds him to the grasp of the corporate machine. The juxtaposition of competing values within Jimmy/Snowman's family exposes the larger struggle of the compounds to maintain their ideology of global consumerism. Sharon's eventual execution by the CorpSeCorps illustrates the futility of resistance under the current system. Her plea to Jimmy/Snowman to "*Remember Killer. ...Don't let me down*" (258) manifests a hope that Jimmy/Snowman will choose his mother's ideology over that of the dominant culture. Here, Atwood sets the stage for Jimmy/Snowman to become humanity's redeemer.

Atwood invokes Killer as a representation of human domination and ownership of nature. Killer becomes a symbolic link between Jimmy/Snowman and his mother. When Jimmy/Snowman reads that his mother has taken his pet, his response is "Killer was his! And Killer was a tame animal, she'd be helpless on her own, she wouldn't know how to

fend for herself, everything hungry would tear her into furry black and white pieces” (61). His pain and anger over losing Killer represents the loss and painful growth necessary to allow a shift in human ideology and the relationship to nature. His misplaced fear that Killer cannot protect herself reflects the human ideas that nature needs humankind in order to function properly and that nature is incapable of regulating itself once humanity has manipulated and altered it. These ideas are proven false in the next sentence as Jimmy/Snowman notes that “Killer and the other liberated rakunks must have been able to cope just fine, or how else to account for the annoyingly large population of them now infesting his neck of the woods?” (61). This passage illustrates that nature, even nature altered by humankind, can and will survive without humankind’s “protection” or their existence. Jimmy/Snowman has lost all interest in the creatures now that they have proven to be more than dependant pets. In fact, he describes their existence as “annoying.”

Atwood further contrasts Sharon’s revolutionary strand with Compound values through Ramona who becomes Jimmy/Snowman’s step-mother. Atwood utilizes her character to emphasize the cultural focus on beauty and youth, the treatments created by Compound scientists, and the extents to which humans will go to preserve their youthfulness. Indeed, she is a female character who goes to extreme measures to escape the monstrosity associated with natural aging. The narrator notes that she receives collagen injections and that “[p]retty soon it would be the NooSkins BeauToxique Treatment for her – Wrinkles Paralyzed Forever...plus say in five years, the Fountain of Youth Total Plunge, which rasped off your entire epidermis” (175). The names of the treatments invoke dangerousness and an element of fantasy. “Toxique” resembles the

word “toxic” with an exotic twist on pronunciation. The “Fountain of Youth” invokes the mythical tale of a fantastical elixir that promises everlasting youth. Ramona exemplifies the dangers of pursuing “magical” solutions to human problems. Problems that are not really problems at all, but are merely nature taking its course on the human body.

Atwood also uses her character to present a cynical twist on the ever increasing forays into the science of reproduction. The narrator describes Ramona’s attempts at natural conception as “hormone-sodden, potion-ridden, [and] gel slathered” (250). Again, the language that Atwood uses suggests negative (-sodden, -ridden, and slathered) and fantastical (potion) elements of science. Another important aspect of Ramona’s desire for motherhood is that she wants “to get the best for their money” (250). Parenthood, the desirable parenthood with perfectly engineered children, is no longer a natural condition, but is a scientific commodity. Ramona presents insight into the methods of altering humankind’s experience of nature and the scientific commodification of natural processes.

While Ramona represents the scientific tampering of nature, Oryx’s character represents nature herself. Originating in the poverty stricken and technologically underprivileged third world, Oryx is the antithesis of Jimmy/Snowman and Crake’s privileged Western, scientific culture. Neither the reader, nor Jimmy/Snowman and Crake are certain of Oryx’s identity. Indifferent to experiencing Oryx as a separate entity, Crake is only concerned with how she can further his cause and meet his sexual needs, while Jimmy/Snowman forces several stories together to create a past that she protests is not hers. He makes Oryx into the image he wants her to be. If we read

Jimmy/Snowman and Crake as competing and complimentary representations of Western culture and Oryx as the embodiment of nature, then we can apply Haraway's contention that "the social construction of science and nature ... locates all agency firmly on the side of humanity" ("Promises" 77). Both men's relationships with Oryx exemplify humankind's experience of nature as a threat that must be dominated and humankind's desire to create nature in our image and as a resource to be exploited by technology, thus completely stripping nature/Oryx of her own agency and status as subject.

Crake uses Oryx to seduce Jimmy/Snowman and to spread the BlyssPluss pill around the globe. Atwood utilizes the love triangle to illustrate corporate manipulation through Crake's manipulation of Oryx and Jimmy/Snowman. Danette DiMarco maintains that Crake uses Oryx to control Jimmy/Snowman as he nears the culmination of his plan for the destruction of the world (7). Crake tells Jimmy/Snowman that he vaccinated him against the plague through the "pleeb vaccine" that he used every time he went to the pleeblands to "drown [his] lovesick sorrows" (328). Crake's selection of Oryx is calculated not only to fulfill his own desires but to create a situation in which Jimmy/Snowman becomes a predictable puppet in Crake's twisted play which shows the depth of Crake's inhumanity and thus the inhumanity of corporate capitalism.

Atwood implicates Jimmy/Snowman in Crake's patterns of masculine domination as Jimmy/Snowman attempts to speak for Oryx just as Haraway notes that "[s]cience speaks for nature" ("Promises" 82). He does not use Oryx as blatantly as Crake, but he does attempt to dominate and control her identity. He pieces together her life from instances in which he has felt that he had a connection with her (or a girl/woman who resembles her who was being sexually exploited) and when he believes she needed to be

protected or saved. When he insists that an event was an event in her life she asks him “Jimmy, why do you dream up such things?” (315). He refuses to believe her insistence that she is not the girl he saw on the child-porn site or the girl who was saved from a garage in San Francisco. Only after he insists several times does she relent and agree with him “in a storytelling voice” (316). He creates her image as he wants her to be instead of truly learning about her through the pieces of herself that she offers to share with him. Before the plague he even feels “that her entire past – everything she’d told him – was his own invention” (316). Atwood uses Jimmy/Snowman’s appropriation of Oryx’s identity to symbolize humankind’s appropriation and representation of nature. Just as Jimmy/Snowman creates Oryx with his own expectations of who she is, we create our understanding of nature in ways that suit the interests of humankind and not those of the environment.

Oryx’s identification as the embodiment of nature takes place when Jimmy/Snowman creates her as a nature Goddess for the Crakers. According to Jimmy/Snowman’s mythology, Crake creates the Crakers and Oryx creates animals and language. In his story, Crake builds the Crakers from coral and mangoes, while Oryx lays eggs from which words and animals hatch (96). The differences in their abilities to create reflect the masculine use of technology to create and the natural feminine ability to bring forth new life from the body. Through Jimmy/Snowman’s revision of Genesis Atwood solidifies his inability to relate to the world outside of his previous experiences.

Danette DiMarco maintains that Jimmy/Snowman revises Oryx’s character to create a goddess “whose genuine concern for nature requires that its people give attention to regenerative possibilities” (7). She further concludes that Jimmy/Snowman’s rewriting



of Oryx changes her instrumentality, thus making her an “instrument to maintain others’ well being” (7). While Jimmy/Snowman still interacts with Oryx as an instrument of his storytelling and still tries to control the creation of her identity, Atwood shows that the Crakers begin a new relationship with Oryx through Jimmy/Snowman’s tales. The Crakers, as the speculative “elsewhere” that offers a place for ideological change to occur represent a physical merger of the human and animal, but their mythology builds a relationship with Oryx/Nature within a context of their needs. After protecting a Craker child from a bobkitten by assailing it with rocks, the Craker women ““apologize to Oryx”” and ask that she ““tell her children not to bite [them]”” (157). Atwood illustrates the current masculine dominance of nature through Jimmy/Snowman’s appropriation of Oryx’s identity both pre- and post-apocalypse. She also demonstrates the beginnings of the Craker’s understanding of difference and thus a Craker-animal hierarchy through their violence toward the bobkitten.

Atwood shows that the masculine domination of the feminine, as represented by female characters and Nature, invariably leads to a culture of ownership and commodification. When this culture controls scientific advancement it threatens humanity and the environment. She invokes the West’s treatment of the female and nature as monstrous others in order to critique the monstrousness of post-Industrial-Western culture at the turn of the century. Through their cultural interactions, Atwood’s female characters illustrate the subtle domination that exists within the highly educated world of the Compounds. She exposes the destructive power of global capitalism and the objectification of people and nature as a resource through Jimmy and Crake’s refusal to acknowledge Oryx as a self-determining subject.

## CHAPTER IV

### RE-WRITING THE BODY: GENETIC AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

The genetic rewriting of the human body to create the Crakers is a metaphor for re-constructing the social body which Atwood deems monstrous in its appropriation of the feminine and nature. She explores the possibility of technological manipulation through Crake's plan to change the social, cultural, and economic dynamics that dominate the planet. Crake's plan to reinvent the social body is two-fold. First, he creates the Crakers who represent all that is wrong with humanity in its current state and who offer a scientific solution to those problems. Then, he destroys the old social form, humanity, to make way for his idealized social form. The BlyssPluss Pill is designed to take advantage of the dominant social values, i.e., sex, pleasure, youthfulness, and drug use, to permeate the global market and thus the social system, thereby allowing the virus to destroy all of humanity. Crake designs the Crakers with the intent to bring about a new social structure that, according to his beliefs, will be more successful and less destructive than the old one. Atwood utilizes Crake's embeddedness in his own culture to illustrate the strength of ideologically influenced technology. Ku also maintains that

Crake is a “product of the capitalist machinery” (119) that pervades his culture. Pursuing this idea a bit further, I maintain that Crake unintentionally perpetuates his culture in the Crakers through the traits that he chooses for them, through the traits that he attempts to remove from their DNA, and by leaving Jimmy/Snowman as their caretaker. Therefore, they embody both sameness and otherness and perhaps represent a viable site for social change. Human cultural markers present in the Crakers identify them with the patriarchal, consumerist society responsible for their production, while their genetic fusion of the human and animal represents otherness, thus making them monstrous on two levels. In discussing Rousseau’s *Du Contract social*, Acosta states that Rousseau’s work maintains that “[f]rom a monstrous body politic will emerge only monstrous bodies, individuals whose nature has been corrupted until every trace of their divine origin has been obscured” (3-4). Atwood’s novel hints at the inability of the Crakers to fulfill their divine purpose<sup>4</sup>. Rather than directly show the failure of the Crakers, Atwood ends her novel with two looming possibilities. One future that would have the Crakers peacefully coexisting with their environment for eons to come and another that forces the Crakers to defend themselves, to develop their intelligence, and to finally follow in the footsteps of their creators. Atwood shows that an idealist, like Crake, believes that the ideal can exist in physical reality, but the pragmatist, Jimmy/Snowman, knows that redirecting the human condition is not as easy as gene splicing and beginning with a new model; true change requires labor and communication. Initially, one assumes that the Crakers’ “otherness,” (i.e., non-humanness) situates them as monstrous representations in *Oryx*

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<sup>4</sup> Ku also discusses Crake’s desire to transform humanity through the Crakers, but he stops short of identifying the Crakers themselves as influenced by Crake’s complicit relationship with capitalism. He hints at their failure to fulfill Crake’s plan, but again does not connect this failure to the contamination of their physicality by Crake’s relationship with his culture (124-5).

*and Crake*; however, I argue that the Crakers' monstrosity is their link with humanity's past which will eventually lead them to a similar history. They signify all that humanity values in the modern world and are doomed to repeat what Crake has destroyed.

Though Crake creates the Crakers to replace humanity because he believes that humanity is inherently flawed, the Crakers are Crake's expression of his own humanity, his corruption of knowledge, and his skewed notions of power. Though he does not believe in God, his manipulation of genetic material to create a new sentient life form and his destruction of humanity reflect a strong desire to become godlike. Danette DiMarco notes that

Crake confuses the boundaries of human/divine when he becomes fluent in genetic blueprinting and recklessly uses his knowledge to alter the world according to his own vision or word. Once thought to be a quality of the divine – to create a person outside of natural birth – it now becomes known and measured by man. It is not surprising that Crake envisions himself as divine, the creator of an “elegant” idea like Paradise. And two of his human instruments critical in the tending to Paradise include Jimmy and Oryx. (6)

He does not object when Oryx names the Crakers after him or when she tells the Crakers that he is their creator. The Crakers genetically bear Crake's imprint; their genes are manipulated to reflect both the consumerist and environmentalist cultures which influence Crake. Thus, by modeling Crake's culture as a projection of the possible future of American consumer science, Atwood critiques the ethical and environmental

implications of continued scientific and technological manipulation of the environment through Crake's character. His attempt to right humanity's wrongs is noble, but ultimately fails because his knowledge and understanding are limited to his own experiences of domination. His plan lacks the very noblest of traits with which he endows the Crakers: honesty, communication, care for others, and community. By refusing to embrace and promote these characteristics in himself and other humans, Crake is no better than those he murders. Unfortunately, the flaw in the creator is passed on to the created because while they have these noble traits, they do not have the knowledge or history with which to contextualize the importance of the harmony that Crake creates for them.

Though he tries to rebel against imperfection in humanity, Crake is driven by the cultural values of his time: that everyone wants to be young, beautiful, and to live forever. Just as a child cannot escape the repressed desires and insecurities of the parent, the Crakers cannot escape the catalyst behind their creation. By denying the Crakers the knowledge of their past, Crake has not freed them from the mistakes of their predecessors, instead he has doomed them to repeat the mistakes of humanity, which is evident in their actions during their short time away from the dome. Indeed, Atwood expresses that our greatest advantage as a species is our ability to learn; and instead of learning to create more consumer goods, we need to learn to coexist with our environment and one another, not treat nature and those less powerful as a resource for our desires and monetary gain.

Atwood utilizes Crake's character to show that reason cannot be used to escape the insecurities and fears that a culture awash in marketing propagates in order to sell

products. His condemnation of sex and love is a reaction to the over-commercialization of the perfect human body and the ultimate sensual experience. One of the many technologies being worked on in the novel is a “method of replacing the older epidermis with a fresh one” (55). Jimmy/Snowman’s father explains the advantages of such a product in a commercial market, “What well-to-do and once-young, once-beautiful woman or man, cranked up on hormonal supplements and shot full of vitamins but hampered by the unforgiving mirror, wouldn’t sell their house, their gated retirement villa, their kids, and their soul to get a second kick at the sexual can?” (55). The commercialization of science preys on the insecurities of the aging and no longer “beautiful,” while at the same time perpetuating a desire to be young and beautiful. The Crakers mirror this desire as they are “sound of tooth, smooth of skin. No ripples of fat around their waists, no bulges, no dimpled orange-skin cellulite on their thighs. No body hair, no bushiness. They look like retouched fashion photos, or ads for a high-priced workout program” (100). They fulfill the modern desire for physical perfection and youthful appearance; and because they do not live beyond thirty years of age, they will never experience the decay of aging.

Like humanity, the Crakers are “each one a different skin colour – chocolate, rose, tea, butter, cream, honey” (8), even though the Crakers do not register skin color (305). The diversity of color is not necessary as a protective measure against UV rays since all the Crakers have UV protection regardless of their skin tone, therefore the color diversity of the Crakers exists only on a superficial, aesthetic level. This reflects a stated cultural desire for diversity and globalization which through the Crakers’ sameness in all other things Atwood shows to be only acceptable and desirable if it is homogenously

assimilated within the context of the dominant ideology. Ku proposes that this could lead to racial division and hierarchy among the Crakers (125).

Crake's emphasis on the aesthetics of the physical body reflects a cultural obsession with sexuality and physical sensations. Because Crake is valued for his intelligence, he is not encouraged to participate in pair bonding or emotional attachments of any kind. Atwood illustrates the tortured sexual conflict that consumes Crake because he is surrounded by a culture of sexuality but by virtue of his position at the top of the social hierarchy he is expected to resist the temptations of his culture. He tells Jimmy, "Pair-bonding at this stage is not encouraged ... [w]e're supposed to be focusing on our work" (205). Crake's University provides students with access to sex workers to relieve their physical urges. This conflict translates itself into a rigid and formulaic mating system that he "programs" into the genetic coding of the Crakers. He mathematically decides that females will mate and give birth once every three years. Eliminating lust, love, and biological and social attachments, Crake attempts to make the messiest, most elusive, and intriguing of human interactions cyclical by borrowing physical adaptations from various animals. He maintains that love is "humiliating, because it puts you at a disadvantage, it [gives] the love object too much power. As for sex per se, it [lacks] both challenge and novelty, and [is] on the whole a deeply imperfect solution to the problem of intergenerational genetic transfer" (193). Crake also identifies sex and love as the primary causes of war. War is "misplaced sexual energy" and sex leads to overpopulation which results in "environmental degradation and poor nutrition" creating scarcity of resources and thus aggressive competition for those resources (293). Crake experiences his world as a text to be dissected and logically ordered. He utilizes his

scientific tools to order social and sexual relations in a way that has quantitative and seemingly controllable outcomes.

One of the most volatile issues that Atwood poses for humanity is that we have failed to adapt to environmental changes which are directly linked to our depletion of natural resources. The failure to adapt and to live harmoniously with nature causes political and civil unrest as is evident from the riots and demonstrations that Crake and Jimmy/Snowman watch on television and the Internet. Also, Jimmy/Snowman's mother provides the reader with direct experience with the efforts to resist mass consumerism and human domination and destruction of nature. The letter she leaves for Jimmy/Snowman and his reading of it illustrates the power struggle between the two sides and the blatant disregard for and censorship of the resistance movement by the dominant culture:

*Dear Jimmy, it said. Blah blah blah, suffered with conscience long enough, blah blah, no longer participate in a lifestyle that is not only meaningless in itself but blah blah. She knew that when Jimmy was old enough to consider the implications of blah blah, he would agree with her and understand. She would be in contact with him later, if there was any possibility. Blah blah search will be conducted, inevitably; thus necessary to go into hiding. A decision not taken without much soul-searching and thought and anguish, but blah. (61)*

Atwood provides the reader with enough of the note to deduce that the lifestyle in the Compounds is meaningless, unconscionable, and that any dissent or attempt to break from the lifestyle is met with severe consequences. Sharon's liberation of Killer implies a concern for nature and a desire to restore natural order. Jimmy/Snowman's "blah blah"



reading of the letter is more than teenage angst and dissociation. It illustrates a boredom with and disregard for higher moral values. He only reads one full sentence of her letter; the one in which she informs him that she has taken Killer with her in order to set her free in the wild. His subsequent anger is unleashed only because “Killer was his!” (61). In this scene Atwood juxtaposes the two cultural forces, a desire to liberate and live in harmony with nature and a desire to dominate and commodify nature. Both aspects of Crake’s culture influence the creation of the Crakers; by Crake’s design they are meant to live in harmony with their environment, but Crake also, unknowingly leaves them with a legacy of domination.

The underlying lesson for the young Oryx, Jimmy/Snowman, and Crake in the novel is that one’s personal worth is based on monetary value and in belonging to a monetary system that will protect and provide for one. Jimmy disappoints his father because he is not a “numbers person” which makes him a less valuable commodity in the workplace. Crake is valued and praised for his superior intelligence because this will one day lead to economic and social advantages. Oryx, whose childhood is spent as a commodity in the sex industry believes that “love was undependable, it came and then it went, so it was good to have a money value, because then at least those who wanted to make a profit from you would make sure you were fed enough and not damaged too much” (126). Though not sold by their parents, Jimmy/Snowman and Crake participate in a college selection process similar to an auction system where Universities bid on students. Education is no longer the student’s choice; rather one must attend the institution willing to pay the most for the student. As previously mentioned, Crake’s life is his work; he has no time for socializing, especially once he begins college;

Jimmy/Snowman is his only friend. Such social isolation and denial of enjoyment leads Crake to remove the necessity of work from the Crakers' lives. Crake reasons that work leads to hierarchy and inequality. However, work also leads to ingenuity and the creation of technology. The Crakers are self-sustainable, with minimal "duties." The men urinate around the camp to maintain a protective barrier of scent and the women give birth, all other duties, such as healing and caring for children are held in common between both men and women. Crake endows the Crakers with extremely strong immune systems, UV resistant skin, the ability to heal wounds by purring (a device borrowed from cats) and the ability to process unrefined plant material as food. Without the need to create remedies for disease or to produce and procure food, the Crakers need never be concerned with technological advancement or with territoriality. Thus, their similarities will ensure that no one person's abilities will exceed those of the others; by eliminating difference, Crake believes he has eliminated hierarchy and with it the temptation to take advantage of those who are less valued.

Atwood utilizes Crake's insecurities to amplify social concerns at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. She portrays his technological solution as idyllic and harmonious creatures, the Crakers, but leaves the reader with an ambiguous ending that intimates that true survival requires simultaneous technological and ideological change. Atwood's metaphoric rewriting of the social construct through the rewriting of the Crakers' genetic code expresses a desire to return to a natural state from which humanity was expelled in the Judeo-Christian tradition. By transgressing human and animal genetic boundaries Atwood attempts a physical combination of the human and the natural that could be compared to Haraway's idea of articulation through a "collective relationship."

However, it is the very “productionism” of Crake’s technological attempt that culminates in a representation and reproduction of sameness rather than a concatenation of the many actants involved in a relationship between humanity and nature.

CHAPTER V  
POST-APOCALYPSE: IDEOLOGICAL RE-INSCRIPTION

Just as Sharon desires to change the world created by corporate exploitation of science, Crake wants to disrupt the ideological systems that govern his culture. Unlike Sharon he seeks to undermine the ideological system from the inside. He hopes to remove individuation, knowledge, religion, hierarchy, and the need for law from the human genetic code. He also tries to hardwire social rituals (e.g., mating) into the Crakers' genetic makeup. Louis Althusser's contention that humans are naturally ideological ("Ideology Interpellates" 31) poses the question of whether Crake can truly remove the interpellation of ideology from a creature based on the human model. Atwood's novel illustrates the durability of ideology and the dangers of an unchallenged and singular ideology because the Crakers innocently trust everything that Jimmy/Snowman imparts to them. The full-scale removal of intellect allows for the transmission of the dangerous ideological concepts that Crake tries to remove from the Crakers.

Atwood demonstrates that the capitalist, consumerist, scientific ideological system in *Oryx and Crake* requires change in order for humanity and the environment to survive. Using science, Crake tries to purge the human genetic code of those traits which have led humanity to this particularly perilous time in history instead of trying to engage social change through intellectual dialogue. Crake believes that “[a]ll it takes...is the elimination of one generation” (223) to forever destroy an ideological system or a species. Atwood soon shows that Crake is unable to remove the need for ideology from the Crakers’ genetic makeup. The Crakers represent a failed scientific solution for the social and environmental problems that plague humankind in the twenty-first century. Jimmy/Snowman represents the arts, culture, and religion and is the antithesis of Crake’s goals for humankind. By exaggerating the divide between science and the humanities Atwood emphasizes that science can be a helpful tool to change our circumstances only if there is also an ideological shift in human perceptions and human interaction with one another and with the environment in conjunction with scientific advancement.

Atwood intends for the reader to identify with the character of Jimmy/Snowman. He is an “everyman” figure who guides the reader through the possible future. Though not a title character, *Oryx and Crake* is told through the story of Jimmy/Snowman’s life. Atwood explores Oryx, Crake, their world, and the post-apocalyptic world through his perspective. He is the caretaker of the future, the Crakers, as well as the past, words and the lessons he passes on to the Crakers. Through his character Atwood presents the circular nature of human civilization and history. Danette DiMarco indicates that Jimmy/Snowman “struggles with repeating a cycle of violation and imperialism” through his relationship with grasshoppers and ants which she maintains as an allusion “to

Aesop's fable about the ants and grasshopper, where the investment of time and labor entitles one to possession and use" (9). She situates Jimmy/Snowman in the context of the ant who has earned the right to dominate the grasshoppers by urinating on them. Ku maintains that Jimmy/Snowman's position in the human-animal hierarchy is threatened by the Crakers and the pigoons; and that his position as human actually becomes a monstrous position within the text of the novel (111). While Jimmy/Snowman does become monstrous in contrast to the Crakers, I maintain that his position as a representation of contemporary Western culture and his role in the perpetuation of difference and masculine domination provides the foundation of his monstrosity, not the "humanization" of the Crakers and the pigoons.

Though perhaps threatened by the Crakers and pigoons, Jimmy/Snowman remains a dominating force in the novel by creating the Crakers' mythology; through his myth-making, he successfully re-inscribes the Judeo-Christian basis for human domination of the earth. He explains the chaos as they leave Paradise as a dream that Crake dreams so that the Crakers do not have to. The Crakers feel that "it is sad that he suffers on our behalf" and they "thank him" for his suffering (353). This scene invokes Jesus' suffering for humanity's sins. Jimmy/Snowman places Crake above Oryx in a religious hierarchy because he uses his myth-making to blame Crake for the chaos and destruction through which he and the Crakers must journey. Jimmy/Snowman remains tied to an ideology of domination as he appropriates Crake's identity for his own purposes and in so doing, he begins a tradition of gender distinction and hierarchy within the Craker community. Whenever the Crakers ask a question of Snowman he consults Crake, never Oryx. The

male god “creates” the laws for the Crakers through his male “prophet”

Jimmy/Snowman.

When leaving Paradise, Jimmy/Snowman creates a social order with the tallest men leading and the other men surrounding the women and children in order to protect them. In this regard, he models the idea that women are weaker than men and less able to protect themselves and others. This model also groups the women together with the children, in effect infantilizing them and inscribing their duty to care for the children while the men protect them. Ku notes that “the fact that the Crakers are led by a male ‘Abraham’: can be seen as a crude form of patriarchy or gerontocracy” (125), but fails to note that Jimmy/Snowman recognizes Abraham as the leader and indeed favors interacting with the males over the females. Jimmy/Snowman “can’t always remember their [the females’] names” and often wonders “Eleanor Roosevelt? Empress Josephine?” (157) when speaking to the women. Thus, hierarchy is reborn under the auspices that “Crake had said that this was the proper way” (350). Crake’s power as their creator endows his word with more influence than any decision that Jimmy/Snowman makes on his own, but Jimmy/Snowman remains the active force that teaches the Crakers his ideology.

The Crakers eventually begin creating their own mythologies. They interpret the tornado as a means of transportation that Crake sends to whisk Jimmy/Snowman to the sky to meet with him. They also surmise that since he has been to the sky to meet with Crake that he is now “almost like Crake” (362). Atwood shows that science is unable to remove the human desire for religion and storytelling from the human part of the Crakers. Jimmy/Snowman teaches the Crakers myth-making, but it is their ability to synthesize

what they have learned and to begin their own myth-making that illustrates that culture persists despite Crake's genetic manipulations.

While still in Paradise, the Craker men are taught a sort of ritual marking of territory in order to protect themselves from predators<sup>5</sup>. Crake programs the men's urine with chemicals to ward off large predators and to give the men "something important to do, something that didn't involve childbearing" (155). Crake is so enmeshed in his own culture that he fails to see that he exposes the Crakers to difference, and thus, through his own rationale, to hierarchy through perpetuating a division of labor based on gender.

While Atwood does not endorse gender neutrality, she does suggest that the way in which humanity contextualizes gender difference (truly any difference) is foundational to the construction of ideology. Jimmy/Snowman takes gender divisive rituals a step further by teaching the Crakers religious ritual. He tells the Crakers that Crake decrees that they bring him a fish to eat once a week and that Oryx asks that the bones "be returned to the sea" (101). The fact that the women point to the fish to be killed while the men kill it reinforces a gendered division of labor, domination of nature, and a relationship that posits nature as a resource; thus, while forcing rituals on the Crakers, Jimmy/Snowman also sets the foundation for domination of nature and eventually, through the division of labor and difference, the domination of the female. The male Crakers are introduced to masculine domination by directly participating in violence against nature. Again, Atwood illustrates the need for an ideological approach to social change that embodies more than scientific solutions because as long as the ideology remains the same, true change will not occur.

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<sup>5</sup> Ku asserts that this ritual is "contrary to Crake's original design" (124), but I maintain that this feature illustrates the necessity (in Crake's estimation) of gender distinction. Atwood also uses this instance to illustrate that Nature does still hold dangers for the Crakers to protect themselves against.



The most obvious instance of the Crakers' shift toward dominating their environment is the confrontation with the bobkitten because they act alone without direction from Jimmy/Snowman and apparently through instinct. The Craker child is attacked outside of the Craker territory, in the bobkitten's territory, but the Crakers use violence to protect the child. The Crakers have learned to differentiate themselves from animals and instinctually they deem their survival as more important than the survival of other creatures. Atwood does not suggest that the Crakers would not have naturally learned survival on their own, but it is Jimmy/Snowman who teaches the Crakers violence through the fish ritual.

Indeed, Atwood illustrates that Crake's attempt to use science to remove hierarchy, domination, and religion from the human social construction fails. The monstrosity of the Crakers lies not in their differences from humanity; rather, Atwood displays their similarities in stark contrast to Crake's goals to illuminate the futility of a scientific solution to social problems. Without their own ideological evolution, Crake and Jimmy/Snowman, as representations of the monstrosity of contemporary Western culture are only capable of perpetuating that which they wish to change.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Critics widely agree that Margaret Atwood's writing addresses the social and political conditions of the contemporary world. Her 2003 speculative fiction novel, *Oryx and Crake* profoundly reflects her concerns with the limitations of the West's current capitalist ideology to evolve new ethical boundaries to harness technological advancement for the good of humankind and the environment. Donna Haraway posits science fiction/speculative fiction as an "elsewhere" in which to explore new ways of relating to nature by creating a rupture that forces humanity to experience nature in new and different contexts that return agency and subject status to the natural world. While Atwood critiques the current state of humankind's relationship with nature, her characters fall short of realizing a new relationship with nature that endows both humanity and nature with agency. She opens the door for discourse beginning with the foundations of Western technologic capitalist ideology, through contemporary divisions of science and the arts that leave science beyond ethical guidance, and, finally, into a shockingly plausible and corrupt future that imagines a new beginning for humanity that is

hauntingly familiar, but Jimmy/Snowman and Crake, who are very much products of their post-industrial, technologic, capitalist culture, are unable to cross the boundary of ideological change in order to forge a new relationship with nature. Instead, they reinforce a human/nature and a male/female hierarchy based on domination.

Atwood inverts the gendered hierarchy of Judeo-Christian culture in order to address the responsibility of masculine domination for the current environmental and social degradation throughout the global infrastructure. In a marked departure from her focus on female characters and narrators, Atwood addresses the new millennium with two primary male characters. Her shift to the masculine in this particular novel draws attention to the masculine/feminine binary through which Atwood indicts the history of masculine domination of the feminine as responsible for the current social and environmental problems. Throughout the novel she tries to invert the masculine/feminine hierarchy to posit the feminine in a subject role with active agency, but her male characters fail to realize the potential of the “elsewhere” that she creates because of their embeddedness in a masculine culture of domination.

Atwood begins her narrative at the beginning by rewriting the Genesis myth within the context of a futuristic twenty-first century America. She utilizes biblical allusions to situate her text within the Judeo-Christian tradition which gives man dominion over nature and establishes the man/woman and human/nature hierarchy as the base of Western culture and of her narrative. In contrast to Genesis, humankind’s quest for knowledge is represented by the masculine field of science. With this revision and redistribution of blame for the fall of humanity, Atwood tries to reform the image of the feminine and nature as monstrous by signifying the masculine as monstrous.

Atwood depicts the feminine and nature as monstrous to the masculine through Sharon and Killer's relationship with Jimmy/Snowman. Sharon's desire for freedom and independent thought disrupts the capitalist, scientific ideology of the Compounds. Her liberation of Killer instigates a new relationship with nature that does not view nature as a toy for humanity. After her departure from the Compound, Sharon's position is filled by Ramona who epitomizes the female complicit in her own domination. Her dependence on technology to avert the monstrous signs of aging reinforces the human struggle to dominate natural processes. Atwood successfully shifts the monstrous designation from the feminine to the masculine through Crake and Jimmy/Snowman's appropriation of Oryx's identity. But the Crakers' relationship with Oryx as a nature Goddess is ultimately besmirched by their interpellation to the ideology presented by Jimmy/Snowman which places the Crakers at the center of creation.

The Crakers' physical construction represents a marriage of the human and the animal into a unique, but still man-made, creature. On the surface they appear to be the perfect technological solution to humanity's ever increasing inability to live harmoniously with the natural world, but they serve as a monstrous representation of Crake's fears and desires, and ultimately the fears and desires of contemporary Western culture. As symbolic structures the Crakers have no agency of their own and thus also represent a nature stripped of its agency. As Haraway notes, without active agency for both human and nonhuman a "collective" relationship, and thus survival, will not be realized.

Jimmy/Snowman's role as the Crakers' caretaker places him in a position of responsibility for teaching them to survive in their post-apocalyptic environment. While

some critics view him as humanity's redeemer, he who must suffer for the sins of humanity, and he who holds the key to humanity's salvation, I contend that his character is ideologically stagnant and thus unable to recognize the possibility for change that he represents. Atwood offers no redemption for humanity, only a darkly shaded mirror through which we may experience our own moral corruption through the physical degradation of Jimmy/Snowman's character and through the monstrously perfect image of the Crakers that masks the monstrosity that lurks within the ideology of their male creators. In conclusion, while the Crakers appear to represent a new human harmony with nature, they really embody a site of reproduction of an ideology of masculine domination because of Crake and Jimmy/Snowman's influence on their creation and survival.

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