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Power, Pain, and Manipulation in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*

Abstract
The paper deals with motifs of power, pain and manipulation in Margaret Atwood's speculative fiction novels *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and *The Year of the Flood* (2009). The conflict of the real and the fictional, the real and the virtual, resulting in emotional death, is the main topic of the paper. This aspect is discussed from the perspective suggested in Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulations* (1994). In her two books, Atwood concentrates on the speculative and experimental aspects of the genre of speculative fiction (SF) to respond to contemporary situations of political, ecological and cultural crisis.

Key words
Margaret Atwood; power; pain; manipulation; victimization; Jean Baudrillard

1. Introduction

The apocalyptic "flood" of Margaret Atwood's third speculative fiction novel *The Year of the Flood* (2009) is a waterless one.[1] A virus, engineered by the scientist Crake[2], has killed all but a few people within several weeks. The victims of the pandemic melt into blood "froth" (OC 177), "blood hand lotion" (YF 323) and "pink sorbet" (OC 253), as Atwood puts it with her typical black humour. *The Year of the Flood* is neither a sequel nor a prequel to *Oryx and Crake* but the background story, or, in Atwood's coinage – a 'simultaneouel'[3]: the characters, themes, settings and events overlap. The novel includes elements of science fiction, speculative fiction, cyberpunk, alternate history, dystopia, futuristic thriller,

black farce and fantasy; but behind the black humour and enthralling story are very real issues of our 'real' world today: global warming, genetic engineering, dwindling resources, endangered species, sexploitation and an erosion of compassion and families.[4] The conflict of the real and the fictional, the real and the virtual, resulting in emotional death, is the main topic of the paper. This aspect is analysed from the theoretical perspective suggested in Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulations*. The relevance of Baudrillard's concept in interpretation of Atwood's speculative fiction is first discussed by Corall Ann Howells in *Margaret Atwood.* Howells suggests that in "Atwood's satirical vision of a world where everything is a reproduction of a vanished original, human beings are alienated not only from their environment but also from themselves" (2005: 176). It is not only the conflict of the real and the virtual, but also the disturbing question of power and pain, manipulation and victimization which I discuss from this perspective. Howells thinks that Jimmy and Crake are living in a "decadent postmodern culture described by Jean Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulations*" (176). I elaborate on this idea by extending the interpretation to discuss not only the biotechnological research in Atwood's speculative fiction, but also the motif of manipulation and victimization.

The two books are based on contrast: the elite and the marginal, powerful male characters and powerless female characters, emotional wasteland and human compassion; but Atwood's strategy is, as in all her books, ambiguous, the manipulators are often the manipulated and the seeming victims are often engaged in the victimization. Atwood's fiction does not comply with fixed categories and her use of humour and irony contribute to the complexity of the text.

2. Power: "There'd been a lot of fooling around in those days: create-an-animal was so much fun, said the guys doing it; it made you feel like God" (OC 51)

In *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* power is concentrated in the hands of a paramilitary organization called CorpSeCorps and their genetic engineers, who are working toward the ultimate goal: immortality. With Crake's most ambitious project, the Paradice Method, whole human populations could be created. Crake, the genius scientist, has altered the ancient primate brain to get rid of what he thinks are "destructive features" (OC 305) in order to create an ideal society:

> Gone were its destructive features, the features responsible for the world's current illnesses. For instance, racism [...]. The Paradice people would not register skin colour. Hierarchy could not exist among them [...]. Their sexuality was not a constant torment to them, not a cloud of turbulent hormones: they came into heat at regular intervals, as did most mammals other than man. In fact, as there would never be anything for these people to inherit, there would be no family trees, no marriages, and no

> divorces. [...] They would not need to invent any harmful symbolisms, such as kingdoms, icons, gods, or money. Best of all, they recycled their own excrement (OC 305).

Crake, obsessed with the idea of a world without famine, sexual, racial and religious wars and tensions, lets the world dissolve in a horrible apocalypse caused by his own invention, the BlyssPlus Pill.[5] However, The Pill contained the virus of an ebola-like disease which kills everybody but Jimmy, Crake's friend. He is the only one who survives Crake's epidemics, and becomes an apathetic leader of the humanoid Crakers. Without any hope and human company, he passively and un-heroically waits for death and recollects his past. The Crakers, genetically modified humans immune to the plague, are everything but violent and lustful; all of them peaceful vegetarians. With them, the world of *Oryx and Crake* enters a new, post-human phase.

In the *Year of the Flood*, the future of humankind is seen not only from Jimmy's pessimistic and limited view. The background of the man-made apocalypse is revealed from the other side. While Jimmy and Crake were male members of the elitist Corporate, living in gated Compounds, and, as Howells puts it, "literally sealed off from the rest of the population" (YF 174), the new female characters in *The Year of the Flood* survey the catastrophe from the marginal and lower strata of 'pleeblands': they are outcasts and members of an eco-religious sect called God's Gardeners. The Gardeners are, in Paul Filippo's words, "a low-tech, low-carbon-footprint, recycle-minded commune" led by Adam One (Filippo 2010: 2). They work hard to prepare for the Waterless Flood which, unknown to them, Crake is obsessively engineering. The sect's founder, Adam One, has foreseen the doomsday by Waterless Flood, and encourages the Gardeners to set up a series of food storehouses – "Ararats" – in anticipation of disaster:

> A massive die-off of the human race was impending, due to over-population 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. […] Thus they would survive to replenish the Earth. Or something like that. (YF 47)

The members of the eco-cult live organically, sing silly hymns, wear stinky clothes and advocate ridiculous theology. With completely different values than the ruling CorpSEcorps, the Gardeners question and refuse the life of the Corps people: "[...] fish-crunching, materialistic body worshippers cut out? There, with facelifts and bimiplants and genework and totally warped values" (YF 288). The Gardeners have warned against endless consumerism and the destruction of all the species.

Atwood does not portray the members as pure and devoted believers. They are not noble heroes but doubting, desperate, frustrated and (seemingly) power-

less people. The three protagonists, Toby, Ren and Amanda, are women. Their compassion, love and friendship are in opposition to the emotional detachment of the CorpSEcorps. Toby has been saved by the sect from a fast-food restaurant where she suffered from sexual and physical terror; in the sect she has become an herbalist and leader, Eve. Ren and Amanda grow up in the sect: Ren becomes a Scaly, a stripper wearing full-body condoms, while Amanda becomes a conceptual artist. All three women stay alive: Toby is holed up in a former spa, using her Gardener skills – gardening, foraging, and herbal medicines to survive.[6] Ren has stayed alive because she's locked in quarantine while awaiting test results after a client ripped her Biofilm Bodyglove. Amanda survived in the desert working on her art. As they struggle to find others and to defend themselves against nightmarish criminals from the PainBall arena, they retell the stories of God's Gardeners.

In between the powerful elite of the Compounds and the (seemingly) powerless women members of God's Gardeners is Jimmy/Snowman. Born to a genetic engineer's family, living in the wealthy Compounds in the position of a privileged friend of Crake's, Jimmy/Snowman endures a failure in his inability to embody the ideal of the CorpSECorps system: a genius number-man. Jimmy is "the neurotypical" (OC 203), meaning "minus the genius gene" (OC 194), as Crake annoyingly introduces him. Jimmy has always felt like an outcast.[7] As a child he tried hard to win friends at school by entertaining other children with a hand-puppet show, a parody of his parents' dialogues, just to win their applause. Jimmy feels powerless and, as Roger Davis notes, "he feels victimized" (Davis 2010: 5). When he was a boy he had no power to make his mother feel less depressed; he also had no power to influence how to spend the time with Crake. Crake's dominant role is represented by the way he decides what both of them would watch and/or play: "'What is this shit? said Crake. 'Channel change!'" (OC 85). Jimmy soon starts hiding his preferences from Crake not to show his weak points.

Jimmy is caught between the old world of Shakespeare's words and 'the brave new world' of virtual reality. His inclination to the old and the real can be illustrated by his disapproval of computer chess: "'Why don't we use a real set?' Jimmy asked one day when they were doing some chess. 'The old kind. With plastic men.' It did seem weird to have the two of them in the same room, back to back, playing on computers. 'Why?' said Crake. 'Anyway, this *is* a real set.'" (OC 77). While Crake seems to suggest that there is no difference between the two kinds of representation, Jimmy simply needs to confront his friend personally, not through the computer screen.

But as an adult man Jimmy no longer longs for a real human relationship: "Every week there was a Compound social barbecue, a comprehensive ratfuck that all employees were expected to attend. These were dire occasions for Jimmy. He lacked the energy to work the crowd, he was fresh out of innocuous drivel; he loitered on the edges gnawing on a burned soydog and silently ripping apart everyone within eyesight" (OC 249). After a chain of disappointments with his family, an investigation by the CorpSEcorps regarding his disappeared mother, and meaningless sexual affairs with women, he prefers being alone. Later, when

Oryx pleads with him to take care of the Crakers, Jimmy is unable to acknowledge his own individual will and responsibility: "Okay then. Cross my heart and hope to die. Happy now?" (OC 387). Deadened by the impossibility of human communication, he rather satirizes any indication of his true emotions.

Jimmy has been victimized and manipulated by others, especially by Crake and Oryx.[8] As an outcast from "number" people, coming from a broken family, he is unable to have a true relationship with people (women in particular): he ignores them, ridicules them and victimizes them in a parody of love affairs.

3. Pain: "'But it will be so painful,' said Toby. 'Don't worry about that,' said Pilar." (YF 179)

The motifs of pain and the impossibility to feel pain are related to the feelings of victimization in my reading of *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*, as they are in opposition in these two books. While the powerful characters in *Oryx and Crake* are too cold, unable to feel pain or any other human emotion, the Gardeners in *The Year of the Flood* are still able to experience and show a wide spectrum of feelings.[9]

Jimmy, after witnessing the mass death of the whole human population, tries very hard to keep himself drunk. Alcohol provides him with an anaesthetic: he does not mourn his lost ones; he does not hope for any future; he is just masturbating. The impossibility to feel pain and human emotions in *Oryx and Crake* is symptomatic: Crake reacts to the experience of watching his mother's agonizing death by saying that it was 'impressive'. The lack of feeling can be explained by Crake's suffering from Asperger's syndrome, as some critics, including J. Brooks Bouson and Coral Ann Howells, suggest.[10] Nevertheless, Crake is the one who initiates and seeks the friendship with Jimmy. Moreover, *The Year of the Flood* suggests even stronger positive emotions that probably affect Crake's ambitions. The unarticulated nightmares Crake suffers in *Oryx and Crake* present one pole of the emotional range, while his helping God's Gardeners in *The Year of the Flood* shows his friendlier and warmer side. Crake, known as Glenn, in his typical black clothes, has sent Pilar's biopsy samples – hidden in a jar of honey– to the diagnostic labs at HealthWyzer West: "'Who smuggled them?' said Toby. 'Was it Zeb?' Pilar smiled as if enjoying a private joke. 'A friend,' she said. 'We have many friends.'" (YF 178). Glenn's/Crake's secret friendship with the sect of God's Gardeners seems to open new questions about the Gardeners' shared responsibility in Crake's plan of the post-human new world.

Despite the fact that Crake had edited out of the Crakers' brains the human features of loyalty, honour and love, calling them destructive, he reminds Jimmy of his (very human) moral responsibility. In words that echo those of Jimmy's mother and Oryx, the two most important people in Jimmy's life, Crake, playing on Jimmy's destructive features of loyalty and love, says "I'm counting on you" (OC 385).

In Atwood's dystopian vision, everything, including human beings and their human relationships, is a simulation of a vanished original. The absence of reality is sharply noticed only by Sharon, Jimmy's mother. As Baudrillard notes, the process of simulation is always imperfect and it is impossible to keep it entirely separate from reality. Sharon, depressed by the always-changing environment, sees a line between the artificial and the real. According to Fiona Tolan, Sharon believes in "truth, justice and morality" (Tolan 2007: 278). Sharon, disappointed with economic inequalities, forgotten ideals and the lack of ethics of her husband's research, argues: "'[...] there is research and there's research. What you're doing – this pig brain thing. You're interfering with the building blocks of life. It's immoral'" (OC 57). However, Jimmy's father replies: "'It's just proteins, you know that!'" (OC 57). Sharon's belief in "truth, justice and morality" is also a need for reality. The need for reality, as well as the need for morality and the other traditional human values, is questioned in the novel.

The emotionally deprived boys escape into the virtual reality of computer games and internet porn featuring sex and violence in real-time coverage, where human suffering is reduced to virtual reality. The boys react differently: Crake finds such sites funny, while Jimmy finds them disturbing. The effect of these shows and games on the boys is in repressing any sense of emotional involvement and moral responsibility: the boundaries between fiction and reality, reality and virtuality are blurred. Tolan comments on the resulting detachment: "Watching the coverage [of riots] on television, Jimmy maintains a dispassionate alienation, and Crake's concession that 'there aren't any sides as such' (OC 179) is seemingly supported by the inability to visually distinguish between the various dead" (Tolan 2007: 280). Jimmy, a fragile and sensitive boy, is affected by the computer games and TV watching, and becomes apathetic.

The most dismal game they enjoy playing is Extinctathon, presenting extinct species.

Grandmaster Red-necked Crake plays out Extinctathon to its end, when virtual reality shifts into the dimensions of the real and causes a worldwide apocalypse: "He'd meant well, or at least he hadn't meant ill. He'd never wanted to hurt anyone, not seriously, not in real space-time. Fantasies didn't count" (OC 304). Jimmy/Snowman, who calls himself "emotionally dyslexic" (OC 190) witnesses the global extinctathon of humankind, watching it on a television screen and drinking heavily: "The whole thing seemed like a movie" (OC 309), he remarks.

The material privilege, and the sterility and coldness of family life in the Compounds (Jimmy's depressed mother leaves her family, Crake's father commits suicide/or is murdered) cause Jimmy's emotional deprivation. In *The Year of the Flood*, the coldness and ignorance of the Compounds is even more obvious: the pharmaceutical laboratories make their own employees buy and use their products which cause serious illnesses: "[T]hose Corporation pills are the food of the dead, my dear. Not our kind of dead, the bad kind. The dead who are still alive. We must teach the children to avoid these pills – they're evil." (YF105). This is

how God's Gardeners react to Toby's story of the strange death of her mother who used to work for the pharmaceutical industry.

The two contradictory worlds of *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* are complimentary. Crake's Compounds are characterized by material comfort, purely scientific approaches, and emotional blankness: Crake dismisses falling in love as "a hormonally induced delusional state" (OC 193) and Jimmy describes himself as being "an emotional landfill site" (OC190). On the other hand, God's Gardeners live in the very harsh reality of 'pleeblands': their clothes stink, they work hard in their roof gardens and their members express a wide range of emotions: jealousy, anger, hatred, love, friendship, sympathy. After the Waterless Flood, the ill and starving Ren runs away from the brutal Painball men and seeks asylum at Toby's spa. Toby thinks about killing Ren because her food supplies are limited, but then her Gardeners' values stop her:

> Her homicidal impulse of the night before is gone: she will not drag dead Ren out into the meadow for the pigs and vultures. Now she'd like to cure her, cherish her, for isn't it miraculous that Ren is here? That she's come through the Waterless Flood with only minor damage? [...] Just to have a second person on the premises – even a feeble person, even a sick person who sleeps most of the time – just this makes the Spa seem like a cosy domestic dwelling rather than a haunted house." (YF 360).

Toby chooses to open herself to a human relationship instead of a safe but lone survival.

At the end of *Oryx and Crake*, Jimmy faces not only the real pain in his foot and the possibility of his near death but also the question of choice, moral responsibility and the chance of entering again into human relationships. By finding out that there are more people alive, he is pushed into the three-dimensional reality and 'zero hour' time again: Will he be able to protect the Crakers? Will he be able to negotiate or kill? And whom? Which story will he choose?

The Year of the Flood suggests that the three strangers Jimmy sees at the end of *Oryx and Crake* are two criminals and a young woman they keep as a captive. The open ending of *The Year of the Flood* offers even more questions: will the peaceful gardeners kill the brutish men? Who would take care of the Crakers? And the most uneasy question of all: how much are God's Gardeners responsible for the apocalypse?

4. Manipulation: "It was a choice between that and being spraygunned, so they took the jobs" (YF 395)

The question of responsibility for the Waterless Flood leads to the motif of manipulation, which is strongly present in both books. As is typical for all of Atwood's books, most of the characters in *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the*

Flood function simultaneously as victims and victimizers, manipulators and manipulated. Manipulators manipulate feelings of human beings as well as genes in laboratories.

The notion of simulacra has entered human relations and emotions in Atwood's books. According to Baudrillard, "simulation threatens the difference between 'true' and 'false, between 'real' and 'imaginary'" (Baudrillard 1994: 3). The link between the world of *Oryx and Crake* and Baudrillard's concept lies in their common interest in "genetic miniaturization"[11] (Baudrillard 1994: 2). In *Oryx and Crake,* students of Watson-Crick developed butterflies with "wings the size of pancakes" (OC 200). Jimmy wonders if they are real or fake. Crake explains: "These butterflies fly, they mate, they lay eggs, caterpillars come out" (OC 200). In his words, which are congruent with Baudrillard's notion, they are real, as:

> "The real is produced from miniaturized cells, matrices, and memory banks, models of control – and it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times from these. It no longer needs to be rational, because it no longer measures itself against either an ideal or negative instance. It is no longer anything but operational. In fact, it is no longer really the real, because no imaginary envelops it anymore." (Baudrillard 1994: 2)

Atwood's genetic engineers, in their science minus ethics politics, simulate a chicken which grows chicken parts on "a large bulblike object that seemed to be covered with stippled whitish-yellow skin. Out of it came twenty thick fleshy tubes, and at the end of each tube another bulb was growing" (OC 202). The chickens produced by NeoAgriculturals are a pure simulacrum because they can never be exchanged for the real. In Baudrillard's definition of simulacrum "it has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum" (Baudrillard 1994: 6). The new chickens are far from real chickens: they have no eyes, or beaks – they do not need them. The scientists had also removed all the brain functions that had no business use, that had "nothing to do with digestion, assimilation, and growth" (OC 203). Jimmy, although he cannot imagine himself eating them, realizes that he "wouldn't be able to tell the difference" (OC 203).

Atwood suggests that those who have knowledge and information, have also power: and this is not only important in the compounds, where the scientists are kidnapped for the information they possess, but also in the pleeblands. The dying Pilar emphasizes the power of knowledge to Toby: "[...] all earthly things must be passed from the dying to the living, and that includes our knowledge. I want you to have everything I've assembled here – all my materials. It's a good collection, and it confers great power!" (YF 179). Ambiguously, it is not only the Corporations which manipulate the knowledge/information which represents power. As has been suggested, most of Atwood's characters are the manipulators as well as the manipulated; God's Gardeners also manipulate the information they have and they also excuse it with the same reason as the manipulators in the Corporations, that it is "for the greater good" (YF 184).[12] In fact, 'the greater good', a world

without famine, wars, racial and sexual tensions, is also the utopian vision of Crake.

Jimmy, the character in-between the two books, becomes the victim of Crake's domination and manipulation. Crake's best friend becomes an accomplice, as he assists Crake to promote The BlyssPluss Pill which is infected with the deadly virus:

> He fiddled around at his job: not much of a challenge there. The Blyss-Pluss Pill would sell itself, it didn't need help from him. But the official launch was looming closer, so he had his stud turn out some visuals, a few catchy slogans: Throw Away Your Condoms! BlyssPluss, for the Total Body Experience! Don't Live a Little, Live a Lot! (OC 312).

Paradoxically, Jimmy's slogans helped Crake to sell the lethal pill which killed the whole human population.

Another of Crake's accomplices is Oryx. She states that she believes in Crake's project: "I believe in Crake, I believe in his […] vision. He wants to make the world a better place" (OC 322). Oryx never reveals her true identity, memories and motivations, and is seen as an enigma. In *The Year of the Flood*, Ren comments on Oryx's deceptive behaviour: "She was acting all the time, giving nothing away about herself" (YF 306). Oryx, who is a very good trickster and manipulator herself, has been manipulated by Crake as well. When the pandemic starts spreading, she guiltily realizes that the virus was in the pills Crake employed her to distribute around the world.

Some reviewers have considered that God's Gardeners had contributed to the global catastrophe.[13] In *The Year of the Flood*, the question of our individual responsibility and involvement is raised. The peaceful and non-violent God's Gardeners have been fragmented into another group, MaddAddam, manipulated and later abused by Crake, known as Glenn then. Glenn's father used to be a friend and colleague of the founding members of God's Gardeners, Pilar and Zeb. It is interesting how much the ideas and beliefs of the Gardeners parallel Glenn's own concepts. It seems that Crake used to be affected (and, possibly, manipulated) by their ideas. First, Glenn was acting as a friend of the Gardeners, helping them to smuggle biopsy samples; later, he manipulated them into working on his Paradice Project: "[…] and they ended up as brain slaves in a place called the Paradice Project dome. It was a choice between that and being spraygunned, so they took the jobs" (YF 395). In the dome they worked on the human gene splice and "they were the ones who'd done the heavy lifting on the BlyssPluss pill too" (YF 395). The deceived MaddAddams[14], former Gardeners, have been involved in designing the violent death of (nearly) all the people although they "didn't believe in killing people, not as such. […] just wanted them to stop wasting everything and fucking up" (YF 333). However, the Gardeners were manipulated and blackmailed by one of them, the double agent Crake. As Baudrillard explains in *Simulacra and Simulation*, manipulation is "reversible in an endless whirligig.

For manipulation is a floating causality where positivity and negativity engender and overlap with one another; where there is no longer any active or passive" (Baudrillard 1994: 16).

At this point, I suggest that Baudrillard's concepts of simulacrum and manipulation are congruent with *The Year of the Flood*, since Baudrillard concludes that − given that there is no possibility to locate an origin, or reference, or the real, (as this is also impossible in Atwood's two dystopias) − then manipulation is associated with simulation. According to Baudrillard, they are located outside power because positions are reversible. Hence, the manipulated are simultaneously the manipulators and vice versa. The minor and nearly invisible groups of harmless God's Gardeners and MaddAddams are responsible for the pandemic: actively as those who co-designed the virus, passively as the victims of Crake's manipulation and blackmail.

5. Conclusion

An examination of the interconnections among power, pain, manipulation, and Baudrillard's concept of simulation and simulacra reveals that the notion of simulation plays a significant role in Atwood's speculative fiction novels. In *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* the alienation of the powerful elite members from their environment and themselves is caused by the continuous process of simulation, which, according to Baudrillard, "masks the *absence* of a profound reality" (1994: 6). Atwood complicates the novels by ambiguous endings: by juxtaposing the apathy of passive consumers (like Jimmy) and political activists (such as Jimmy's mother, MaddAddams, God's Gardeners), who reject the endless elimination of species, materialism, and sexploitation, but, blinded by their political aims, they succumb to manipulation and contribute the Waterless Flood.

Notes

1 The first of Atwood's novels that could be labelled as a speculative fiction novel is *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). The second one is *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and the third *The Year of the Flood* (2009).

2 Crake can be seen as "a mad scientist" in the line of Frankenstein and Dr. Moreau. All of them intend to achieve their goals at the sacrifice of anything, including other human beings, animals, or themselves.

3 In a recent interview with the U.K. magazine *The Bookseller*, Atwood explained that *Flood* should not be considered a prequel: "It's not a sequel and it's not a prequel—it's a 'simultaneouel' in that it takes place during the same time span and with a number of people in it who are peripheral in *Oryx and Crake* but are central in *The Year of the Flood*" (Atwood 2010: 1).

4 In the discussion following the presentation of this essay at the 9th Brno International Conference of English, American and Canadian Studies, Milada Franková commented that many SF writers (and women writers in particular) of recent dystopias have confronted the dilemmas of environmental issues. She suggested that Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* (1998)

and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007) can be classified as ecological dystopias. According to Joan Slonczewski and Michael Levy's study 'Science Fiction and the Life Sciences', the most significant examples of ecological dystopias are in the subgenre of post-apocalyptic novels, which concentrate on a small group of survivors (Nevil Shute's *One the Beach,* 1975; Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker*, 1980). The other cases are the ecological collapse dystopias (David Brin's *Earth*, 1990; Dennis Danvers's *The Fourth World*, 2000). Slonczewski and Levy also introduce the novel by Joan Slonczewski, *Brain Plague,* which discusses the impact of nanotechnology (Slonczewski, Levy 2003: 183). In addition to these novels, I would also mention Doris Lessing's *Mara and Dann*, 1990. In this book, two children survive the hardships of drought, ecological disasters have left Earth unrecognizable and they are confronted with the question of why cities and peoples disappear.

5 The BlyssPluss Pill is designed to protect humans from all sexually transmitted diseases, provide unlimited libido, prolong youth and solve the problem of contraception.

6 Atwood re-introduces Ren, alias Brenda in *Oryx and Crake*, and Amanda Payne, Jimmy's girlfriend in *Oryx and Crake.* In addition to them, Bernice is another female character who is mentioned in *Oryx and Crake* as well as in *The Year of the Flood.*

7 Coral Ann Howells suggests that Jimmy is an outcast from his own narrative, as "the story is told not in the first person but through third-person indirect interior monologue, which shifts restlessly between the narrative present and Jimmy/Snowman's memories of his own and other people's stories in a series of associative leaps, and the context is provided by an omniscient narrator" (Howells 2005: 173). Howells says that this method displaces Jimmy from "the centre of his own narrative" (Howells 2005: 173) in a parallel to his displacement in the post-human world.

8 J. Brooks Bouson reads Jimmy as "a kind of living human joke trapped" in one of Crake's experiments, and interprets the ending as "deliberately ambiguous" (Bouson 2004: 153). Earl G. Ingersoll notes that "Snowman is disabled from being an 'I' in this novel" (Ingersoll 2004: 171); "He is a castaway in a culturally vacant cosmos, with no hope that his message-in-a-bottle could ever find a reader" (Ingersoll 2004: 171). Similarly to Bouson, Ingersoll claims that the "novel seems in the end not quite sure how to end and what kind of future it wants to project" (Ingersoll 2004: 172). Stephen Dunning attempts to turn around the novel's bleak outlook: "while Oryx and Crake may not offer much by way of substantial hope, it stands as a clear warning of what we must hope to avoid" (Dunning 2005: 98).

9 Ren sees the CorpSECorps men as "[…] my least favourite clients. It was like they had machine parts in behind their eyes" (YF 305). Ren, deeply affected by the Gardeners' warm, protective and welcoming manners, is always alarmed by the cold and mechanized behaviour of the powerful men.

10 This notion is supported by playful hints in *Oryx and Crake*: Crake's prestigious college, the Watson-Crick Institute, is nicknamed Asperger's U "because of the high percentage of brilliant weirdos that strolled and hopped and lurched through its corridors. Demi-autistic, genetically speaking; single track tunnel-vision minds, a marked degree of social ineptitude – these were not your sharp dressers – and luckily for everyone there, a high tolerance for mildly deviant public behaviour" (OC 194).

11 "[...] genetic miniaturization that is the dimension of simulation" (Baudrillard 1994: 2).

12 Adam One, after lying to God's Gardeners about Pilar's death, apologizes to Toby: "'Forgive me, dear Toby,' he said when the rest had gone. 'I apologize for my excursion into fiction. I must sometimes say things that are not transparently honest. But it is for the greater good'" (YF 184).

13 Paul Di Filippo in the review for Barnes and Noble suggests that the book portrays God's Gardeners as "unwitting co-conspirators in the downfall of civilization" (Filippo 2010: 2).

14 MaddAddams were rebellious top scientists who did not agree with the Corps. They were working as bio-terrorists to "kill the centre of power," in Crake's words, or "technological connections" (228) and so they have designed microbes that eat asphalt or mice that attack cars. They had names of extinct animals, such as "Thickney, after a defunct Australian

double-jointed bird" (OC 81), and had a website, Extinctathon. The Red-necked Crake used to be one of them.

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