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UTOPIA AND DYSTOPIA INTERTWINED: THE PROBLEM OF ECOLOGY IN
MARGARET ATWOOD'S *ORYX AND CRAKE*, *THE YEAR OF THE FLOOD* AND
MADDADDAM

Mahinur AKŐEHİR UYGUR*

Abstract

The modern mechanization of nature and its reification as a commodity by the Project of Modernity is the main cause of the alarming ecological situation today. With respect to the probable ecological disasters that humanity may possibly face, the ecological threat has become the central discussion among the scientific as well as the literary circles. Among other literary critics and novelists, Margeret Atwood, one of the most acknowledged feminist novelists, also treats this issue in her trilogy, the last book of which has come out very recently. In *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009) and *MaddAddam* (2013) she creates a dystopic narrative that depicts the collapse of civilization, warning her readers as to what might happen if the indifference towards the abuse of nature nature goes on. However, one cannot also help noticing that there is also a utopic aspect to this dystopia which is also depicted as the first step to the healing of the world.

Keywords: Margeret Atwood, MaddAddam, Ecology.

* Celal Bayar University, mahinuraksehir@yahoo.com

"A planet doesn't explode of itself," said drily
The Martian astronomer, gazing off into the air.
"That they were able to do it is proof that highly
Intelligent beings must have been living there."
"Earth" John Hall Wheelock

For a long time, Crake thought. He thought and thought. He told no one about all his thoughts, though he told some of them to Snowman-the-Jimmy and some of them to Zeb and some of them to Pilar and some of them to Oryx.

This is what he thought: The people in the chaos cannot learn. They cannot understand what they are doing to the sea and the sky and the plants and the animals. They cannot understand that they are killing them, and that they will end by killing themselves. And there are so many of them, and each one of them is doing part of the killing, whether they know it or not. And when you tell them to stop, they don't hear you. So there is only one thing left to do. Either most of them must be cleared away while there is still an earth, with trees and flowers and birds and fish and so on, or all must die when there are none of those things left. Because if there are none of those things left, then there will be nothing at all. Not even any people. But shouldn't you give those ones a second chance? he asked himself. No, he answered, because they have had a second chance. They have had many second chances. Now is the time. (Atwood, 2013: 217)

The modern mechanization of nature and its reification as a commodity by the Project of Modernity is the main cause of the alarming ecological situation today. With respect to the probable ecological disasters that humanity may possibly face, the ecological threat has become the central discussion among the scientific as well as the literary circles. Among other literary critics and novelists, Margeret Atwood, one of the most acknowledged feminist novelists, also treats this issue in her trilogy, the last book of which has come out very recently. In *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009) and *MaddAddam* (2013) she creates a dystopic narrative that depicts the collapse of civilization, warning her readers as to what might happen if the indifference towards the abuse of nature nature goes on. However, one cannot also help noticing that there is also a utopic aspect to this dystopia which is also depicted as the first step to the healing of the world. Through these paradoxical representations, Atwood succeeds in making a meticulous criticism of the abuse of nature and possible consequences of it even more striking.

The first book of the trilogy, *Oryx and Crake* begins right after the apocalyptic collapse of civilization. The protagonist of this postapocalyptic world is a survivor named Snowman and he looks after a group of

strange humanoids called Crakers. As the story unfolds, it is revealed that beside Crakers, there are other hybrid animals created as a result of genetic splicing experiments. Going back and forth in time, Atwood shows how the world has come to be this way putting Snowman to the center of the narrative. Issues such as animal abuse disguised as scientific study, a degenerate and corrupt society in which violence is internalized and the reification and abuse of natural resources are among the discussions that are highlighted in the trilogy. It is also revealed that a deadly virus that wipes the civilization off the face of the earth is created by a group of rebels so that the earth would be healed from the malevolence that is justified as civilization. The second novel of the trilogy, *The Year of the Flood* is designed as the background story for *Oryx and Crake*. In the novel, several other versions of the same story are told from three different perspectives and the necessary details that reveal why and how Crake, the creator of the virus, is able to put his plan of destruction into action. A group of people with strong ecological concerns that call themselves Gradeners are also introduced in this novel. These people believe in living according to the laws of nature and reject anything that is artificial. Their eating habits and clothing is determined by a certain code that is totally in terms with nature, they grow their own vegetables, avoid television and computers and they do protests and demonstrations to bring more people to their community. As the plot thickens the reader finds out that Crake is a member of the group and that the group is responsible for the creation and the spreading of the virus that destroy civilization, planned to erase humanity along with its artificiality, hypocrisy and cruelty. They call this event 'the waterless flood' referring to Noah's flood story and hoping that it will be a new beginning, a paradise regained. In the last book of the trilogy, *MaddAddam*, further details of this man-made apocalypse are revealed from the perspective of the operators of the disaster along with its aftermath.

In the trilogy, the destruction of humanity unexpectedly turns out to be the threshold of the rebirth of the earth. In other words, the trilogy begins as a dystopic narrative that depicts the end of history but as Atwood reveals the details of the story, it turns out to be a utopia that narrates the salvation of the earth and the beginning of a better world. Modern man, with his egotistical ambitions, is depicted as a perpetrator and as the worst catastrophe the world has ever seen. It is shockingly implied that humanity must be destroyed in order to save the world. To put it in other terms, Atwood chooses to reverse the conventional notions of good and evil that is typically seen in an apocalyptic novel. Whereas the main task of the hero is to save humanity from the destructive evil force in a

conventional apocalyptic novel, in Atwood's work, the evil force is the humanity itself and the villain to be destroyed for the salvation is man. In this sense, Atwood apparently attributes a utopic aspect to the dystopic destruction of humanity and civilization.

Atwood's main aim in creating such a 'utopic dystopia' is basically to criticize the mechanistic approaches towards nature and to highlight the fact that the modern mindset that evaluates nature on the basis of its functionality should be abandoned. She strongly opposes the separation of the human from nature as a higher entity which is a consequence of the binary of the body and the mind that lies at the heart of the Project of Modernity. Descartes's dualistic philosophy also intensified the hierarchy between the body and the mind by suggesting the mind is the higher and more reliable part of our existence. Descartes "assume[s] that everything that ever entered into [his] mind [i]s no more true than the illusion of [his] dreams" because the senses can be deceitful (Descartes, 2003: 23). Yet, then again it is a given that "it [i]s absolutely essential that the 'I' who thought this should be somewhat" and as he can think, he must exist, at least, as a consciousness. This reasoning led him to his famous phrase, "I think therefore I am" (23). It is this deduction that has led to the perception of the mind as the only reliable and, hence, superior half of human existence. On the grounds that one can think, the existence of the mind can be proven, however the existence of the body, along with the material world, is still in question. With respect to this, he writes: "And then, examining attentively that which I was, I saw that I could conceive that I had no body, and that there was no world nor place where I might be. ... [T]his 'me,' that is to say, the soul by which I am what I am is entirely distinct from the body, and is even more easy to know than is the latter" (23). Apparently Descartes creates an opposition between the body as the shady part of existence and the mind as the reliable source of truth in his *Discourse on Method* causing a hierarchy between these two parties with the mind valued over the body. Thus the mind or the consciousness became the sole medium of true knowledge and any other creature that lacks a consciousness – the body, the material world, nature – of the same kind is reduced to the secondary status. The notion that nature is a lower level of creation because it has no consciousness that we know of, has drifted people away from nature. As Anthony Giddens puts it in *The Consequences of Modernity*, "human beings live in a *created environment*, an environment of action which is, of course, physical but no longer just natural" (Giddens, 1992: 60). Furthermore, the earlier perception of nature as an organic, divine mother is replaced by the perception of nature as a machine designed to serve human beings. As Greg Garrard suggests,

Descartes hyperseparated mind and body, and v^b denied to animals not only the faculty of reason, but the whole range of feelings and sensations that he had associated with thought. As a result, he saw animals [i.e. nature] as radically different from, and inferior to, humans. They were bodies without minds, effectively machines. (Garrard, 2004: 25)

In other words, his philosophy has degraded the position of nature from divinity, to a mere material existence. The reification of nature is followed by commodification and as Descartes suggests, through reason and rational thinking modern people have become the "masters and possessors of nature" (Descartes, 2003: 49).

Descartes' materialization of nature was also reinforced by other enlightenment philosophers such as Francis Bacon who valued knowledge as a priceless source of power. Furthermore, Bacon suggests that if it is motivated to enhance man's power over nature, the ambition for power can even be seen as a noble urge. As he suggests in *Novum Organum*, there are three versions of ambition.

First, that of men who are anxious to enlarge their power in their country, which is vulgar and degenerate kind; next, that of men who strive to enlarge the power and empire of their country over mankind, which is more dignified but not less covetous; but if one were to endeavour to renew and enlarge the power and empire of mankind in general over the universe such ambition (if it may be so termed) is both sound and more noble than the other two. (Bacon, 1911: 129)

Obviously, the ambition to gain power over nature – or the universe as Bacon refers to it – and to materialize it for the benefit of humanity is acknowledged as the soundest and the noblest of human ambitions which has opened a way to justify the ransacking of the natural sources. What's more, the pragmatic attitude towards the earth is not only supported by the modern philosophy but also by the Christian doctrine, according to Lynn White:

Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions (except, perhaps, Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends [...] By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects [...] To a Christian a tree can be no more than a physical fact. The whole concept of the sacred grove is alien to Christianity and to the ethos of the West. (White, 1996: 10-12)

Therefore, in Atwood's words, the motto of the world has come to be this: "Nature is to zoos as God is to churches" (Atwood, 2003: 242).

Atwood reflects the problem of modern separation of the body and the mind on the two main characters in her novels. Crake is the mind in this binary and in Oryx's words, he "lives in a higher world. He lives in a world of ideas [...] He has no time to play" (368). His world is one of pure intellect which is enforced by the authorities. Even dating is not allowed at Crake's school because they are

supposed to be focusing on [their] work [...] If you really need to, you can arrange that kind of thing through Student Services [...] They deduct the price from your scholarship, same as room and board. The workers come in from the pleeblands, they're trained professionals [...] You can get any colour, any age— well, almost. Any body type. They provide everything. (243-4)

Jimmy, or the Snowman, is a representative of the body, on the other hand. As opposed to Crake, he loses himself in empty sex which is a reflection of his dissatisfaction with his life (294). He does not like his life, he does not like his job, he is not capable of love and he lives in this unbearable sense of emptiness. They are the two halves of a split identity like schizophrenic halves such as Jekyll and Hyde. It is obviously highlighted that as split selves they are both dysfunctional and they bring the end of the world, one by being over-analytical and cold and the other by his intellectual ignorance.

Atwood's trilogy basically treats the possible catastrophic consequences of the modern materialization of the mother earth through the depiction of a kind of future existence which obviously has strong parallelisms to our present world. In other words, the novels are designed to look like futuristic texts but the scientific and cultural details suggest that the world before the virus, beyond doubt, refers to the present situation of the world which is corrupt, unjust, and cruel. The central characters of the trilogy, Jimmy and Crake grow up playing computer games full of bloodbath, watching online surgeries, animals being tortured, executions, suicides, etc. (93-5). Pornography as a sort of violence is very widespread and especially child pornography is very popular on the internet and it is available for everybody. Oryx is one of the unfortunate little girls who is abused, enslaved and dehumanized by the sex industry with no free will, no other options, no way out of this glass prison. Members of this society are depicted as image freaks who would do anything to satisfy their obsessions to look younger and sexier: "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" (62)? People sell their bodies, eggs and hair because in this world everything has a financial value and trading things is at the center of this cycle. In such a commercialized value system, consumerism becomes the most common addiction among the people of this society.

Animal slaughter becomes a means to satisfy people's appetite for luxury and endangered species are secretly slaughtered for their fur and meat (Atwood, 2009: 25). What's more, the animals are being violated not only by being slaughtered illegally but also by being genetically spliced legally. Jimmy's father, who works as an expert on creating genetically altered animals, perceives them as combinations of proteins and he feels no regret about locking them up for life, playing with their nature and torturing them for the sake of humanity. He works on a project, called the pigeon project that aims to create pigs that can produce and reproduce human organs "that would transplant smoothly and avoid rejection, but would also be able to fend off attacks by opportunistic microbes and viruses," and that would be used as organ banks for people (Atwood, 2003: 25). The animals are objectified and reduced to their functionalities within the project in which "large bulblike" chickens without the unnecessary parts such as eyes or a beak are reduced to mere protein resources (238). Bees, on the other hand, are inserted with micro-mechanical systems, to be used as spies against the opposers of the system: "a bee cyborg spy controllable by a CorpSeCorps operator, equipped to transmit, and thus to betray" (Atwood, 2009: 162). Being the subjects of this socially accepted project of violence, the animals are seen as the are "only like pictures, they [a]ren't real and ha[ve] no feelings" (18).

Representing this Cartesian attitude towards nature, Jimmy's father imposes a strictly scientific, analytical and materialistic approach towards animals, whereas Jimmy's mother functions as the opposing ideology arguing that the project is "another way to rip off a bunch of desperate people" and that his father is "interfering with the building blocks of life" (64). As stressed by Jimmy's mother, genetic splicing is not only a torture to the animals but also a great threat to the balance of nature. Bobcats for instance are genetically altered cats that are introduced to the wild as a means of controlling the population of feral cats. However, the bobkitten population eventually grew too large and they began attacking family dogs. Beside bobkittens, wolvoogs, friendly looking fierce dogs, and pigeons, pigs with human brains, pose a great threat too. After the virus, all the genetically altered animals become loose and the real apocalypse begins. Jimmy becomes a prey

to the pigeons that he pitied as a child. He realizes that pigeons are clever enough to bait him with his own bag (319). They have human brains after all, so people have created their worst enemies: predators with human brains, a mirror image of themselves.

The materialization of the animals is accompanied by the commodification of people by the marketing strategies of the pharmaceutical companies. These companies, which are supposed to create cures, create the diseases so that they can have an enemy to fight with. As revealed in *MaddAddam*, they use

their vitamin supplement pills and over-the-counter painkillers as vectors for diseases – ones for which they control the drug treatments. Whatever’s in the white ones is in actual deployment. Random distribution, so no one will suspect a specific location of being ground zero. They make money all ways: on the vitamins, then on the drugs, and finally on the hospitalization when the illness takes firm hold. As it does, because the treatment drugs are loaded too. A very good plan for siphoning the victims’ money into Corps pockets. (Atwood, 2013: 191)

They invent diseases, the cure of which can only be produced by themselves. The more diseases they create, the more money they make. “The best diseases, from a business point of view [...] would be those that cause lingering illnesses. Ideally— that is, for maximum profit— the patient should either get well or die just before all of his or her money runs out. It’s a fine calculation” (Atwood, 2009: 248). So the basic aim is to create the illness and to fail to cure it until the victim is financially drained. However, as a result of Crake’s master plan, the whole system is ironically destroyed by the very same weapon. This time the disease is created not to rob people off their resources but to heal the world, to stop war, rape, crime, hunger, and greed that are raging the world. The way Crake spreads the virus is also extremely ironic. He inserts the virus in the BlyssPlus Pill, a kind of medicine that is advertised as capable of protecting from STDs, improving sexual power and enabling to stay young at the same time (346). Crake tells Jimmy that there is also a secret feature and that it is also a birth control pill. Taking it literally, Jimmy objects the idea “to sterilize people without them knowing it under the guise of giving them the ultra in orgies” (347). He realizes the dark humor in Crake’s words only after the virus is spreaded when he realizes that what Crake symbolically calls birth control is indeed the destruction of humanity which can be seen as an extreme version of birth control anyway.

Humanity is portrayed as “a sort of monster, its main by products being corpses and rubble” (285). Incapable of learning from their mistakes, people keep destroying the world for their own benefits, “trading

short-term gain for long-term pain” (285). As Atwood puts it, the human society “was like a giant slug eating its way relentlessly through all the other bioforms on the planet, grinding up life on earth and shitting it out backside in the form of pieces of manufactured and soon-to-be-obsolete plastic junk” (285). People become so greedy and addicted to consume that they do not even realize that it will bring the end of the world: “The tide of human desire, the desire for more and better, would overwhelm them. It would take control and drive events, as it had in every large change throughout history” (349). Atwood highlights the failure of modernity and the modern man through the representation of such a world. She outlines the “Fall of Man” which she claims to be “multidimensional” (115). There is an ongoing fall concerning humanity according to her.

The ancestral primates fell out of the trees; then they fell from vegetarianism into meat-eating. Then they fell from instinct into reason, and thus into technology; from simple signals into complex grammar, and thus into humanity; from firelessness into fire, and thence into weaponry; and from seasonal mating into an incessant sexual twitching. Then they fell from a joyous life in the moment into the anxious contemplation of the vanished past and the distant future. The Fall was ongoing, but its trajectory led ever downward. Sucked into the well of knowledge, you could only plummet, learning more and more, but not getting any happier. (115)

Obviously the dystopic mood of the story does not originate from the catastrophe created by the virus. This world is, without doubt, already a dystopia and as Atwood suggests “[e]xecutions were its tragedies, pornography was its romance” (Atwood, 2003: 98). Atwood laments the wasting of the Earth through this continuous fall and strongly opposes what Martin Amis calls “toiletization of the planet” (Deitering, 1996: 196). Harold Fromm, similarly, considers the situation as a contemporary Faust legend. He suggests that while in the early days humanity had no power over nature, they have come master it by the use of technology and have put it in a cage. They have put nature in plastic bags and turned it into a commodity that could be sold in supermarkets. According to Fromm, people are not aware that they are consuming the earth and toxicating it as well by the mass of waste they create. He proposes that “man has failed to see that now, as in the past, the roots of his being are in the earth” (Fromm, 1996: 35). Just like Faust, modern people have failed to see that they are digging their own graves for short term profit until nature starts to respond to the raiding of the earth. Rising of the sea-level, washing-away of the beaches,

tidal waves, going off of the volcanos, hurricanes, floods, drying-up of the orchards, shrinking of the lakes into mud puddles are only some of these responses.

In the novels, the struggle against the consumption of the earth is led by the Gardeners who are brave and dedicated enough to stand up against this materialistic, oppressive and hypocritical society. They are also a paravan community that shelters a group of radicals that call themselves MaddAddam of which Crake is also a member and who are responsible for various acts of terror and aim to destroy the entire system (Atwood, 2003: 254). They are the ones who spread the virus that they call the waterless flood. Crake, along with the other members of MaddAddam, plans the destruction and rebirth of the world meticulously. Upon this point a crucial question occurs in the novel: "Had he been a lunatic or an intellectually honourable man who'd thought things through their logical conclusion? And was there any difference" (401)? Gardeners are good and respectable people who know how to 'let things be.' They create a belief system of their own that depends on the equality of everything that exists on the planet. They establish a life for themselves at a rooftop which used to be "a sizzling wasteland, hemmed in by festering city slums and dens of wickedness; but now it has blossomed as the rose" (Atwood, 2009: 14). They try to spare themselves from the artifice and corruption of the world, living close to nature, and leaving the egotistic temptations of the modern world behind. They break the modern notion regarding man to be "the measure of all things" (30). The leaders of the group preach their beliefs to the new comers and they prepare themselves for the upcoming waterless flood.

A massive die-off of the human race was impending, due to overpopulation and wickedness, but the Gardeners exempted themselves: they intended to float above the Waterless Flood, with the aid of the food they were stashing away in the hidden storeplaces they called Ararats. As for the flotation devices in which they would ride out this flood, they themselves would be their own Arks, stored with their own collections of inner animals, or at least the names of those animals. Thus they would survive to replenish the Earth. Or something like that. (34-5)

Their story is very similar to the story of Noah but rather than giving the leadership to a single person they prefer to see themselves as "plural Noahs" (60). Unlike the original flood story, the gardeners are the ones that trigger the collapse. They collapse the civilization ironically using its own tools and their aim is to rebuild it from its ashes.

The rebuilding actually starts far before the waterless flood with the creation of Crakers. These humanoids are created by Crake as a replacement for humanity, a more peaceful replica of human kind. They look like human beings but they are devoid of constructed notions such as race and gender, and they are designed to live peacefully without any hierarchical sorting. They are designed to lead a maximum quality of life with minimum harm to nature. Genetically, they are given some traits that Crake thought would protect them from being contaminated like human kind. Some of these traits are an inability to read, a lack of interest in art, a lack of desire to worship a higher being, and an ignorance of death. They are all beautiful and there are four types of all colours of them. They grow rapidly and die at 30. They experience no old age, no disease and no fear of especially death. "Gone were its destructive features, the features responsible for the world's current illnesses" (Atwood, 2003: 358). They have no notion of violence, racism, hierarchy, hunting, family, marriage, houses, weapons, clothes or money; they feed on leaves and grass, they do not change nature, but rather adjust. They are Crake's utopia babies.

What is a scar, Oh Toby? That would be the next question. Then she'd have to explain what a scar is. *A scar is like writing on your body. It tells about something that once happened to you, such as a cut on your skin where blood came out. What is writing, Oh Toby? Writing is when you make marks on a piece of paper – on a stone – on a flat surface, like the sand on the beach, and each of the marks means a sound, and the sounds joined together mean a word, and the words joined together mean ... How do you make this writing, Oh Toby? You make it with a keyboard, or no – once you made it with a pen or a pencil, a pencil is a ... Or you make it with a stick. Oh Toby, I do not understand. You make a mark with a stick on your skin, you cut your skin open and then it is a scar, and that scar turns into a voice? It speaks, it tells us things? Oh Toby, can we hear what the scar says? Show us how to make these scars that talk!* (Atwood, 2013: 75-6)

After the flood the Crakers are released to nature under the guidance of Jimmy, or the Snowman. They know nothing about how the world used to be and the Snowman comes to be their only source of information concerning the old world and their origin. He makes up stories to ease the curiosity of Crakers and at that point he starts creating stories and myths about the world, Crake and how they have come into being (Atwood, 2003: 9). He tells them that in the beginning everything was chaos, that people killed one another without regard, that they also killed and ate the Children of Oryx, the animals and that Crake has corrected the world. He tells them how Crake was not

born but descended from the clouds and how he suffered so that they would not have to (118-121, 411). In the last novel of the trilogy, *MaddAddam*, this duty is taken over by Toby and she tells them how they were born out of an egg made by Crake, how the egg was surrounded by the chaos, how the people with extra skins (clothes) were doing terrible things to each other outside the egg, how the egg bore the hope for a peaceful life and how Crake decided to get rid of the chaos to make Oryx happy (Atwood, 2013: 14). The story telling has two main functions in the novels, regardless of who tells it. The first one is the typical post-modern implication of the constructed nature of reality which suggests that “[t]here’s the story, then there’s the real story, then there’s the story of how the story came to be told. Then there’s what you leave out of the story. Which is part of the story too” (51). The second and the more striking one is the Promethean allusion. Both narrators function like Prometheus figures whose duty is to give Crakers the knowledge of life. However, this time the narrators are hesitant about giving the knowledge of the old world to the Crakers and they tell them the truth partially because they are afraid that the truth might contaminate them. Just like the gardeners, Snowman thinks that “they’re not dangerous — it’s us that’s dangerous to them” (Atwood, 2009: 232). In this sense Atwood rewrites the myth of Prometheus through the myth-making motif.

Although, Crakers seems to be quite ideal and utopic at first sight, Atwood lays bare that Crakers are not the answer the world is looking for. Crake creates the Crakers with a disregard to worship a higher being, but ironically he eventually becomes a god-like figure himself. The parts of the human psyche that Crake attempts to edit out are inextricable parts of humanity which proves Crake’s hypotheses to be wrong. No matter how strict precautions might be taken, they still long for a story that would make them explain themselves and the world, and even some of them stand out as leaders like Abraham Lincoln: “He’s getting to be a bit of a leader, that one. Watch out for leaders, Crake used to say. First the leaders and the led, then the tyrants and the slaves, then the massacres. That’s how it’s always gone” (Atwood, 2003: 184). Snowman also realizes that Crakers start to perform rituals, as well. On his way to the Crakers’ settlement, he hears strange noises. He gets closer and realizes that the Crakers are chanting in a circle with a kind of idol in the middle (418-9). Besides Toby unknowingly teaches one of the Crakers, the Blackbeard how to write:

Later – after it’s rained, after the rain has stopped – she finds him at the sandbox. He has a stick, and the paper. There’s his name in the sand. The other children are watching him. All of them are singing. Now what have I done?

she thinks. What can of worms have I opened? They’re so quick, these children: they’ll pick this up and transmit it to all the others. What comes next? Rules, dogmas, laws? The Testament of Crake? How soon before there are ancient texts they feel they have to obey but have forgotten how to interpret? Have I ruined them?” (Atwood, 2013: 157)

Atwood suggests here that no matter how hard Crake tries to erase some tendencies that are human, he is doomed to fail and that there are parts of us that are inextricable such as artistic expression, story-telling and communicating these which becomes precise as Blackbeard, one of the Crakers, take over the story at the end of the last novel of the trilogy (264). Apparently, Atwood argues that the solution Crake offers for a new beginning is also problematic because his creations are far from being natural, as well. She does not approve of the world being ransacked, but she does not approve of humanity’s being replaced by some artificial humanoid society, as well. She seems to suggest that people should rather learn to let things be. What Crake does is to replace selfish, hypocritical, opportunist, money-oriented people with a “bunch of hormone robots” (196). In this respect, Atwood makes sure that none of the options is the solution. Not the Crakers but the remaining gardeners should be read as the future of the world, according to Atwood.

Although the destruction of the civilization is narrated in a tragic tone, Atwood also gives the reader hints of optimism about the possibility of a better world as a result of this destruction. She uses the concept of destruction as a striking metaphor for the need for a new beginning. *The Year of the Flood*, for instance, begins with a poem named “Garden” which refers to the Garden of Eden or the untouched uncontaminated nature. The poem laments the loss of a garden that was so green and “was once the finest Garden/ That ever has been seen” (Atwood, 2009: 7). It was a peaceful ground for creatures until “came greedy Spoilers,/ And killed them all away” (7). Everything beautiful in this garden “By waves of sand are buried,/ Both leaf and branch and root./ And all the shining Water/ Is turned to slime and mire, / And all the feathered Birds so bright/ Have ceased their joyful choir” (7). Apparently the poem laments the loss of the earth and to recover it man must go. Thus, there is something utopic within the dystopic destruction of humanity. In this sense, it is not a coincidence that after the apocalypse, Atwood displays the hints of nature healing itself. The sound of the ocean, the view of the sunrise, and the beauties of nature are described in so beautifully to indicate the optimism that the nature still has the power to regenerate itself if it is let be. This notion that Atwood tries to evoke is particularly obvious in the depiction of nature as

reoccupying the urban areas: "Some kind of vine is growing everywhere draping the windowsills, climbing in through the broken windows and up the bars and grillwork. Soon this district will be thick tangle of vegetation [...] It won't be long before all visible traces of human habitation will be gone" (Atwood, 2003: 260). Apparently the old world is gone, but it is replaced with a much better one. "The abandoned towers in the distance are like the coral of an ancient reef — bleached and colourless, devoid of life. There still is life, however. Birds chirp; sparrows, they must be. Their small voices are clear and sharp, nails on glass: there's no longer any sound of traffic to drown them out" (Atwood, 2009: 9). Through these depictions of the rebirth of nature the dystopia turns out to be a utopia.

This trilogy is a reflection of Atwoods concerns about the possible environmental disasters that humanity might possibly encounter. In her novels, she basically questions the position and responsibility of humanity concerning the present situation of the earth. She asks:

Do we deserve this Love by which God maintains our Cosmos? Do we deserve it as a Species? We have taken the World given to us and carelessly destroyed its fabric and its Creatures. Other religions have taught that this World is to be rolled up like a scroll and burnt to nothingness, and that a new Heaven and a new Earth will then appear. But why would God give us another Earth when we have mistreated this one so badly? No, my Friends. It is not this Earth that is to be demolished: it is the Human Species. Perhaps God will create another, more compassionate race to take our place. (247)

By attributing a utopic aspect to the dystopic destruction of humanity, she aims to make her readers question themselves, their actions and their responsibilities towards their environment. She makes her readers stop and think by presenting them a scenario in which a disaster for humanity can become a utopia for the rest of the world. What is to be done, then. What Greg Garrard offers is "to let things disclose themselves in their own inimitable way, rather than forcing them into meanings and identities that suit their own instrumental values" (31). Rather than identifying and placing the material world due to its validity determined by the consciousness, consuming or abusing it, "we must let things be" (47). Obviously, this is what Atwood also intends to communicate to her readers. According to her, we must let things be because the world is definitely not merely a mechanism that operates for the 'progress' of humanity and every single organism in nature has value regardless of its use for humans. Although her way of letting things be is somehow extreme as narrated in her novels, by depicting the destruction of humanity

as the only possible way to let things be, she aims to indicate the gravity of the current ecological situation.

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