

Chapter V

Maddaddam: A Flicker of Hope

Maddaddam is about the apocalyptic world, where most of the man-made things are destroyed by Crake using his newly invented pandemic. While the *Oryx and Crake* is about the world of chaos, a world ruled by the Corporations and *The Year of the Flood* about the world of the Gardeners, the final book of the Maddaddam trilogy, *Maddaddam* is about the world after the worldwide pandemic has swept off most of what were made by man and has left earth almost like when it was at its genesis. The novel revolves around the survivors of the waterless plague: some of the Gardeners, the Painballers and both the manmade and the natural flora and fauna of the earth.

The novel is about how people rebuild a better society out of the ruins of the previously destroyed world. In *The Year of the Flood* it could be seen that the Gardeners strive hard to make the earth a better place for all living beings to live in. In this novel, it is seen that among the survivors of the waterless flood, the Gardeners are the only people besides a few Painballers, partly because of their ways of life and partly because they worked with Crake in the destruction of the decayed earlier world. However, the Gardeners were equipped and were ready to face the waterless flood, as they knew both about how the flood would occur and also its effects.

As the novel opens, it could be seen that most of the humans and the manmade creatures, that were considered to be destroying the earth are destroyed. The Gardeners and the scientists are left with no company other than

the naive and innocent humanlike creatures created by Crake to replace humanity. The Gardeners are left clueless as to how to continue and lead their life on the cleansed earth as their mentor and leader Adam One has disappeared suddenly. The other members of the group such as Toby and Zeb, however, are trying to build a better, new world for the survivors - humans, Crakers, the natural animals and the manmade animals - so that they can witness a nature friendly generation in the future.

Toby is one of the Gardeners who survived the flood, is an expert in bees and mushrooms and is in love with another Gardener named Zeb. Snowman is in a fallow state; Amanda is recovering from a horrible attack by the Painballers; and Adam one is missing since the flood; and all the survivors of the flood, including the green-eyed Crakers and the Pigoons, are under the threat of attack from the malicious Painballers who know nothing about either mercy or love.

The novel is divided into parts where, one revolves around Toby, her life with the Gardeners and the Maddaddamites, and the other where Zeb reveals, to Toby, about his past and that of his brother Adam, the creator of the Gardener group. The reason for Adam to form the group and also lend his hands in creating the plague that destroyed the world is brought to the fore in this novel. Adam and Zeb, as youngsters, were exposed to terrible experiences that made them think that it was time for humanity to come to an end and compelled them to join hands with Crake in destroying the world through the BlyssPluss Pill. Adam at the times when he was not a leader of the Gardeners,

with the code name Maddaddam, endeavours to bring together many of the clever scientists of the Compounds to intrude other Corporations. He also uses them, as a team headed by Crake, in creating and disseminating the deadly plague. Most of these gene hackers are seen as the survivors of the plague in the novel.

The Crakers plead for a story about their creation inside the Paradise Dome and she is forced to tell stories that unintentionally mythologise Crake, Zeb and a few other Gardeners. After some time the story telling sessions transform into a kind of a ritual for Crakers. At the end of the novel it could be seen that Blackbeard takes up the ritual of telling stories about Crake, Toby, Zeb and others to the Crakers. *Maddaddam*, through this, focusses on the importance of the mythologies.

Atwood has portrayed a good apocalypse that none of the reader of the novel laments for the end of humanity after reading the book. She has not depicted the waterless flood that destroyed most of the humans as anything evil; instead it is represented as something that the humanity deserved. At the end of reading the novel, it is only expected that the world be cleansed of all the things that destroy it.

The two novels *Oryx and Crake* and *Maddaddam*, although are part of the same trilogy, express different ideas. The first novel is centered on the people of the compound, their extravagant lives and the creatures that they create inside their labs against the nature. The final novel of the trilogy,

Maddaddam, is about how the Gardeners strive hard to make the post- flood world that is nature- friendly and treats every organism with respect and love.

Snowman, in the first novel, while telling stories to Crakers about their creation, tells them that the egg full of words broke open before the birth of the animals and birds making only humans capable of speech. But in *Maddaddam*, while Toby tells the same story to the Crakers, she alters the story the Gardener way, giving equality to all the creatures of the earth:

The Story of Two Eggs, as told to the Crakers by Snowman/Jimmy:

[Oryx] laid two eggs: one full of animals and birds and fish, and the other one full of words. But the egg full of words hatched first, and the Children of Crake had already been created by then, and they'd eaten up all the words because they were hungry, and so there were no words left over when the second egg hatched out.

And that is why the animals can't talk. (OC 96)

The Story of Two Eggs, as told to the Crakers by Toby:

The other egg [Oryx] laid was full of words. But that egg hatched first, before the one with the animals in it, and you ate up many of the words, because you were hungry; which is why you have words inside you.

And Crake thought that you had eaten all the words, so there were none left over for the animals, and that was why they could not speak. But he was wrong about that. Crake was not always right about everything.

Because when he was not looking, some of the words fell out of the egg onto the ground, and some fell into the water, and some blew away in

the air. And none of the people saw them. But the animals and the birds and the fish did see them, and ate them up. They were a different kind of word, so it was sometimes hard for people to understand the animals.

They had chewed the words up too small. (MA 290)

Opinions of Jimmy, who is totally brought up inside a Compound, and that of Toby, who is a Gardener, vary a lot with regard to the stories they tell Crakers about the speaking capacity of humans, animals and birds. In Jimmy's version of the story words go only to humans and not to any other creature of earth. But towards the end of the story, when Toby is made to tell of their origin to the Crakers, she provides equality to all the beings of earth where even animals and birds share the contents of the second egg. This should be the attitude of the people of the world, where both the "Children of Oryx" and the "Children of Crake" are honoured. This will only ensure equality and help to keep the planet safe.

Margaret Atwood advises that it is necessary to respect all the creatures of the earth so as to live in peace and harmony. Humans should not think of themselves to be superior to all other beings and so have control and power over all the others. He must start realizing that he needs all of them so that the earth will sustain itself.

Val Plumwood maintains that humans should also be placed equal to other animals in the food chain. She puts forth the idea that everyone is equal and edible on the earth. This idea of Plumwood is supported by Atwood in the novel when the Pigoons and humans come into an agreement that as far as the

humans do not kill them, the Pigoons would not harm humans. Every single creature on earth - however big, small, powerful or frail – is entitled to enjoy the treasures of the planet and no one has the right to plunder the same.

The Gardeners, in the novel, consider humans only to be a part of the earth's ecology. Apart from this, on the Predator Day, a celebration revering beings other than humans, they even mention God as “the Alpha Predator”. According to the God's Gardeners, all the things under the sun are food and God is the principal predator of all.

The main ideology of the God's Gardeners is considering humans to be a part of the ecosystem and not anybody who is at the top of the ecological pyramid. Depending upon other beings for food becomes higher after the flood, as most of the sources for food have been destroyed by the waterless plague. After the plague, the remaining few God's Gardeners are philosophised by their leader Adam One. He asks, “Which is more blessed, to eat or to be eaten?”; and then he says, “Such a question may soon cease to be theoretical” (YOF 347). He goes on to say that: “We would not be Human if we did not prefer to be the devourers rather than the devoured, but either is a blessing. Should your life be required of you, rest assured that it is required by Life” (YOF 347). The Gardeners struggle not to be a burden to the planet as much as they can; they follow strict vegetarianism as long as they are not starved to death; when survival becomes very hard, they readily accept animal flesh as when they say: “we are blessed that so many of our Rat relatives have donated their protein to

us” (YOF 345); at the same time they are also ready to donate their flesh if that will save the other creatures from death.

The books of the trilogy portray two worlds that are contrasting with each other: one world, the pre-flood one, consists of people who are completely against the planet and its beings, while the other one, the post- flood world, is full of people who work only to preserve the green planet. The pre- plague world sees only animals as food to human beings. It could also be noted that human parts are mixed in the so called SecretBurgers, but it should also be noted that the SecretBurgers are eaten only by the marginalized part of the world and not by the elite class, who occupy the Compounds. But the reader should observe that the humans not only refrain from eating animal meat, but also are frightened of animal attack, such as the Pigoon attack. Through this Margaret Atwood intends to convey the message that, when it comes to the protection of ecosystem, every creature on the planet has the same importance and responsibility as the other and so should be considered equal; and that no one has the right to destroy a species that belongs to the planet.

The books of the trilogy not only reveal the position of the animals on earth, but they also put some light on the status of agriculture in the speculative society. No worthy agriculture is spotted in the novels. There could not even be seen foods that are available from natural sources in the pre-flood world. There are a few foods mentioned in the novels such as goats and oryxes. But even they are stashed away for the elite, privileged lot of the people.

The post- flood world is a huge contrast to the pre- pandemic world in this issue. It could be seen that, in the post- pandemic world, people are forced to eat things from nature and also those manmade things that have become natural. People are forced to grow their own food and grow animals so as to get milk from them. People consume animals on a large- scale which could also be the reason for the extinction of animals. As Jessica Cora Franken has pointed out: “All meat production has moved into the lab, which could be a contributing cause to farming’s collapse, or a result, or most likely some of both” (20).

Jessica Cora Franken, in one of her essays, says that, “the implied demise of animal agriculture is likely due in part to global warming, which has made entire countries uninhabitable. It is also partially attributable to excess consumption...” (20). It is said that ninety- nine percent of the meat consumed by the people of the United States is grown through factory farming. Animals and birds are produced according to the needs of humans. Chicken that lays no eggs and eggs that do not hatch are produced just for the sake of humanity. As man wants the wings and thighs of the chickens to be fleshy, they are grown in ways that make those parts of them alone to be bigger. All these are done despite the pains the animals and the birds undergo. At one point in *The Year of the Flood*, Zeb says, “There’s at least a hundred new extinct species since this time last month. They got fucking eaten!” (YOF 252).

Nature and wild animals have all but disappeared in *Maddaddam’s* world, but animal symbols have not. From the benign to the insidious, over and

over again the objects of capitalism are marked with representations of animals. Atwood makes a point of populating her world with, for example, giraffe wallpaper (OC 232), lighters shaped like frogs (YOF 339), clocks with bird calls (OC 55), kangaroo pajamas (OC 50), whale-patterned underwear (OC 50), comforters with cats playing fiddles and laughing puppies (MA 36), and curtains with cartoon fish (MA 263). None of these representations are about the actual animal, of course, but about the anthropomorphized caricatures, using animal images to reflect the human. Toby, one of the survivors of the plague, muses on this in *MaddAddam*: “They did love to depict animals endowed with human features...Huggable, fluffy, pastel bears, clutching Valentine hearts. Cute cuddly lions. Adorable dancing penguins. Older than that: pink, shiny, comical pigs, with slots in their backs for money” (MA 261). In the “pleeblands,” people dressed in animal costumes hand out flyers on the street advertising various beauty treatments. Animals are not only used in advertising the treatments, but their bodies feature in the procedures themselves, such as “iguana-based hue changes” and “flat-wart leech peels” (YOF 260). Again we see the confluence of material and metaphorical currencies.

People from the pre-flood period were intent just in satisfying their pleasures. They were indifferent either about the animals or about the lower class people. People relished the meat of animals that were on the verge of extinction. As the world was getting filled with artificial ones in almost all the fields, the high-class people wanted the rarest of the rare. “They killed the

animals on the premises because the customers didn't want goat dressed up as oryx or dyed wolf instead of wolverine. They wanted their bragging rights to be genuine" (YOF 31). One more place where the craze of the people is evident in the novel is: "It was amazing what people would do for a couple of lamb chops or a chunk of genuine brie" (OC 85). This is true of the real world too. People belonging to the upper class do whatever to get things they wish for.

People of the book eat human meat for two reasons: for the sake of enjoyment, to get an appalling pleasure of eating a human like himself; and to show dominance, as when the Painballers do. "When society crumbles, animals—and, . . . marginalized people—are the first to be seen as expendable." (Franken 14). Even though everyone knows this is happening, the only time the authorities step in is when someone too "valuable" goes missing: The CorpSeCorps had closed them down after one of their high-placed officials went slumming in the Sewage Lagoon and his shoes were discovered on the feet of a SecretBurgers meat-grinder operator. So for a while stray cats breathed easier at night. But a few months later the familiar grilling booths were sizzling again, because who could say no to a business with so few supply-side costs? (YOF 34) The people who get eaten first when people-eating starts are the ones on the margins, deemed "expendable" by those in power.

The works of the Gardeners are such that they impose as little negative effect on the animals and the natural environment as possible. In the pre-flood period the Gardeners apologise to animals when they lend their protein and fat

to the human beings. But in the post-flood world one could witness that the animals have also joined the arbitration ritual.

The Gardeners endorse human beings eating animals at times of crisis so as to keep themselves alive. They also prepare themselves and teach the co-Gardeners that they should not stop themselves from offering themselves to animal predators when needed.

As Franken asks, “. . . while ChickieNobs may be easy to pass off as science fiction, is the desire that created them really so different from the desire that created the average factory farm chicken of today?” (24). The desires are, definitely, not so different. Human beings, obviously, are taking an upper hand while it comes to animals and birds.

Franken has commented in her thesis that: “Every genetic decision during the past fifty to sixty years made when breeding chickens for consumption has been based on making them more productive, easily-managed *things*; every decision has been based on human needs” (24). It is also said that as humans prefer chicken breasts than its other parts, chickens are produced with large breasts, making them incapable of supporting their own weight, which makes them live shorter lives which in turn makes them unable to reproduce. “Most of the animals on factory farms today bear little resemblance to their ancestors. Their bodies express the marks of human dominance over nature” (24).

“... the polar bears are starving because the ice is almost gone and they can't catch seals any more, so lets feed them our leftovers until they learn to

adapt, “*adapt* being the buzzword of those days...” (MA 59). Further in their discussion about the past, Toby and Zeb, talk about how the word “adapt” was used by the people of the upper class, the Corporations. It was a word used to say to people in need, that no help would be rendered to them. In the case of the polar bears, they got used to food falling from the sky and were always expecting that to happen. Whenever they heard noises of helicopters, they began slavering expecting food.

The post- pandemic world proposed in *Maddaddam* is a frightening one like the societies shown in the other novels taken up for the study. In this world a small number of human beings live taking care of themselves and the quasi-human beings, who are created ideal and know no violence. People have to get protected from the lab-created animals such as the Pigoons, who are very difficult to handle as their brains are made of human tissues and are able to think rational thought just like humans. The other threat they have is the Painballers who have somehow survived the flood. These most threatening and awful men seem to have no heart, even after seeing the world getting destroyed before their eyes. The only thing they are intent upon is satisfying their hunger and also their sexual hunger. “Anyone who’d survived Painball more than once had been reduced to the reptilian brain. Sex until you were worn to a fingernail was their mode; after that, you were dinner. They liked the kidneys” (MA 9). One could not even imagine what all they would have gone through when they were in the Painball, that their minds have turned so cruel.

The post- pandemic world has this kind of people and the Gardeners, who are intent on keeping the world clean in all ways and who try hard not to harm any of the creatures of the planet as much as they can. In one instance, Toby even lets loose the Painballers who have done cruel things to another Gardener, Amanda.

The world of *Maddaddam* proposes that, as Franken comments, “One gets the sense that if Crake had not released his virus into the world, it would not have been long before another pandemic arose, with similar results” (33). The world of the trilogy is so corrupt and full of viruses and lab grown animals gone feral, that even if left untouched by the Maddaddamites, it would have gone to ruins I tone way or the other.

“The splice porcubever that was attacking the fan belts in cars, the bean weevil that was decimating Happicuppa coffee plantations, the asphalt-eating microbe that was melting highways” (YOF 270), as well as a parasitic wasp that invades and wipes out ChickieNob installations and a new form of mouse addicted to insulation on electric wiring (OC 216). Some scholars argue that this is a kind of co-operation between humans and animals, and some others like Jessica argue that humans use animals for their own benefits. Even if the people of Maddaddam group use animals for a benefit, it is for the benefit of some sort, it includes the benefit of animals too. Their intention is also to protect animals from extinction by the hands of humans. “Zeb figured if you could destroy the infrastructure then the planet could repair itself. Before it was too late and everything went extinct” (YOF 333).

“Six of the eight genetic segments of the most feared virus in the world” directly trace back to US factory farms (Foer 143). Seventy-five percent of new diseases affecting humans from 1999 to 2009 originated in animals or animal products. The WHO, OIE, and USDA cite factory farming as a primary risk factor for “disease entrance and/or dissemination” (Foer 143). There are many diseases on the rise and the major factor cited is climate change as is in the present world. Steps to stop the changing of climate is mandatory, so that the future generations can live in a pleasant environment.

MaddAddam is not a story of heroes. Though humans survive, it is not a story about humanity. Atwood accentuates this point by having the final chapter not narrated by humans at all, but by one of the Crakers, a young man named Blackbeard. Blackbeard has learned how to write from Toby, and after she is gone he takes over the task of recording the daily happenings in her journal. It is through Blackbeard’s writing that one learns of the birth of the babies to human mothers: none are human; all are human-Craker hybrids. The trilogy’s story is longer than that of the humans in it, throwing into question whether it was ever their story to begin with.

Though Blackbeard’s writing makes room for nonhuman characters, however, it still relies on humanism. The act of writing, of recording a history, is an essentially humanistic task. It serves to calm the anxiety of a world without us: the future may be all Craker-human babies and pigeons, but at least the story of humans has been recorded and one has ensured that those who come after him will be able to read it. Jimmy/Snowman, the trilogy’s standard-

bearer of tragic humanism, clings to human language after the flood. “Hang on to the words,’ he tells himself...When they’re gone out of his head, these words, they’ll be gone, everywhere, forever.

Toby first teaches Blackbeard what writing is, almost offhandedly, and then she has a moment of panic: “Now what have I done? she thinks. What can of worms have I opened?...What comes next? Rules, dogmas, laws? The Testament of Crake? How soon before there are ancient texts they feel they have to obey but have forgotten how to interpret? Have I ruined them?” (MA 204). She worries she has spoiled this harmonious race, somehow infected them with a kernel of the humanity that necessitated their existence in the first place. But of course, one has no way of knowing how Crakers would have “naturally” behaved, without the interference of humans. Would they still have developed a mythology and an oral history to pass on to their young? Would they eventually have invented written language? It is often remarked upon that Crakers do things Crake did not “program them” to do, or that he specifically tried to program them *not* to do. So there is no telling how they would have evolved in a vacuum. And, significantly, this question possibly relies on a false premise to begin with. Haraway would remind us that there is no essential “nature,” only “natureculture”. Humans are all connected and constantly influencing all others on the web in the process of becoming-with.

Environmental philosopher Timothy Morton refers to this as “the mesh.” He reminds his readers that life forms “are made up of other life forms. And life forms derive from other life forms. It is so simple, and yet so profound”

(267). In *MaddAddam*, just as humans have changed and been changed by the passage of time and interactions with others, so have animals and ecosystems.

The people of the upper class, like Zeb's father, preach their children the notion that food comes not from the nature but from the markets. As he makes money through oil business, he tells his children that oil is the most important thing to make food items. He says that it is important because all the machinery runs only because of oil. But contrastingly, the Gardeners teach their kids that food grows from earth and not from the supermarket. The gardeners, in the post-flood period, find it easier to live with the minimal sources of food that is left on the earth. Despite the environmental depredations that humanity has wrought, this new society, while initially resistant to change, eventually strives to better its circumstances for future generations.

The God's Gardeners, in the post-flood period, eat whatever they get: be it the dandelion or pigeon meat. As some scholars say, they diverge from their former opinions. Shelley Boyd, for example, considers that, they have "bypassed the God's Gardeners' strict vegetarianism"(171). But from the beginning they are taught to eat whatever they get. It is also one of the primitive practices of man, although it is considered one of the major acts which led to the destruction of the planet. Ursula Le Guinn explaining in one of her essays about the evolution of novel says that,

“. . . the Hero has frequently taken it over, that being his imperial nature and uncontrollable impulse, to take everything over and run it while making stern decrees and laws to control his

uncontrollable impulse to kill it' So the Hero has decreed through his mouthpieces the Lawgivers, first, that the proper shape of the narrative is that of the arrow or spear, starting here and going straight there and THOK! hitting its mark (which drops dead); second, that the central concern of narrative, including the novel, is conflict; and third that the story isn't any good if he isn't in it".

(152)

It is also clarified at the end of the book that the humans make a pact with the Pigoons that they will not kill Pigoons for their meat and the pigoons in return will leave the gardens of human beings untouched. Through this Atwood demonstrates that only through human-animal co-operation and considering both beings to be equal, and not one to be superior to the other, can the earth move on.

Atwood wants her readers to understand that a communion between humans and animals is mandatory for a serene life on earth. As told earlier, the beginning of the trilogy suggests that the world is filled with people who think of themselves to be the most supreme of beings. This is understood from the story Snowman tells the Crakers where he tells that the egg full of words burst and the Crakers ate up all of them that there was no word for the animals to eat and hence animals are not able to speak. But at the end of the trilogy, the author gives out a positive note through the story told by Toby. She tells that although the Crakers ate most of the words up, there still were some words which got blew away into the air and into the water, which got eaten up by the animals

and fish when Crake was not looking. This is also evident when the humans converse, at the end of *MaddAddam*, with the Pigoons through one of the Crakers called Blackbeard.

Franken in her thesis has stated: “*MaddAddam* continually calls upon “the gaze” to destabilize subject-object relations between humans and animals, or more broadly, between those in power and those considered the Other” (40). The world of *MaddAddam* is shown with animals and the nature with an upper hand: the Kudzu growing without control, the Pigoons digging up the gardens and the infections that take longer than before to get cured. Atwood implies that a world where the nature has an upper hand has greater possibilities of prospering. It would not have to encounter any kind of disasters and would remain peaceful for longer periods.

The path humans are on includes genetic manipulation, pollution, exploitation of natural resources, and abuse of non-human animals. Atwood, always very vocal about her environmental concerns – as an author and as an activist – depicts a scenario in the book concerned, that plausibly results from current environmental policies. All of this is, of course, embedded in fiction; more precisely, in a narrative that alternates between two different moments in the future: a post-apocalyptic narrative line is intertwined with one that relates events from a nearer future, all of them leading up to an environmental catastrophe of huge proportions.

One can find in Atwood’s novels some fictional clues as to her willingness to explore new representational territories. The characters of the

novel feel perturbed with absence of official time. They just act according to the rise of the sun and the moon, which reminds the reader that the characters of the novel have gone back to the period before invention of any kind of clocks. They live without much of the manmade machines that make life easier. But one could also find that, with considerable contentment, that they do not live a life of difficulty. This may be because many of the survivors of the plague are the Gardeners, who have learned even earlier how to live in such conditions. But it should also be noted that there are also some of the other characters, one-time scientists, who have been living their lives inside the sophisticated Compounds. So the final book of the trilogy, *Maddaddam*, does serve to be a final supply of hope to the readers.