

“Like Calling God a Studmuffin”: Women’s Relationships with Self and Others  
Within the Commodifying Patriarchy of Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* Trilogy

A Project Submitted to the College of  
Graduate Studies and Research  
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Master of Arts  
In the Department of English  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon

By

Corianne Christine Bracewell

## PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this project in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Postgraduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this project in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised my work or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department or the Dean of the College in which my project work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this project or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my project.

Requests for permission to copy or to make other uses of materials in this project in whole or part should be addressed to:

Head of the English Department  
419 Arts Building, 9 Campus Drive  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5A5 Canada  
OR  
Dean  
College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
University of Saskatchewan  
116 Thorvaldson Building, 110 Science Place  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5C9 Canada

## ABSTRACT

The *MaddAddam* trilogy by Margaret Atwood is a devastating evaluation of its female characters' position and value within their collapsing and commodifying society. Although the trilogy opens with narrative focus on Jimmy, a self-interested and privileged character who grew up in a regulated Compound and who survived the pandemic that wiped out most of humanity, the experiences of Atwood's female characters drive the commentary on devastation outlined by the trilogy. Atwood's focus is not on the impact of a widespread contagious medical plague, but rather on the impact and plague of a patriarchal consumerist society on the valuation of the individual, specifically the individual woman. This paper explores the narrative authority of prominent women within the *MaddAddam* trilogy and their relationships with themselves, their male counterparts, and each other, to determine the novels' representations of the impact of hegemonic systems on individual characters and interactions. Although in the aftermath of this pandemic the overt patriarchal system is dismantled and characters such as Toby and Ren can reconnect with themselves and with those around them, the rebuilding of society after its collapse reaffirms the presence of patriarchal values, suggesting that even when a society such as that explored in the *MaddAddam* trilogy is wiped clean, patriarchal echoes will re-emerge in the rebuilding of a structured collective.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Wendy Roy for her incredible guidance throughout the writing, revising, and submitting process of this paper. In our time working together and workshopping this project, I have learned invaluable lessons regarding my writing and editing processes, and with her guidance have come to appreciate the challenges and successes of graduate work in a new light. Dr. Roy has been a constant source of support and kindness throughout both my undergraduate and graduate studies and has always inspired me to be dedicated and persevere through the challenges faced in academia. Dr. Roy, thank you from the bottom of my heart for believing in me and this project, and for offering endless encouragement throughout my academic career.

Secondly, I would like to thank Dr. Joanne Leow for her role as my second reader. With Dr. Leow's comments and suggestions, I was able to evaluate this project from a different perspective and create a more fleshed out presentation of my ideas. I am truly grateful to have had such a strong second reader to challenge and encourage me. Dr. Leow, thank you for your input and constructive comments, which allowed me to rise to new challenges and strengthen my arguments.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends, whose understanding and faith in my success propelled me through the emotional challenges of graduate work. To my parents for their unwavering support and love during countless nights of stress and self-doubt, my sister for being my constant cheerleader, my academic cohort for coming together as a support system for one another, the professors who guided me throughout my academic career for shaping and strengthening my writing, and the army of friends and family who continually expressed interest in my work and were always ready with words of encouragement: thank you. Only with the incredible support from countless people in my life was this project made possible.

Thank you all.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PERMISSION TO USE</b> .....	i
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	ii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	iii
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	iv
<b>“LIKE CALLING GOD A STU DMUFFIN”: WOMEN’S RELATIONSHIPS WITH SELF AND OTHERS WITHIN THE COMMODIFYING PATRIARCHY OF MARGARET ATWOOD’S <i>MADDADDAM</i> TRILOGY</b> .....	1
Reviewing the Critical Literary Landscape.....	2
Dehumanization and the Suppression of Narrative Voice.....	4
Femininity and the Reclamation of Voice.....	14
Commodification and the Individual.....	16
Patriarchal Cyclicity.....	23
Conclusion.....	29
<b>WORKS CITED</b> .....	32

Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy is an exploration of survival and community, offset by collapsing social and political structures. Throughout the two parallel novels *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and the sequential novel *MaddAddam* (2013), Atwood investigates the influences of a selfish culture of commodification and consumption on her characters and explores how this culture affects their relationships with others and their senses of self. At the beginning of the trilogy is *Oryx and Crake*, the first of Atwood's novels without a female narrator or protagonist and the first not to focus extensively on the experiences of women. However, Atwood sets up the trilogy as an interrogation of the impacts of dominant patriarchal hegemonies on women's abilities and opportunities for self-expression and positive relations with one another. Throughout the *MaddAddam* trilogy, Atwood demonstrates that embedded social norms influence and are influenced by patriarchal constructions of womanhood and woman-to-woman interactions, and that it is only through the complete collapse of a toxic masculine-centered system of commodification that women can reclaim spaces of their own. However, the *MaddAddam* trilogy also maintains a thread of anxiety throughout that in reforming social structures after a collapse, patriarchal influence again can dictate future feminine expression.

The *MaddAddam* trilogy progresses through a series of narrative modes through which Atwood emphasizes the contrast of experiences between her male and female protagonists. In comparing the extremely limited third-person narration of *Oryx and Crake* with the less singularly-focused third- and first-person narration of *The Year of the Flood* and *MaddAddam*, Atwood highlights the societal allowance of male ignorance about women's experiences and demonstrates the impacts of patriarchal societies on women's actions and interactions in private and public spheres. As the first two novels are set in the same time period, their contrast in

narrative gaze highlights the limitations of the self-focused masculine perspective within the first novel. *The Year of the Flood*, alternately, engages with multiple perspectives and groups living in the pre-pandemic, commodifying society, as well the limited social world after the pandemic, and as such presents a wider picture of the same period on which *Oryx and Crake* is so singularly focused. Through this contrast, the narration and narrative power awarded within the *MaddAddam* world becomes party to, if not also responsible for, the recommodification occurring on the fringes of its consciousness.

### Reviewing the Critical Literary Landscape

The *MaddAddam* trilogy has historically been labelled as either science fiction or speculative fiction, setting the tone for all subsequent readings of the text. In an introduction to Atwood's self-proclaimed "exploration of [her] own lifelong relationship with a literary form, or forms, or subforms, both as reader and as writer" (1), she discusses the position of her novels within these genres and settles upon definitions from which to build an understanding of her place within the debates about science fiction and speculative fiction. Atwood writes that "science fiction" involves "things that could not possibly happen" (6) whereas "speculative fiction" engages with "things that really could happen but just hadn't completely happened when the authors wrote the books" (6). These definitions ground Atwood's work in greater traditions of dystopic futurity and feminist criticism. The *MaddAddam* trilogy outlines the base on which the impact of Atwood's dystopian vision depends, that is, the reality of the current situation. Sławomir Kuźnicki determines that "speculative fiction represents an alternative, futuristic vision of the contemporary world" and "tends to drift towards the genre of utopia/dystopia, because it envisions a reality that is always alternative to ours, either more positive or more negative" (16). Together, Atwood and Kuźnicki's definitions of speculative fiction demonstrate

that dystopian elements of the *MaddAddam* trilogy must be both plausible and grounded in a contemporary reality in order to present a sharp criticism of the society in which Atwood is entrenched. Mark Bosco, in an article exploring the apocalyptic imagination, argues that “contemporary dystopian fiction [...] serves to critique actual cultural trends – political, economic, or social – observable in some form in the present situation of the author’s life” (160). Although sanctioned sexual and physical commodification and dehumanization are not prevalent to the same extent in the early twenty-first century as in Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*, echoes of the patriarchal norms and ideals of her time are present in the novel and its sequels, inflated and exaggerated for critical examination.

In addition to exploring issues of science fiction, speculative fiction, and apocalyptic dystopia, Atwood’s work also engages in the feminist politics of these subgenres. Susan Watkins, in her article regarding the apocalypse in women’s fiction, notes a selection of “key ideas” which are common to women’s apocalyptic literature (119). One such idea is a “stress on circularity and repetition, not only in terms of plot, but also in terms of form and narrative structure” (120). Watkins connects this cyclicity to maternal experiences and reproduction, occurring in “both negative and positive ways” (120). This dual approach is evident in Atwood’s trilogy, with the impulse towards reproduction fueling the dystopian form of patriarchy that dominates the novels’ political, social, and sexual landscapes. Nancy Armstrong, in her discussion of the political history of novels, indicates that the “patriarchal model” is a “historical phenomenon that linked the political authority of the father over the household” to that of the society’s rulers (153). The historicity of patriarchy is reproduced in the circular structure of the *MaddAddam* world. In this futuristic, dystopian patriarchy, society returns to the past, into a space wherein basic women’s rights are not yet recognized, and yet also exists in a future time in



which the unprogressive social practice of authority is combined with the complete devaluation of the individual. Sylvia Walby, in her article engaging the concept of *patriarchy*, emphasizes that “at the most abstract level, [patriarchy] exists as a system of social relations” which are predicated on “practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women” (214). Walby argues that male violence is a “routine in the forms that it takes” (225), cyclical as Watkins suggests, and even actively available as a “resource” in a structured system of “lack of state intervention” (225). The patriarchal systems explored in the *MaddAddam* trilogy act as a dystopian manifestation of historical realities and contemporary fears, a return to the past to darken the future. This cyclicity of patriarchy and dystopia is further emphasized by the initial obliteration of structured society in *Oryx and Crake*, the period without society as a period of freedom for the female characters in *The Year of the Flood*, and eventually the return to a structured society with elements of historically established patriarchal regimes in *MaddAddam*. Through this cyclicity of destruction and reconstruction of society, Atwood’s employment of narrative voice indicates the levels of empowerment experienced by her characters within the culturally dictated patriarchy. As the structured society crumbles, characters like Ren and Toby gain narrative voice and power, but in the same cycle as society, the trilogy ends with narrative control returning to male-dominated spaces.

#### Dehumanization and the Suppression of Narrative Voice

As noted, *Oryx and Crake*, the first novel of the trilogy, is not narrated by or from the perspective of a female character, and so the world Atwood builds, at least on the surface, is distanced from feminine expression and experience. Instead, the novel’s third-person narration is focused on Jimmy, also called Snowman, as he tries to survive a post-apocalyptic world in which he believes he is the sole human survivor. *Oryx and Crake* explores Jimmy’s present

surroundings and ruminates on the events of his life that have led him to become a “cross between pedagogue, soothsayer, and benevolent uncle” to the Crakers (*O&C* 7), a genetically spliced group of post-humans designed by Jimmy’s long-time friend and rival, Glenn, also known as Crake. Jimmy is a figure of authority for the Crakers, dubious as the origins of that authority might be. His recollections of his past as filtered through a somewhat distanced narration have an extremely narrow scope; he focuses on the impacts of others on him without dwelling on his role and therein responsibility in the social setting within which he existed before the pandemic. Shari Evans notes in her article on themed spaces and feminist ethics in *Oryx and Crake* that “women shatter Jimmy’s identity” but are “marginalized in the narrative” and only enter it to “interrupt” Jimmy’s experience (52). As Evans argues, “ghostly echoes” (52) of women haunt his memories, and yet Jimmy never pauses to consider his impact, positive or negative, on their lives.

The women characters Jimmy and thus readers encounter are rendered less than complete and become less than human. Although Jimmy’s is not the direct voice of the novel’s narration, he maintains narrative control through his role as storyteller to the Crakers. In taking on this role of storyteller and final authority in their conception of the world, Jimmy actively controls the Crakers’ interactions with the world and their own history, including their connection to their original storyteller and guide, Oryx. The romantic or at least sexual interest of both Crake and Jimmy, Oryx is also the first teacher the Crakers know, and yet after her death Jimmy shapes their memory of her, just as his interaction with her shapes the novel’s limited engagement with her character. Regarding Oryx, “there was Crake’s story about her, and Jimmy’s story about her as well, a more romantic version; and then there was her own story about herself, which was different from both, and not very romantic at all” (*O&C* 114). Jimmy must “piece her together”

(114), as though the story she maintains about herself is not complete. Similarly, with his mother, rather than focus on her version of why she leaves the compound where they live, Jimmy recalls the letter she left in this way: “*Dear Jimmy [...] Blah blah blah, suffered with conscience long enough, blah blah blah*” (61). By this time, Jimmy has constructed a “Righteous Mom” caricature to amuse himself and his classmates (60), overlooking the individual person of his mother, and seeing and relating to her instead as “just a mother. [...] She did what mothers did” (63). Reingard M. Nischik, in his essay on naming in Atwood’s novels, problematically interprets gender as “not a central issue” in *Oryx and Crake*. He argues, instead, that “relationships between gender groups are usually designed on equal terms – if gender is of relevance at all” (124). Though Atwood has moved away from a female perspective in the book’s narration, the distancing and absolute removal of feminine agency and voice in the text is too stark to dismiss as a side-issue within this work of dystopian experimentation. Nischik’s reading of the text demonstrates what Atwood is presenting in Jimmy’s attitudes: that a patriarchal society ignores gendered divides and inequalities to the detriment of female experience and voice.

Throughout Jimmy’s childhood and early adulthood, as related in *Oryx and Crake*, women flicker in and out of Jimmy’s life sporadically and without further narrative development. These women serve as points of contact from which Jimmy learns or discovers something about himself, and yet learns nothing about the women who hold unspoken but critical roles in his life. As Jimmy goes through puberty and becomes enfolded in the patriarchal commodifying mindset, he muses on “girls a lot in the abstract, as it were – girls without heads – and about Wakulla Price with her head on” (*O&C* 59). Jimmy’s imaginings indicate that though he has a fixation on Wakulla, the current object of his desires, most women become nothing more than headless

bodies about which he then begins “having sexy dreams” (59). The image of the headless woman is a direct attack on the social relevance of the female figure, removing the most universally identifying piece of human anatomy. As Valeria Mosca argues in her essay on posthumanism in *Oryx and Crake*, the head is considered the center of “linguistic responses and [...] rational thinking” (46), which “traditionally” (46) defines the human in contrast to the animal. In removing the locus of human consciousness entirely from Jimmy’s conceptions of women, *Oryx and Crake* predicated his encounters with women and the “sexy” fantasies he entertains on the dehumanization of women. Further, the visceral image of the headless woman is echoed in the trilogy’s second novel *The Year of the Flood* in relation to a much more clearly violent and consuming dominant male figure. Before Toby, one of the second novel’s two protagonists, meets the God’s Gardeners environmental religious sect and achieves relative stability in her life, her short-lived job at “Secret Burgers” is punctuated by the terrorizing abuse perpetrated by her boss, Blanco. Blanco is known for his violent and consuming treatment of women as objects and has a tattoo on his back of “an upside-down naked woman whose head was stuck in his ass”; the tattoo not only decapitates her but also depicts her “twined” in chains (*Year* 36). Blanco’s tattoo is an exemplification of the immobilization, suffocation, and figurative beheading suffered by women in the *MaddAddam* world, predicated on the blinding rage and hunger for control of men in power. That is, all men within a culture that permits and encourages the abuse of women through sex and violence, including Jimmy, are party to the damage wrought.

This trend of dehumanization and removal from focus continues for Jimmy in *Oryx and Crake* as he discovers his mother’s disappearance. Evans suggests that the Compounds of Jimmy’s childhood are a “themed space where traditional gender roles are replicated, with his scientist and executive father and his ‘housewife,’ but former top scientist, mother” (53). The

emphasis on gendered roles is exemplified in the replaceable nature of women in the family, as his father's colleague Ramona supplants Jimmy's mother as romantic partner, and through the way that Jimmy is uncertain whom he is "mourning the most[,] his mother, or an altered skunk" (*O&C* 61). The absence of his mother lingers in Jimmy's consciousness as in "some corner of himself he could not quite acknowledge" (67) he wonders about her fate once she has escaped the Compound with information damaging to its system of control, and admits to feeling he had "disappointed her, he'd failed her in some crucial way" (68). The Compound's culture allowed him to go to his father's place of work for lunch and meet Ramona, to get to know his father on some surface level, but Jimmy experiences a disconnect from his mother. Despite being a former scientist and a brilliant woman, she has become "slowed down and deliberate" as she takes on the housewife position (52). Jimmy recalls a conversation in which she had "complained about the tight security at the HelthWyzer gates – the guards [...] liked to strip search people, women especially. They got a kick out of it, she said" (53). Jimmy's mother chafes at the limitations placed on her by this patriarchal society, which values women as housewives and sexual objects to get "a kick out of." She is "like a prisoner" in the compound (53), and both Jimmy and his father are oblivious to her concerns.

As Jimmy grows up and interacts with other women, his experiences of them as mere stepping stones becomes more evident. The passages about Brenda, a figure from Jimmy's childhood, provide an explicit depiction of the male-dominated self-focus with which Jimmy's experiences are rife. In *Oryx and Crake*, Jimmy minimizes Brenda's importance to a two-paragraph experience of reading her diary for his own amusement after having slept with her. Jimmy's description of Brenda is that she was "cute, a gum chewer, [and] sat in front of him in Life Skills class" (231); the most memorable part of his interactions with Brenda is reading her

diary to find “his own name [...] though he hadn’t always liked what he’d found” (231). Jimmy takes Brenda’s self-narration and expression of her experiences for himself, only to find them lacking, and Brenda expects this from him. She writes directly to Jimmy in her journal, telling him that “*just because I fucked you doesn’t mean I like you so STAY OUT!!!*” (231; emphasis in text), indicating that even as she briefly gains a separate voice from Jimmy, Brenda must acknowledge and accept that he claims ownership of her story after he has gotten what he wants from her sexually. Jimmy uses Brenda’s narrative to feed into his own, actively searching through what she has written to fit it into his own story without caring where her story ended up. Jimmy “liked reading girls’ diaries” (230), suggesting that he often engaged in this breach of privacy with purely selfish intentions, aiming to repurpose what girls wrote about him to bolster his own sense of self-worth. In his post-pandemic future, he ignores the reality of the corpse of an unknown woman he has just encountered lying under a “king-sized pink and gold duvet” in what was once her home (230). The dead woman’s identity is merged with the identity of Brenda and the other nameless girls whose drawers he sifted through as a boy. Their individual stories becoming meaningless unless they feed Jimmy’s personal narrative.

Although Wakulla Price, Jimmy’s mother, and Brenda each float in and out of Jimmy’s narrowed focus both in his past and present, perhaps the woman with the most effect on Jimmy is Oryx. Despite being one half of the titular couple in *Oryx and Crake*, Oryx’s interactions with other women and her self-representation are highly moderated through the lens of Jimmy’s patriarchal obsession with controlling her narrative. Oryx is actively romanticized by Jimmy through memory, as he mythologizes her for the Crakers as a deity who “laid two eggs: one full of animals and birds and fish, and the other one full of words” (*O&C* 96). Oryx is made out to be a mother of sorts, but is beyond human error, and therein also beyond human identity. Unlike

Jimmy's mother, Oryx is eternal. Her name is remembered and venerated by both Jimmy and the Crakers, but *like* Jimmy's mother, she is turned into a caricature of goddess-like serenity. The Crakers are not taught who Oryx was; rather, they are taught who Jimmy wanted her to be and continues to imagine her to be. Oryx becomes a figurehead for everything Jimmy has lost and everything he has convinced himself that he once had. Teaching the Crakers that Oryx is a goddess is Jimmy's way of keeping her alive somehow, and yet her depiction remains on Jimmy's terms.

In the Compounds where Jimmy is raised, it is possible to ignore social divides occurring outside of the walls in less-privileged spaces like the pleeblands. However, Jimmy moves beyond ignorance to commodification through extreme pornography websites like the "sex-kiddie sites" (*O&C* 90). Jimmy and Glenn, who later takes the name Crake, focus on inequalities without acknowledging them as such. Both boys grow through their teenage years simultaneously addicted and desensitized to the commodification of female bodies in the culture surrounding them. Atwood writes that "none of those little girls had ever seemed real to Jimmy" on the websites predicated on commodifying and sexualizing the bodies of children, but that Oryx, who "was only about eight, or she looked eight" was "three-dimensional from the start" (*O&C* 90). As "three-dimensional" as Oryx is to Jimmy, he immediately imagines what her voice must be saying in the pornography video in which he first sees her: "*I know what you want*" (91). Later, he prints out an image of her face, to which he clings in a twisted conception of romance or love even after he knows and confronts Oryx about her past. The "Oryx" Jimmy imagines is not three-dimensional; she is a printed screen-capture of a child from a country "where life was cheap and kids were plentiful, and where you could buy anything you wanted" (90), including the ability to engage children for sex. Jimmy describes all three of the young girls

from the video as “frightened” and “crying” (90), and yet deigns to assign thought and motivation to a girl halfway around the world in a horrific situation, and dares to call his conception of her three-dimensional. Although Atwood does not expand further on the slums and sex-sites of Jimmy’s world beyond his engagement with them and their influence on his sexuality and obsession with Oryx, the complete removal of female agency and voice in the greater overview of a culture of pure commodification is a direct example of the dangers of ignoring violent patriarchal control. Jimmy is a cog in the machine of the patriarchal system; he both looks directly past its moral implications and actively engages in the system, demonstrating the parasitic and omnipresent influence of patriarchal regimes.

Despite being sexually involved with both Jimmy and Crake, and despite having been sexually commodified from a very young age, Oryx exercises some agency over the story she tells and the story she assigns to herself. During their time together, Jimmy’s insistence that she agree with his version and his assumptions of her past is constantly undermined by her questions as she turns his “ugly” (*O&C* 144) inquiries back on him: “why do you care?” (117); “Oh Jimmy, you would like it better maybe if we all starved to death?” (119); “What do you think Jimmy?” (138); “if you don’t want to buy that, Jimmy [...] what is it that you would like to buy instead?” (142); and “why do you want to talk about ugly things” (144). Without outright refusing him, Oryx does not allow Jimmy to tell her what her life has been and actively acknowledges his participation and role in the society that has commodified and used her up sexually from childhood. Though Jimmy asks about her life and is determined to create a story for her, it is a *creation*; he wants her narrative to fit that which he has already formed for her. In his essay about *Oryx and Crake*, Sam McBean suggests that Oryx’s resistance to Jimmy’s “attempts to ascribe singular and coherent meaning to her life” is “a challenge to the desires that



underpin his need to hear her story” (151), or more accurately, the story of her in which he believes. Oryx’s refusal to engage deeply with Jimmy regarding her past discomfits him, as she “refuses to attach the meanings to her past that he wants her to” (McBean 157). Ultimately, Jimmy recollects Oryx in a montage of moments throughout her life both with and before him, and wonders “which of these” he ought to fantasize about, and whether there was “only one Oryx, or was she a legion” (308). He thus briefly acknowledges the impossibility of Oryx as everything that he imagines her to be, yet still is determined to fantasize about one of these Oryxes that he has knowingly created for himself.

Although Oryx is most often related to the reader through Jimmy’s flashbacks and small inserted conversations with minimal context, she “highlights how [Jimmy’s] desire to know her might be better understood as being about him” (McBean 158), demonstrating both an understanding of her narrative’s role in Jimmy’s patriarchal paradigm and a refusal to accept that narrative. Oryx’s depiction in the text is entirely a construct of what Jimmy and Crake desire, from her name which is “not even her real name, which he’d never known anyway” (*O&C* 110), to her final appearance dictated by Crake’s needs. Oryx, limp and drugged, is used by Crake to ensure that Jimmy will kill him after the pandemic has spread. Crake utilizes Jimmy’s sexual and romantic obsession with her, orchestrating her final moments alive to suit the direct purpose of antagonizing and exciting Jimmy. Oryx “seemed to be asleep; her face was against Crake’s chest, her long pink-ribboned braid hung down her back” (329), and in this Oryx is reduced to her physical, feminized, and forcibly weakened body, as her end is Crake’s final design. The pink ribbon in Oryx’s hair is a deliberate placement to further incite Jimmy to action, an echo of the “small-boned and exquisite” child the two men first saw on a porn site in their youth, who had “nothing on her but a garland of flowers and a pink hair ribbon” (90). By recasting Oryx as

the child sold into pornography, Crake reasserts in Oryx's final moments that she has only ever been as valuable as her sexuality to both him and Jimmy, and that her personhood has always been overshadowed by the image of a naked eight-year-old girl looking "over her shoulder and right into the eyes of the viewer – right into Jimmy's eyes" (91).

Despite a lack of feminine perspective in *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood actively interrogates and complicates the patriarchal narratives of the women in Jimmy's life. Evans indicates the problematics of the two-dimensional dichotomies represented in Jimmy's portraits of the women around him; they are labelled either "as mother or whore, as unattainable or sexually available" (55), and never with any complications or caveats within these categories. In limiting the women of *Oryx and Crake* to mother or whore, sexually available to Jimmy or not, the worth of these women is based on the potential commodification and usage by Jimmy and not their worth as individual persons. Given the nature of the latter two works in the trilogy, *Oryx and Crake* acts as the epitome of the experiences of an average middle-class man living in a patriarchal dystopia. Jimmy only sees what these structures offer to him and his status: women of lower economic status are sex toys from childhood on, and Compound women are replaceable outlets for amusement, sexual gratification, and decent housewifery when kept in check. *Oryx and Crake* acts as a prelude to *The Year of The Flood* and *MaddAddam*, spending a paragraph or two at most on characters who are fleshed out with individual narratives in the subsequent novels, such as Ren (the renamed Brenda) and her friend and Jimmy's former lover, Amanda. These women are defined within *Oryx and Crake* in their relationship to Jimmy and are flat, two-dimensional characters. Oryx is the only female character with the opportunity to share her narrative voice within *Oryx and Crake*, and yet even that is a construct. Jimmy cannot let Oryx tell her own, true

story, as doing so would be relinquishing his power over her story, her history, and what he seems to hope is her future with him.

#### Femininity and the Reclamation of Voice

While *Oryx and Crake* explores the staunch refusal of the production of feminine narratives, *The Year of the Flood* embraces women's narratives as the center from which the novel radiates. By replacing Jimmy's limited third-person perspective with Toby's, Atwood situates the feminine within *The Year of the Flood* at the same level of self-mastery as the masculine in *Oryx and Crake*, thus deconstructing the set, binary boundaries of the future patriarchal system. Toby is a survivor, and unlike the two-dimensional women of Jimmy's recalled past, *The Year of the Flood* reveals the complexities of Toby's experience and existence beyond her interactions with the men she encounters. Toby's story is not "romantic" (*O&C* 114), like the curated story of Oryx, which Jimmy overwrites in his superficial obsession, but gritty and difficult, reflecting the social world she is trying to endure. Atwood takes this interrogation of narrative voice and authority of storytelling in *The Year of the Flood* further by introducing Ren as an alternating first-person narrator. In direct contrast to *Oryx and Crake*'s narrative style, *The Year of the Flood* reverses the overwhelmingly male-dominated narration and relation of character.

Ren, as the trilogy's first and most prolific first-person narrator, challenges the position of the women of Jimmy's past as objects of sexual desire and outlets of frustration, introducing them as fully capable tellers of their own experiences. Unlike the previously employed third-person narration, Ren's narrative introduces no barrier between her experience and the reader's understanding of it. The immediate effect is to emphasize the complete control Ren holds over her story, as there is no layer of external viewership or imposed language. Ren embodies the

sexual position of women within Jimmy's narrative, but comes alive as a complex character rather than a shadow of a dead woman. Unlike Jimmy, whose survival is framed as a purgatory of sorts in which "everything is so empty" (11), and who takes on a new name as a result of this purgatory, Ren is immediately aware of and adamant about remaining connected to the self she is and has been. Trapped and alone after the pandemic of the "Waterless Flood" (*Year 6*), Ren writes her name "lots of times. *Renrenren*, like a song" (6), to maintain a sense of self. She writes with "an eyebrow pencil, on the wall beside the mirror" in her dual shelter and cell (6), repurposing the paints used to dehumanize her in order to reassert and retain her humanity. Whereas Jimmy presents the women of his world as flat, inactive figures of male desire, Ren destabilizes that categorization both in her initial characterization and through the eventual reveal that she is Brenda, the girl from Jimmy's past. Jimmy recalls Brenda briefly and without depth in *Oryx and Crake*, but now she is grown up and surviving in the new harsh world just as Jimmy is, only without the authority over the Crakers and without the freedom to move in the outside world.

By introducing Toby and Ren as major players in the narrative cycle of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, Atwood directly contrasts their forms of engagement with the world with Jimmy's and demonstrates the failings of any one narrative perspective in a fraught social catastrophe. Ren and Toby, as both women and survivors, negate Jimmy's "authority" as the last man standing and demonstrate the broader experience of post-apocalyptic survival. In assigning narrative control to Toby and Ren in *The Year of the Flood*, Atwood pulls back the hazy curtain of Jimmy's memory to expose the toxicity of the patriarchal society towards which Jimmy is feeling, if anything, nostalgic. *The Year of the Flood* indicates what this dominant culture is like

for the women outside of patriarchal protection and the highly gender-regulated compounds to reveal the underbelly of *Oryx and Crake*'s cracking veneer.

If *Oryx and Crake* can be read as a “ ‘Last Man’ narrative,” Calina Ciobanu suggests that *The Year of the Flood* is a “last women’s narrative that serves as [*Oryx and Crake*’s] counterpoint” (154). *The Year of the Flood* undercuts Jimmy’s authority; his is no longer the only available voice and his story is superseded by others that have the potential for futurity. Ciobanu argues for a complication of the term *Anthropocene*, as the trilogy indicates a future that “will depend not just on situating humankind as one species among many, but on unsettling *mankind*’s primacy in relation to *womankind* as well” (154; emphasis in text). Rather than considering each novel in the trilogy as separated by the literal conflict occurring within it, Ciobanu and arguably Atwood identify the *MaddAddam* trilogy as a gradual exploration of the levels of awareness of characters within such a gendered, failing society, and how one might contend with patriarchal systems and methodologies of thought when that society does fall apart. The Anthropocene becomes more than an issue of humankind’s impact on the environment; it becomes a question of the devastating results of patriarchal power structures as the scientists of this society toy with nature, splice animals into existence, and even play God to the point where Crake designs humankind’s species successors. *The Year of the Flood*, as a last women’s narrative, demonstrates the differences of wants and abilities in this patriarchal society, as Toby and Ren are looking for freedom and safety, while Jimmy and Crake are after glory, sex, and anything they can consume, including women like Toby and Ren.

#### Commodification and the Individual

The memory scenes of *The Year of the Flood* echo the culture that Jimmy implicates but does not condemn in *Oryx and Crake*, with “pleebmobs” (*Year* 33), a ruling capitalist enterprise

morbidly named “CorpSeCorps” (28), human trafficking of “smuggled illegal-alien temporar[ies]” who “got ripped up all the time” (36), extreme fetishist “SeksMart” establishments (295), and more. In this society, women are conditioned to believe in the overarching safety of being protected by men, even if those men are not truly safe for them. In *Oryx and Crake*, Oryx finds safety in “Uncle En” (122), whom she insists “could have done much worse things” (136) even as he actively placed a very young Oryx in the path of pedophiles and potential rapists. She also considers the man who apparently kept her “locked in the garage” a “kind man” who was “rescuing young girls” (316). Without undercutting the validity of Oryx’s few instances of self-narration, the concept of these men somehow helping her by exploiting her sexually from a very young age is extremely disturbing. In an echo of Oryx’s experiences, in *The Year of the Flood* Toby finds herself “protected” through Blanco’s promotion of her at Secret Burgers, and yet that safety is wholly perverted as he tells her that he loves her before threatening to “snap [her] like a twig” if she crosses him (*Year* 37). Ren also demonstrates this mentality of sacrificial sexuality as a substitute for safety: after leaving the relative safety of the “God’s Gardeners” religious cult (15), the “HelthWyzer” compound (64), and the “Martha Graham” campus (229), she sells herself into the SeksMart at “Scales and Tails” (7). Ren’s belief in her safety at Scales, the same establishment where Blanco “ripped up a [...] girl” (36), is founded on her understanding that she, in comparison to the sex workers outside and less-valued workers inside of the corporate SeksMart, is not “a disposable” (282). Ren’s ability to sexually please the men who come to her establishes her worth and safety in this society, and her experiences echo those of Oryx in *Oryx and Crake*. In her time as a sex worker, Oryx is just one of many young women exploited on a pornography site and receives decent enough treatment that she does not condemn it in her conversations with Jimmy. Despite her

treatment, and her assurance that she worked with a website that did not predicate itself on sexualized brutality like other porn sites Jimmy and Crake visit, the sexual exploitation and violence she endures as a child only bolsters conceptions of her disposability, and she is eventually “disposed” of by being kept in someone’s garage (*O&C* 316).

Women within the *MaddAddam* world are made into sexual commodities by the patriarchal systems surrounding them, both in the form of threatening men and internalized misogyny. Oryx is kept as a source of revenue by the men running the pornography site from her childhood; her body is outfitted to look appealing, and her emotions are manipulated as she is acting to the sound of giggles which “must have been recorded, because they weren’t coming from the three girls” in the pornography video (*O&C* 90). Her body, sounds, emotions and name are all manipulated to draw in the consumer, to be commodified. Likewise, Ren’s body is “traded” (*Year* 154); it is her only possession of value and is exchanged repeatedly to ensure her safety within Scales and Tails. In her article on *The Year of the Flood*’s post-apocalypse, J. Brooks Bouson notes that Ren “views herself solely as a sexual commodity” (14). The dehumanization that Ren actively engages in at Scales, where she dresses and acts like an animal for the sexual gratification of her male clients, is emblematic of the removal of human agency from the women of the *MaddAddam* world. However, Bouson argues that Ren does not consciously choose this position. Instead, it is imposed through her upbringing in a patriarchal society that deems that woman are only as safe or as powerful as the men surrounding them. Bouson further suggests that this self-commodification is “postfeminist” (12), which can be best described as “admonitory satire” (14) when applied to Atwood, as there is no indication in either *Oryx and Crake* or *The Year of the Flood* of this society having equalized the sexes, much less reaching a stage where feminist ideals can become obsolete. Yet Atwood toys with the “thin line

[...] between the postfeminist's embrace of her sexuality and the sexist world of the prefeminist past" (15), emphasizing the twisted value system and social processes of the *MaddAddam* trilogy's world. Bouson argues that in focusing on a "passive acceptance of [a] sexist world in which women have become consumable sexualized and eroticized objects, Atwood accentuates her fear, expressed in [...] *Oryx and Crake*, that the recent gains women have made as a result of the feminist movement may be short-lived" (15). Further, Bronwyn Davies in "The Concept of Agency: A Feminist Poststructuralist Analysis," suggests that though "agency" has often been "used interchangeably with such concepts as freedom, autonomy, rationality and moral authority" (42), a complication of the term leads to agency being understood as also "the capacity to recognize that constitution [of the self] and to resist, subvert, and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted" (51). Although Ren may be claiming agency and a postfeminist sexual freedom, she is still operating within the framework designed by the patriarchy to hold her down, and she has not acknowledged let alone subverted the systems in place that have limited her potential to fully engage with her position as a sex-worker and the social climate surrounding the societal valuation of her body.

This commodification of women's sexualities and the way that commodification is internalized and justified demonstrates the patriarchal power over Atwood's characters and how, after the pandemic, that control fades as Toby and Ren seek to remake themselves and their relationships with one another and Amanda. After the Waterless Flood and Ren's re-entering a new world in which patriarchal structures have fallen, she and Toby find a community with the remaining God's Gardeners and "MaddAddamites" (*MaddAddam* 95), a community with burgeoning patriarchal overtones. While the women have initially escaped overt patriarchal values, this return to a semi-structured community draws them back into hegemonic action and



reaction. After Ren reunites with Crozier, a young man also raised within the God's Gardeners and a childhood companion, the two discuss how the "pandemic plague got started" (*Year* 395), and he informs Ren of Crake's involvement in the crisis. Ren immediately thinks of what she knows from her time in Scales: the advertisements for "Blyss-Pluss" (130), the drug which ultimately leads to the spread of Crake's engineered pandemic, the names "Oryx and Crake," the way Crake would make the girls "purr and sing like birds" and more (395), but decides not to tell Crozier as "guys hate to picture other guys doing sex things with you that they want to do themselves" (396). Despite having new information regarding Crake's actions, Ren keeps silent as she acknowledges that her greatest value at this moment is to be sexually desired and claimed by the nearest attractive and "safe" man. Likewise, when Toby reunites with Zeb, the man she has been attracted to and dancing around for years, he immediately belittles her, calling her "babe," which to Ren is "like calling God a studmuffin" (399). Toby has been Ren's guide and strength as they survived the aftermath of the pandemic and the brutality of the violent criminal "Painballers" (399) together, with Toby helping Ren to escape their cruel captivity, and yet as soon as the two women are back within the social world of these men, they are both sexualized and their worth is depreciated.

As the society into which Toby and Ren are thrust in their exodus from the God's Gardeners collapses into a plague-like pandemic, the patriarchal institutions and ideologies that influenced the relationships possible between women also collapse. The friendship between Amanda and Ren, strained by their romantic pasts with Jimmy, is rekindled after the Flood occurs. Despite being physically estranged, Amanda comes to rescue Ren from her imprisonment in the "Sticky Zone" where Ren is quarantined just prior to the pandemic after an incident with a customer at Scales (*Year* 6). Ren returns the sentiment and action in her selfless decision to save

Amanda from the Painballers, violent men who have become even more brutal as a result of their forced participation in a gladiator “game.” As Ren decides to rescue Amanda, she considers “everything [Amanda] did for me” and acknowledges that the jealousy Ren felt over Jimmy “was in no way [Amanda’s] fault” (407). Ren is aware of the expectation from before the plague to compete for the attention of men like Jimmy, and now after the collapse of society, those same contests are made obsolete. Taken out of her societal confinements, Ren acknowledges that there is no reason to be jealous. The joint survival of the women is all that truly matters.

While Bouson’s arguments regarding the pre- and post-feminist dichotomy of Atwood’s trilogy are valuable in working through the imposition of culture on these characters’ abilities to know themselves, she places a great value on the “counter-narrative of sweetness and light” (17) of the God’s Gardeners, which is problematized within Atwood’s text. Toby comes to the Gardeners as an outsider and an adult, and is much more aware of the gendered divide than Ren, who is a child when she joins with her mother. Having experienced sexual torture immediately before joining the religious sect, Toby fights back instinctively when old Mugi, one of the Gardener men, “leapt on” her and “tussled her to the floor, then [fell] heavily on top of her and groped under her denim skirt” (*Year* 103). Despite this gross breach of personal autonomy and the peace preached by the Gardeners, Toby is told by her mentor that she “must forgive him in [her] heart” (104), and that is the end of it. This incident in which Pilar brushes off sexual assault as something not to “make a fuss” over seems to be commonplace for Mugi, and is written off as being “the ancient Australopithicus” coming out in him (104). Despite Mugi being a fully competent, mature, and assumedly developed man, Pilar pardons him on account of his base animal instincts, which is absolutely in line with the socially approved sexual predation occurring outside of the Gardeners’ realm. While the incident with Mugi is isolated, it is not the

only instance in which the Gardeners not only experience but dismiss sexual assault on women. After Burt is arrested by “CorpSeMen” for his “gro-op” (166), rumours begin to spread. Toby makes a wry joke that “at least Burt hadn’t done any choirboy molesting,” and further that any sexual misconduct he may have performed was “just [toward] girls, and just groping” (166), dismissing the severity of the action. Toby readily acknowledges the objectification and sexualisation of young girls within a supposedly safe religious community with the same callousness as people in the pleeblands and compounds regard the child pornography websites in which Oryx once starred, demonstrating that though this group may have separated itself from the most overt commodification and damaging social constructs, it is still affected by the outside hegemony.

Beyond questions of sexual harassment and assault within the Gardener community, heteronormative expectations are placed on the women there, affecting their self-presentation and ability to relate to one another. Toby learns that she must grow her hair long, since “Gardener women all wear [their] hair long” as this is the assumed “aesthetic preference” of God (*Year 46*). This dictate has a “smiling, bossy sanctimoniousness” (46), which Toby notes is “a little too pervasive for [her], especially among the female members of the sect” (46). While Toby is bringing an outsider’s perspective to the limitations and politics of female relationships, the Gardener woman Nuala is also playing this game of power in which one of the women must come out as superior. This tension between women is not only evident in the collision of pleebland and Gardener cultures, but within the Gardener community in varying degrees. Veena, the mother of Ren’s friend Bernice, is in a “Fallow” state of mental illness (80) and yet is roused from being “Veena the Vegetable” (70) to Veena the Vengeful by her jealousy and anger over rumours started by Ren and Amanda that her partner is having an affair. The arrest of Burt and

fury of Veena are explored through Ren's young and naïve perception, coloured by her assumptions regarding Burt and Nuala and the revelation of the "gro-op" (151). It is suggested through Ren's narration that these are the only real contributing factors influencing Veena's actions in calling in the "CorpSeMen" (150), but she later learns that Veena's emergence from her Fallow state is due to Bernice's divulgence of sexual assault at her father's hands. When the girls are in college, Bernice admits that "[h]e used to tell me I was his favourite little girl" and that he "didn't stop at the armpits" when it came to her (289), as he did with the other little girls (80). Toby, too, has dismissed Burt's actions as "just groping" (166), clearly unaware of the extent of his assaults. The sexually repressive and aesthetically focused culture of the God's Gardeners allows Burt to be dismissed as harmless and even undeserving of his fate at the hands of the CorpSeMen. Meanwhile, Veena, who is acting to protect her child, is cast through both Toby's and Ren's perspectives as a vengeful, jealous figure rather than as an avenging, protective mother seeking justice for the wrong done to her daughter. The acceptance and callousness with which both Mugi and Burt's actions are treated emphasize the acceptability of using young women's bodies for sexual gratification, and the pitting of Veena and Nuala against one another demonstrates the impossibility of feminine solidarity within a community that actively opposes women against one another as sexual and political rivals.

### Patriarchal Cyclicity

The collapse of the greater societal structures as a result of the pandemic leaves Ren, Toby, and Amanda without the boundaries of patriarchal control dictating their movements. Without an overlooking power controlling their interactions, these women band together with the greater goal of surviving. Toby's relationship with Ren is a model for the removal of socially constructed internalized misogyny and the jealous tension of younger and older women in

competition. Later in *MaddAddam*, Toby is threatened by Swift Fox as a younger “swooning nubil[e]” in competition for the affections or at least the sexual attentions of Zeb (*MaddAddam* 89), but in *The Year of the Flood* Toby prioritizes Ren’s survival even to the detriment of her own. As she brings Ren into her encampment, Toby muses that Ren “could be a plague carrier, an incubator” and may have already infected Toby (356), but that does not deter the greater goal of nursing her back to health. Though briefly considering putting Ren “out of her misery” (357), Toby acknowledges the need to be better than this. Despite attributing this “unselfishness and sharing” to the teachings of the Gardeners (358), Toby’s selfless choice to help Ren – and later Amanda – stems from a newly emerging human recognition of individual value, including that of women, a concept completely lost in the strictly regimented and highly commodified dystopian society of their past.

The subsequent rescue of Amanda from the Painballers is even more telling of the conflicting values of women post-patriarchy and the rebuilding of a dauntingly familiar community. Ciobanu argues that the decision to go after Amanda, rejected by Zeb and the other male survivors, indicates that “Zeb and the remaining men will set out to reconstruct humankind according to a logic of calculation and accretion – optimization of the lives that ‘count’ over the ones that will not be counted, the ones that have been deemed disposable” (155). This new community is a recreation, on a micro and perhaps less obvious level, of the commodifying culture that has just been wiped out. Just as with the Scalies who were reduced to “membrane” by those who would use them up entirely for pleasure (*Year* 130), the community determines Amanda’s disposability. Ciobanu suggests that it is “the Painballers who hold [Amanda] hostage” who have labelled her as disposable (155), but it is Zeb and the other survivors of the synthetic plague created by Crake who solidify this judgement as they determine that saving

Amanda is not worth the risk to other survivors' safety. The survivors, who believe they are the "heroes," dismiss this young woman as disposable. Further, Zeb claims that "if it was Amanda, she'd decide the same thing" regarding the rescue of another hypothetical girl (399), therein completing the circle and returning to a narrative in which a male figure in a patriarchal system creates the story and appropriates the voice of a voiceless woman. Amanda has said no such thing, and by replacing Amanda's voice with a constructed one, Zeb removes the potential for a more nuanced response that may have been in line with Toby's earlier self-disregard in the face of helping another individual. Zeb also suggests that the intention to rescue Amanda is childlike, treating Ren's concerns "as if [she were] still eleven" rather than a fellow adult survivor (399). Evans suggests that the reality Jimmy lives in during *Oryx and Crake's* flashback sequences is one of "male-dominated science, not narrative" (53), a reality that becomes again apparent for the survivors in *The Year of the Flood* as the group is more concerned with the number of potential surviving Gardeners than the one woman they *know* is experiencing sexual torture.

Despite Ciobanu's insistence that society must "situat[e] humankind" in a way that removes the oppression of women to create a more equalized utopic future (154), Atwood's created world fails to do so and remains dystopic. The period between the beginning of the pandemic and Toby and Ren's reintegration into a re-forming society is relatively short in the context of the trilogy's timeline, and yet acts as a trial period for freer interactions between the women of the text. Toby is faced with Ren's presence and physical weakness after Ren escapes the Painballers and must be nursed back to health, but Ren is not a commodity for Toby to exploit, nor is her worth diminished by her inability to care for herself. Rather, the value of both individuals almost immediately increases as they begin to relate to one another and as the boundaries between their separate interests fade. Similarly, in Ren's reunion with Amanda, the

young women set aside patriarchally dictated tensions and competition for male attention in order to care for one another in community. However, once they become part of a larger group, the survivors return almost immediately to older systems as they attempt to rebuild social structures. While the post-pandemic experiences and joint efforts of Toby, Ren, and Amanda do become equalizing as they care for one another beyond the roles imposed on them by society, re-entering a moderated societal world almost immediately reinstates those roles, jealousies, and ideologies. The small community of the third installment *MaddAddam*, peopled by the surviving MaddAddamites, God's Gardeners, and Crakers, is all that Atwood presents as remaining, with Painballers an outside threat, and the group becomes a microcosm for a new patriarchal society similar to that before the pandemic. As this setting wherein women have the potential to recreate themselves and their relationships is so short-lived, Atwood perhaps provides a commentary on the futility of the elimination of entrenched patriarchal culture. Atwood's three-part narrative returns to the same structured downfall as before. Ciobanu suggests that the end of *The Year of the Flood* and movement into *MaddAddam* indicates the possibility of a "neither man – nor woman – but decidedly post-human world order" in contrast to the first novel and a half of the series (159), but this is not entirely true. While the transition into the third novel suggests that women are no longer wholly irrelevant as they were in the first novel, as a limited focus is still mostly on Toby and Ren, the value of the women in the proto-societal community is their ability to procreate and to follow patriarchal dictates.

In the process of rebuilding the old society and its social norms, Zeb becomes the acting leader of the group, the patriarch, as he is not only the connecting figure among all the survivors, but also a fatherly figure for Ren, Amanda, and the other young ex-Gardeners, who knew him as a teacher and role model. As the group settles into its own new culture, the more dangerous

outings are reserved for the men of the group, while the women focus on keeping the home site running smoothly. Toby relates an instance in which the “gleaner team” is going out to scavenge for supplies in the wreckage of the old cities (*MaddAddam* 149), and Swift Fox demands to go along and get “girl stuff” from an old drugstore (143). The men of the group are less than supportive and warn that the Painballers could “grab” her (144), as though these ex-cons are the bogeyman and she a frightened child. Swift Fox is a MaddAddamite, a genius scientist and survivalist like the others, and yet she is being treated like a delicate child or a lady, who must be coddled and protected. While it is evident that Zeb and the other men are falling back on those highly gendered dichotomies of ability, Swift Fox is also playing on those same ideologies. Swift Fox “lowers her eyelashes” at Zeb and plays to his ego by claiming that she will be “so safe” because he will “be there with me” (144). The return to patriarchal values is threefold with Swift Fox’s interactions regarding the gleaner team, as she is a focal point for the men’s, her own, and Toby’s backslide into patriarchal modes of thought. Toby, who spends a large amount of *The Year of the Flood* as an empowered survivor in the face of many trials, is jealous of and paranoid about Swift Fox’s “lookit-my-legs” clothing and its effect on Toby’s paramour, Zeb (145). As the gleaner team leaves, Toby wants to run after the three men and Swift Fox, and call out that she has “a rifle” and thus is fully capable of being an active member on the team, but does not as there is “no point in that” (150). Toby relinquishes autonomy of place as she stays put in the camp and autonomy of relationship as she allows patriarchal ideology to pit her against Swift Fox.

As the value of woman-to-woman relationships is diminished once again in *MaddAddam*, so is the value placed on women’s lives. While the young Craker boy Blackbeard’s final narration suggests the importance of the “Beloved Three Oryx Mothers” (*MaddAddam* 386) as



he takes on Toby's position as storyteller, the value of the three women is linked inexorably to their ability to procreate. The relinking of women's value to reproduction echoes the dichotomy of mother and whore, and through this dichotomy the value of Toby's life is judged and found lacking. Ciobanu suggests that Toby "gives birth not to a baby but to a book" (161), which she further explores as evidence that writing and the potential for "future readers" are the *MaddAddam* world's hope, but this argument dismisses the problematic nature of Toby's writing and death. Once her stories are written, and Toby is older, her social worth plummets. Although "age isn't the deciding factor" on whether she will have children (*MaddAddam* 91), due to an earlier complication in the process of selling "her eggs on the black market" (*Year* 32), Toby is unable to provide the community with anything that is considered productive or valuable within this dichotomous, patriarchal, normative gendered frame. Further, "Zeb did not return" from a trip after which he is reported dead (*MaddAddam* 389), and so Toby's reasons for living have been fully cut off in the context of this new society. She becomes "shrunkened" (389), and even though Ciobanu suggests that the "post-Anthropocene future" boasts that no "humans, Crakers [or] Pigoons" are disposable (160), Toby still is. In other words, while the value of the "natural" human, the lab-engineered human replacement, or the genetically modified pig-like creatures designed "using cells from individual human donors" to be a source of donor organs (*O&C* 23), ought to be recognized in this future, Toby, as a woman without the direct link to a living man, is not valued in the way she should be. Toby is the main storyteller and is likened to "God" (*MaddAddam* 399) by other survivors, and yet losing her man diminishes her value. She "walk[s] away slowly into the forest" and dies (390). While Blackbeard's writing preserves her memory, her place as a storyteller and writer is taken up by a young, Craker male. The final removal of Toby's agency echoes Oryx's fate. Jimmy replaces Oryx as the Crakers' main source of

knowledge after Crake murders her to achieve his own ends. Both Toby and Oryx are replaced through death, and both women's deaths are instigated or influenced by the whims or deaths of the controlling "safe" men in their lives. While Toby gives up and walks toward death, Crake kills Oryx in cold-blood and decides to set Jimmy up as the Crakers' new keeper. Oryx's male-scripted role has been storyteller and teacher for the Crakers, and she is replaced by Jimmy as the Crakers' new storyteller and guide.

### Conclusion

As the trilogy begins to close on the stories of Jimmy, Toby, Ren and the others, the Crakers are set up as the inheritors of an amalgamated society created from both the Crakers and the survivors' blended customs. The Crakers are, in a way, predicated on their origins of non-traditional creation. Crake, with the help of the other MaddAddamites, designs the Crakers to be without female reproductive power, which is an immediate disjunction and devaluing of traditional female actions. The Crakers instead have a "colour-coded hormonal" signal of readiness to mate (*MaddAddam* 43), which is meant to eliminate "sexual jealousy" (xiii). The introduction of the mating season, however, diminishes the sexual agency of both the Crakers and the human women who encounter them. Female Crakers "smell blue" when their mating season arrives, and select four potential fathers to tend to them, but human women "sometimes" smell blue also (107). In their first interaction, the Crakers accost Ren and Amanda in what Toby refers to as a "major cultural misunderstanding" (13), but is actually a group sexual assault. Amanda, who has just escaped the clutches of the Painballers, has already experienced intense sexual trauma and vulnerability. Ren and Amanda end up pregnant by the Craker men, their ability to choose their sexual partners and potential fathers of their children taken away. Despite the human women demonstrating how harmful these actions are, some women of the new

community adopt the Crakers' mating and reproductive practices. A lab design introduced by Crake as one of his many customizations becomes defining for the coming-together of the humans and the Crakers, and while this eliminates sexual jealousy between the Craker men, it also eliminates sexual agency and shifts the value of the individual women in question. Ren, Amanda, and Swift Fox are "beloved" by the end of the text (*MaddAddam* 386), but as mothers, therein dismissing Swift Fox's genius, Amanda's art and traumatic history, and Ren's tendencies of emotional attachment.

While Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy serves as an exploration of a future beyond commodification and the Anthropocene, the trilogy exemplifies the anxiety that for women, the *Anthropocene* can never really end. A culture cannot truly evade encompassing patriarchal precepts imposed on women as long as men are in dominant positions when structuring society. From the onset of the trilogy, Atwood weaves a world in which the voices and wants of women are silenced and resituated to suit the narratives of the men in control. The trilogy acts as an exploratory progression, from *Oryx and Crake* in which women have no agency or voice whatsoever, to *The Year of the Flood* as female characters are presented with the opportunity to try and build something of their own, and finally into *MaddAddam* wherein the domineering nature of patriarchal norms is reasserted. In this light, the *MaddAddam* trilogy provides a bleak outlook on the future of its characters and the real society from which Atwood is extrapolating their experiences, but Atwood also provides a clear warning about the negative effects of threats to social equality. The concepts of "sex and gender" are not, as Nischik suggests, "neutralized in this world" (122), either in the Craker or human communities. Rather, Atwood is playing the long game to highlight the mirroring of sex and gender relations in the

pre- and post-pandemic structured communities, in order to warn about the potential for a return to a patriarchal, unequal regime as society reconstitutes itself.

## Works Cited

- Armstrong, Nancy. "Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel." *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*, edited by Mary Eagleton, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, pp.151-53.
- Atwood, Margaret. *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*. McClelland and Stewart, 2011.
- . *MaddAddam*. Vintage Canada, 2014.
- . *Oryx and Crake*. Vintage Canada, 2009.
- . *The Year of the Flood*. Vintage Canada, 2010.
- Bosco, Mark. "The Apocalyptic Imagination in *Oryx and Crake*." *Margaret Atwood: The Robber Bride, The Blind Assassin, Oryx and Crake*, edited by J. Brooks Bouson. Continuum, 2010, pp. 156-71.
- Bouson, J. Brooks. "'We're Using Up The Earth. It's Almost Gone': A Return to the Post-Apocalyptic Future in Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2011, pp. 9-26. *SAGE CKRN*, doi: 10.1177/0021989410395430.
- Ciobanu, Calina. "Rewriting the Human at the End of the Anthropocene in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy." *Minnesota Review*, no. 83, 2014, pp.153-62. *Project Muse*, doi: 10.1215/00265667-2782351.
- Davies, Bronwyn. "The Concept of Agency: A Feminist Poststructuralist Analysis." *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, no. 30, 1991, pp. 42-53. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23164525>.
- Evans, Shari. "'Not Unmarked': From Themed Space to a Feminist Ethics of Engagement in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*." *Femspec*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2009, pp. 49-72. *Literature*

Resource Center, URL:

<http://link.galegroup.com.cyber.usask.ca/apps/doc/A340181288/LitRC?> .

Kuźnicki, Sławomir. *Margaret Atwood's Dystopian Fiction: Fire Is Being Eaten*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017.

McBean, Sam. "What Stories Make Worlds, What Worlds Make Stories: Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*." *The SAGE Handbook of Feminist Theory*, Mary Evans, et al., editors, SAGE Publications, 2014, pp. 149-62.

Mosca, Valera. "Crossing Human Boundaries: Apocalypse and Posthumanism in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*." *Other Modernities*, 9, 2013, pp. 38-52. *DOAJ*, doi: 10.13130/2035-7680/2985.

Nischik, Reingard M. "'Nomenclatural Mutations' The Development of Forms of Address and Reference for Female and Male Characters in Atwood's Novels." *Engendering Genre: The Works of Margaret Atwood*. U of Ottawa, 2010, pp. 97-129.

Walby, Sylvia. "Theorising Patriarchy." *Sociology*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1989, pp. 213-34. *JSTOR*, URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42853921>.

Watkins, Susan. "Future Shock: Rewriting the Apocalypse in Contemporary Women's Fiction." *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2012, pp. 119-37. *Routledge*, doi: 10.1080/10436928.2012.676490.