

Chapter IV

The Year of the Flood: Not a Remote Future

Atwood's pre-Flood cities are referred to as Compounds, insulated from the rest of the world by high electric walls watched over by heavily armed guards. Inside these Compounds – self-explanatorily called HelthWyzer or CryoJeenyus, where scientists work to find cures for all imaginable diseases and experiment with eternal youth – everything is paradisiacal: luxurious homes and garments, an abundance of food and drink and an endless range of consumer goods. Outside these elitist power enclaves, life is hard, people struggle to earn their living and, more often than not, they resort to violence to solve conflicts. Nonetheless, the pandemic that wipes out almost the entire world population is concocted in one of the Compound laboratories meant to improve living standards.

In Atwood's novel, the community of the Gardeners is marginalized by the rest of the society, and the ones who manage to survive the pandemic do so precisely because they have been in isolation from possible carriers of the disease: Toby at a spa; Ren in a sealed room at the nightclub Scales and Tails. Both Toby and Ren find the strength to move on only when each of them realizes that she is not the sole survivor, that there are others who are worth getting close to, sharing and rediscovering humanity and compassion. Although meant to protect the insiders, such confining spaces limit the individual's freedom and personal development, as well as the ability to choose right or wrong, thus restricting evolution. It is only when the protagonists exit such

places that protagonists become free to choose and, thus, open to change and progress.

The living space of the people of the novel represents numerous parts of a city. There are the compounds, such as the HelthWyzer, that are protected by several enclosures; the pleeblands that are the unguarded living area of the poor; the nightclubs, Scales and Tails considered the best among them, which are also situated inside the Pleeblands; and the Edencliff Rooftop Garden which is the dwelling place of the Gardeners, people who intend to save nature and the earth in return, which should save them from the violence of the Pleeblands, produce air and sunlight for their rooftop gardens and provide a better protection for the Gardeners.

Outside the compounds there is only chaos. All governing bodies have collapsed, so the only law enforcement are corporate security teams, who usually only intervene in cases affecting their employer or local gangs. People's lives are short, violent and full of hardship. Fewer and fewer people are able to get jobs from the mega-corps because they are becoming more and more self-contained breeding their own work-force. Most live in extreme poverty. Without governmental oversight corporations are running rampant, dumping, polluting and destroying both human communities as well as natural reserves with reckless abandon. Environmental collapse is imminent. So is a revolt of downtrodden, increasingly more illiterate masses who grow jealous of the corporate wealth.

The Year of the Flood is a dystopian novel that follows two main characters that are connected through a religious group called the God's Gardeners. The group anticipates the coming of a waterless-flood that is going to come and wipe out the human race so that the Earth can heal and rebuild from the destruction and unbalance that humans have caused it. This book is the second in the *MaddAddam* series though one does not need to read the first book *Oryx and Crake* to read this one. This story has two main characters: Toby and Ren. The plot details different areas of their lives in different time-frames, including what happened to them before they came apart of a religious group called the God's Gardeners, their time in the God's Gardeners and where they are after the waterless-flood has hit the earth. Each chapter opens with the character's name, what year they are in and usually the corresponding religious name and context that the God's Gardeners have given to the date.

The Gardener's believe that humankind has strayed away from how God wanted us to live on the earth. Especially with the way the world has become. Corporations rule everything and are less than moral. They are called the CorpSeCorps. They have used up almost all of the Earth's resources and have erased most of the animal species on the planet. The animal genes that remain are spliced and used to create horrible hybrids that serve human purposes. Food is highly processed and people have stopped asking where it comes from. The most notorious example of this is the burger chain, Secretburger. They use any protein that they come across to use in their burgers, even human protein. Hence, the name of the establishment, as one

does not ever really know what he's eating. As a result, the God's Gardeners choose to separate themselves and live in the pleeblands, the slums. The pleeblands are inhabited by some very desolate people: homeless, refugees and criminals which make living there very dangerous. The God's Gardeners are strict vegans and condemn anything material made. They recycle everything, grow their own food and teach their children how to live one with God. The children take courses and learn essential skills in classes taught by the leaders of the groups, the Adams and Eves. They all wear the same garb, which is a blue dress of recycled material. They also do not use any technology and refuse to write anything down because anything that is written can be used against them. They stay under the radar from the CorpSeCorps because they pose no real threat and the God's Gardeners have nothing that the CorpSeCorps want.

Members of the God's Gardeners are given ranks once they have been with the group long enough. The creator of the group is Adam One. In between the chapters of Ren and Toby, are some of Adam One's sermons followed by a hymn from the God's Gardeners Oral Hymn book. Other important characters in the book are Pilar, who teaches about bees and mushrooms. Toby eventually takes Pilar's place when she passes away. Zeb is Adam Seven, "Mad Adam", who will eventually stray off and start his own group just before the waterless-flood hits which takes the God's Gardeners passive teachings and makes them more active and forceful. Lucerne is Zeb's partner and Ren's mother. Rebecca is Eve Eleven who Toby initially meets when working at SecretBurger.

Bernice, is Ren's childhood friend. Amanda, is a pleebland girl that Ren finds as a child and brings her back to The God's Gardeners to join them.

The Gardeners foresee the Waterless flood and survive it due to their admirable survival skills and the sheltering Ararats they are instructed to build, “with canned and dried goods” (YOF 59). But, most importantly, because they lovingly take care of each other. In this way, the God’s Gardeners represent an island of utopia amidst the dystopian. As Labudova comments in one of her essays:

The comic version of the God’s Gardener’s utopia is imperfect: there is no ‘peace, ease, and plenty’ in the years before or after the Waterless Flood, but they keep their sense of community and sisterhood and this is what helps them not only to survive the apocalypse but also to remain human. (32)

The book opens with where Toby and Ren are in the year of the flood, 2025. Toby has camped out in what used to be a spa called Anooyoo. Ren is stuck inside a strip and prostitute joint she used to work at called Scales and Tails and she is the only person alive there. She is inside the “sticky zone” which is a locked down area when girls are being tested to ensure that they are clean diseases. The next chapters detail their past.

Toby is twelve years old and living in a small house with her mother and father. Her father teaches her how to shoot a gun, which is risky, as the CorpSeCorps have outlawed all firearms. Many people still keep one stashed

away in the dirt of their backyards like Toby's family. Toby's mother works for HelthWyzer, which is a pharmaceutical company owned and run by the Corporations. Despite taking all of their supplements and vitamins, Toby's mother becomes very sick and eventually dies despite all the efforts and sacrifice that Toby's father made. At the point of her death, Toby is old enough to be in college. Her death brings her home to be with her father and mourn her mother. Toby discovers her father in the garage of their family home, dead. He has shot himself. Toby knows that this situation looks terrible as it shows that they own a firearm, which can have dire consequences so she decides to bury her father and rid herself of her identity to protect herself. Those without identities cannot get standard or respectable work, so she finds herself as an employee of SecretBurger.

At SecretBurger she meets Rebecca, who warns her about their manager, Blanco. He likes to select pretty girls from his staff and make them his personal sex slave. He is also known for his violence and ensuring that no one ever escapes him. Rebecca warns her that she should leave as Blanco has his eyes on her but she does not listen. Rebecca disappears shortly after this. Blanco begins to torment Toby. One day a group of Gardeners come in and start preaching about the sins of eating meat. The leader, it is learnt later is Zeb. Blanco threatens them and demands that they leave but Zeb and the group refuse. Zeb beats up Blanco and asks Toby to come with them. Toby smashes Blanco in the head on her way out with the Gardeners, an action Blanco is not likely to forget. None of his girls ever gets away.

Zeb and his group were sent by Rebecca to save Toby, as when she disappeared it was to join the Gardeners. This is how Toby comes to be a part of the Gardeners. At this time Ren, who is 10 years old at the time, is also a part of the Gardeners and is with her with her mother Lucerne, who left Ren's father to be with Zeb. Lucerne is clingy and prone to jealousy with Zeb and their relationship is not stable. Ren dreams about the life she lost when her mother took her to the Gardeners and is still very interested in some of the things that are a part of that world. One day when she is out collecting wine to turn into vinegar with Bernice, she meets Amanda. Amanda at this point is a refugee living in the pleeblands. Amanda's attire and material things intrigue Ren. Ren invites her to go with her to become a Gardener and Amanda agrees. The two of them become very good friends, much to Bernice's dismay.

Toby is constantly worried that Blanco will find her one day and will kill her after what she did to him. Adam One assures her that he is in Painball after murdering a woman associated with CorpSeCorps. Painball is a place CorpSeCorps put their criminals. The prisoners are forced on teams, Red and Gold, and are made to fight each other in order to survive. The people that survive and make it out of Painball end up becoming fairly messed up individuals. Blanco is released and reinstated back into Painball several times throughout the book and Toby only feels safe when he is in there.

The climax of the novel comes when Amanda and Ren believe that Bernice's dad is having an affair with another woman. Bernice's mother, believing the affair to be true, turns her husband into the CorpSeCorps for

illegally growing marijuana and tells the Adams and Eves that he was doing this behind their back to earn money. Around the same time, Lucerne decides that she has finally had it with Zeb and she decides to leave the Gardeners to return to her old life. Ren does not want to leave Amanda but she goes with her mother. Ren is a teenager at this point.

Once reintegrated with her old life, Ren finds it difficult to leave the Gardener ways. She struggles to eat meat and her father is distant. She does however enjoy certain material things and gets on well in her new school. She meets Jimmy and falls in love with him but he does not return her love. Jimmy breaks her heart and Ren finds it difficult to move forward. At graduation, she finds out that she is, unfortunately going to the same college as Jimmy. Jimmy proves to be a sleaze and spends his time drinking and sleeping with a lot of women and breaking their hearts with the same sob story he told Ren back when they were in high school.

Back at the Gardeners, Blanco notices Toby in the pleeblands one day after he was released from Painball and attempts an attack on her and the Gardeners. At this point Adam One decides that it is safer for Toby and the Gardeners to go to one of their safe houses. This process includes changing Toby's skin colour and hair to hide her. She is then placed as an employee at the AnooYoo Spa and told to wait until she hears from the Gardeners about what to do next. Shortly after Zeb contacts her and lets her know about the MaddAdam group that he has started and that he would like her to be a part of. After the incident with the grow-op and the attack that Blanco made on the

Gardeners the CorpSeCorps start to pay attention to the Gardeners and the group has to disperse and leave their homes. At this time Amanda runs off to become an artist and Bernice is killed in a protest.

Lucerne decides to leave her husband and re-marry. By doing so, she tells Ren that she is no longer responsible for her and can no longer look after her financially. Ren knows now that she is on her own and cannot stay in college any longer. She ends up finding work at the same spa as Toby, though she does not recognize her at first. Once Toby reveals herself, she says that she can get Ren in contact with Amanda, whom she has not seen in years now. Ren and Amanda meet up and it is a joyful meeting until Ren learns that Amanda is now dating Jimmy. Ren does not let Amanda know about her feelings or that Jimmy had broken her heart previously but she is extremely distraught. It is at this time that she knows she needs to go out on her own and leave her past behind. She quits the spa and goes to work at Scales and Tails as a dancer and prostitute.

A disease wipes out most of the population when the waterless-flood hits. Ren is safe because she is in the sticky zone when it happens and Toby is safe as she is alone at the spa. The two of them do not know that the each other are alive or if they are the only people left on Earth. Amanda finds Ren, along with some remaining friends they had at the Gardeners. They set out in search of food, safety and to see if Toby or any of the other Gardeners are still alive. The conclusion is reached when the main characters finally find peace with

their past, Toby with Blanco and Ren with Jimmy. They stand united as group in hopes of rebuilding the human race as God intended.

The novel attempts to re-tell the story from the perspective of poverty stricken pleeblanders struggling for survival in the lawless wastelands outside the corporate compounds. It introduces a number of interesting characters, and a religious sect of vegetarian environmentalists who takes them in, and provides them with a safe harbor against local gang violence. As the plot progresses Atwood has to bend herself backwards in order to get the stories of these characters to intersect with the events from the former book, *Oryx and Crake*".

The Year of the Flood provides additional background information: the CorpSECorps "started as a private security firm for the Corporations, but then they'd taken over when the local police forces collapsed for lack of funding, and the people liked that at first because the Corporations paid, but now CorpSECorps were sending their tentacles everywhere" (YOF 25). The CorpSECorps is, of course, corrupt, murdering dissidents and others—including bystanders, torturing for profit, running the mob and "Seksmart," the only official sex trade market. The CorpSECorps accepts bribes for ignoring pleebland violence and crime, and it is the wholesalers for the illegal drug market. The CorpSECorps has also outlawed weaponry for citizens. Atwood relates that the citizens abide the corruption because "the CorpSECorps were better than total anarchy" (YOF 34). Unlike in *The Handmaid's Tale* in which

leaders of the Republic of Gilead hide their ambition for power and status under the guise of religion, the Corporations of these novels simply go directly for the gold. The novels intimate that the CorpSECorps “police” any competition to corporate profits; it is, apparently, against the law to engage in free enterprise.

The CorpSECorps police were, indeed, defending the worst of business practices. Zeb confesses to Toby that the CorpSECorps murdered Crake’s father: “he got unhappy when he found out they were seeding folks with illnesses via those souped-up supplement pills of theirs . . . troubled his conscience. So the dad fed us some interesting data. Then he had an accident” (YOF 244). The Corporations would, naturally, lose their profit margin if the populace were aware of these activities. Ultimately though, because the CorpSECorps police are merely mercenaries for hire and have no cause to adhere to, Toby surmises, “They must have been the first to desert, heading for their gated Corporation strongholds to save their skins” (YOF 21). Therefore, the protection force has no allegiance to the populace and is thus ineffective in any endeavor except in spreading death and destruction.

Jimmy tells, “Accepted wisdom in the Compounds said that nothing of interest went on in the pleeblands, apart from buying and selling: there was no life of the mind” (OC 196). Yet, God’s Gardeners are an intelligent, if somewhat naïve, group surviving without corporate and artificial products. Living on produce grown on rooftop gardens, God’s Gardeners have evolved

from a survivalist and fundamentalist religion into a full blown culture complete with texts and their own products such as honey and vinegar, both of which are natural preservatives.

God's Gardeners are initially exempt from CorpSECORPs persecution, even as the group actively protests corporate products. When Toby wonders why the CorpSECORPs doesn't just "move in openly, blitz their opposition," Zeb rationalizes: "that officially they were a private Corporation Security Corps employed by the brand-name corporations, and those corporations still wanted to be perceived as honest and trustworthy, friendly as daisies, guileless as bunnies" (YOF 266). Later, the CorpSECORPs does indeed destroy the rooftop garden and pursues the sect. In a sermon, the leader of God's gardeners, Adam One explains,

Alas, we were becoming too powerful for their liking. Many rooftops were blooming as the rose; many hearts and minds were bent towards an Earth restored to balance. But in the success lay the seeds of ruin, for those in power could no longer dismiss us as ineffectual faddists: they feared us, as prophets of the age to come. In short, we threatened their profit margin. (YOF 275)

[Serban Andreea](#) points out that ". . . the remapping of the new world is not limited to the rearrangement of geographical space, but it triggers cultural, political and religious (re)mappings, too" (5). He argues that in the face of calamity, an individual's flexibility and openness and their ability to

renegotiate spatial and relational boundaries can save them from it. The Gardeners, who turn out to have the maximum number of survivors of the flood, are trained for all of these things so that they can live with even minimum life supplies.

Atwood's plotting of pandemic in the novel thus emphasizes the futility of attempting to quarantine an individual's subjective interiority from relations among historical subjects who are connected to each other in ever-widening, overlapping circles of power and obligation: the familial, the corporate, the national, the global, the non-human and the post-human. Snyder points out that “by showing us how the doubled temporality of trauma may disorder the everyday and the end-of-days alike, Atwood's novel provides the reader with a template for proleptically mourning a global fate that may already be unavoidable or, alternatively, for prescriptively re-writing humanity's seemingly inevitable demise” (2).

People from different parts of the world have different kinds of worship practices. Although worship of nature as a totality is unknown, people of almost all parts of the world such as Africa, India, Indonesia, Mexico and others practice worship of the Earth Goddess. In some countries like India, people worship the five elements of the nature separately; the five elements being earth, water, fire, air and space. Some people worship celestial objects like the sun and the moon. It is understood that people are still practicing these kinds of worships in some parts of the world. But when everyone on the earth,

if not worship Earth Goddess, should at least try to respect her so as to live in peace and safety.

It is felt by most of the human beings that looking at, or feeling one of the natural elements can bring inner peace. When feeling down, some people get relieved of their worries when they look at and start enjoying the natural elements, such as a green field, the full moon, the dawning sun and so on. People, when they lead a life closer to nature and abide by the laws of nature, can lead a quieter and happier life. Psychologists have been exploring the relationships between human beings and nature. Some of them regard like Cheryll Glotfelty “. . . the modern estrangement from nature as the basis of our social and psychological ills” (xxi). Theologians have also recognized it and they have started viewing “the earth itself as sacred” (xxii).

The Gardeners intend to preserve all species of nature so that they can grow them on the new earth after the flood. They proclaim themselves to be modern Noahs, as they do the job of transferring most of the species to the new world after the waterless flood. They are also “. . . death on anything new . . .” (YOF 156). They do not like the new spliced animals. But after the flood it could be seen that they do not fend them off. In the *Maddaddam* the new animals are found to be tamed and grown as cattle by the Gardeners.

We are inclined to overlook the very small that dwell among us;
yet, without them, we ourselves could not exist; for every one of us
is a Garden of sub- visual life forms. Where would be without the

Flora that populate the intestinal tract, or the Bacteria that defend against hostile invaders? We teem with multitudes, my Friends- with the myriad forms of Life that creep about under our feet, and – I may add – under our toenails. (214)

The passage talks a lot by itself. Not only the above said life forms, even the creatures like earthworms are necessary for human beings to move on, as without them the earth may in the long run turn into a hard, cement- like mass. The Gardeners also believe in giving their bodies, after death, to the nature where it turns into compost. They believe in giving human bodies back to the nature in return for all the things it has given mankind.

With the onset of the plague in *Oryx and Crake*, Jimmy is spared because Crake has immunized him. In the second novel, Ren and Toby, however, have apparently escaped death by avoiding contact with the disease. Yet as the virus has spread worldwide, sparing virtually no-one, avoiding the source alone seems hardly reason enough to have escaped death. Later, other members of God's Gardeners appear to have been spared, and *The Year of the Flood* suggests that it is the refusing of corporate food and drugs that enables the members of the sect to resist the epidemic. "It makes sense that if the corporate products had been embedded with agents of death in the form of diseases, the rejection of the products could account for survival" (Appleton 72). God's Gardeners choose to owe a debt to life-giving nature rather than owe the death-selling corporations.

The environmental catastrophe described in *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* is not primarily caused by dangerous environmental policies, as one is led to think until the very end of the first book. As I have already mentioned, the pandemic is actually caused by a very attractive, and yet deadly, invention of Crake's, top Compound scientist and Jimmy's best friend. Crake's creation is a pill named BlyssPluss, a seemingly wonderful scientific product that works simultaneously as a protection from any sort of venereal disease, a contraceptive device and a libido enhancer. Although certainly alluring and apparently beneficial to the whole humanity, BlyssPluss is actually part of a broader and secret project of Crake's. A few months after its commercial distribution, BlyssPluss causes a deadly pandemic that brings humanity to near-extinction; Crake's intention is to have human beings replaced by the para-human population he has secretly bioengineered. Jimmy, albeit unknowingly, has been a part of Crake's plan; after spending his childhood in the OrganInc Compound with Crake, he has in fact moved on to study Applied Rhetoric, and then to pursue a career in the advertising industry. At Crake's request the two friends reunite, and Jimmy is offered a job in the advertising campaign for BlyssPluss.

Crake discloses the truth to his friend shortly before the pandemic outbreaks: the Crakers have not been bioengineered as a playful experiment; on the contrary, they are actually intended to replace humans once BlyssPluss wipes them off the world. Crake does not dignify Jimmy's objections with even the slightest consideration. In his opinion, the Crakers are fitter than humans

both to live in the world and with one another: they have not been programmed to experience conflict-provoking feelings of any sort; their immune system is indestructible; they lack the ability to think symbolically, and their language only comprehends words whose referents can be found in material reality; they are only interested in sexual intercourse when it results in reproduction, and, since their own excrement is their only nutritional source, they do not need to use up natural resources in order to survive.

The Crakers, according to their creator's intentions, are a post-human population – literally and chronologically, since they are supposed to become the 'new' humans after the 'old' ones have disappeared. We see that Margaret Atwood presents us once again with an uncanny product of speculative fiction; her novels dramatize current philosophical thinking about the emergence of a post-human condition. "It is plain to see that both branches of posthumanism describe the Crakers. Pigeons, too, display ambiguous post-human features" (Mosca 46).

Margaret Atwood's interest in the post-human condition is obvious, and statements she has made on various occasions show that one of her main concerns as a novelist shares the same theoretical basis as posthumanist thought. Throughout the post-apocalyptic strand of the narrative, Snowman continues to hear voices in his head, some of them authoritative written voices comparable to that of the colonial handbook described above, some of them the spoken voices of significant and not-so-significant others from his past: the

voices of Crake and Oryx, of his father and mother, of former teachers and school friends, even those of an anonymous "motivational lecturer" (237) and a "stand-up comic" (37). Most often, however, the voice that Snowman hears speaking to him in the absence of all actual human voices is not a specific aural memory associated with a particular person, but the aural hallucination of an unidentified yet intimately familiar woman's voice whispering in his ear. When he first hears this voice, he identifies it as that of a "professional sexskills expert" he had once "bought" (11).⁶ As it continues to whisper in his ear throughout the narrative, in tones ranging from seductive to mocking, from consoling to demanding, from wistful to matter of fact, we come to recognize its imaginary female speaker as both utterly generalized—an everywoman who is variably a prostitute, his mother, a friend, his lover—and at the same time utterly specific: Oryx playing all of these roles.

At the same time that the voice in his head helps Snowman to maintain his melancholic fantasy of the continued presence of his beloved, it also tells him otherwise: that silvery laugh mockingly undoes the comforting assurances of the voice's words.

Mosca, in *Crossing Human Boundaries: Apocalypse and Posthumanism in Margaret Atwood's Oryx and Crake and The Year of the Flood*, describes: "Humanity has not ended yet, and the only possible referents for end-of-the-world narratives are other narratives; apocalypse is an entirely discursive phenomenon" (44). Echoes of this theory are much more easily found in The

Year of the Flood than in *Oryx and Crake*. Although, as we said before, the two books relate the same events, they do so from very different points of view – and those found in *The Year of the Flood* are effective examples of how apocalyptic rhetoric works. In the second book of Atwood's trilogy, the focalisers are Toby and Ren, two pleeblander women who belong to the eco-religious group of the God's Gardeners. God's Gardeners live according to very strict, environmental friendly rules, upon which they have built their theology; their leader, Adam One, periodically makes up sermons to validate the Gardeners' dogmas, and he depicts end-of-the-world scenarios as the inevitable consequences humanity will incur into if these dogmas are not respected. It does not take long for Toby to dismiss the Gardeners' theology as twisted, and her uncertainty as to the value of its theoretical foundations is solved when she reaches a high rank in the Gardeners' hierarchy. Getting better acquainted with Adam One allows Toby to find out for sure that the majority of the leader's sermons are textual constructs only made up to provide the Gardeners' doctrine with a logical basis.

Individual survival, as explored through the characters of Snowman, Ren and Toby, is not the only focus of the novels; there remains the wider issue of the survival of the human race. The human population in the novels, prior to the release of the virus, is faced with a multitude of challenges in ensuring its continued survival, many of which have arisen as a result of the failings of society. As Crake explains, "a species we're in deep trouble ... we're running out of space time. Demand for resources has exceeded supply" (OC, 295). The

reader is given to understand that without serious intervention, such as Crake's engineering and distribution of the virus, the human race would have had little, if any, chance of survival.

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

The structuring of *Oryx and Crake's* narrative around such witnessed scenes is crucial to the novel's interweaving of absence and loss, insidious and event-based trauma, personal suffering and global cataclysm. These scenes reveal not only trauma's doubled temporality, but also the ways in which these presumably separate registers or orders of trauma are mutually imbricated. The pandemic—a singular traumatic event of global proportions, yet one that replays past private traumas for the protagonist—marks the moment at which these two

registers of the narrative collide, or the moment at which they are revealed to have been one all along. When the pandemic hits, the novel's domestic plot crashes into its global plot, or, rather, each plot explodes, blossom-like, to reveal the other within. Its familial and sexual plots of kinship, intimacy, and estrangement are shown to be of a piece with the pandemic bioengineering plot, a plot that at one level concerns genetic speciation, hybridity, and extinction, and at another concerns infection, sabotage, and surveillance. The trouble at home at once predetermines and is retrodetermined by the cataclysmic world events around which the narrative is structured.

The psychic and narrative dynamics of the early familial scenes-scenes whose meaning is retrodetermined by the traumatic events that shape the pandemic plot-are replayed in the novel's climactic scene, the scene to which Snowman literally returns over the course of the post-apocalyptic narrative. Snowman's return to the Paradise dome is a return to the "birthplace" of the Crakers and to the refuge from the pandemic that he shared with them. But it is also a return to the scene of a crime. Most obviously, Paradise was the site of Crake's Promethean crimes of re-creating humanity in an image of his own making and of bioengineering the germ of genocide, a scene of transgressive origins and endings. But the dome houses a spectacle that even more literally suggests a Freudian primal scene: the sight of the moldering corpses of Oryx and Crake, intertwined in an eternal deathly embrace. Snowman can trace the origins of the pandemic directly to this tableau of love and loss. The novel even

suggests that, for him, the global trauma of the pandemic merely confirms the more devastating personal trauma of the loss of these significant others.

Jimmy's glimpse of Oryx's returned gaze on the monitor thus reveals the primacy of loss in *Oryx and Crake* and its more general logic of substitution. In addition to repeating the earlier spectacle of her looking back at the viewer on HottTotts, this image also replays one of the novel's most powerful scenes of traumatic witness: Jimmy's viewing of the videotaped recording of his mother's execution. A team of CorpSeCorps agents had screened this grisly spectacle for the college-aged Jimmy as part of one of their routine interrogations, conducted several times each year after his mother's disappearance from the OrganInc compound and from Jimmy's childhood.

It is indeed true that much of what we find in *Oryx and Crake* is a large-scale, extreme version of recent (Western) scientific and economic trends. Corporate power, for instance, is a major force in Atwood's hypothetical future: corporations control the environment and those who inhabit it; they have seemingly replaced – or, at best, disempowered – any form of democratic government, and they defend their supremacy with the help of private police forces, gruesomely named CorpSeCorps (Corporation Security Corps)" (Mosca 40). Corporate power also goes hand in hand with scientific experimentation: genetic engineering corporations are the richest ones, and they are exempted from having to deal with any unexpected outcome their experiments may have. Atwood's dystopian future is in fact defined, among other factors, by a rigid

separation between the inside and the outside – the inside being the Compounds, safe and enclosed areas that the various corporations have bought for their members to live in, and the outside being the increasingly unsafe rest of the world. Outer spaces are disparagingly called ‘pleeblands’ by the compounders, who also feel free to pillage and trash them and, when necessary, use them as the setting for their hazardous scientific experiments.

The Gardeners constitute an exploration of the question of whether we can envisage the same fervour driving religious congregations around the practice of ethical living on a large scale. The point of the Gardeners is not to literally proselytize for a new religion, but to conceptually investigate the possibility of different layers of epistemic integration.

The God’s Gardeners prove to be a typical construction of modern dystopian fiction. According to Moylan, critical dystopia “adopts a militant stance that is informed and empowered by a utopian horizon that appears in the text- or at least shimmers beyond its pages.” (196) The Gardeners are a radical religious group organized around ecologically based principles that reject the normality presented in the world of the corporations and the surrounding environs of pleebland. As defined by Labudova as a “low-tech, low-carbon footprint, recycle-minded commune” (137) they are the antithesis of the dominant order represented by the corporations. Throughout the novel Adam One prophesizes the coming of the ‘waterless flood’ that will take down the dominant social order and allow a new beginning for their followers. This

prophecy is not presented as an attainable one; the novel presents us events that bring down the majority of the gardeners themselves, and their utopian horizon is yet to be realized.

A few parts of the book seem silly like where it is said that “. . . the Gardeners didn't believe in wasting water and soap on too much washing” (YOF 83) and “the Gardeners were skimpy on toys- *Nature is our playground-* and the only toys they approved of were sewed out of leftover fabric or knitted with saved-up string, or they'd be wrinkly old-person figures with heads fashioned from dried crabapples” (84).

The principles of the Gardeners are also flexible and changed from time to time according to their convenience. For instance, “In theory the Gardener fellowship had no overall head, but in practice its leader was Adam One, revered founder and guru” (324). As they themselves say, all of the practices might also be for the good of the Gardeners in general and the world in particular.

The major aim of the Gardeners is to educate the young minds to preserve whatever is natural so as to prevent the earth from the oncoming disaster: “. . . he always going on about how the Gardeners should mould young minds” (YOF 103). This also seems to be the need of the hour in the current scenario as the future generations are in danger and they need to be educated about the catastrophic happenings if the present scenario continues.

The malignant capacity of science to reshape nature and society, particularly when controlled by corporations, is what is depicted in *The Year of the Flood*. Corporations pursue unlimited genetic modifications, while dissenters turn this expertise against them, planting genetic time bombs such as microbes that melt highways and mice that attack cars. These kinds of stories give an intuitive sense of the consequences of privatizing science and public space. Beyond speculating on the decay of nature and the breakdown of society, and what happens when we lose track of what matters, they exhibit the futility of a world in which imagination is forbidden.

Science is just part of the malevolence of corporations in these future worlds. Having taken over the functions of governments by force or stealth, the result is a kind of deadening – not just nature and civility are gone, but also awareness of alternatives and the opportunities to pursue them. The effect is claustrophobic. The isolation experienced by characters in these novels is an allegory for what happens when public life is squeezed out of existence, taking with it the capacity to think about different ways of living.

Atwood offers solutions by suggesting that it is the systematic denigration of the humanities in a hierarchical knowledge system that has led to a situation in which techno-scientific speculation goes unchecked, and can be easily taken to extremes, such as one can see in the novel. Rather, Atwood advocates for a different mode of knowledge, an inclusive, interconnected, and rhizomatic one: an immanent knowledge, in which the humanities would have

as much importance as techno-science, and would be able to provide an ethical balance to the latter.

While numbers people such as Crake are recruited by highly reputable institutions such as the Watson-Crick Institute, which “was like going to Harvard had been, back before it drowned” (OC 200), words people such as Jimmy get “knocked down at last to the Martha Graham Academy” (OC 218), “named after some gory old dance goddess of the twentieth century” (OC 226), where he gets a “risible degree” in Problematics (OC 229). Genius numbers people such as Crake, with his hard techno-scientific thinking skills, get the VIP education and treatment in their highly secured and lavish compound to prepare them for their future executive positions atop a corporation. Words people, like Jimmy, on the other hand, would “have a choice between well-paid window dressing for a big Corp or flimsy cut-rate stuff for a borderline one” (OC 229). Margrit Talpalaru comments:

However, apart from the material differences, the oppressive mechanism of epistemic segregation operates at a subtle level. As much as it is constructed rather than innate—in the sense that people with techno-scientific abilities are not more endowed than humanities disciples—this hierarchy insinuates itself in activities as seemingly innocuous as game playing. (249)

The main tension in the novel appears as the binary between techno-science and humanities, embodied by Crake and Snowman respectively.

However, this is a false dichotomy. In fact, Atwood directs her critique exactly towards this simplistic division of knowledge into neat and exclusive categories, embodied by disciplines, which can neither appropriately explain the world, nor ensure a viable future for humanity. While the overarching problem of humanity is its social organization—corporatism or corporate capitalism bent on appropriating bio-power. Atwood offers solutions by suggesting that it is the systematic denigration of the humanities in a hierarchical knowledge system that has led people to a situation in which techno-scientific speculation goes unchecked, and can be easily taken to extremes, such as the events seen in the novel.

Atwood employs some interesting symbolism in regard to Toby's human-animal liminality by twice employing her as a "furzooter," someone who wears an animal costume and walks the street handing out advertisements. In her costume, Toby is repeatedly attacked by sexual fetishists. She experiences these attacks through animal skin and sees them through animal eyes in a way, although the skin is synthetic and the eyes are plastic. Toby lives above a shop that sells the skins of endangered animals, and leaves her job as a furzooter partly because "it was distasteful dressing up as bears and tigers and lions and other endangered species she could hear being slaughtered on the floor below her" (YF 31).

Marginalized persons are often more perceptive of others who are being abused by their society. Toby's gender and economic status in a stratified

society likely make her more attuned to how the whole system is connected to oppress the Other. She sees the link between the commodification of animals in advertising and the slaughter of fetishized endangered species. Conversely, Jimmy, though he feels powerless, is still the recipient of considerable privilege, which limits his perspective.

One gets a glimpse of a new moral territory after Toby kills her rapist Blanco. He is on the brink of death when she finds him anyway, but she poisons him with mushrooms to speed his departure. “Silently she says the words of apology and release, the same as she would for a beetle” (YF 381). Life is to be respected, whether human or beetle, but sometimes it is necessary to kill to protect her community. And increasingly, that community is not just human. In fact, the biggest threat to her multi-species community are the violent human “Painballer” criminals, of which Blanco was just one.

MaddAddam's world, especially post-pandemic, is characterized by animals and nature asserting their agency. The narrative often employs the gaze to signify human anxieties about the “outside world” reclaiming subjecthood and about the unpredictability of newly created genetically engineered species.

The literary dystopias of contemporary times deal with issues like dread of bio-terrorism, bio-piracy and eco-terrorism. The novel illustrates these observations and alerts against the dangers seldom discussed in traditional dystopian fiction but obvious in present societal order. Atwood alerts us about the commercial exploitation and uses of hazardous bioforms. Another

contemporary concern dealt with in this book is bio-piracy. Atwood imagines a genetic engineering corporation called HealthWyzer that produces and disseminates diverse kinds of bacteria and trickily sells cures and medicines to pollute populace with the ailments that it produces as described by Crake in the book.

The Year of the Flood is, as everyone knows, a speculative fiction where the events mentioned have the possibilities of happening in the real world. It does what speculative fiction ought to do: it challenges us to reimagine the present day from a new angle and reminds us that the path we are treading may lead to some dark and dangerous places.