

Posthuman Experimentations: The Crisis of Anthropocentrism in Margaret Atwood's

Oryx and Crake and The Year of the Flood



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Introduction

According to Timothy Morton, nature writing, through the lens of fantasy, depends on “ambient poetics,” which is a way of evoking images of a “surrounding atmosphere or world,” for example, by evocative present tense writing, and by dwelling on the surrounding scene (EWN 22). The history of ambient poetics is loaded with ideological meanings translated into art such as literature and film as well as in philosophical and ecocritical discourses. Their history is based on how individuals relate to their natural surroundings. Ambient poetics, as a set of linguistic techniques, literary techniques and theoretical resources, produce a certain effect on the reader when reading about nature. Generally, ambient poetics paint a picture of the environment as peaceful, serene, and essentially benign (which is Morton’s main critique).¹ They are incorporated in works of SF writers such as Clifford Simak and Ursula Le Guin, who both subscribe to this kind of poetics that enforce a pastoral meaning when describing nature. Like many SF writers, they employ nature as a device to propose an ideological critique or utopian solutions² to confront twentieth-century human influence on the environment. For example, *The Word for World is Forest* (Le Guin 1972), which was written as a response to the role of the United States in the Vietnam War, involves native Athsheans whose planet is invaded by the human species for its natural resources. In this novel, humans have depleted the Earth of its natural resources leaving only deserts and therefore a dystopian natural environment, while Athsheans preserve their natural environment through biocentrism and live as pacifists in what is depicted as a utopian society. Another example of such an ecocritical dystopian novel is

¹ See Morton, Timothy. *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Harvard University Press, 2007. Print.

² For example, LeGuin infuses ecofeminist ideas of nature into *Word for World is Forest* to create what Atwood describes as an Ustopia; “an imagined perfect society and its opposite” (IOW 66). In *World for World Forest*, The Athsheans’s planet and society as a utopia are juxtaposed to Earth’s dystopia.

Simak's *Ring Around the Sun* (1953). The narrative implies that consumer culture and economically driven war are human defects that can be remedied by starting over on alternate Earths where the environment is untouched by human ills. The many pastoral passages in these novels are exemplary of what Morton coins as ambient poetics that elicit utopian visions of nature as well as the material surroundings of the environment. Passages such as the ones in Le Guin's *The Word for World is Forest* describe the ground as a "a product of collaboration of living things" (27). Simak's *Ring Around the Sun* depict nature as "enchanted" and refer to it as "fairyland" (56, 122). At the same time, these novels expose existing limitations and deficiencies of existing societies such as their reliance on capitalism and disregard for the planetary environment. The effect of ambient poetics in these novels thus becomes a way to evoke a subtext in which Nature is a romanticized object separate from the human, and in which Nature should be preserved to benefit humans. In these novels, saving humanity by saving Nature is a central utopian vision.

While the early novels of pioneering feminist and ecological SF writers, such as Simak and Le Guin are characterized by a humancentric utopian vision, the later works of Margaret Atwood reveal a shift from "traditional" feminist writing to a more post-human ecological critique in SF. The first two fictional works of the MaddAddam trilogy, *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*, are an imaginative experiment on how to overcome anthropocentrism,³ the active systems that maintain human existence at the cost of the nonhuman other and their

³ The Anthropocene is coined by ecologist Eugene F. Stoermer and atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen to name the new "geological epoch" in which human influence supersedes planetary influences most noticeably in the Earth's "crust and mantle" (Grusin vii). In recent years, it indicates the "effects of climate change and the ongoing possibility of a 'sixth extinction'" (viii). Anthropocentrism refers to the continuous practices of humans with negative effects for nonhuman others and their ecologies. It also refers to an ideological human centric view maintained through those practices, such as deforestation, construction and mining" (viii). Another descriptions of the Anthropocene is "the current interval of time distinguished by human-induced changes at global scale, in particular biosphere species extinctions linked to the chemical composition in the atmosphere (Isendahl 6007). In the context of the humanities, the Anthropocene marks the "the end of a liberal human subject characterized by a biological and individuated self, and the subsequent rise of a distributed humanity that operates as a geological agent" (Morton qtd. in Johnson et al. 440). The end of the Vitruvian man as proposed by Braidotti as well, causes fears and anxiety about human nature. Posthumanism is in the context of the Anthropocene a tool or a working theory to redefine the human.

environments, and that ultimately leave an incontrovertible negative human impact on the planet. The books are cautionary tales on how anthropocentrism will lead to the destruction of the planet.

This thesis answers the question to what extent this turn in Atwood's writing transcends the utopianism traditionally present in SF's ecological subgenre by putting posthuman theories into practice. Atwood, a notorious satirist, problematizes her characters in the MaddAddam trilogy's attempts to achieve a posthuman and post-anthropocentric way of thinking and living. Her commitment to post-anthropocentrism remains tentative, which begs the question whether she transcends the concerns of her predecessors in the field of speculative fiction and her earlier works by turning to posthumanist and postfeminist theories, or whether she still relies to some extent on the kind of ideals that traditional SF inherited from the Romantic movement: an escape from a dystopian present into a utopian past. Furthermore, how do her novels function as satires and how do they interplay with posthuman theories of Timothy Morton and Rosi Braidotti?⁴ Are Atwood's novels aligned with a more politically activist ecocriticism of today, or do they, as SF adventures still belong to the visionary, but escapist tendencies of early dystopian SF classics? In other words, what do Atwood's novels reveal about the *present* concerns in relation to the idea of the end of the world and the preservation of world/nature? And what is the effect of taking a certain position towards the idea of the end of the world?

This thesis illustrates the implied tensions between the three types of posthumanisms in the first two novels of Margaret Atwood's MaddAddam trilogy, which are *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*. In investigating each book's approach to the environmental crisis and how humans as well as central characters view the end of the world, this thesis demonstrates that there are Romantic/Humanist ideologies underpinning these posthuman approaches that Atwood satirizes. Morton's concept of hyperobjects and Braidotti's *zoe*-egalitarianism and their

⁴ The theories of Morton and Braidotti will be explained in the following chapters.

effects on characters' ideas about the end of the world further allow for an exploration of the ambiguities in the novels' solutions to the environmental crisis/global warming as well as how current posthuman thought reciprocate or challenge these ambiguities. In addition, the two novels effectively investigate the posthuman theories' merits, thereby exploring their ability to overcome anthropocentrism.

Up until the present, scholars like J. Brooks Bouson explored the idea of corporate cannibalism as a trope in Atwood's MaddAddam trilogy to describe a "corporate-controlled world" (12). Chris Vials draws upon Karl Polanyi and Nikhil Singh's theories of market liberalism to demonstrate how Atwood's MaddAddam trilogy is part of a "cultural tendency in representing the contradictions of neoliberalism" (238). Gerry Canavan argues that the "sciencefictional imagination of the apocalypse functions today as the postmodern version of Frederic Jameson's . . . 'radical break,' in which it is possible for us to imagine the end of the world but impossible to envision an alternative to capitalism, the culprit" (139). Yet, he argues that both novels (*Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*) have a utopian potential: they "seek to open up new space for imagining a post-capitalist future through a satirical, science-fictional stating of capitalism's final, catastrophic breakdown – and the subsequent emergence of other lives, after the end of history" (139). Humanist-oriented scholar Valentina Adami resonates with popular posthumanism's warning of the "dangers of uncontrolled scientific progress," and argues that Atwood's novels bring light to "what it means to be human, which. . . is the ultimate goal for an all scientific as well as humanistic endeavors" (249). In another paper, J. Brooks Bouson concludes that Atwood's "remedy to humanity's ills lies not only in interspecies cooperation but also in interspecies breeding" (341).⁵ The aforementioned authors all analyze the novels from various methodological approaches that seek to challenge capitalism and transhumanism. However, none of them engage with specific concepts in posthuman theory

⁵ Brooks Bouson, J. "'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." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2011, pp. 9–26.

to learn how developing posthuman theories in the twenty-first century interplay with Atwood's MaddAddam trilogy.

The Posthuman Debate

What is considered post-human? What is posthumanism? The biggest question is: who is the posthuman? The academic field of posthuman theories has been evolving rapidly in the last twenty years, splitting its scope into the study of what it means to be human in an increasingly technologically dominated world, and what it means to be human in relation to nonhumans. A fundamental aspect of posthumanism as an academic critical theory is that it endorses postmodern anti-humanism which gives rise to a division between "popular post-humanism" and "critical posthumanism" (Wallace 1). Popular post-humanism rejects (bio)technological advancements that interfere with human nature and freedom (Wallace 1). In contrast, critical posthumanism critiques human centric ideals of what it means to be human in relation to non-humans and the planetary environment in the age of the Anthropocene (Ferrando 3). Rosi Braidotti states that the "posthuman turn" in philosophy is triggered by "the convergence of anti-humanism on the one hand and anti-anthropocentrism on the other. . .Anti-humanism focusses on the critique of the humanist ideal of 'Man' as the universal representative of the human, while anti-anthropocentrism criticizes species hierarchy and advances ecological justice" (13). It is useful to note that, "Man" is criticized in critical posthumanism for both the implication of its humanism and anthropocentrism (15). Most importantly, both branches of posthumanism address the political implications of what they critique – that is the political implication of technological advancements and human exceptionalism.

As mentioned before, there is a branch of posthumanism that referred to by themselves as well as by critical posthumanist scholars such as Braidotti⁶ as transhumanism.

⁶ See Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman*. Polity Press. 2013.

Transhumanism is a movement and academic field that approaches human limitations by enhancing the human through technology. Transhuman scholar Ronald Cole-Turner asserts that transhumanists see human nature as incomplete, human biology as limiting, and human technology as the pathway to a new form of humanity” (10). He defines transhumanism as “a movement that advocates the development and use of new technologies to improve human capacities and enhance human lives” (11). Naturally, transhumanism and the two former branches are radically different in approach and philosophy. In comparison, Nick Bostrom defines transhumanism as:

a loosely defined movement that has developed gradually over the past two decades, and can be viewed as an outgrowth of secular humanism and the Enlightenment. It holds that current human nature is improvable through the use of applied science and rational methods, which make it possible to increase human health-span, extend our intellectual and physical capacities, and give us increased control over our own mental states and moods. (qtd. in Cole-Turner 11)

Human transcendence is thus central in this movement, and the nonhuman only functions as a means to achieve transhumanist goals. The ultimate goal of transhumans is to become posthumans: “possible future beings whose basic capacities so radically exceed those of present humans as to no longer be unambiguously human by our current standards” (Bostrom qtd. in Cole-Turner 13). The posthuman in transhumanist discourse is not simply “a continuation of the self-governing individual but the individual set free of anything biological that interferes with governing” (Cole-Turner 13). Transhumanism is thus on the other end of the political and philosophical spectrum when it comes to the discussion of the posthuman, and is, as quoted above, a continuation of the Humanist project that critical posthumanism aims to decentralize.

At the same time, there is an implied tension between the two former branches of posthumanism: critical posthumanism and popular posthumanism. While popular

posthumanism rejects the amalgamation of the human and the technological for a more Romantic ideal of nature and the human, critical posthumanism rejects a Romantic notion of nature, which is mainly humancentric, for a more inclusive concept of nature in which the nonhuman is the focal point. The Romantic notion of nature connotes various “images, a view of the world,” which fetishizes nature as an aesthetic object (Morton, *EWN* 2). These images depict a nostalgic pastoral memory of nature, which, as Morton describes abstractly, gives rise to “a sense of nature” full of “ideological intensity” (*EWN* 2). Furthermore, Morton notes that “[literary] writing conjures this notoriously slippery term, useful to ideologies of all kinds in its very slipperiness, in its refusal to maintain any consistency” (*EWN* 14). Morton lists three signifiers for nature; 1) nature entails other terms that collapse into it through metonymic words, 2) it is a norm to which deviation is measured, 3) and finally it is a word that “encapsulates a potentially infinite series of disparate fantasy objects” (14). Nature’s very meaning oscillates between substance and essence, object and subject. The oscillation between substance and essence is typified as *ambience* that create an obsession with nature as a sensual object.⁷ It is “both/and or neither/nor” (*EWN* 18). The rhetorical effect of *ambience* in eco-writing is one that could hinder progress in eco-critical writing, including through escapist eco-critical novels that construe nature as mystical, pastoral and as an entity that needs to be preserved. Therefore, critical posthumanism distances itself from human centric ideals of nature as well as from anthropocentric goals to transcend nature and the nonhuman.

The critical posthumanism of Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway, Patricia McCormack, and Cary Wolfe proposes ideas that can be explored through literature, film and other cultural objects in which ambient poetics invoke a sense of the environment. Film and literature in particular, speculate on what is human, posthuman and what our relationship is to nonhumans

⁷ Morton defines a sensual object as an object that is “an appearance-for another object” (*Hyperobjects* 118). Morton considers humans as objects too. Nature is a sensual object for humans in the way that they appear to humans as fetishized objects.

such as A.I. robots, animals, biotechnologically enhanced humans and the planetary environment. The purpose of this thesis is to draw on critical posthuman theories to analyze the first two novels of the MaddAddam trilogy as well as to reflect on the analytical force and aptness of the theories in question. I call into question to what extent Braidotti's *zoe-egalitarianism*, Haraway's concept of companion species, Patricia's McCormack's posthuman ethics and Timothy Morton's hyperobjects are challenged or accepted in Margaret Atwood's first two novels of the MaddAddam trilogy.

In her book, *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction*, Fiona Tolan explains that because Atwood is a "culturally and theoretically-aware writer that both uses and challenges the ideas that permeates her culture," there is a "tension between the literary theorist who would read her novel in terms of a prevalent theory such as Feminism, and the self-consciously theoretical and political aspects of the novel" (Tolan 1). Consequently, the "text is no longer a passive recipient of theoretical interpretation, but enters into a dynamic relationship with the theoretical discourse, frequently anticipating future developments yet to be articulated in academic discourse" (1). Atwood's MaddAddam trilogy, in which Atwood explores themes beyond feminism, is a new experimental narrative that displaces existing theories and approaches to the environmental as well as the humanitarian crisis in the twenty-first century (i.e. deep ecology, radical environmental activism, transhumanism). It is impossible to know for sure to what extent, or whether, Atwood challenges or incorporates posthuman theories in her novels. Posthuman theories, as they question the position of humans to nonhumans, are very relevant in the context of the MaddAddam series as the series explores current cultural anxieties such as the environmental crisis, biodiversity loss, global warming, bio-ethics, the privatization of state and police and dehumanization in the late state of capitalism. Atwood's MaddAddam trilogy is compatible with the ongoing discussions within posthumanist discourse due to its focus on present causes of impending environmental doom.

Thesis Outline

As I argued above, there is a tension within the novels between the traditional human centric ideals that are prevalent in popular contemporary ecocriticism, transhumanism and the more critical posthumanist perspective on the human-nonhuman relationship. While some of the Romantic traits are still present in both novels, they are at the same time rejected by posthumanist themes the novels contain. The posthumanist themes in the novels open up new opportunities for readers to explore advantages and limitations of posthuman theories of Rosi Braidotti's *zoe*-egalitarianism and Timothy Morton's concept of hyperobjects in practice. By extension to Braidotti's egalitarianism, Donna Haraway's concept of companion species and Patricia McCormack's concept of posthuman ethics will be juxtaposed to explore human-animal relations in the second novel, *The Year of the Flood*.

The scope of this project does not allow a further investigation of the third novel, *MaddAddam* as this novel focuses mainly on the post-apocalyptic storyline present in all three novels with fewer flashbacks. The first novel, *Oryx and Crake*, centers on one focalizer, Jimmy, who thinks he is the only survivor after the apocalypse. The function of the first novel is to recount the events that led to his present apocalyptic habitat and to recount the events from his unique perspective as a person of higher class (upper-middle class). The second novel, *The Year of the Flood*, is focalized by two former members of an eco-religious sect, presenting the events that led to the apocalypse from the perspective of two women, one from the higher class and one of the lower class. The third novel, *MaddAddam*, contains flashbacks as well, and showcases similar themes as the first two novels, namely, a critique on *present* causes of impending catastrophe or as I will explain further in chapter two, the end for the world-for-us. Much of those causes are similar to the ones in the first two novels. However, the passages in the flashbacks of the third novel do not provide new points of discussion in the context of this thesis. The third novel is interesting to explore for another project in which approaches of

posthumanism can be evaluated in a post-apocalyptic setting. This thesis, in comparison, close-reads the themes in the events that lead to the end of the world in the novels. Scholar Marinette Grimbeek states that the three novels form a unit, but that they “differ significantly in emphasis and style, and these differences may well be obscured if the novels are discussed thematically” (11). I agree with this statement and therefore opted to discuss the themes in the novels chronologically. In order to answer the main research questions, each chapter will address the different ways of the main characters in the books cope with the environmental crisis, namely, Crake in *Oryx and Crake* and The God’s Gardeners in *The Year of the Flood*. The first chapter, however, provides a thorough explanation of the posthuman theories that will provide the critical lens for the analysis of the novels. In the final chapter, I will further explain Donna Haraway and Patricia McCormack’s concepts for the final analysis that demonstrate the ambiguities of the God’s Gardeners eco-religious beliefs and practice toward the nonhuman.

Chapter 1

Methodology: Posthumanism as a Critical Framework

Margaret Atwood has been described by scholars⁸ as a satirist, environmentalist⁹ and dystopian¹⁰ writer. In the first book of her MaddAdam trilogy, *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood exposes transhumanism for its human-centric pursuit for perfection, which is embodied in the Crakers. These genetically engineered humanoids are named after their creator Crake, who designed them to take Homo sapiens' place in the food chain after he successfully eradicates humans with his supplement BlyssPluss (Atwood 345). In the second novel, *The Year of the Flood*, Atwood introduces the role of religion in a pre-apocalyptic environment. The introduction of eco-religion in order to practice post-human perspectives is an intriguing theme to analyze to what extent taking a certain position to the end of the world-for-us is useful or effective in thinking and practicing post-anthropocentrism. But first of all, it is useful to give an overview and in-depth explanation on the posthumanities as a critical framework to close-read the novels.

In the introduction, I explained that critical posthumanism is the latest theoretical discourse in a line of post-structuralist and anti-humanist critique. Post-structuralist philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze argue that Europeans need to develop a critique of "Europe's delusion of grandeur in positing ourselves as the moral guardian of the world and as the motor of human evolution" (Braidotti 25). Deleuze does this by rejecting the transcendental vision of the subject. Others, like Jacques Derrida, critiques Eurocentrism¹¹. Rosi Braidotti

⁸ For example, Fiona Tolan analyzes Atwood's satirical rhetoric in her earlier novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. Martha Dvorak states that Atwood's writing blurs the boundaries of humorous writing, which Atwood "classified into three genres: parody, satire and humor" (114). Coral Ann Howells describes *Oryx and Crake* as Atwood's "ferocious satire on late modern capitalist American society" (164).

⁹ By J. Bouson and M. Grimbeek among others.

¹⁰ See Fiona Tolan's *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction* and *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*.

¹¹ See Derrida, Jacques. *The Other Heading: Reflection on Today's Europe*. Indiana University Press. 1992.

considers post-structuralist philosophers part of the anti-humanist movement that followed the Second World War (Braidotti 25). Consequently, anti-humanism became an important source for posthuman thought. Critical posthumanism is based on anti-humanism in its tradition to challenge the Vitruvian concept of “Man,” in which the human is center of the universe due to its capability to reason. While critical posthumanism as a developing academic field is not without its own contradictions, it proposes nonbinary theory to engage with the polarizing politics and environmental crisis in the twenty-first century. Critical Posthumanism engages in an ethics of subjectivity that can provide an interpretative framework for contemporary dystopian works that speculate on the end of the world and what it means for humans and nonhumans.

So, how does critical posthumanism call attention to the tensions present in the first two novels of Atwood’s MaddAddam trilogy? Are these tensions dialectic or are they subversive of an established system of thinking (Neo-Humanist/Humanist)? To answer these questions, it is important to explore the definitions of critical posthumanism according to Rosi Braidotti, a prominent scholar in this field. She defines the posthuman/posthumanism as a genealogical¹² and navigational tool that brings into question what it means to be human in the twentieth first century (Braidotti CCCB). More specifically, Braidotti questions the basic unit of reference to define the human in the “bio-genetic age known as the Anthropocene” (Braidotti 5). Besides a navigational/genealogical tool, Braidotti considers critical posthumanism a generative tool to redefine the concept of human.

In Braidotti’s narration of the human genealogy, she critiques the current concept of “Man” developed in the Enlightenment period and attempts to untie the link to classical Humanism and Neo-Humanism. Protagoras defined this classical idea of “Man” as the

¹² Braidotti draws upon Michel Foucault’s definition of genealogy as an interpretative tool. Foucauldian genealogy is a specific type of history that aims to trace “origins” to question their deeper meanings. It comments on facts as they are “constructed out of the researcher’s ‘will to truth’” and shows how the discourses created by these histories form subjects (Sembo 2).

“measure of all things” (Braidotti 13). Afterwards, the Italian Renaissance revived this concept as a universal model portrayed in Leonardo Da Vinci’s drawing of the Vitruvian Man (Braidotti 13). The image of the Vitruvian Man represents a man’s body in perfect symmetry. The image is commonly used to illustrate the human as a “symbolic microcosm” in the Renaissance, affirming its role as “the center of the universe” (Murtinho 511). Braidotti describes the Vitruvian Man as the “emblem of Humanism as a doctrine that combines the biological, discursive and moral expansion of human capabilities into an idea of teleologically ordained, rational progress” (13). The model represents European standards of individuals and their cultures which highly relies on self-reflexive reason as a universal power (Braidotti 13). Eurocentric Humanism is thus a “structural element of European cultural practice, which is also embedded in both theory and institutional and pedagogical practices” (15). What is at stake is that this Humanistic norm implies a “binary logic” that distinguishes self and other, essentially realized by aforementioned cultural practices which treats difference/otherness as “pejoration.” These others are the “sexualized, racialized, and naturalized others” who are dehumanized and considered “disposable bodies” (15). Davies points out that after World War II “there was no escaping the recognition that the systematic purging of Jews, homosexuals and other racial impurities was the result not of some inexplicable descent into the irrational, atavistic barbarity but of supremely modern rationality” (52). Humanism in which the concept of the Enlightened “Man” is praised for its powers of reflective self-awareness and reason is thus an ideology that encourage the harmful cultural practice of othering. For this reason, Braidotti argues for the posthuman as a navigational and generative tool to critique and redefine human.

After the Second World War, Humanism was strongly questioned on whether its tenets contribute to a civilized human (nature) and whether the human is the center of the world/universe. In his *Letter on Humanism* (1947), Martin Heidegger is critical of traditional Humanism with its definition of “Man” as a “rational animal” of an “animal endowed with

speech” (qtd. in Flynn 51). In his view, Humanism thus leads to a “technological society that defines man in terms of productivity and assesses all values in terms of personal and social utility” (Flynn 51). Jean-François Lyotard critiqued Humanism on the grounds that it depends upon a definition of the human which is “exclusionary of difference” (Woodward, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy). In his book *The Inhuman*, the inhuman refers to the dehumanizing effects of “development” in society and “the infinitely secret one of which the soul is hostage” (2). Woodward describes the latter type of inhuman refers to “the potentially positive forces that the idea of the human tries to repress or exclude, but leads to disruptive effects” (Woodward, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Likewise, Foucault argues that Humanism is too “supple, too diverse and too inconsistent to serve as an axis of reflection,” which can then be utilized to justify imperialism and domination of those considered less human (Foucault, Rabinow 44, 176).

However, Humanism’s protean quality is what kept the ideology of “Man” as the center of history, no matter how much Anti-Humanists in Humanist Communism, Liberal Humanism a Neo-Humanism attempted to adapt its philosophy. This is because Anti-Humanist philosophers based their anti-Humanism on a rejuvenation or re-inscription of Humanism and thus failed to create a paradigm outside of Humanism. Humanist rhetoric remains focused on the superiority of the human being on the planet. For example, Heidegger’s conception of Being as *transcendens* places the human being on a pedestal, as the only being in the animal kingdom with “a special dignity not shared by such beings as animals, rocks and trees” (McLennan 119). Furthermore, while Lyotard and Foucault challenge human agency based on the idea that language is not a transcendental human trait, they still assign the human “a royal place as the motor of human history,” which further supports the definition of human in terms of “autonomy and self-determination” (Braidotti 23). As Michele Barret argues,

the Cartesian subject. . .is white, an European; he is highly educated. . .he is not a woman, not black, not a migrant, not marginal; he is heterosexual and a father. . .It is entirely clear to us that this model of the subject is centered, and unified, around a nexus of social and biographical characteristics that represent power. (qtd. in Davies 59)

Humanism and anti-Humanism are thus not without their limitations. They both uphold the status quo of Eurocentric human perfectibility.

As a feminist philosopher with a background in Anti-Humanism, Braidotti acknowledges the shortcomings of Anti-Humanism. In the 1960s and 1970s Anti-Humanism took various forms in feminism, de-colonialism, anti-racism, anti-nuclear and pacifist movements (16). According to philosopher Kate Soper, Anti-Humanists “often end up espousing humanist ideals” such as freedom and individualism, and their “work of critical thought is supported by intrinsic humanist discursive values” (qtd. in Braidotti 29). The realization of Humanism as well as anti-humanism’s discrepancies gave rise to the posthuman turn, wherein alternative concepts of the human subject are in the process of being developed by four separate strands.

Contemporary posthuman thought has developed in four strands. The first one is posthumanism based on moral philosophy: popular posthumanism, the second one builds upon science and technology studies: analytical posthumanism, and the third is based on anti-humanism: critical posthumanism. The first strand relies heavily on a restoration of Humanism, the second one relies on the Enlightenment ideal of human progress and perfectibility. By extension, analytical posthumanism’s concept of panhumanity¹³ is capable of creating both positive and negative inter-connections, remaining politically neutral. Lastly, there is a fourth strand of posthumanism that refers to itself as transhumanism. As explained in the introduction,

¹³ Franklin, Lury and Stacey define panhumanity as “the technologically mediated world” in which humans (and nonhumans) sense an inter-connection with each other globally (Braidotti 40). This inter-connectedness creates a “web of intricate inter-dependencies” (40). Braidotti argues that this interconnectivity is mostly negative as it relies on “fear of imminent catastrophe” and “does not breed tolerance and peaceful co-existence” (40).

transhumanism is a form of Neo-Humanism in which science and technology are the tools that will lead humanity to perfectibility in health and longevity. This strand sees the human in the twenty-first century in transition of becoming a posthuman, which means becoming the perfect human. Despite these different strands, this thesis will utilize critical posthumanism as the critical framework for the analysis of Atwood's novels because it produces the most interesting challenges for reasons I will explain below.

Critical posthumanism challenges humancentric ideologies in which the (Eurocentric and male) human is seen as the measure of all things at the cost of women, people of color and the non-human other. Additionally, Rosi Braidotti defines her posthumanism as materialist, deliberately turning away from post-structuralism because her posthumanism is not linguistically situated. She defines the critical posthuman subjects "within an eco-philosophy of multiple belongings, as a relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity, that is to say a subject that works across differences and is also internally differentiated, but still grounded and accountable. . .[Her] position is in favor of complexity and promotes radical posthuman subjectivity, resting on the ethics of becoming" (49).

Braidotti employs Benedict de Spinoza's monism and Deleuze and Guattari's vitalist materialism. Braidotti describes Spinoza's central idea that "matter, the world are not dualistic entities structured according to principles of internal and external opposition" (56). Spinoza's monism is the idea that "matter is one," "driven by the desire for self-expression and ontologically free" (Braidotti 56). Braidotti explains that Spinoza's monism has been criticized by Hegel and Marxist Hegelians for excluding any reference to "negativity and violent dialectical oppositions," therefore being "politically ineffective" (56). Nevertheless, Marxist Hegelians in the nineteen seventies realized Spinozist monism's potential to remedy the contradictions in Marxism and to "clarify Hegel's relationship to Marx" (56). For Braidotti therefore, Spinozist monism is a key to overcoming dialectical oppositions and stimulating

“nondialectical understandings of materialism,” because it rejects all forms of transcendentalism (56). In addition, Spinozist monistic worldview is the basis of vitalist materialism, a philosophy that defines matter as vital and self-organizing (auto-poetic). According to Braidotti, monism relocates “difference outside the dialectical scheme, as a complex process of differing which is framed by both internal and external forces and is based on the centrality of the relation to multiple others” (56). Spinozist monism and vitalist materialism are the necessary basic philosophies for a “posthuman theory of subjectivity that does not rely on classical Humanism.” Braidotti names this combination matter-realist worldview (56).

Braidotti disregards language as an important factor in her processing and theorizing on the posthuman. However, she neglects that the posthuman cannot have a psychic environment without language and that it is not a shared language with non-humans. Posthuman scholar Cary Wolfe addresses this issue and attempts to theorize a posthuman that is aware of its self-referential condition:

There are autopoietic systems that, if they are to continue their existence, respond to this overwhelming complexity¹⁴ by reducing it in terms of the selectivity of a self-referential selectivity or code. . .this means. . .that the world is an ongoing, differentiated construction and creation of a shared environment, sometimes converging in a consensual domain, sometimes not, by autopoietic entities that have their own temporalities, chronicities, perceptual modalities, and so on – in short, their own forms of embodiment. (xxiv)

For Wolfe, the world is a “virtuality and a multiplicity: it is both what one does in embodied enaction and what the self-reference of that enaction excludes” (xxiv). The self-referentiality of embodiments (systems) indicate a closedness that contribute to the complexity of an

¹⁴ Of multiple self-referential beings in a heterogeneous environment.

environment possible for any autopoietic system. Thus, the more virtual the world is, the more real and the more it increases the system's dependency on the environment (xxiv). While Wolfe addresses the issue of self-referentiality, he does so with the assumption, following Derrida, that language is a transcendental phenomenon rather than an embodied one: "it exceeds and encompasses the life/death relation" (qtd. in Wolfe xxv). Nonetheless, Wolfe's posthumanism posits to rethink the human by removing meaning from the "ontologically domain of consciousness, reason, reflection, and so on" and by reconsidering human experience in terms of "the entire sensorium of other living beings and their own autopoietic ways of bringing forth a world" (xxv). It is important to address self-referentiality, an aspect that is missing in Braidotti's work as she does not explain how a relational post-human subjectivity would function without language. For the purpose of this thesis, therefore, I will employ critical posthuman theories that support Braidotti's posthuman subjectivity, while keeping Wolfe in mind in order to deconstruct the novels.

As previously mentioned, the posthuman predicament entails a growing tension between the urgency to find "new and alternative modes of political and ethical agency" for twenty-first century "technologically mediated world," and the resistance of old mental frameworks (Braidotti 58). The techno-scientific structure of advanced capitalism is built upon what Braidotti calls the "four horsemen of the posthuman apocalypse," which are nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology and cognitive science (58). The advancements in these fields lead to the "trade of Life itself" (59). So, even though matter as autopoietic is developed in the field of molecular biology/system theory, monistic philosophy adds to the idea of auto-poesies that all matter is "structurally relational," and thus always in connection to different environments (59). That is why the autopoietic power of the posthuman is not "confined within feedback loops internal to the human self, but it is present in all living (and dead) matter" (59). Braidotti's posthuman subjectivity is thus "a relational self, engendered by the accumulative

effect of the social, psychic and biological environments” (59). Braidotti does not fully accept social constructivism as a viable critical framework, but rather attempts to emphasize the non-human, she coins as *zoe*. *Zoe* also stands for the “dynamic, self-organizing structure of life” and “generative vitality” (60). It is a transversal materialist-oriented tool that displaces the boundary between the organic/discursive and the non-human/*zoe* (60). *Zoe*-centered egalitarianism is thus at the center of the post-anthropocentric posthumanist turn,¹⁵ because it is materialist, secular and unsentimental towards the “opportunistic trans-species comedication of Life” that advanced capitalism presents as logic (60).¹⁶

In conclusion, this chapter has provided an overview of posthumanism’s rise within the humanities. Moreover, it has discussed the differences between critical posthumanism’s two main critics: Wolfe and Braidotti. Finally, it has explained Braidotti’s notion of *zoe*-egalitarianism, which will prove crucial in my analysis of the nonhuman relations with humans in Atwood’s novels, which I will turn to in the following two chapters. In addition to Braidotti’s *zoe*-egalitarianism, this is where I will also draw upon Timothy Morton’s concept of hyperobjects. The concept of hyperobjects will be outlined in chapter two. The following chapter centers on the first novel, *Oryx and Crake*.

¹⁵ Note that Braidotti makes a clear distinction between posthumanism and post-anthropocentrism. However, other critical posthuman scholars such as Cary Wolfe and Donna Haraway do not make this distinction. Some of post-anthropocentrist philosophies are still considered critical posthumanist.

¹⁶ This posthuman idea of the nature/culture continuum is very much shared by Donna Haraway as well: “Biological determinism and cultural determinism are both instances of misplaced concreteness – i.e. the mistake of, first, taking provisional and local category abstractions like ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ for the world and, second, mistaking potent consequences to be preexisting foundations” (6). This information is relevant for my analysis in the third chapter.

Chapter 2

Hyperobjects, Dehumanization and Commodity: The Crisis of Anthropocentrism in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*

In 2009, Ursula K. Le Guin wrote a review in *The Guardian* of Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) along with its sequel *The Year of the Flood* (2009). In her review, she quotes Atwood's reason for classifying her books as Speculative Fiction (SpF) rather than Science Fiction (SF): "In her recent, brilliant essay collection, *Moving Targets*, she states that everything that happens in her novels is possible and may even have already happened, so they can't be science fiction, which is 'fiction in which things happen that are not possible today'" (qtd. in *In Other Worlds* 2). It seems, as Atwood would discover in a public discussion with Le Guin (2010), that Le Guin defines Science Fiction much the same as Atwood defines Speculative Fiction. Atwood explains her understanding of Le Guin's definition of SF as "fiction about things that really could happen, whereas things that could not happen Le Guin classifies under fantasy" (Atwood *In Other Worlds* 4). Despite Atwood and Le Guin's distinctive ways of classifying SF, Atwood asserts that her novels represent a future that could potentially happen, which is the end of the world as we know it propelled by anthropocentric impact on the planetary environment.

Atwood's dystopian narrative dovetails with the idea of the end of the "world-for-us" by anti-humanist nihilist scholar Eugene Thacker (4). Thacker defines the world-for-us as the world that "human beings, interpret and give meaning to, the world that we relate to or feel alienated from, the world that we are at once and that is also separate from the human" (4). In contrast, the world-in-itself is defined as the world in "some inaccessible, already-given state, which we then turn into the world-for-us" (Thacker 5). It is a "paradoxical concept" because the world-in-itself cannot be "thought" about or "acted upon" without turning into the world-

for-us. Furthermore, the world-in-itself usually manifests in the form of “natural disasters” (5). Such manifestations, whether caused by global warming or other effects of the Anthropocene, incite anxieties about the end of the world and imaginative narratives of the “world-without-us; a spectral and speculative world” that “allows us to think about the world-in-itself” (5). How the world-without-us takes shape, is what Atwood considers her work to represent. In this sense, her MaddAddam series is relevant to the discussion of post-anthropocentric and posthumanist thinking. Her books serve as an experimental site in which the environmental crisis compels humans to reevaluate intersubjective relationships between people of color, women and nonhumans.

In this chapter, I will investigate how the eco-crisis¹⁷ in the novel elicits human realization of the end of the world-for-us, a world that is no longer habitable for, nor hospitable to, human beings, in *Oryx and Crake*. Through the lens of Timothy Morton’s concept of hyperobjects and Rosi Braidotti’s posthuman subjectivity, I will demonstrate how Atwood’s character Crake clings to human centric perspectives in order to form new world-views based on transhumanism through the Crakers and nihilism by causing human extinction. In addition, the function of Morton’s hyperobjects, which manifest as a pandemic and extreme weather in the novel, is to map out the effects they have on post-anthropocentric thinking of characters in the novels. The characters in the novels have different social identities that affect their post-anthropocentric thinking. Their social background plays a constitutive role in the characters’ process of redefining the human based on a Romantic and liberal notion of the human. The characters’ practices include the process of othering of humans and nonhumans that do not fit the Vitruvian model. Nonhumans are commodified and humans create gated communities as a

¹⁷ Ecological crisis or Environmental crisis. They both have the same definition according to Oxford’s *Dictionary of Geography* (2015). I am working with the following definition of eco-crisis: “a state of human-induced ecological disorder that could lead to the destruction of this planet’s ecosystem to the extent that human life will at least be seriously impaired for generations, if not destroyed. Evidence to suggest that this crisis has already been reached includes deforestation, increasing levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide, and current rates of energy use” (Mayhew 148).

way to separate the planetary environment and the world-for-us. To demonstrate this, I will close-read passages of Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* wherein humans grapple with redefining themselves as a way to survive and as a way to rethink what it means to be human in relation to nonhumans and the planetary environment. In this chapter, however, I will focus on the first novel of the series: *Oryx and Crake*.

First, I will give a short definition of hyperobjects to make clear why I refer to weather phenomena and diseases in the novel as hyperobjects. Second, I will demonstrate how hyperobjects prompt characters Crake and Jimmy, to redefine the human in relation to the nonhuman. Third, I will close-read these characters' post-anthropocentric approaches through the lens of Braidotti's posthuman subjectivity/*zoe*-centered egalitarianism to analyze the characters' intersubjective relations to other humans and nonhumans. Lastly, these findings point forward to a conclusion in which the limits of posthumanism of Braidotti and Morton in practice are mapped out.

Hyperobjects

What Thacker refers to as the world-in-itself, Timothy Morton would refer to as a hyperobject. Morton's conception of hyperobjects draws from quantum theory as well as systems theory.¹⁸ For the purpose of this thesis, I will not explain Morton's reasoning for how he defines hyperobjects, rather I am more interested in the effects they have on how humans redefine themselves on the basis of their presence. According to Morton, hyperobjects¹⁹ are nonlocal, meaning that they are not things that are to be found in one specific location, rather they

¹⁸ Systems theories are "concerned with the relationship among elements within systems. General System Theory was generalized by Karl Ludwig von Bertalanffy as an interdisciplinary framework, or metatheory, aimed at describing the fundamental principles of systems of all kinds, from cells and organisms to societies and from biological and ecological to social systems. Several other metatheories, such as cybernetics and information theory, the theory of complex adaptive systems, and dynamical systems theory, are also systems theory" (Tschan 891-894).

manifest as “aesthetic effects²⁰ that are directly causal” (39). By viewing phenomena as units (derived from systems theory), it is possible to measure hyperobjects such as radiation or seismic waves. Because of this, quantum physicist Niels Bohr, from which Morton draws his theory, considers quantum theory a “heuristic tool” (43). According to him, to search further for what kind of reality is underneath (the compartmentalization based on quantum theory) is “absurd,” because quantum phenomena (the units referred to above) are “irreducibly inaccessible to us” (qtd. in Morton 43). The world-in-itself is therefore always inaccessible to humans, but the aesthetic effects or manifestations of the world-in-itself to humans comes in the form of natural disasters, pandemics or other uncontrollable interferences of the world-in-itself on the world-for-us.

As previously mentioned, hyperobjects are phenomena that cannot be perceived with the eye but only measured with the help of quantum mechanics. If they are not measurable, it is possible that these unmeasurable hyperobjects are part of the world-in-itself that humans are not aware of. A natural disaster is thus only a manifestation of hyperobjects but not a hyperobject itself. For example, La Niña is an aesthetic effect (visible manifestation) of global warming. Furthermore, hyperobjects are “massively distributed in time and space” which is a characteristic of their nonlocality (48). They are viscous, meaning that what is considered matter is interconnected (similar to monistic philosophy). Yet hyperobjects are on a deeper level anti-materialist because their “viscosity is a feature of the way in which time emanates from objects, rather than being continuum in which they float” (33). Hyperobjects are thus part of a reality that quantum physics can only measure but not fully prove because the smallest matter is irreducible thus far in science. Humans are “glued to” their “phenomenological situation”

²⁰ Morton never explains why he chose the word aesthetics, which I find problematic, because Thacker refers to the effects of the world-in-itself as manifestations but Morton refers to them as a possible work of art. This part of his explanation remains unclear to me but I can only give my interpretation of what he explains. Morton refers to what we can see as the manifestation of hyperobjects as aesthetic images. I interpret his word-choice as a way to emphasize that humans are not able to see what Kant calls the “ding an sich” but can only have a notion of it through our corporal senses.

(36). The world-in-itself or hyperobjects remain inaccessible yet that does not mean that they do not exist.

In contrast to the monistic philosophy of Spinoza on which Braidotti develops her posthumanism, hyperobjects are not part of a semi-holistic reality, rather “everything is enfolded in everything as flowing movement” (43). Morton stresses hyperobjects’ nonlocality and viscosity:

Nonlocality means just that – there is no such thing, at a deep level, as the local. Locality is an abstraction. Metaphorically, this applies to hyperobjects. The wet stuff falling on my head in Northern California in early 2011 could have been an effect of the tsunami churning up La Niña in the Pacific dumping it on the land, La Niña being a manifestation of global warming in any case. (47)

It may seem that Morton contradicts himself by stepping away from monism and materialism. Nevertheless, he uses the metaphor of a holographic universe to describe the world-in-itself merely to explain viscosity²¹ and nonlocality of hyperobjects. Morton’s holographic universe does not consist of particles equally spread as space in which all objects float. How Morton explicates the universe consists of the temporal undulation of all objects: “the undulating folds of space and time float in front of objects” thus directly influencing other objects and creating the space and time it undulates (63).²² Influencing the temporality of other objects is called phasing: “The massiveness of hyperobjects makes phasing vivid to humans” (68). Phasing is the result of hyperobject’s viscosity as “[v]iscosity is a feature of the way in which time emanates from objects, rather than being a continuum in which they float” (Morton 33).

²¹ Viscosity, as described above, is a property attributed to hyperobjects to describe their presence as interconnected with all environments on the planet. All objects have their own lifespan or time in which they exist. That is to say, hyperobjects are not localized separate entities that take space, rather, they are present everywhere. An example is radioactive particles found in the air in areas that cannot be delineated.

²² For more content on how temporal undulation influences space; read Morton’s *Hyperobjects*. “Time is radically inside objects, rippling through them . . . and space is inside objects, differentiating their parts from one another” (73).

Hyperobjects such as space, climate, the biosphere, are high-dimensional objects, making them unconceivable to the eye. Morton exemplifies: “When it rains on my head, climate is raining. The biosphere is raining. But what I feel are raindrops, and gaps between raindrops” (76). Lastly, phasing is the process in which objects interact due to their temporal undulation. Phasing is thus the mechanical process in which interobjectivity takes place. In contrast, intersubjectivity is anthropocentric; yet Morton considers intersubjectivity an instance of a “much more widespread phenomenon, namely interobjectivity” (81). Hyperobjects interact interobjectively through phasing with the world-for-us and prompts humans to think ecologically.

The Crisis of Anthropocentrism in *Oryx and Crake*

In the first novel of Atwood’s trilogy, *Oryx and Crake*, a scientist named Crake plots human extinction by creating a virus, which he spreads worldwide as vitamins in the product “Blyssplus” (342). In addition, Crake brings “Crakers” into being through biotechnology to replace humans in his post-anthropocentric ideal. In this chapter, the focus will be on Crake’s attempt to end anthropocentrism. His approach is embodied by the Crakers, who represent a type of transhumanist ideal of the perfect human. In this context, hyperobjects are the denominators of post-anthropocentric experimentation in thought and practice.

As mentioned above, one of the forms that hyperobjects manifest in *Oryx and Crake* is through a pandemic originating from a human lab. Indeed, as scholar Richard Alan Northover points out, “virtual destruction of humanity on Earth” in Atwood’s MaddAdam trilogy is “not the result of ecological collapse caused by human activity but rather the consequence of a bioengineered virus meant to forestall such a collapse by killing off all humans” (81). However, he does not take into account that hyperobjects (or the effects of global warming through catastrophes) are the agents of fear and anxiety of the end of the world-for-us. The awareness

of hyperobjects results in humans accelerating the process of the end of the world-for-us in the novel. The protagonist of this novel, Jimmy, otherwise known as Snowman, narrates his story to give the reader context of how the world came to an end. His post-apocalyptic life is a life without humans as he relies on the Crakers, beings created by biotechnologist Crake, to inhabit an Earth in which humankind is extinct. Crake's nefarious plan is tied with an oppressive system of neo-capitalism in which both Jimmy and Crake are raised. As the effects of global warming is becoming more visible to governments and politicians in the novel, there is no way to dismiss this phenomenon. Jimmy's first memory of an impactful event in which humans make use of hyperobjects as a means to start biological warfare is depicted in the following passage:

At the bonfire Jimmy was anxious about the animals, because they were being burned and surely that would hurt them. No, his father told him. The animals were already dead . . . In some way all of this - the bonfire, the charred smell, but most of all the lit-up suffering animals - was his fault because he'd done nothing to rescue them. . . Jimmy's father sounded angry; so did the man when he answered. 'They say it was brought in on purpose,' 'I wouldn't be surprised,' said Jimmy's father. . . 'Drive up the prices,' said the man. 'Make a killing on their own stuff, that way. 'It's a killing all right,' said Jimmy's father in a disgusted tone. 'But it could've been just a nutbar. Some cult thing, you never know.' . . . This bug is something new though. We've got the bioprint.' (20-21)

This passage reveals that disease, as a hyperobject, is attainable to humans. However, the "bug" referred to is an object within itself that once spread is uncontrollable. As a result, death of the infected is the only way to contain the effects of this hyperobject. Morton states that hyperobjects are "directly responsible for the end of the world, rendering both denialism and apocalyptic environmentalism obsolete" (2). He does not think that there is an impending doom that did not happen yet; the end is here and now, because the world-for-us is no longer

“operational,” and hyperobjects make this conspicuous (6). Disease as an hyperobject is therefore part of the end of the world-for-us. To further explain the context of the novel, there is a scarcity of food due to species extinction and global warming (which of course is an effect of human impact on earth). Jimmy explains at the time that he lived in the gated community of OrganInc Farms:

Still as time went on and the coastal aquifers turned salty and the northern permafrost melted and the vast tundra bubbled with methane, and the drought in the midcontinental plains regions went on and on, and the Asian steppes turned to sand dunes, and meat became harder to come by, some people had their doubts. Within OrganInc Farms itself it was noticeable how often back bacon and ham sandwiches and pork pies turned up on the staff cafe menu. (27)

In the same way as Morton suggests, the concept of world in Atwood’s novel is just as dysfunctional in the world outside of the novel. Hyperobjects, which are global warming and disease in the context of the novel, expose themselves through the loss of permafrost, excess of methane and drought that all have serious consequences for humans as well as nonhuman animals. It leads to food scarcity, even for the privileged ones that live in a safe environment away from nature.

To further analyze these passages, Braidotti’s concept of posthuman subjectivity is useful to show how the realization of hyperobjects affects humans as a whole in the novel. Braidotti points out that “the public discourse about environmental catastrophe or ‘natural’ disasters – Fukushima nuclear plant and the Japanese tsunami, the Australian bushfires, hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, etc. – accomplishes a significant dilemma: it expresses a new ecological awareness, while re-inserting the distinction between nature and culture” (Braidotti 112). Similarly, Morton asserts this from an ontological perspective. He asserts that world “as a background of events is an objectification of a hyperobject: the biosphere, climate,

evolution” generate denialism through “debates” and “sides” on global warming (100). This approach is problematic, because as environmentalism “preaches apocalypse,” it results in more “defiance” from global warming deniers (100). Furthermore, both sides are “fixated” on the concept of world in which the human is the center of giving meaning and in which humans have absolute agency (100). This point of view further empowers the anthropomorphic subject that distances itself from nature as something *out there*, which leads to a further acceleration of the end of the-world-for-us. Similarly, while Atwood’s fictional world is a speculative reality, it is a reflection of our reality, a speculation on the question of what if; what if the systems humans maintain as a status quo remain unchanged? What is at stake is the loss of Life (of humans as well nonhumans) to maintain the status quo. These practices of bio-political management of “life,” as in the case of the extermination of pigs, “mobilize new and subtler degrees of death and extinction” (Braidotti 115). All bodies are “reduced to carriers of vital information” and their value is measured by their classifications “on the basis of genetic predispositions and vital capacity of self-organization” (117). If the pigs in the novel meant for human consumption and other forms of commodification are not able to recover of their disease on their own, they are considered disposable bodies. Furthermore, through the system of biowarfare, as suggested in the first passage, animals as well as humans are further dehumanized for the purpose of commodification and the realization of the effects of hyperobjects intensifies these practices of dehumanization. Hyperobjects thus underlie the end of the-world-for-us by prompting humans in Atwood’s novel to either cling to their humancentric views through othering or overcome anthropocentrism.

As a response to this posthuman condition, accelerated by the manifestations of hyperobjects and biotechnological advancements, employed to further serve a Humanistic ideal (and Transhumanistic²³), one of the main characters in *Oryx and Crake*, Crake (Glenn) adopts

²³ Transhumanism is a scholarly and philosophical movement in which technology is to serve the human and transcend the human to an improved version (the posthuman). Human enhancement and perfectibility are the

a nihilist human centric perspective. When he rekindles his relationship with Jimmy later in their lives,²⁴ he gives Jimmy a tour in his compound and shows him the many scientific experiments that were successful or were in the process of being so. One of them is the wolvogs, “not dogs” and bred to deceive” trespassers as Jimmy confronts him with the question of “what if,” “what if they get out? Go on a rampage? Start breeding, then the population spirals out of control – like those big green rabbits?” (*Oryx* 241). To that, Crake responds:

“That would be a problem. . .But they won’t get out. Nature is to zoos as God is to churches.” “Meaning what,” said Jimmy. He wasn’t paying close attention, he was worrying about the ChickieNobs and the wolvogs. Why is it that he feels like a line has been crossed, some boundary transgressed? How much is too much, how far is too far?” “Those walls and bars are there for a reason,” said Crake. “Not to keep us out but to keep them in. Mankind needs barriers in both cases.”

“Them?”

“Nature and God.”

“I thought you didn’t believe in God,” said Jimmy.

“I don’t believe in Nature either,” said Crake. “Or not with a capital N.”

(*Oryx* 241-242)

In this context, nature with a “capital N” refers to the Romanization of nature. Romantic writers such as William Wordsworth, amongst others, romanticize Nature as well as keep the notion of

goals for the transhuman to become the posthuman. This line of posthumanism is now generally referred to as transhumanism. Read Ronald Cole-Turner’s *Transhumanism and Transcendence: Christian Hope in an Age of Technological Enhancement* for a thorough explanation on Transhumanism. In addition, the introduction of this thesis explains transhumanism as well.

²⁴ They separate from each other for a few years because they go to different compounds to pursue different studies. Crake went to a prestigious compound that specializes in biotechnology (Watson-Crick) and Jimmy went to a university specialized in the Humanities (or what is left from the Humanities: “Applied Rhetorics” (Atwood *Oryx* 221)).

Nature arbitrary: Nature is either deified or anthropomorphized.²⁵ Oerlemans notes that “within romantic writing and criticism, the word (nature) may be taken as a referent for a materialistic fate . . . a transcendent power which may or may not be God, a conservative notion of the telos of culture, or the material world itself, often reduced or materialized to mere scenery or landscape” (31). On the same note, Braidotti argues that constructing the notion of Nature as “holistic” or as “a single, sacred organism. . . promotes full-scale humanization of the environment. . . therefore (this notion) expands the structures of possessive egoism and self-interests to include non-human agents” (84-85). Furthermore, Morton states that the concept of Nature (as well as world) incites ideas of a “nihilistic Noah’s Ark” (100). Crake is aware that, as Morton points out, that the idea of humans “living ‘in’ a world – one that is called Nature – no longer applies in any meaningful sense, except as nostalgia” (101). That is why for Crake, God, as well as Nature, are concepts to be eschewed because of their negative affect on human agency. This indicates that Crake believes in the absolute agency of the neo-liberalist human²⁶ and the improvement of the human species through science.

Crake demonstrates his belief in how the human is central to the world creating his “nihilistic Noah’s Ark” on the basis of a neo-liberalist transhumanist belief of human enhancement as an attempt to save humanity. Crake demonstrates his belief in his human

²⁵ See Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (1991). According to Bate, Hartman and Paul de Man read Wordsworth’s relation to nature as a medium for transcendence. Bate, however, argues for a green reading of Wordsworth in which Wordsworth’s love for Nature is emphasized (8). Similarly, Lissa Ottum and Seth T. Reno argue in their chapter “Recovering Ecology’s Affects,” that Wordsworth writes “about the joy and pleasure he receives from an affective experience in the natural world” (1). Their main argument on nature is that love of daffodils “is an essential element to thinking critically about the environment” (1). See their edited book *Wordsworth and the Green Romantics: Affect and Ecology in the Nineteenth Century* (2016). The two views of nature, whether nature is transcendental or an object to love, are both a romanticized conception of nature or Nature (Not considering the effect Bate and Ottum & Reno argue this love might have on becoming environmentally conscious).

²⁶ To my understanding, neoliberalism entails a political ideology in which free market (increased privatization) is central and regulation by the state is reduced: “the neoliberal vision of an ideal society entailed individuals being able to engage in market transactions free from third-party interference by governments, unions, or other political motivated entities or rules” (Cahill 28). For Braidotti, the “neo-liberal normative trend” supports “hyper-individualism” as governments give individuals bio-ethical agency and therefore removes responsibility of governments’ social healthcare (The *Posthuman* 116). In the context of *Oryx and Crake* or the *MaddAddam* series), nature is a source of materials for production to serve the free market. Crake’s view of nature is similar. To him, nature is an object of experimentation that can be controlled, manipulated and utilized for production.

centrism and creation of his own “nihilistic Noah’s Ark” in an attempt to save humanity. To Crake, human enhancement would solve humanity’s woes. Atwood puts Morton’s criticism on the topic of the end of the world in environmental discourses in a simulacrum; Crake attempts to save the Earth by plotting human extinction and creates humanoids to replace humanity. First, he creates a virus which he spreads worldwide as vitamins/enhancers in the product “Blysspluss” (Atwood *Oryx* 342). Crake describes his new invention as “prophylactic in nature,” and an aphrodisiac that would “prolong youth” (*Oryx* 345). His reasoning for the initial purpose of Blysspluss is based on the same fear and anxiety humanity shares when they imagine the end of the world-for-us. In response to Jimmy’s remark about Crake’s altruistic motive, he responds:

‘It’s not altruism exactly’. . . ‘More like sink or swim. I’ve seen confidential Corps demographic reports. As a species we’re in deep trouble, worse than anyone’s saying. They’re afraid to release the stats because people might just give up, but take it from me, we’re running out of space-time. Demand for recourses has exceeded supply for decades in marginal geopolitical areas, hence the famines and the droughts; but very soon demand is going to exceed supply for *everyone*. With the Blysspluss pill the human race will have a better chance at swimming’ (*Oryx* 347).

There are two things to address in this passage, the first one is that hyperobjects such as global warming, diseases and radioactive particles make it impossible for humans to achieve “a final distance toward the world” (Morton 130). In Atwood’s novels, the idea of a distance between humans and “Nature” is kept in place by officials that keep the privileged misinformed on the state of the world-for-us as demonstrated in the passage above. Morton argues that it is exactly this “distance that reifies the pattern into a world picture that need to be shattered” (127). In other words, the aesthetic formation of world and Nature is kept in place in order to create the

illusion of safety and human centeredness in a society that holds on to its neo-liberal lifestyle. Secondly, in Atwood's universe, the end of the world is already present the same way Morton argues for the context outside the novel. By maintaining the status quo, privileged humans experience a sense of denialism and safety, whilst disposable ones are hyperaware of the "intimacy" they share with nonhumans.

The intimacy disposable others share with each other will be further expanded on in the next chapter. For this chapter it is important to note that the privileged neo-liberal transhumanists in Atwood's novel designed gated communities to keep the idea of "world" that Morton refers to as an aesthetic concept that is "for us" and in which the role of "Nature" is "out there" (Morton 121). Crake and Jimmy's parents for example, mourn for the shrinkage of the world-for-us according to Jimmy's account: "But everyone's parents moaned on stuff like that. Remember when you could drive anywhere? Remember when you could fly anywhere in the world, without fear? Remember when everyone lived in the pleeblands?" (*Oryx* 72).²⁷

Eduardo Marks de Marques describes the pleeblands as "spaces of social and economic abandonment outside the compounds" (136). The pleeblands refer to the cities, coined by the the compounders due to the cities' "dingy-looking streets" and criminal activities (*Oryx* 31). The people in the pleeblands are considered dangerous because "public security in the pleeblands was leaky" and consisted full of "muggers, addicts, . . . "crazies" and . . . "paupers (31). Inside the compounds it was "the way it used to be when Jimmy's father was a kid, before things got so serious" (31). The world-for-us thus shrunk to gated communities run by technological corporations that evolved and provided their own military security, "CorpSeCorps" (32). The concept of world-for-us as a world that thrives on biotechnological innovative capitalism is only so for the privileged, "the kings and dukes" of society" (32).

²⁷ The pleeblands are the spaces outside gated communities considered unsafe.

Outside this world, other humans are considered disposable. They are susceptible to human trafficking, poverty and disease. In the passage mentioned above, wherein Crake explains to Jimmy how he plans to procure human survival, Jimmy wonders how Crake found test subjects for the clinical trials (of Blysspluss). To which Crake answers, “From the poorer countries. Pay them a few dollars, they don’t even know what they’re taking. Sex clinics, of course – they’re happy to help. Whorehouses. Prisons And from the ranks of the desperate, as usual” (*Oryx* 349). Morton explains that pollution and global warming are now considered “flows or processes that can be managed,” which is what the technological companies are doing maintaining the status quo (capitalistic machine) (Morton 125). Morton further argues:

These flows are often eventually shunted into some less powerful group’s backyard. The Native American tribe must deal with the radioactive waste. The African American family must deal with the toxic chemical runoff. The Nigerian village must deal with the oil slick. Rob Nixon calls this the slow violence of ecological oppression. It is helpful to think of global warming as something like an ultra-slow-motion nuclear bomb. The incremental effects are almost invisible, until an island disappears underwater. Poor people – people who include most of us on Earth at this point – perceive the ecological emergency not as degrading aesthetic picture such as world but as an accumulation of violence that nibbles at them directly. (125)

Hyperobjects are the denominators of the acceleration of the end of the world-for-us as Eurocentric humans struggle to preserve neo-liberal capitalism in Atwood’s speculative novel. Braidotti stresses that “the opportunistic political economy of bio-genetic capitalism induces, if not the actual erasure, at least the blurring of the distinction between the human and the species when it comes to profiting from them” (63). Whomever does not fit the Humanist ideal (not white, rich, able-bodied, male) is further othered such as the pleeblander, Oryx (who has grown

up in East-Asia as a sex worker until Crake hired her to train the Crakers) and people in other nations that are not wealthy by being exposed to dehumanization, violence and the consequences of technological corporations' damage to their ecologies. These groups of people are thus considered disposable just as other forms of life that are profitable.

With regard to Crake's plan to help the concept of world, disposable²⁸ bodies are to him all bodies. His fear of the end of the world comes from a self-serving place as one of the passages above demonstrate: "demand is going to exceed supply for *everyone*," a clear indication that the planet's resources are dwindling even for the privileged (*Oryx* 347). In his essay, "Hope, But Not for Us: Ecological Science Fiction and the End of the World in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*," Gerry Canavan argues that "there is no hope for liberal individualist consumers living in the pseudo-utopia of late capitalism. . .to the extent that Crake's murderous, Frankensteinian actions do indeed usher in a kind of Utopia for us – not for us the way we now are, the way we now live" (154). Yet Crake's apocalyptic plan as well as Canavan's conclusion of Crake's accidental heroism are flawed due to Crake's Humanist cause. Canavan points out:

the apocalypse is the only thing in our time that seems to have the capacity to shake the foundations of the system and 'jumpstart' a history that now seems completely moribund – the only power left that could still create a renewed, free space in which another kind of life might be possible. Apocalypse (especially eco-apocalypse) is increasingly the frame we use for imagining an end to capitalism, precisely because. . . we can't imagine any other possible way for it to end. (139)

²⁸ In *Frames of War*, Judith Butler refers to the condition of being disposable in the context of war: Precarious bodies are "threatened" due to their shared precarity, meaning that they share vulnerability in respect to each other because they depend on each other for their very existence (10). However, this "shared condition of precarity" is not met with recognition, rather with "exploitation of other populations" in which lives are considered "ungrievable" and 'lose-able,' precisely because they cannot be forfeited. . . they are cast as threats to human life as we know it, rather than as living populations in need of protection from illegitimate state violence, famine or pandemics" (31).

For Crake, the only way to save humanity is to end humanity and leave behind a new kind of human: Crakers. These humanoids, referred to as Crakers by Jimmy, are “resistant to ultraviolet” (6), “sound of tooth, smooth of skin” with no “ripples of fat around their waists” (115). Jimmy describes them as “retouched fashion photos or ads for a high-priced workout program” (115). Their bodies represent “an ideal of bodily perfection” that Leonardo da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man represents (Braidotti 13). The symbol of the Vitruvian man is an icon of classical humanism. As previously mentioned, it is the image of “a rational animal endowed with language”: it represents “the basic unit of reference for the knowing subject” (143). This image organizes “differences on a hierarchical scale of decreasing worth,” because this knowing subject is constituted on the practice of othering what he is “excluded from” and therefore, maintain “a violent and belligerent relationship to the sexualized, racialized, and naturalized ‘others’” that do not fit the model of the Vitruvian Man (144). Similarly, the transhuman movement is “geared towards human technological enhancement” (Jeffery 17). The World Transhumanist Association (WTA) defines Transhumanism as an “intellectual and cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of improving the human condition through applied reason, especially by developing and making widely available technologies to eliminate ageing and to greatly enhance human intellectual, physical and physiological capacities” (qtd. in Jeffery 18). In this respect, the Crakers’ embodiments represent the Transhumanistic ideal that the Vitruvian model shares of human perfectibility. Crake’s motive to help humans have “a better chance at swimming” and creation of the Crakers is self-serving to the human, thereby upholding a human-centric and Romantic vision of humans in relation to the planetary environment (*Oryx* 347).

In conclusion, Atwood exposes the Humanistic aspects of human approach to the eco-crisis in her novel by speculating a world similar to ours but in which the consequences of the human influence on the environment are further accelerated. In her novel *Oryx and Crake*,

humans sustain the free economic Humanist system in an attempt to outrun the environmental crisis (hyperobjects). As a response, Crake devises a plan to exterminate all humans in order for his engineered humans to replace them. Yet however “noble” his approach, it ultimately is rooted in Humanist ideals of perfectibility.

Chapter 3

Hyperobjects, Hypocrisy and Eco-religious Sanctimony: The God's Gardeners'

Anthropocentric Crisis in *The Year of the Flood*

The previous chapter provided an in-depth analysis of *Oryx and Crake* to demonstrate how the end of the world-for-us and hyperobjects stimulate posthumanist and post-anthropocentric thinking of Crake. However, Crake's posthumanism is, as illustrated in the previous chapter, transhumanist and not devoid of the Humanist legacy. As stated in the introduction, this thesis aims to demonstrate the tensions present between Humanism and post-humanism in the process of re-thinking the human in relationship to the nonhuman (organic and inorganic). The Humanist and Romantic perspectives on forming nature-culture identifications²⁹ and intersubjective relationships between human and all considered non-human are present in the novels as satirical examples of current approaches to the environmental crisis. The first two novels of the trilogy contrast transhumanism/neo-liberal Humanist approaches to the environmental movements of the nineteen seventies and nineteen eighties³⁰ and their contemporary legacy as approaches to the end of the world-for-us. As analyzed in the first novel, Crake's nihilist transhumanist approach led to human extinction to reset history for the new and improved humanoids that are referred to as Crakers. Furthermore, these Crakers represent a transhumanist vision of the human in which the aspect of Humanism that emphasizes human progress is glorified through their embodiment. Thus, Crake's approach for human destruction represent the mindset of extreme biocentrism in the twenty-first century for the purpose of a transhumanist agenda.

²⁹ Nature-culture identifications refer to Donna Haraway's conception of how all subjects are companion species in which "we make each other up" in a process of significant othering. (*Companion Species 2*).

³⁰ Such as the deep ecologist movement based on Arne Naess, Friends of the Earth in the US.

In the second novel, *The Year of the Flood*, Atwood satirizes aspects of deep ecology³¹ in the form of an eco-religious group that call themselves the God's Gardeners. The God's Gardeners are one of the many satirical targets in the novels. In the previous chapter, I discussed how the biotechnological capitalist system in the novels (it is present both novels) oppress the poor, racialized and sexualized others as a consequence of global warming i.e. hyperobjects becoming apparent to humans. By extension, I discussed how Crake, the scientist that caused human extinction and created the Crakers, symbolize a Humanist and transhumanist ideal. In this chapter, the God's Gardeners' Evangelical eco-religious beliefs and practices. will be analyzed. According to J. Brooks Bouson, Atwood draws on "the apocalyptic and millennial environmentalism that emerged in recent decades in radical activist movements like Earth First!" (342).³² Co-founded by Dave Foreman in 1980, early members of Earth First! believed that "modern society and its destruction of the natural world could only end in apocalyptic crisis" (Lee 37 qtd. in Bouson 353). As the group developed, deep ecology became an important viewpoint and part of the movement's discourse but the group split in two factions that eventually led to them becoming incompatible; one group remained loyal to the traditional viewpoint and the other branched out to social justice and developed a "millenarian" doctrine (Bouson 353). The latter faction aimed to "convert as many as adherents as possible to their cause, in order to create an ecologically sensitive community" (Lee 142). Eventually, other groups emerged from this group such as the Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front that damaged a lot of property in the late nineties and early two-thousands (Lee 142).

³¹ Deep ecology was first proposed by Norwegian environmentalist Arne Naess. The philosophy emphasizes biocentric principles (not anthropocentric) arguing that "the flourishing of human and nonhuman life on earth has inherent value" and that humans have no right to "reduce . . . richness and diversity (of life-forms) except to satisfy vital needs" (Naess 111). In addition, philosopher and environmentalist Naess believes that a "substantial decrease of the human population" is required for the "flourishing of nonhuman life" (311).

³² Co-founded by Dave Foreman in 1980, early members of Earth First! believed that "modern society and its destruction of the natural world could only end in apocalyptic crisis" (Lee qtd. in Bouson 353).

Similar to Earth First!'s pseudo-religious indoctrination of followers, the God's Gardeners in *The Year of the Flood* base their environmentalism on deep ecology and attempt to convert others, already considered disposable, to their cause. The biocentric views similar to deep ecologists' biocentrism will be close-read in this chapter and be analyzed through the lens of posthumanist theories of Rossi Braidotti, Donna Haraway, Timothy Morton and Patricia McCormack.

In addition, the Gardeners engage markedly with biblical passages, notably Genesis³³ from an eco-friendly and eco-critical perspective. Atwood subverts certain beliefs held by these movements in her novels in the form of the God's gardeners to expose the limitations of an eco-religious doctrine in practice. This chapter will demonstrate how hyperobjects in the form of the eco-crisis inspire a group of people to cope with their posthuman condition by adhering to an eco-religious doctrine in *The Year of the Flood*. Similar to the previous chapter, I will draw on Morton's concept of hyperobjects, Braidotti's posthuman *zoe*-centered egalitarianism to illustrate how God's Gardeners, in their biocentric approach to the eco-crisis, cater to the dehumanization of themselves from the perspectives of Ren, Toby and Amanda. By dehumanizing these characters, they conform to Humanist tenets, especially expressed through their interpretation of biblical passages of Genesis, and through their pitfall of living in a gated community away from Nature as something *out there*. Morton and Braidotti's theories can be employed usefully to highlight and critically explore this satirical target in the novel, of course, as theories are more nuanced and do more justice to the complexities and paradoxes of human-nonhuman relations in the context of ecological thought. By extension, I will analyze the God's Gardeners treatment of animals through the lenses of Patricia McCormack and Donna Haraway to expose the limitations of critical posthuman theories on becoming-with the animal. Patricia McCormack's posthuman ethics provide a perspective that challenges Donna Haraway's

³³ Aside from referencing stories from Genesis, the Gardeners focus on other scriptures in the Old Testament (Isaiah) and the New Testament (Matthew) as well.

concept of species companion as well as Braidotti's concept of becoming with the animal/Earth. Yet all three philosophers offer valid points on the human-animal relationship and how humans should perceive and act in this relationship. First, I will close-read passages in the second novel to show how the God's Gardeners approach their posthuman condition by responding to their fears of the end of the world-for-us with the Gardeners' eco-religion's ritualistic and dogmatic aspect. Second, the God's Gardeners' treatment girls and women (specifically Toby, Amanda, Ren and Bernice) will be analyzed as a way to expose their adherence to a form of essentialism and concept of Humanism.

The timeline of *The Year of the Flood* runs parallel with the one of *Oryx and Crake*. The second novel introduces the reader to another survivor of Crake's pandemic, Toby, who chronicles her daily activities. In the same manner as the main character in *Oryx and Crake*, Toby reflects on the events that ensued prior to the end of world-for-us. In contrast to the previous novel, *The Year of the Flood* has more than one main character that survives the "Waterless Flood" and recounts the past (YoF 151). In fact, there are two female protagonists who live in the pleeblands that recount their perspectives on the world for-us and its end, in contrast to Jimmy who recounts the story from a compounder's perspective. The chapters of the book are divided on the basis of the festivals and saints' days that the God's Gardeners celebrate. Each of these chapters begin with Adam One, the leader of the God's Gardeners, giving a sermon to the Gardeners before they proceed to sing hymns. In addition, each chapter's sermon indicates a point in time leading to the year of the flood. For example, the first chapter's sermon takes place in year five of the Gardeners' existence, the second chapter year ten and so on. During the sermons, Adam One provides an in-depth explanation of the God's Gardener's eco-religious beliefs followed by Toby and Ren's account of the time in which each sermon is performed and of how they are dealing with their post-apocalyptic present. Toby is a middle-aged woman that the gardeners saved from a sexual predator (Blanco) in the pleeblands and

Ren is a young woman who grew up in the compounds from a young age as her mother defected and moved with the Gardeners. Their perspectives provide one of othered bodies both due their socio-economic class as well as their gender. Furthermore, they provide an insight into how they became members of God's Gardeners and how they experienced this eco-religion before they proceeded to play another role in the CorspeSeCorpse society; Ren becomes a Trapeze dancer and Toby becomes a Spa-manager undercover for the eco-terrorist group MaddAddam. From their account, the reader learns that the God's Gardeners have their own hymns, are strictly vegetarians and do not write their doctrines and beliefs down. Instead, they make rhymes to help them remember the rules and beliefs of their religion. These pacifists have high regard for animals and do not kill any of them. They also recycle everything they can find in the pleeblands as a way to overcome anthropocentrism.

As quoted in the previous chapter, Morton states that hyperobjects make humans lame and weak; they "cause us to reflect on our very place on Earth and in the cosmos. . . hyperobjects seem to force something on us, something that affects some core ideas of what it means to exist, what Earth is, what society is" (15). That is to say, the fear and anxiety that hyperobjects provoke in humans can either, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, lead humans to accelerate the process of dehumanization and capitalization on Life or to the reinvention of the human subject in relation to its planetary environment, to nonhumans as well as in relation to other humans. By maintaining the status quo, privileged humans experience a sense of denialism and safety, whilst disposable ones are hyperaware of the "intimacy" they share with nonhumans (Morton 125).³⁴ Braidotti's statement on the privileged in relation to the environmental crisis complement Morton's: "the global economy is post-anthropocentric in that it ultimately unifies all species under the imperative of the market and its excesses threaten the sustainability of our planet as a whole" (63). In contrast, the God's Gardeners are a group of

³⁴ As quoted in the previous chapter; "Poor people . . . perceive the ecological emergency not as degrading an aesthetic picture such as world but as an accumulation of violence that nibbles at them directly" (125).

ex-compounders, mostly scientists, that defected from the compounds in order to follow a lifestyle that is more in tune to their beliefs on how to save the planet from anthropocentrism. In contrast to the compounders, they want to overcome their anthropocentric ways by creating biocentric views and practices. Hyperobjects, consequently, inspire the Gardeners, most notably their leader Adam One, to cope with their posthuman existence by creating an eco-religious community. In addition, they motivate themselves and other followers to prepare for the “Waterless Flood” (YoF 151). The “Waterless Flood” is an idea of the end of the world-for-us upon which the God’s Gardeners heavily rely on the biblical passages in Genesis as well as scientific concepts for Earth’s preservation and Rebirth. During the Festival of Arks, the Gardeners commemorate the “First Flood of extinctions” (108). Adam One states that on this day the Gardeners “mourn the deaths of all those Creatures of the land that were destroyed” and

“rejoice that the Fishes and the Whales, and the Corals, and the Sea Turtles. . .were spared . . . We mourn the carnage that took place among the Animals. God was evidently willing to do away with numerous Species, as the fossil records attest, but many were saved until our times, and these are the ones He bequeathed anew to our care. . . According to the Human Words of God, the task of saving the chosen Species was given to Noah, symbolizing the aware ones among Mankind. He alone was forewarned; he alone took upon himself Adam’s original stewardship, keeping God’s beloved Species safe until the water of the Flood receded and his Ark was beached upon Ararat. Then the rescued Creatures were set loose upon Earth, as if at a second Creation.” (YoF 108)

Adam One refers to the biblical story of Noah’s Ark to link science with spirituality as a way to create a narrative of the end of the world-for-us without referring to biblical passages from Revelations, and at the same time creates a belief system in which animals are central to human care. By extension, Adam One refers to fossils to link scientific evidence to the concept of evolution as a way to affirm that after the end of the world-for-us, there would be rebirth similar

to the one Adam One describes after Noah rescues animals. Adam One specifically reinterprets Noah's story as a basis for the narrative of the end of the world-for-us as a third phase of evolution:

“At the first Creation all was rejoicing, but the second event was qualified: God was no longer so well pleased. He knew that something had gone very wrong with his last experiment, Man, but that it was too late for him to fix it. . .Let us today remember Noah, the chosen caregiver of the been called, we too forewarned. . .We God's Gardeners are a plural Noah: we too have coming disaster as a doctor feels a sick man's pulse. We must be ready for the time when those who have broken trust with the Animals – yes, wiped them from the face of the Earth where God placed them – will be swept away by the Waterless Flood. . .But we Gardeners will cherish within us the knowledge of the Species, and of their preciousness to God.” (YoF 109)

The Waterless Flood is thus meant to wipe humans away as punishment for their involvement in the extinction of other species according to Gardener belief and the Waterless Flood is a hyperobject as it “will be carried on the wings of God's dark Angels that fly by night and in airplanes and helicopters” (110). Timothy Morton states that hyperobjects have a “transdimensional quality,” which make them seem as though they are withdrawn and at times noticeable for humans through their aesthetic effects in the form of global warming or a pandemic (70). The Gardeners' Waterless Flood describe the Waterless Flood as an object not visible to the eye, and Adam One already hints that it is airborne or possibly a disease that spreads easily through humans. The aesthetic effects on humanity by hyperobjects inspire the Gardeners to re-establish an old narrative of the beginning and end of the world-for-us. Genesis, specifically the story of Noah's Ark, is therefore a prime and important foundation for their doctrine meant to achieve the Gardeners' version of post-anthropocentrism through the end of

the world-for-us as way to start over as a species that have a more equal relationship with nonhuman animals.

Yet the very driving force of their religion is the impending doom of the world-for-us, therefore they maintain the human centric construction of *world*, which is unproductive to the cause. During one of his sermons, their religious leader Adam One preaches: “For the Waterless Flood³⁵ is coming, in which all buying and selling will cease, and we will find ourselves thrown back upon our own resources, in the midst of God’s bounteous Garden. Which was your Garden also” (151). As his speech demonstrates, their idea of a post-anthropocentrism is fully dependent on the end of the world-for-us to be able to return to a primitive existence. That is why God’s Gardeners commit to a simple and sustainable life in order to prepare for the aftermath. Their way of life includes the wearing of self-made clothing described as “dark, sack-like garments” as well as using “violet-biolets,”³⁶ and growing their own vegetables (YoF 55). From their practices, it is clear that they are against commodification/consumerism and adopt deep ecologist beliefs that include the idea that “in order for nature to flourish, there must be a long-term reduction in the global human population,” hence their obsession with Genesis (Bouson “A joke-filled romp” 343). As Gary Canavan points out in his paper:

the apocalypse is the only thing in our time that seems to have the capacity to shake the foundations of the system and “jumpstart” a history that now seems completely moribund. . . .Apocalypse (especially eco-apocalypse) is increasingly the frame we use to imagine the end of capitalism, precisely because (after ‘the end of history’) we can’t imagine any other possible way for it to end. (139)

According to Lawrence Buell, the apocalypse trope in science fiction or speculative fiction such as Atwood’s is the “single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental

³⁵ The Waterless Flood refers to human extinction, specifically Crake’s virus that extinguishes the majority of humans in the *MaddAddam* trilogy.

³⁶ A solar cell operating toilet.

imagination has at its disposal” (qtd in Bouson “A Joke-filled Romp” 342). The point in question is, however, that the God’s gardeners maintain a view of world the same way the “Exfernal World” does (YoF 71). The concept of Exfernal World, Nature are still *out there* for the Gardeners as they depend on the apocalypse for “Rebirth” (443). Despite the God’s gardeners attempt to incorporate post-anthropocentric indoctrination, there is a flaw in their conceptualization of Nature and World. Morton explains: “All those apocalyptic narratives of doom about ‘the end of the world’ are, from this point of view, part of the problem, not part of the solution” (103). Morton refers to the point of view of the public and governments discovering global warming “precisely when it’s already here” (103). He compares this realization to “realizing that for some time you had been conducting your business in the expanding sphere of a slow-motion nuclear bomb” (103). The God’s Gardeners see themselves as separate from “the Exfernal World” and think that they are connected to Nature due to their distancing from the world-for-us. They consider the people of the “Exfernal World” as “materialist” and full of “greed” (YoF 228). Adam One suggests that their God’s Gardeners group is separate from the CorspeSeCorpse society, as the Gardeners already imply by referring to it as the Exfernal World, as though the Gardeners have no relation to CorspeSeCorpse society or as though whatever happens in that society will not have any effect on the Gardeners. The God’s Gardeners thus create their own reality that is in a liminal space between Nature and World, yet undeniably a configured world-for-us, because they are still living within the confines of the “Exfernal World” (71). According to Morton, the apocalypse is already here: “By postponing doom into some hypothetical future, these narratives inoculate us against the very real object that has intruded into ecological, social and psychic space. . .hyperobjects spells doom now, not at some future date (104). “Worlding” is an “aesthetic effect” that depends on “mood lighting and mood music. . .that contain a kernel of. . .meaninglessness” (105). Considering Morton’s perspective, the God’s Gardeners are satirized

for their “worlding” and dependency on a doctrine in which the end of the world-for-us is a key motivator for the sustenance of their religion. Marinette Grimbeek shares Morton’s concern on how unfruitful the narrative of impending doom is for environmentalism or saving the planet. She argues that “if apocalyptic beliefs are to be self-fulfilling prophecies, they do not encourage action, but rather inaction, and this may be reflected in the passive approach adopted by the Gardeners” (159). Likewise, Braidotti views dystopian imaginations of the end of the world-for-us as “techno-teratological, that is to say as the object[s] of cultural admiration and aberration” (64). These imaginations as objects coincide with Morton’s concept of worlding in which the planetary environment is an object separate from the human. Therefore, one of the God’s Gardeners’ pitfalls in their pursuit to become posthumans is that they attach themselves to the idea of worlding and ending of worlds, humancentric constructions that fail to recognize that all objects (including humans/living things) are enmeshed/viscous.³⁷

Another pitfall, already hinted at above, is that the God’s Gardeners’ eco-centric and biocentric religion is based on an old framework that positions the human as the center of the universe, assuming the highest position in the animal kingdom; Judeo-Christianism. That is to say, by implementing Judeo-Christianity in their eco-religion, the God’s Gardeners are conforming to hierarchical binaries between man/woman and human/nonhuman, in principle adhering to the tenets of Humanism. According to Lynn White Jr., “human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny – that is by religion.” She notes that there is “an implicit faith perpetual progress” in modern Western society, which is rooted in Judeo-Christian teleology (1205). Even though secularity is one of the principles of Humanism, Humanism is the “transformation of the Christian doctrine of salvation into a project of universal human emancipation. The idea of progress is a secular version of the Christian belief in providence” (Braidotti 31). Human centrism is rooted in Christianity, which Humanism

³⁷ See previous chapter on hyperobjects as viscous.

inherited. The Gardeners' fixation with Genesis is thus inherently human centered, despite their attempt to reinterpret and adapt its content. As an outsider, Toby views their doctrine skeptically:

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 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 those names of those animals. Thus they would survive to replenish the Earth. Or something like that. (YoF 56)

Toby explains the historic recurrence of Genesis in a nutshell as she casts her doubts on God's Gardener's religious beliefs on a cynical tone. Even naming their store places Ararats, derived from Ararat - the place Noah reaches with his Ark before he releases the animals back to land, become places of symbolism; a reassurance that the Gardeners are meant to survive the Waterless Flood.³⁸ The core belief that, an exclusive group of people that aim to become post-anthropocentric posthumans are meant to survive and thrive shows that they still aim to achieve a human centric goal as a group; to survive the Waterless Flood and restore the Earth with themselves.

Furthermore, the depiction of their garden on their rooftop relates to the process of worlding Morton refers to in the way that environmentalist as well as Romanticists³⁹ do in the conjuring up of aesthetic connotations related to the word Nature. After Toby is rescued by the

³⁸ See Genesis 8:4: "And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat" (8). See *The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Oxford's World's Classics, 1997.

³⁹ Presumably, Morton means Romanticists such as Wordsworth and Coleridge. Wordsworth and Coleridge are best known for their nature poetry in which nature is regarded as the manifestation of God's presence (Rookmaker 14). In their poems, nature is depicted as benevolent and praised for their pleasing effects on the poet.

Gardeners from a pleeblander Blanco, she details the site that the Gardeners take her to as “an early modern red-brick factory building” that used to be a cosmetic facility of some kind (YoF 51). The children lead her up the fire escape to the Garden rooftop, which is contrary to what she’d thought would be “a baked mudflat strewn with rotting vegetable waste,” a place in which she “gazed around in wonder” (52). She describes the garden, “It was so beautiful, with plants and flowers of many kinds. . . There were vivid butterflies; from nearby came vibrations of bees. Each petal and leaf was fully alive, shining with awareness of her. Even the air of the Garden was different” (52). Toby’s admiration of the Garden epitomizes ecomimetic worlding, which contributes to a Romanticization of Nature by associating it with visceral images of a utopian whole that relates with the human subject (Morton, *EWN* 33).⁴⁰ The aesthetic imagery that Nature elicits “impedes ecology” (Morton, *Hyperobjects* 105). This relates to the process of worlding in the sense that it requires “distance and coolness,” hence why privileged humans are able to disassociate themselves from the planetary environment as enmeshed in their very materiality (106). The God’s Gardeners, on the one hand, adopt connotations of utopia with nature as well as with urban life. On the other hand, however, their utopia is directly related to urban life, which does not take what the end of the world-for-us would mean for their utopian balance achieved on the Eden garden rooftop. Without urban life, how would their world be sustainable? The imagery of the Garden rooftop thus form part of a dichotomous form of worlding in which urban life is hybridized with Nature as a utopia, a state that the Gardeners aim to achieve by perpetuating the process of worlding and objectifying Nature.

While the Gardeners include urbanity as part of their aesthetic construction of *world* and *Nature*, Adam One’s reliance on Christianity’s religious framework for the Gardeners’ environmentalism maintain dichotomies between man/woman, human/animal, nature/world

⁴⁰ Ecomimesis is defined by Morton as “a pressure point, crystallizing vast and complex ideological network of beliefs, practices, and processes in and around the idea of the natural world (33). For more knowledge on Morton’s early writing on this topic, read *Ecology Without Nature* (2007).

nonetheless. These dichotomies form the very roots of classical Humanism and all other forms of Humanisms that follow.⁴¹ Similar to what contemporary eco-groups have been criticized for, the God's Gardeners dehumanize their own followers by conforming to gender norms and perpetuating the Vitruvian and Humanist ideal of the male, abled and white body and its hierarchal position in regard to women. During Toby's first week with the gardeners, one of the Eves, Nuala, advises Toby to "Get rid of that scalped look," because "We Gardener women all wear our hair long" (YoF 56). According to the Gardeners, it was because it was God's "aesthetic preference" (YoF 56). The God's Gardeners assumption of The God's Gardeners approach of radical biocentrism is similar to the criticism deep ecologists that they are "more fond of animals than humans" (Naess 311). The God's Gardeners demonstrate their lack of concern for women in their treatment of sexual harassment in the case of Burt, one of the Adams that teach children how to survive in the wilderness. The group dismisses his sexual predatory behavior towards young girls as unimportant to their cause. In Ren's recount of the matter, she remembers how Burt gives her a sense of uneasiness:

"Where's my little girl? That made me cringe. I'd seen him do this before, not only to Bernice. He just loved girls' armpits. He'd corner you in behind the bean rows when you were doing slug and snail relocation and pretend to be helping you. Then along would come the hands." (YoF 97)

Toby was aware of Burt's predatory behavior but dismisses it as "just groping" (197). Later in the novel, it is revealed that Burt sexually abused Bernice as she pours her heart out to Ren, "But he didn't stop at armpits. . . You're just lucky it was never you" (346). This shows that Toby as well as the other female protagonists are aware that they are viewed as sexual commodity. Their experience in a free-market liberal society that capitalizes on all Life formed their binary conception of the man/women hierarchy. Amanda, a Tex-Mexican young adult that

⁴¹ See Davies, Tony. *Humanism*. Routledge, 1997.

spent her childhood in the group, accepts this viewpoint as well, expressed through how she views her body as sexual commodity. According to Amanda, “You trade what you have to. You don’t always have choices” (YoF 70). In her article, “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*,” J. Brooks Bouson notes that Ren, who works as a trapeze dancer at Scales views herself as “solely a sexual commodity” (14). Ren emphasizes her opinion by asserting Amanda’s world-view on women’s bodies as well as through her opinion of other women who prostitute themselves “outside the Corpcontrolled SeksMart system” (Bouson 14). Bouson concludes this based on Ren (as well as her colleagues) views women, who are mostly of a different cultural background that cannot work through the Corspe system, as well elderly women outside this system as “not only illegal but pathetic” and are referred to as “Hazardous waste” (YoF 9). As previously mentioned, the model of the Vitruvian Man determines the tenets for the ideal individual and for its culture (Braidotti 13). The extensive focus the Gardeners invest in biocentrism lead them to ignore human concern and fail to redefine the definition of their position in relation to other humans. By disregarding the issues and conception amongst themselves as arbitrary compared to the environmental crisis, they are re-enforcing an aspect of Humanism that subsumes a binary process of othering in which the man is superior and the woman inferior.

Another incident that illustrates the Gardeners’ neglect of specific issues concerning gender, is the incident that involves a Gardener assaulting Toby. The Gardener referred to as, “old Mugi the muscle,” “had leapt on her” (YoF 124):

He’d pulled her off the treadmill and tussled her to the floor, then fallen heavily on top of her and groped under her denim skirt, wheezing like a faulty pump. But she was strong from all the soil-hauling and stair-climbing, and Mugi wasn’t

as fit as he must have been once, and she'd dug her elbow into him and levered him off, and left him sprawled and gasping on the floor. (YoF 124)

Other Gardeners like Pilar (Eve Six) respond with indifference to such an incident, as she expresses the Gardeners' viewpoint that these situations are to be dismissed: "We never make a fuss about such things. . . There's no harm in Mugi really. He's tried that on more than one of us- even me, some years ago" (124). One of the most prominent female members of the Gardeners, Eve Six, reinforces the Gardeners' biocentrism that excludes the human from its intersubjective concerns. Her reaction is lighthearted as she "gave a little dry chuckle" to assure Toby that "he won't do it again" and that she "must forgive him" (124). In her dissertation on technology and gendered bodies in Atwood's fiction, Annette Lapointe asserts that the Gardeners rely on a patriarchal framework for a biocentric way of life which leads to a "relatively benevolent patriarchy" as Toby is assaulted just once and as it seems that there is no sign of sexual abuse and assault among other Gardeners (209). As pointed out in the previous paragraph, that is not the case, however, and thus the Gardeners do not fully engage with a post-anthropocentric world-view in which power relations between binary oppositions are resolved.

This kind of reiteration of patriarchy risks the return of an asymmetry in relations of power similar to the severity that the CorpseSeCorpse system uphold in binary oppositions between human/nonhuman, man/woman, white/non-white and so on. This risk to return to asymmetrical relationships between human/nonhuman is especially precarious as the Gardeners' main aim is to change this relationship between humans and nonhumans to one that is more empathic in perspective as well as in practice.

Beneath Atwood's satirical representations in the MaddAddam trilogy, Atwood's dystopia has a utopian quality to it in which it envisions some alternate viewpoints and practices in relation to the nonhuman animal. However, as Grimbeek notes, the trilogy's "environmental injunction seems relatively clear (simply put: save the environment to have any hope of saving

yourself), its straightforwardness is obscured and undermined through the consistent use of satire. No single environmental movement is sanctioned, and all are at some point subject to ridicule” (10). In the previous chapter, I discussed how Crake’s stance is problematized by his plan to save the Earth and through his creation of the Crakers. In this chapter, the God’s Gardeners’ indifference towards women and girls is discussed above. The God’s Gardeners are thus flawed in their attempt to overcome anthropocentrism and Atwood makes that perfectly clear by satirizing The Gardeners. In contrast to the God’s Gardeners’ disregard to gender inequality in their group, the God’s Gardener’s doctrine emphasizes positive ways to form human-nonhuman relationships. One of the ways is by decentering humankind as the center of the universe exemplified in Adam One’s sermon during The Feast of Adam and All Primates:

In our efforts to rise above ourselves, we have indeed fallen far, and are falling farther still; for like the Creation, the Fall, too is ongoing. Ours is a fall into greed: why do we think that everything on Earth belongs to us, while in reality we belong to Everything? We have betrayed the trust of the Animals, and defiled our sacred task of stewardship. God’s commandment to “replenish the Earth” did not mean we should fill it to overflowing with ourselves, thus wiping out everything else. (YoF 63)

During the celebration of the origin of the human as primate, Adam One addresses the issue that posthumanism as well as anti-humanism critique of classical Humanism, which is that humans are the center of the cosmos. Adam One refers to this self-ascribed position as a fall into greed and at the same time paradoxically refer to the passage found in Genesis to support his opposition to human-centrism. The specific passage in the Bible is as follows: The specific sentence “replenish the Earth” follows with “and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea . . . over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (*The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*, Genesis 1:28). Similarly, during April Fish, a festivity that

celebrates the foolishness of humans in relation to God, Adam One asserts that Jesus chose two fishermen as his first apostles, “to help conserve the Fish population” (YoF 234). Importantly, the Gardeners believe that it is their duty to take care of animals both by not eating them as well as not by killing them as the CorSpeSeCorpse system does for food, clothes and other consumerist materials. Note the quotation of the Festival of Arks above as he recounts Noah’s story and relating it to their present, “but many (animals) were saved until our times, and these are the ones He bequeathed anew to our care. . . According to the Human Words of God, the task of saving the chosen Species was given to Noah, symbolizing the aware ones among Mankind” (YoF 108). So, despite that the Gardeners’ foundation are human centric, Adam One attempts to establish post-anthropocentric beliefs in his followers.

These biocentric beliefs are translated into practice in the form of vegetarianism, snail-replacements and in the way Pilar as well as Toby treat the bees. Accompanying these practices, the Gardeners worship their own set of saints that represent a past activist or survivalist; one example is the worship of Saint Dian Fossey, a martyr activist who “gave her life while defending the Gorillas from ruthless exploitation” and thus was supposed to reaffirm empathy for animals in the Gardeners (YoF 372). The Gardeners passivity and meager interaction with animals put the effective practice of post-anthropocentrism at stake; the Gardeners fall short in translating their beliefs in practice. As for theories on the human/animal relations in posthumanism, scholars who are considered part of the posthumanities have yet to come to an agreement on the concept of *becoming with* first proposed by Deleuze and Guattari⁴² and later drawn on by Braidotti. Donna Haraway, for example, is a firm believer that the human is becoming with the animal in naturecultural contexts (Read *The Companion Species Manifesto*). In *When Species Meet*, she argues against the “philosophic and literary conceit that all we have is representations and no access to what animals think and feel” (226). In contrast, she argues

⁴² See Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Bloomsbury, 2017.

that it is possible due to “historical, flawed, generative cross-species practices” (226). Haraway is aware that communication with other species is “imperfect” but is firmly against the idea that there is no possible communication between human and non-human animals: “To claim not to be able to communicate with and to know one another and other critters, however imperfectly, is a denial of mortal entanglements for which we are responsible and in which we respond” (226). Contrary to Haraway’s view of interspecies communication, Patricia McCormack argues that “the posthuman as an ethical practice is a practice toward. . . lives – real singular and connective, uniquely emergent without predictable development and directly addressed lives for which we seek to expand the capacity to express” (4). What McCormack argues for is “the ethical activity of passivity” (5). This kind of passivity she coins as “grace” for the human in relation to the nonhuman is to let the nonhuman be without reciprocal expectations because nonhumans are “outside discourse” and are therefore “unspeakable” (5). In respect to the Gardeners, they have little interaction with animals, and for the most part practice McCormack’s concept of grace; they practice not killing any life forms, not interfering or seeking contact with animals in general but only remember their names and collect the DNA’s of extinct species. Yet the Gardeners’ hypocrisy on the matter of animals is always present in their post-anthropocentric practices; Ren recounts how children had the task of removing the snails from the plants (“slug and snail relocation”) only to fling them “over the railings to the traffic, where they were supposed to crawl off and find new homes,” even if she “knew they were really getting squashed” (YoF 99). Furthermore, Toby as Eve Six, was put in charge of the bees and providing honey for the Gardeners they considered “Holy Grail” (52). Yet the way Toby was taught to interact with the bees was with respect by “bringing news to the bees every day” and many other ways to form a seemingly subjective egalitarian relationship with bees; “the bees had to be spoken to and persuaded, not to mention temporarily gassed” (115-119). When Pilar teaches Toby all the “bee lore” and how Pilar “introduced her to the bees by name,”

these teaches expose how bees are personified and therefore anthropomorphize them (119). McCormack puts it succinctly: “Our own human need for rights to equal some kind of equality pay-off which the other [nonhuman] neither wants nor needs if it requires fulfilment of human criteria are our need, not that of the other” (5). The Gardeners thus fail to practice their post-anthropocentric ideals of human and animal relationship as Ren and Toby’s jobs with animals demonstrate.

As discussed above, the God’s Gardeners have many discrepancies in their pursuit for an ostensibly utopian community wherein the planetary environment and animals live in harmony with them as posthumans. However, the Gardeners foundational flaw is in the foundations of their doctrine that, despite their efforts to twist the stories in the bible to a post-anthropocentric ideation, lead to the problems Braidotti stresses as the most problematic points of a dialectical scheme in Humanism; the process of othering through racialization, sexualization and naturalization are perpetuated. In her book, *Nomadic Theory*,⁴³ Braidotti states that autopoiesis is “processual creativity” of which the subject that is “an enduring, affective entity capable of affecting and of being affected by a multiplicity of others. As a subject-in-becoming, she or he is a vector of subjectification” (118).⁴⁴ Based on this concept of the subject, Braidotti argues that to understand it, its three fundamental ecologies have to be taken in consideration; “the environment. . .the socius and . . .the psyche” (118).⁴⁵ She argues that it is imperative to identify “transversal interconnections” between the three ecologies: “It is crucial to see the interconnections between the greenhouse effect, the status of women, racism and xenophobia, and frantic consumerism” (118). Although the CorpseSeCorpse Corporate government practices othering on a bigger scale, Atwood exposes the contradictions of the

⁴³ In *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti*, Braidotti explains her concepts that she introduces in *The Posthuman* in detail (becoming Earth, becoming animal).

⁴⁴ Braidotti draws on Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of subjectivity. According to Guattari, “subjectivity is ‘pathetic’ in the sense that of emphatic, affective, multi-mediated, and complex” (NT 118). It is constantly “evacuated from discourse” (NT 118).

⁴⁵ Braidotti refers to the planetary environment to my understanding.

representation of radical environmentalism through the God's Gardeners. Their response to the end of the world-for-us is but partially post-anthropocentric according to Braidotti's *zoe*-egalitarianism; they change their conception of the human in relation to the nonhuman but fail to walk their talk. In addition, the Gardeners fail to realize that their dismissal and complete ignorance on gender issues and racial issues, they perpetuate the Humanist legacy posthumanism aim to displace. In conclusion, the God's Gardeners' ideological underpinning of Christianity for their eco-religion as well as their dependency on the end of the world-for-us impede their efforts to become posthumans.

Conclusion:

As demonstrated in this thesis, Atwood speculates on the effects of global warming on Western governments as well as on citizens and their environmental world-views. In her novels, she problematizes the world-views and decisions of Crake, the government (presumably of North America) and the God's Gardeners. Their perspectives either remain anthropocentric and are exacerbated further in practice or shift insufficiently to a post-anthropocentric/posthuman ideology. Crake attempts to solve the world's woes with a transhumanist view in which humans are re-engineered to be able to create a more symbiotic relationship with the planetary environment. The beings he created, referred by Snowman as Crakers, embody the transhumanist idea of human enhancement as a way to transcend humans as we know them. On the other hand, Crake envisioned enhanced humans that are more in tune with their natural environment, which is an ideal closer to the deep ecologist ideology. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in this thesis, both world-views are humancentric. In the case of deep ecology, Morton implies that deep ecology does not go deep enough but is rather a "depthless ecology" (*TET* 59). In the last chapter, the God's Gardeners' religion embedded some of the principle ideas that constitutes deep ecology in the minds of their followers. For example, the God's Gardeners believe that a Flood would end humanity and give the Earth a chance to replenish itself and heal. However, just as the critique Earth First! has received, the God's Gardeners maintain practices of othering humans as well as non-humans. Their practices maintain the status quo of Humanism.

The prospect of the end of the world-for-us remains an inspiring yet problematic idea meant as a tool to rethink humans in relation to nonhumans and disposable humans. Part of what makes this prospect (in the novels) problematic is a desire to return to a pre-industrial and pre-capitalistic pastoral life in nature, which is viewed as an aesthetic object that is separate rather than considered inextricably connected to humans and human ecology. As illustrated in

chapter two, humans that live in gated communities (the compounds) embody Morton's ideas related to hyperobjects. Hyperobjects, manifested as global warming, storms, and disease, affect humans in the novels profoundly as they become hyperaware of entities that are at work beyond human control. Crake's actions represent the humanist legacy/transhumanist of rationalism and science, in which nature is an object that is manageable, controlled and manipulated for human improvement. Morton's concept of hyperobjects displaces this idea effectively. Furthermore, the Humanistic legacy that invigorates human progress without regard to nonhumans is a consistent theme in modern society's attempts to overcome anthropocentrism. This theme manifests as deep ecologist movements that are portrayed as the God's Gardeners in Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*. That same legacy is undeniably present in the first novel of the MaddAddam series, *Oryx and Crake*, through Crake's ideology and his creations that materialize in the form of the Crakers.

As previously demonstrated, Crake's ideas are in line with the transhumanist agenda by creating better humans: the Crakers. He subscribes to a transhumanist ideology of human improvement by the use of science and control of nature. With regard to the God's Gardeners, in their efforts to challenge the norm of the CorpseSeCorpse society, they only do so in their conceptualization and re-interpretation of Genesis and a few other handpicked passages in the Bible. Re-interpreting the Bible for the purpose of emphasizing empathy for animals and care for the planet evidently leads to a relapse of Humanism in which binaries are reinforced between men and women, human and non-human. And, as much as the Gardeners preach for animal empathy, they seek no contact with nonhuman animals nor attempt to save them from extinction. The few animals they encounter or keep are attributed human traits and emotions such as the bees, which they keep for their honey. Other animal encounters are with snails that they dispose (but initially meant to relocate). These are thus the ways that Atwood satirizes post-anthropocentric and posthuman theory: by revealing how vacuous theory is if it is not

effective in practice nor if it is based on the very ideas (Humanism and human centrism) that it intends to displace and part ways.

On the one hand, Rosi Braidotti asserts that her posthuman sensibility is “affirmative.” To her, “affirmative politics combines critique with creativity in the pursuit of alternative visions and projects” (*The Posthuman* 54). However, her alternative vision is limited in its specificity and practicality, which she clearly states in her proposition:

. . . current scientific revolution, led by contemporary bio-genetic, environmental, neural and other sciences, creates powerful alternatives to established practices and definitions of subjectivity. Instead of falling back on habits of thought that the humanist past has institutionalized, the posthuman predicament encourages us to undertake a leap forward into the complexities and paradoxes of our times. To meet this task, new conceptual creativity is needed. (54)

Her posthuman theory relies on Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophies of “becoming minoritarian” and “becoming nomad of Europe” as a way to “bypass binary pitfalls” (53).⁴⁶ Similarly, for the nonhuman she proposes concepts of “becoming-animal” and “becoming-earth,” in which *zoe*-egalitarianism engages a “more equitable relationship with animals” and in which “estrangement” of the Humanist subject is the aim. The main purpose is to become a *zoe*-centered subject (67-81). For her theory on becoming animal she argues that posthuman relations are based on a constitutive interrelation between humans and animals in which both form the identities of each other (79). Yet her theory to become earth remains limited as she argues that a posthuman subject could only acquire a planetary dimension if the anthropocentrism and compensatory humanism is overthrown (89). How Braidotti envisions

⁴⁶ See Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. 1980. Bloomsbury, 2017.

human interaction with the planetary environment remains poorly developed, but it is a step forward on to how a world-view in which the planet is considered an immanent reality is a possible beginning that inspires practical changes. This is why Haraway and McCormack's theories provide more clarity and depth on the specific matter of human-nonhuman relationships as Braidotti's *zoe*-egalitarianism merely states that equity with animals is of importance, yet does not provide a specific theory that is practical. Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* demonstrates this with the Gardener's religion, which is based on the idea of an egalitarian human/non-human relationship but fails to translate this ideology in their daily practice.

In a similar line of thought, Timothy Morton opposes the concept of the world as a dimension that is separate from humans. According to him, he as a human is inescapably interconnected with the planet whether recognized or not. However, Morton argues for the realization of the viscosity of hyperobjects and how they affect humans rather than of acquiring a metaphysical dimension of the planet after displacing anthropocentrism or compensatory humanism. Considering Morton's point of view, I argue that it is a process in which realization of hyperobjects and the sticky situation we have with them simultaneously occurs with the process of overthrowing anthropocentrism and neo-humanism or compensatory humanism. In regard to Atwood's novels, the aesthetic effects of hyperobjects (floods, drought, and other natural catastrophes) prompt varied responses of groups and individuals; the compounders (and Crake) choose to hold on to the transhumanist dream and the God's Gardeners choose an opposite path in which biocentrism is emphasized. Yet both approaches maintain the binary systems Braidotti argues need to be eradicated. Morton argues what Braidotti does though he emphasizes on breaking free of the binary of human vs. nature: "The ultimate environmentalist argument would be to drop the concepts of Nature and world, to cease identifying with them, to swear allegiance to coexistence with nonhumans without a world, without some nihilistic

Noah's Ark" (100). Morton thus provides a more useful tool for a shift of consciousness in respect to the planetary environment.

Braidotti makes a fair point in proposing for transversal lines between intersubjective relations between humans (sexism, racism, consumerism), animal cruelty, and global warming, because they are all connected to the Humanist ideology of the Vitruvian Man (NT 118) and it is this framework that has to be overthrown to be able to become posthuman and post-anthropocentric. Neither the transhumanist or the deep ecologist approach as the example of Atwood's *God's Gardeners* and Crake's character illustrate, are part of the solution. Both approaches reinforce the Vitruvian Man in different yet similar ways in how these characters treat women, girls and animals. In conclusion, Atwood does not, though seemingly so, provide a solution embodied by these characters; rather, she points out the complexity and pitfalls of taking a certain position. Her hyperbolic characters are part of her satire that challenge theorists such as Braidotti's *zoe*-egalitarianism in practice and resonate with Morton's hyperobjects. Atwood's speculative *MaddAddam* series provide an experimentation that can be utilized as a field to put posthuman theories to the test and lines up the work that posthuman theorists still need to do in order to develop theories that are effective in praxis. In addition, Atwood's *MaddAddam* series is limited in its exploration of race and gender. Further analysis on the basis of posthuman theories of mentioned scholars could provide more insight on whether they are applicable to people of color and nonhuman animals in other novels such as Octavia E. Butler's *Parable* series. To summarize, Atwood's *MaddAddam* series presents a fruitful speculative setting for which posthuman theories can be put to test. The series helps with thinking differently about these philosophies in how applicable they would be in possible extreme situations. Atwood's novels ultimately show that the effects of adhering to ideologies of the non-human are always detrimental when these ideologies inherit any form of human-centrism.

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