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# Literary Eco-Resistance

Feminist Sustainable  
Practices in Margaret Atwood  
and Ruth Ozeki

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## ABSTRACT

In *The Great Derangement* (2016), Amitav Ghosh has argued that literature is currently facing a crisis of imagination, since fiction is unable to properly deal with climate change. This dissertation is going to assert that there is a beacon of hope. Literature has developed into two branches that adequately engage with climate change, ‘report’ fiction and speculative fiction. They are exemplified by the works of two female Canadian authors, Ruth Ozeki and Margaret Atwood. Ozeki’s *My Year of Meats* (1998) and *All Over Creation* (2003) fictionalize analyses on the use of hormones in cows breeding and genetically modified food. The MaddAddam trilogy by Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *Maddaddam* (2013), narrates a future in which the human race is swept away by a disease, only to be replaced by a new form of ‘superhumans.’ The novels display various forms of eco-sustainability and resistance against hegemonic forms of capitalism. Taking a materialistic route, it will be argued that the food practices depicted by Atwood and Ozeki escape the idea that the realistic novel cannot engage with climate change events. All of the food practices are linked with environmental issues, such as pollution, bioengineered meat, and vegetarianism. Special attention will be paid to the role played by women in the novels, as their narratives are intertwined with forms of ecological food-related resistance.



## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>RESISTING THE DERANGEMENT .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1. Words and Numbers People.....	1
2. Amitav Ghosh and the Deranged Imagination.....	5
3. The Role of the Humanities .....	7
4. Ruth Ozeki and Documentaries .....	11
5. Margaret Atwood and Speculative Fiction .....	13
<b>CHAPTER I .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>THE NEOLIBERAL AND BIOCAPITALIST LANDSCAPE .....</b>	<b>17</b>
1. Capitalism and Climate Change.....	17
2. Beef with Antibiotics and Genetically Modified Potatoes .....	19
3. Compounds and Bioengineered Animals.....	33
<b>CHAPTER II.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>ECOLOGICAL FOODWAYS AND ACTIVISM.....</b>	<b>46</b>
1. Vegetarian Ecofeminism and Ordinary Choices.....	46
2. Vegetarians and the Seeds of Resistance .....	51
3. Adams, Eves, and Pigoon Pies.....	57
<b>CHAPTER III .....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>THE FUTURE IS FEMALE .....</b>	<b>73</b>
1. Disruptive Women .....	73
2. Ozeki’s Activist Women.....	74
3. Atwood’s Female Rebels .....	86
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>THE GREAT RESILIENCE .....</b>	<b>99</b>
1. Ecological Resistance .....	99
2. Resisting Arts.....	103
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>112</b>



## INTRODUCTION RESISTING THE DERANGEMENT

*Watch out for art, Crake used to say. As soon as [the Crakers] start doing art, we're in trouble. Symbolic thinking of any kind would signal downfall, in Crake's view. Next they'd be inventing idols, and funerals, and grave goods, and the afterlife, and sin, and Linear B, and kings, and then slavery and war. (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 419-420)*

### 1. Words and Numbers People

The role of the humanities and their significance to humankind has long been at the centre of a heated debate. In today's technologically mediated and deeply-permeated society, it might seem that arts and literature are no longer relevant, especially when facing a potentially-fatal climate change. The humanities seem useless in front of the ecological disruptions that the world is currently facing. Moreover, it appears that ecocriticism, the branch of literature that is the closest to an ecological consciousness, has a descriptive value at most, but does not have any powerful agency.

In the novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003) by Margaret Atwood, the first of the MaddAddam trilogy, a rather bleak portrayal of the future of the humanities and of liberal arts colleges is presented in the context of a future dystopic society. Atwood's world is divided into "words and numbers people" and, in the technologically-infused society, it is clear which of the two is perceived to be almost a burden. As described by Amelia Defalco, "word people, whose aptitude for the outdated medium of language with its irritating imprecisions and ambiguities, are superfluous, if not outright liabilities in a society where prosperity depends on using mathematical modelling and algorithms to incessantly 'improve' biomedica" (439-440). The

humanities have lost the prestige they used to have and now present themselves as a mere vassal to science and technology. That society looks down on those who decide to dedicate their time to the arts and at the same time the human beings that are considered inferior are encouraged to undertake this path.

The main character, Jimmy, son of a microbiologist and of a bioengineer is a “words” person, as his inclinations bring him towards the arts and not the sciences, therefore he is completely useless in the technological-heavy world he lives in. Consequently, to further his studies after high school, he is sent to the liberal arts college Martha Graham Academy. The campus is ruins, both because of the state of the buildings and of its reputation. The academy’s first description is decadent and straightforward, “Martha Graham was falling apart,” depicted with muddy lawns and cockroach-infested bedrooms (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 217-218). Reflecting its society’s consideration of the arts, its motto used to be “*Ars Longa, Vita Brevis*,” but now it is “Our Students Graduate with Employable Skills” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 220). Arts no longer have an intrinsic value, but their worth is directly linked to their functionality in relation with technology and science. The disciplines offered by the curricula differ greatly from today’s courses and they all have a specific purpose. Atwood carefully provides a detailed description of all of them:

As the initial funders had died off and the enthusiasm of the dedicated artsy money had waned and endowment had been sought in more down-to-earth quarters, the curricular emphasis had switched to other arenas. *Contemporary* arenas, they were called. Webgame Dynamics, for instance; money still could be made from that. Or Image Presentation, listed in the calendar as a sub-branch of Pictorial and Plastic Arts. With a degree in PicPlarts, as the students called it, you could go into advertising, no sweat.

Or Problematics. Problematics was for word people, so that was what Jimmy took. Spin and Grin was its nickname among the students. Like everything at Martha Graham it had utilitarian skills (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 220).

Being a “words” person, Jimmy takes the unusual decision to spend time in the dusty and abandoned library of the campus, in a *Fahrenheit 451*-esque world in which “better libraries, at institutions with more money, had long ago burned their actual books and kept everything on CD-ROM, but Martha Graham was behind the times in that, as in everything. Wearing a nose-cone filter to protect against the mildew, Jimmy grazed among the shelves of mouldering paper” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 229). Jimmy is moved to explore these unusual areas precisely because his society deemed the arts useless, what he is studying is considered “an archaic waste of time [...] he would be its champion, defender, and preserver. Who was it who’d said that all art was completely useless?” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 229).

Moreover, although each instalment of the MaddAddam trilogy presents a different setting, even in the second instalment, *The Year of the Flood* (2009), there is a chilling depiction of the Martha Graham Academy, its courses, and the student’s future employability. In the second novel the point of view shifts from Jimmy to Ren, a young girl from the higher classes. Ren decides to attend dance courses at the Academy, “I took Dance Calisthenics and Dramatic Expression – you didn’t need any background or math for those. I figured I could get a job in one of the Corps, leading the in-corp noon-hour exercise programs that the better one had. Tone to Music, Yoga for Middle Management” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 341). Even a form of artistic expression such as dancing becomes a source for profit, Ren does not take it because she wants to become a ballerina or to find a way to express herself, but rather because it seems the easiest way to find a job afterwards.

Furthermore, Atwood depicts a shallow portrait of education in the dystopic society even in the third novel, *MaddAddam* (2013). The final instalment is centred around another character, Zeb, and the readers enjoy a different, but scarily similar, perspective on education in the dystopic society. Zeb is the son of the founder of the Church of PetrOleum, which is a new religion based on the holy power of oil, as its name suggests. Therefore, he is sent to CapRock Prep for his secondary education, a private school tainted by anti-ecology ideologies, as it is funded with money coming from the oil corporations (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 141-142). Afterwards, Zeb is not encouraged to continue his studies, since he is not exceptionally gifted in the science field, unlike his brother Adam. Zeb's brother is sent to Spindletop U, where he studies "PetrTheology, Homiletics, and PetrBiology" (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 148). Looking at the name of the subjects, it is fair to assume the university is also funded by oil money, since the Church of PetrOleum takes its name from the apostle Peter and from petroleum (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 137) - this topic will be further explored in later parts of the dissertation.

The society described by Atwood takes to the extreme the neoliberalisation and reification of universities of today. As the rest of the ecological themes tackled in the trilogy, Atwood vehemently criticises the sterile view of academia as a money-making machine, whose sole aim is to produce and reproduce wealth and the social structures that sustain it. Since the society in the *MaddAddam* trilogy is built on Compounds, each connected to a specific corporation, such as the cosmetic-surgery-centred AnooYoo, or the health-focused HealthWyzer, their high schools and universities are built to perpetrate the omnipotence of technology. The humanities are inadequate and no longer relevant, they have been cast aside as a relic from the past, as the modernization and technologizing of arts disciplines has only disrupted their original creative force and their ability to make room for social change.

## 2. Amitav Ghosh and the Deranged Imagination

Such a bleak image of the humanities in the MaddAddam trilogy is worryingly similar to the one presented in the seminal *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016) by Amitav Ghosh, although his focus is on the present and not on a speculative future. The essay is a strong critique of the humanities, based on their current failure to deal with climate change. Ghosh argues that the arts cannot tackle the ecological exploitation that expanded immensely during the Anthropocene, the geological era in which human beings have become geological agents, as a consequence of the technological and economic developments of the Industrial Revolution (Chakrabarty, 197-222). For Ghosh, the Anthropocene challenges “the arts and humanities, but also [...] our commonsense understandings” (9). Ghosh reasons that the humanities have not been able to keep up and they are unable to properly deal with climate change, nowadays there is a crisis of the imagination, by him described as the time of “The Great Derangement” of literature and the arts (Ghosh 9, 11).

Ghosh argues that the humanities’ inability is a consequence of the literary forms themselves, he wrote “I have come to realize that the challenges that climate change poses for the contemporary writer [...] are also product of something broader and older; that they derive ultimately from the grid of literary forms and conventions that came to shape the narrative imagination” (Ghosh 7). At the core of the problem lies the realist novel, the central genre of literature today and of the bourgeois class. According to Ghosh, the realist novel cannot reflect the changing climate, since for structural reasons, it is unable to describe the extraordinary climate events that are threatening the Earth’s and humankind’s survival. This type of novel can only fictionalize probable events, as the realist novel wants to depict the ordinary, and Ghosh suggests that “probability and the modern novel are in fact twins” (Ghosh 16). Hence,

the feature in the literary scene of anything improbable could potentially undermine the entire novel to the reader's mind.

To strengthen his argument, Ghosh recounts that in his youth he had witnessed a tornado of unprecedented strength. Although he is a writer himself, Ghosh has never felt comfortable enough to include it in his fictional writing, fearing that it would make his works appear unrealistic and unbelievable (Ghosh 11-15). A similar reasoning could be applied to the portrayal of any kind of event linked to climate change, it is an impossible task because of their high degree of improbability according to man's idea of normality (Ghosh 24-26). Even genres that featured an important amount of improbability, such as surrealism and magical realism are futile, since "to treat [climate change events] as magical or surreal would be to rob them of precisely the quality that makes them so urgently compelling – which is that they are actually happening on this earth, at this time" (Ghosh 27).

If novels are a failure, similarly, other types of literature, for instance works of nonfiction, do not produce viable alternatives to narrate climate change (Ghosh 7). Arguably, works of nonfiction are incapable of moving their readers into action, because they are perceived as too sterile by the readers. As stated by Ghosh, it is impossible to aestheticize words such as "*naphtha, bitumen, petroleum, tar, and fossil fuels*" (73). Therefore, the humanities are facing an unprecedented crisis of the imagination, as they are incapable of portraying the most pressing issue of today. According to Ghosh, a possible feasible solution would be to mix words and images, in order to produce the most shocking reaction possible in the audience and force people to take action, as the visual arts have depicted climate change more easily than literature (Ghosh 83).

Therefore, the humanities are doomed to be unable to portray the most significant event of today because of their intrinsic qualities, according to Amitav Ghosh. There needs to be a

radical change to do so, otherwise humankind is lazily turning the other way and merely waiting for the disaster to happen.

### 3. The Role of the Humanities

While it cannot be denied that there is a quantitative lack of novels that effectively tackle climate change issues, this dissertation is going to argue that North-American literature nowadays presents a beacon of hope through five novels of two female writers. Instead of focusing on extraordinary and larger-than-life climatic events such as tornadoes, today's writers can still write ecologically-conscious realist novels by focusing on everyday practices, for instance food narratives. Food-related ways of production and choices reflect the way humankind has exploited nature and at the same time show eco-sustainable alternatives. Moreover, food practices are ordinary, but their depiction can promote significant individual changes.

Therefore, the dissertation will present a comparative close reading of the works of two authors, Margaret Atwood and Ruth Ozeki. Once a filmmaker, Ozeki has written *My Year of Meats* (1998) and *All Over Creation* (2003), respectively about the use of growth hormones in cattle farming and about genetically modified potatoes. The trilogy *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013) by Margaret Atwood is set in a speculative future, in which humankind has been swept away by a bioengineered disease and set to be replaced by a new kind of "superhumans." Although the gloomy image of education in Atwood's novels at the beginning of this chapter might be misleading, all of these novels show forms of resistance against capitalist and neoliberal practices, particularly in relation to food choices. It will be debated that Atwood and Ozeki present a significant challenge to the Great Derangement theorised by Amitav Ghosh, as they rely on the speculative fiction and

realist genre to challenge climate change and ecological exploitation. Both Atwood and Ozeki are ecologically-conscious writers and the purpose of their work is to inform their readers and to show them alternative lifestyles. Moreover, their work represents two sides of literary ecocriticism, as Ozeki's novels present a focus on recent events since they are all set in the 1990s, while Atwood's works take place in an unspecified future. Both writers present warnings to their readers, Ozeki is more interested in raising awareness about what is currently happening and in which ways man is exploiting nature, while Atwood cautions her readers about the place where our current technology could lead humankind one day. This dissertation is not going to focus on the past, as much as a historical knowledge of ecological exploitation is essential, but rather on the present and the future. Climate change presents a challenge for tomorrow and, at the same time, it is essential to be aware of what is happening in the present.

Following the introduction, the dissertation is going to be divided into three main chapters before reaching a conclusion. Consequently, the first chapter will look at the background scene of the narratives, that is a capitalist and exploitative society both in the real world and in Atwood's dystopic future. Corporations are a dominant factor in the novels by both Atwood and Ozeki and they deteriorate the quality of life of animals and humans alike. Moreover, the capitalist paradigm is at the core of the birth of the Anthropocene, therefore, it is fitting to start by analysing their representations in the novels. The second chapter will deal with eco-sustainable practices, by paying special attention to food choices, vegetarianism, and ecological activism, as all of the novels present sharp critiques of genetically modified and bioengineered food. It will be argued that although both Ozeki and Atwood want to promote ecological practices, Atwood is able to present a more nuanced depiction of activism and to criticize its extremist versions. The third chapter will examine the most influential female characters in the novels, as they play a significant role in all of the narratives. In particular, the majority of the women in these novels are unruly and rebellious, they possess an ecological

attitude and defy the capitalist status quo. Ozeki and Atwood present women as the future of society, in relation to the fight against climate change. Moreover, women are at the core of the third chapter, because one of the key theories on which the dissertation is based is vegetarian ecofeminism, as it will be later explored. Finally, the conclusion will present an overview on the theme of religion, which is the underlying thread beneath all of the narratives. Furthermore, it will assess the role and future of the humanities according to Ozeki and Atwood, against the backdrop of Ghosh's theory.

A theoretical overview on the themes of capitalism, eco-sustainable practices and vegetarianism, and feminism will precede each chapter. The themes will be the axes of the dissertation because they are all interconnected with each other, both in the novels and in ecocriticism theory in general. For instance, there are plenty of ecocritical analyses that join climate change and capitalism and most importantly, neoliberal practices as the culprit of today's climate crisis (Ghosh 87, Chakrabarty 212). Furthermore, there is also a long tradition of ecofeminist criticism that presents women and vegetarianism as tightly intertwined. A seminal work on feminist-vegetarianism is for example *The Sexual Politics of Meat: a Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (1990) by Carol J. Adams, or the critical inquiries by Greta Gaard, such as the collection she edited *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (1993). Similarly, a connection between capitalism and feminism has been drawn by Nancy Fraser in her essential work *Fortunes of Feminism: from State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (2013), as she has always connected gender domination with an entire social order (Bargu and Bottici 5). As stated by Gaard, one of the key features of feminism is that it is not only related to a specific topic, but that it questions everything (117). Moreover, Gaard argues that the causes of women, animals, people of colour, and nature are all connected against the hegemonic and capitalist Western thought (Gaard 127). As these themes are all closely interconnected, the same mingling attitude is deployed in the structure of the different chapters. Each of them

centres on a particular theme, however, they often interfere with each other's fields as a compartmentalised perspective would not be as beneficial. The theme of interconnectedness is at the core of the dissertation, because it is the policy that modern day ecofeminism wants to promote, in order to join ecological, gender, race, and sexuality issues all together, against the Western capitalist logic of domination (Gaard 128).

Other than a literary analysis of five contemporary novels, all connected with feminist and ecological themes, the underlying aim of this dissertation is to offer a defence of the humanities today. Similar to Atwood's speculative world, academia today has often been described as a neoliberal machine, since even universities have become profit-generators (Slaughter, 73-79), and literature has been depicted as no longer relevant, as argued by Ghosh. This dissertation will try to prove the opposite, the humanities can still influence social and eco-sustainable change, both by examining the novels themselves and their own views on the humanities. Rosi Braidotti provides a significant model for a strenuous defence of both the humanities and universities. In her ground-breaking *The Posthuman* (2013), Braidotti analysed the state of the posthuman thought today and has argued that the only way for the humanities to escape anthropocentric practices and attitudes is a form of "interdisciplinarity, transversality, and boundary-crossings among a range of discourse" (Braidotti 169). Braidotti argues for the possibility of a renaissance of the humanities today, whose area of influence includes the universities. Unlike Amitav Ghosh, Braidotti does not suggest a mixed use of text and images, because she believes that words still maintain their stronghold. Nonetheless, for Braidotti, an inclusion of science and technology into the literary world is decisive, she argues that:

I think the Humanities can and will survive and prosper to the extent that they will show the ability and willingness to undergo a major process of transformation in the direction of the posthuman [...] A university that looks like the world of today can only be a "multi-

versity,” is an exploded and expanded institution that will affirm a constructive post-humanity (Braidotti 184).

Braidotti presents a beacon of hope regarding literature’s potentiality. This dissertation will demonstrate that the novels presented by Atwood and Ozeki precisely exemplify the interdisciplinarity put forward by Braidotti, as the two novelists are greatly influenced by contemporary science and show an in-depth level of scientific research. Furthermore, the novels all present an intermingled analysis of capitalism, ecological activism, and gender issues.

#### 4. Ruth Ozeki and Documentaries

Ruth Ozeki started her career as a filmmaker and the experience has shaped her writing and it has vastly influenced her first novel, *My Year of Meats* (1998). For instance, preceding the Bibliography of *My Year of Meats*, Ozeki states that she was urged to write a list of her sources, precisely because of her past as a documentarian (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 427), she then lists a series of useful resources for her readers to document themselves on the themes covered by her novel. *My Year of Meats* tells the story of a Japanese film crew sent to the United States in order to film a cooking show called *My American Wife!*, however, the supposed to be light-hearted documentary turns into a harsh exposé on the use of growth hormones (DES) in cattle farming. In a similar way, Ozeki’s second novel, *All Over Creation* (2003) chronicles corporate’s greed and the use of improperly-labelled genetically modified potatoes in a farm in Idaho. Ozeki’s detailed research on both topics is evident in her novels, as they show essay-like passages in which they describe the history of DES and the different laws created by the

US government regarding GMOs. As noted by Paul W. Harrison in his analysis of *My Year of Meats*:

Ozeki includes a bibliography of references after the ending—including texts on meat production, factory farming, and the health effects of DES, as well as contact information and websites for advocacy organizations. Thus, the author's uncommon ending seeks not only to inspire her readers, but also to explicitly point them to resources for continued understanding and action. (Harrison 473).

Ozeki successfully mixes nonfiction and fiction, and, in this way, she presents an exception to the idea that ecology-related essays are unable to move their readers. According to Ghosh, it is impossible to include technical words, such as petroleum or fossil fuels, in novels because they are anti aesthetic (73). Even the main character of *My Year of Meats*, while editing her documentary on DES, reflects on the difficulty of talking about such themes:

There were no recipes, no sociological surveys, no bright attempts at entertainment. So how to tell the story?

Information about toxicity of food is widely available, but people don't want to hear it. Once in a while a story is spectacular enough to break through and attract media attention, but the swell quickly subsides into the general glut of bad news over which we, as citizens, have so little control (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 393).

However, Ozeki's anti-aestheticism is precisely one of the main key values of her works, it can be argued that she produces a realist, or more precisely 'report' fiction, since the narrative

is often intermingled by long newspaper-like informative sections, as exemplified by this passage:

DES, or diethylstilberitol, is a man-made estrogen that was first synthesized in 1938. Soon afterward, a professor of poultry and husbandry at the University of California discovered that if you inject DES into male chickens, it chemically castrates them. Instant capons. The males develop female characteristics – plump breasts and succulent meats – desirable assets for one’s dinner (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 148).

She is able to report with details GMOs and growth hormones process, but at the same time Ozeki moves and compels her readers. In her novels, humankind’s exploitations over nature are matched with a “face” (Harrison 466) that provide them emotional power. The dissertation will focus on *My Year of Meats* and on *All Over Creation* because they powerfully combine the didactic and the sentimental.

##### 5. Margaret Atwood and Speculative Fiction

The MaddAddam trilogy by Margaret Atwood presents an exception to Amitav Ghosh’s critique of science fiction as an inadequate genre to portray climate change. In his view, sci-fi novels or apocalyptic novels risk exorcising the rightful fears of the consequences of a drastic ecological change (Ghosh 27). Although set in an unspecified future, Atwood’s novels are not an example of science fiction, but rather of speculative fiction. In a paper written by the author herself, Atwood has clarified the genre distinction:

I said I liked to make a distinction between science fiction proper – for me, this label denotes books with things in them we can't yet do or begin to do, talking beings we can never meet, and places we can't go – and speculative fiction, which employs the means already more or less to hand and takes place on Planet Earth (Atwood, "The Handmaid's Tale and *Oryx and Crake* in Context, 513).

Speculative fiction's speciality is to speak of the future (Atwood, "The Handmaid's Tale and *Oryx and Crake* in Context," 515), but it does so by describing technological and biological advancements that have already been made, "although *MaddAddam* is a work of fiction, it does not include any technologies or biobeings that do not already exist, are not under construction, or are not possible in theory" as it is stated the "Acknowledgements" of *MaddAddam* (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 475). Therefore, Atwood's trilogy escapes accusations of exorcism or even of normalising climate change, but it works as a cautionary tale of a coming-soon process that has already begun. Even if Atwood's novels follow precisely the apocalyptic or surreal genre, they can still effectively tackle climate change. Gerry Canavan argues that Atwood's works are extremely significant precisely because they can be labelled as apocalyptic, as they are the only forces that can disrupt the hegemony of capitalism (138). This type of fiction is the only one that can free humankind from a capitalist-induced paralysis that forces people to perceive it as natural, "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" (Canavan 139). However, Canavan also argues that Atwood's engagement with the genre plays and bends its rules, as exemplified by the beginning of *Oryx and Crake* in which Jimmy finds himself in a desolate land and reflects over the pre-plague world:

Within three pages Atwood has effectively destabilized the typical affective coordinates of post-apocalyptic fiction, in which the post-apocalyptic landscape is a horror and the pre-apocalyptic landscape the longed-for object of nostalgia. Whereas the pre-apocalyptic status quo is generally figured as a lost Golden Age to be mourned, in *Oryx and Crake* its deprivations are quickly revealed to be easily the match of Snowman's wasteland. In the end the pre-apocalyptic landscape turns out to be much worse than the post-apocalyptic, built as it is upon a nightmare of murder, rape, exploitation, and theft that is, as we know too well, the actually existing, entirely nonfictional history of European expansion (Canavan 141).

Furthermore, Canavan defends the apocalyptic fiction saying that the only powerful force that ecological writers can use is precisely this type of fiction (155).

Moreover, the *MaddAddam* trilogy is a tale of the Anthropocene brought to its extreme consequences, the world pre-plague is a "hyperextended, hypertrophic version of US-style consumer capitalism – our mad world, gone even madder" (Canavan 140). The disease that swipes away the majority of humankind is man-made by the scientist Crake. He also "sees humans as a problem to be solved" (Narkunas 2) and consequently he has bioengineered the creation of a new type of super-humans, the Crakers, who possess many adaptable and ecology-friendly qualities, as it will be later explored. Although the novels risk being labelled as extremely human-centric, Chapter III will present an analysis on how the interconnectedness of all living creatures and Nature is the key characteristic of the trilogy.

Consequently, Atwood's speculative trilogy is at the core of this dissertation because it is a new genre that both aptly challenges climate change and posits as a cautionary tale about the future. It does not fit the science fiction paradigm criticized by Amitav Ghosh because it does not provide an escapist fantasy, since it heavily relies on already-existing technological

advancements, for instance for the Crakers or for the disease. The MaddAddam trilogy asks its readers to question the moral, social, and political implications of today's (bio)technological advancements and to pay attention to what surrounds them today.

CHAPTER I  
THE NEOLIBERAL AND BIOCAPITALIST LANDSCAPE

*Why were the bad people doing that? Because of Money. Money was invisible [...] They thought that Money was their helper [...] but they were wrong about that. Money was not their helper. Money goes away just when you need it (Atwood, MaddAddam, 312).*

*You got a choice, dude. We've all got choices. Lots of them. Every single second of the day we're making choices. You've just been making bad ones, is all (Ozeki, All Over Creation, 412).*

1. Capitalism and Climate Change

The history of the Anthropocene is tightly intertwined with the history of capital (Chakrabarty 218) and the free market and the possibility of monetizing an unlimited amount of resources are at the core of today's current climate crisis. The works of fiction of both Margaret Atwood and Ruth Ozeki analysed in this dissertation depict either current or speculative worlds dominated by profit, commodification, and economic interest at the expenses of the Earth, human beings, and animals alike, whose lives are governed and shaped by the ruthless neoliberal logic. Therefore, in order to describe the ways in which their novels show eco-sustainable practices that defy and challenge climate change, it is necessary to present an overview of the landscapes in which their works take place.

Capitalism and neoliberal practices have long been associated with the current climate crisis. As previously mentioned, in his four theses about climate history Dipesh Chakrabarty indicated capitalism as the key factor that lead to the Anthropocene, which is the current era

and the one shaped by the status of geological force acquired by human beings (340). Similarly, in the section of *The Great Derangement* (2017) dedicated to the history of the geological era, Amitav Ghosh argued that “capitalism is one of the principal drivers of climate change” (87). In her detailed report *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (2014), Naomi Klein also reasoned that humankind, albeit mostly on the Western side of the globe, has refused to put into action drastic measures to fight climate change precisely because of capitalism (11). Klein believes that people are held in a stranglehold by an elite minority “over our economy, our political process, and most of our major media outlets” (Klein 11) that ensures an inefficient fight against the climate crisis. The free market, seems to have a privileged position when compared to the future of the Earth. In particular, John Lupinacci stated that the neoliberal context induces human beings to consider themselves as completely independent from external factors, they fall into an “illusion of disembeddedness” (662), whose consequence is to assume the highest position in a hierarchy that includes all of the living creatures. Neoliberal ideals and policies present an effect that does not include only the ecological sphere, but they enable the creation of hierarchized dualisms, in which “individualism connects with patriarchy, racism, commodification, ableism, heteronormativity” (Lupinacci 662-663). As it will be later argued, the neoliberal and capitalist background of the narratives of Atwood and Ozeki is linked to misogynist and homogenizing iterations that the main characters are bravely defying.

The connection between capitalism and ecology is not only an account of the beginning of the Anthropocene, but it is also related to the development of bioethics and biopolitical phenomena. As argued by Coole & Frost, the growth of biomedical and biotechnological sciences today poses significant challenges to ideas of agency and morality (16). Genetic mutations and biotechnological interventions “raise political questions about what life is and how far it can or must fall under state control” (Coole & Frost 23). Human bodies, flora and

fauna are the new terrain for a genetic intervention that lead to a new market economy. Everything is monetized and if it does not exist, it is genetically created.

This chapter focuses on presenting an overview of the social and political landscape set at the background of the *MaddAddam* trilogy (2003-2013) and of the novels *My Year of Meats* (1998) and *All Over Creation* (2003), influenced by critical readings connecting climate change and capitalism. As the rest of the dissertation, the aim is to provide an intersectional account of the different ecological, non-hegemonic and feminist practices offered by Atwood and Ozeki.

## 2. Beef with Antibiotics and Genetically Modified Potatoes

*My Year of Meats* (1998) by Ruth Ozeki offers its readers a report on the use of antibiotics and hormones in cattle farming in the United States, through the narration of the making of *My American Wife!*, a Japanese documentary about beef-centred American recipes. The scene is set in 1991 and the main character, Jane Takagi-Little, and her crew embark on a journey across the US, sponsored by the national lobby organization, “the Beef Export and Trade Syndicate, or simply BEEF-EX [...] that represented American meats of all kinds – beef, pork, lamb, goat, horse – as well as livestock producers, packers, purveyors, exporters, grain promoters, pharmaceutical companies, and agribusiness groups” (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats* 14). The aim of the documentary series is not only to increase BEEF-EX’s profits, but also to spread “All-American Values,” on a note to Jane the producers said:

Our ideal American wife must have enough in common with the average Japanese housewife so as not to appear either threatening or contemptible. *My American Wife!*

of the '90s must be a modern role model, just as her mother was a model to Japanese wives after World War II (Ozeki *My Year Of Meats*, 18).

Therefore, BEEF-EX wants to spread the American lifestyle and present it as ideal, in order to maximise its sales. As argued by Monica Chiu, as a case in point, the series evolves “to foster among Japanese housewives a proper understanding of the wholesomeness of U.S. meats” (10), not to directly promote the consumers' good health, but to increase America's wealth (Chiu 105). Even the premises of *My American Wife!* are problematic, as they have capitalist purposes at heart. Moreover, according to the producer's indications, the show must feature only heteronormative families that presents none of the “Undesirable things: 1. Physical imperfections/ 2. Obesity/ 3. Squalor/ 4. Second class peoples” (Ozeki, *My Year Of Meats*, 16). The neoliberal values shape both the economic and the personal aspect of family life, the producer's guidelines indicate how the white, middle-class, able, heteronormative family is the one associated with wealth, while all of the other types of family are not sources of profit.

Later in the novel, the documentary will move away from these guidelines under Jane's discovery of the use of illegal drugs in cattle farming. However, even at the beginning of the novel, there are two episodes that raise a red flag towards non-organic methods of cattle farming. While visiting a family in Oklahoma, a guy from Jane's Japanese filming crew suffers from an anaphylactic shock while eating a Schnitzel prepared by the designed wife for the documentary. The reaction was caused by a significant presence in the meat of antibiotics (to which the crew member is allergic). As argued by the doctor that comes to the rescue:

“Antibiotics,” he said. He looked at me. “You're a city girl. You've probably never been to a feedlot, have you.”

“What, you mean for cows?”

He rolled his eyes. “No, cattle. Meat.”

“No, but it’s funny you should bring it up. What do feedlots have to do with anaphylactic shock?”

“Well, if you’d been to one, you’d know what I was talking about. They’re filthy and overcrowded – breeding grounds for all sorts of disease – so cattle are given antibiotics as a preventive measure, which builds up and collects in the meat.” (Ozeki, *My Year Of Meats*, 75).

As further explained by the doctor, such a use of antibiotics is dangerous for those allergic to it, but also to everyone else because it raises people’s tolerances. The people in the business exploit their animals by forcing them to stay in unsanitary feedlots, in order to maximise their profits, but at the same time create a concerning situation for people’s health. Moreover, cattle are placed into a Ford-like mechanism of production that reifies them. As stated by Carol J. Adams in her seminal “Ecofeminism and the Eating of Animals,” animals are viewed as a “valuable piece of machinery” (132). The second episode can be found further down the narration, in which there is a section from a Japanese newspaper article stating the imminent introduction of meat vending machines, as housewives are embarrassed to utter out loud the name of meat cuts and concluding that “the challenge is for meat marketers is clearly how to ‘de-humanize’ meat” (Ozeki, *MYOM*, 105-106). In this way, Ozeki parallels two sides of the world that equally exploit and objectify animals, but she does not place them in a hierarchical disposition, as both sides are not wholly good or evil.

The most significant exposé of the novel is related to the now-illegal use of hormones, diethylstilbestrol (DES) in particular, for animal farming and for women with a difficult pregnancy. The first case appears in a black family from the South. While being interviewed

for the programme, Mr. Purcell Dawes says that he used to eat plenty of chicken, because they were able to buy its cheap parts, but that now they have stopped:

“Yeah, we *thought* they was real good ... until Mr. Purcell’s barrytone came out soundin’ serpraner!”

Ueno looked at me questioningly, but I didn’t get it, either.

Purcell explained. “It was some medicine they was usin’ in the chickens that got into the necks that we was eatin’ ... An’ that medicine, well, if it didn’t start to make me sound just like a woman!”

“And look like one too, with them teeny little titties and everything!” Miss Helen chimed in (*Ozeki, My Year Of Meats*, 139).

Mr. Purell showed signs of hormone contamination, such as breasts enlargement and a higher voice pitch, because he could not afford a higher quality of meat. The capitalist logics of wealth and profit equally mistreat animals as well as minorities, as argued by Monica Chiu, “the drive for profit detrimentally affects the production of minorities as well as the reproductive use of women's bodies” (111). DES reifies chickens by modifying their bodies in order to increase production and, at the same time, the hormone modifies the physicality of minority subjects, who are at the bottom of the social hierarchy and cannot afford healthier types of meat. As argued in the introduction, the key value of Ozeki’s fiction is the report-like quality of her novels. She does not just provide hints about DES or other hormones, but she gives a long and detailed description of their use in animal farming. Not only Ozeki reports the history of the synthetization of DES, but she also traces its relationship with the US FDA. She recounts how the hormone was banned by the FDA in 1959, but that it was not the end of it:

But by then DES was also being widely used in beef production, and oddly enough, the FDA did nothing to stop that. [...] By the early 1960s, *after* the ban on implants for chickens, DES was used by more than 95 percent of US cattle feeders to speed up production. [...] DES changed the face of meat in America. Using DES and other drugs, like antibiotics, farmers could process animals on an assembly line, like cars or computer chips [...] Meanwhile, all this time, since it was first synthesized, DES was being used for another purpose entirely. Researchers and doctors were prescribing it for pregnant women in the belief that DES would prevent miscarriages and premature births (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 148-149).

Ozeki deeply criticizes the senseless use of DES by farmers and their actions can be considered as the exemplification of the larger exploitation of nature committed by humankind. It only serves economic purposes and it does not follow neither a rationality in doing business nor respect for nature. It is a devastating greed that leaves nothing behind. Moreover, the passage shows that women and people of colour are placed on the same level as animals in the way their wellbeing is considered in general, and in the same way, Ozeki escapes having an anthropocentric attitude by including animals in her analysis. The lower status assumed by women, people of colour, and animals is not new, but, as argued by Greta Gaard, it is at the core of the Western patriarchal thought (126). While an attitude that does not privilege humans in relation to animals would be ideal, still setting a hierarchy with white (presumably straight) middle-class men at the top is not a viable way. The farmers suffer from what Lupinacci called the “illusion of disembeddedness,” as they believe they are individuals not affected by what happens around them and they further support the division of society into hierarchical binaries (Lupinacci 662-663).

Ozeki attacks the capitalist way of life and its treatment of the creatures that are not included in its privilege, as argued by Summer Harrison “by relating women and cattle, and redefining Wall Street as a slaughterhouse, Ozeki links the ruthless pursuit of capitalist profits with the oppression of marginalized human/nonhuman bodies seen in the documentary” (469). Moreover, Ozeki sharply critiques the use of DES for women in the face of studies confirming the danger of prescribing the hormone (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 149). Even without an ecocritical framework, the fact should be perceived as scandalous. In a way, women are placed on the “assembly line” in the same way that animals were, their wellbeing vanished when confronted with the end-product, be it children or meat. Although it might seem that the US government tried to prevent the use of DES, Ozeki further recounts how in 1980 more than fifty feedlots were discovered using the hormone, but that none of them were prosecuted (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 151), a further sign that capitalist profit is more important than everything else, as argued by Naomi Klein (11).

Even in a later section of the novel, the objectification of cattle is shown in all of its extent, when the crew lead by Jane Takagi-Little visits the Dunn Family. Jane wants to film on camera the decision of the Dunn family of keeping the 20,000 cows they raise all in one place, in order to get some “horrifying” material (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 248-249). The scene is more gruesome than expected, because the crew discovers that the cows are fed not only the growth hormone, but also with “recycled cardboard and newspaper. We got by-products from potato chips, breweries, liquor distilleries, sawdust, wood chips. We even got by products from the slaughterhouse – recycling cattle right back into cattle. Instant protein,” because the animals are not humans, therefore they are mistreated by the farmers (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 304). The description of the slaughterhouse in the following passages is even more terrifying, since Ozeki does not spare her readers an extremely detailed description. The way the animals are fed and killed demonstrates that they are not living creatures in the mind of the farmers, but

rather, they are objects. Their worth comes from the participation as essential parts in the capitalist machine, but they have no rights nor are given any care. Furthermore, the capitalist logic of mechanization is guilty of erasing the history of meat and of the land linked to it. The only thing that matters is quantity and everything else is irrelevant. As indicated by Andrew H. Wallis:

Caring more about the price of a product than its origin, a concern primarily conveyed through television to consumers and through town council meetings to zoning supervisors, erases the stories behind the production of what we buy, especially our food, and in so doing renders the connection between people and the land ever more abstract, effectively obliterating time and space when it comes to the products one buys or eats (848-849).

Capitalist profit strips humans and animals alike of their identity, transforming them in sterile pieces of a production process. Ozeki takes a stand by trying to expose a wider audience to man's exploitation of animals and humans.

Ruth Ozeki has furthered her analysis of man's exploitation of the natural and animal world in her second novel *All Over Creation* (2003). While describing the return home in a farm in Idaho of an estranged daughter, Yumi Fuller, Ozeki also unpacks the US policies regarding genetically modified food, in particular potatoes, and criticises corporate's greed and the fast food lifestyle. At the beginning of the narration, there is an idyllic depiction of Idaho's farms and its fields, the narration presents a close relationship with the land and soil right from the first line, "it starts with the earth. How can it not? [...] The earth's crust must be more like the rind of the orange thicker and more durable, quite unlike the thin skin of a bruisable peach" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 3). However, before the novel takes a political turn by fully detailing

GMOs practices, there are subtle hints to corporate farming scattered in the initial chapters, in a similar fashion to *My Year of Meats*. First of all, one of the main characters, Frankie, is recruited by the eco-activist group Seeds of Resistance while they carry out a political action at a McDonald's restaurant (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 47-53). Afterwards, there is a short informative passage on the development of fast food chains in the US in perfect Ozeki style, "the rapid growth of the fast-food chains was the random factor that helped fuel the potato boom of '74. In the 1980s it was McDonald's introduction of the Supersize Meal. In the nineties it was Wendy's Baked Potatoes" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 56). At the beginning, there is no critique of the fast food lifestyle and its implications, on the contrary, the fries produced by McDonald's and its similar produced an incredible amount of money for Idaho potato farmers. The only group rebelling against fast-food chains is the group of eco-activists, the Seeds of Resistance. Therefore, everything is going according to the status quo, McDonald's is profiting, farmers are collaborating with corporations, and activists are protesting.

However, the novel's key turn of events happens when the elderly father of Yumi, Lloyd, a conservative and extremely religious farmer, starts to openly criticise food corporations. In the beginning of the narrative, for instance, Lloyd vehemently protested against Yumi's abortion and his argument was mostly religious-based, he said, "[...] That's a license to commit murder! [...] It's a sin against God, Yumi! Don't you see?" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 201). He was already presented as suspicious of "large corporations" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 58), before the novel reports a newsletter he wrote to his customers for the seeds business he runs with this wife, Momoko:

I have seen how large Corporations hold the American Farmer in thrall, prisoners to their chemical tyranny and their buy-outs of politicians and judges. I have come to

believe that anti-exotic agendas are being promoted by the same Agribusiness and Chemical Corporations as yet another means of peddling their weed killers.

Mrs. Fuller and I believe the careful introduction of species into new habitats serves to increase biological variety and health. God in His great wisdom has given us this abundance. “O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches” [Psalms 104:24-25] (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 67).

Lloyd takes a clear stand against genetically modified seeds and against corporations, but at the beginning is a mild position, as it is expressed only through his newsletter and not through a political action. What is interesting to notice is the connection he makes between religion and ecology, Lloyd argues for respecting nature as a divine creation. In a further newsletter, Lloyd writes, “They have made many discoveries about DNA, and they have learned how to splice genes from one of God’s creatures to another. They are now able to create life forms that have never before existed on God’s earth” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 105). Arguably, this passage echoes the ending of *The Great Derangement* by Ghosh, where he provides a close reading of a letter by Pope Francis I (Ghosh, 150-164).

In the narrative, the enemy is Duncan & Wiley a management company that represents in Idaho and sponsors Cynaco’s NuLife, a line of genetically modified potatoes. The seeds produced by NuLife are chemically-heavy, as the plants are created with a pesticide inside in order to kill the beetles that try to eat it (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 98). The personal mixes with the private when it is discovered in the narration that the agent sent to Idaho from Duncan & Wiley is Elliot Rhodes, who used to be the history professor of Yumi in high school, with whom she had an affair that resulted in an aborted pregnancy and forced her to leave home. Profit and nature exploitation are tightly connected, not only because they literally make money from planting unlabelled potato seeds, but also because they function because they are backed

up by an entire hegemonic system. For instance, a farmer tells Yumi that banks do not lend money to farmers that refuse to use chemical inputs in their fields (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 77). The economic theme is also explored in another section of the novel, where an employee of the company talks about the gene-patents that Cynaco implant in the plants and the way they can profit off of the farmers, because once the company sells them the seeds, it has a stronghold on them, he says, “Guys around here operate on pretty tight margins. Can’t afford to go up against a corporation like Cynaco, and they’re not worth suing, not for damages anyway – so far in debt a court case would bankrupt them. The idea is to slap ‘em back down to keep ‘em in business. It’s just maintenance” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 221). Moreover, later on the Seeds of Resistance execute a political action in a supermarket, during which they expose the support given by the US government to biotechnological food, they argue that “genetic engineering is no joke, not when it comes to the food you feed your children. As of 1997 over thirty genetically engineered crops were approved by the US government for sale, including potatoes that are genetically spliced with a bacterial pesticide and tomatoes crossed with fish genes” and worst of all, the government does not require a proper label for these potentially dangerous GMOs (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 92-93). The government has approved the use of genetically modified vegetables in the same way it has close an eye in front of the use of hormones in cattle farming in *My Year of Meats*. *All Over Creation* even presents a brief mention of the use of growth hormones in cattle farming (134), in this way Ozeki drops a hint to her readers not only to read her other novel, but also to be aware of this other topic.

Another issue generated by the extreme neoliberal influences in farming is the homogenization that is sponsored. In the same way that cows were stacked in the same environment and then treated like parts of a machine to maximise the profits, farmers in Idaho were forced to reduce their soil’s variety of seeds. Monoculture is taking a hold in their fields, as reported by a member of the Seeds of Resistance:

We only have maybe a dozen kinds left in commercial production here, because engineers have decided that potatoes all have to be the same size. Diversity is inconvenient to mechanized farming. This is what happens when agriculture becomes agribusiness. When engineers replace poets, and corporations gain total domination over all our food and all our poems (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 125).

Reducing nature's variety can cause many problems to the ecosystem and not only reduce the Earth's richness. By promoting monoculture, corporations are taking into consideration only their benefits and not the natural heritage that is present on the earth.

The most significant theme explored in the narrative related to genetically modified organisms and neoliberal profit is the "Terminator" gene. The Seeds of Resistance convince Lloyd to join forces with them and organise a teaching political action called Idaho Potato Party when they describe this gene as:

"It's like a death gene, sir. A self-destruct mechanism. They splice it into the DNA of a plant and trigger it. The plant kills its own embryo."

"But that's madness! Why on earth...?"

"To protect the corporation's intellectual property rights over the plant. To keep farmers from saving and replanting seeds. To force them to buy new seed every year." (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 266).

The Seeds of Resistance are against this process because genetically modified organisms are threatening the ecosystem, for example, the activists mention the monarch butterfly's road to extinction. On the contrary, Lloyd is against it because of religious motives, as he believes

science is trying to play God and he feels it is his duty to defend all life forms (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 266-267). Yumi is extremely critical of Lloyd's motives, she describes them as the "pro-life bullshit" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 267) that forced her to run away from home after she had an abortion. However, the fact that Lloyd fights for nature alongside the Seeds of Resistance is a sign that climate changes issues should erase political differences and unite people against a common enemy. The Terminator gene is further explored in typical Ozeki fashion with plenty of scientific details and rigour:

"When you say it makes its own insecticide, where does it do that exactly?"

"In the cells of the plant." [...]

'In the roots?'

"You mean the potatoes? Sure."

"But we *eat* those."

"It's harmless to humans," Will said. "It's a bacterial toxin called Bt. It's used in organic farming. It works on the digestive tract of the insect. Turns it into pulp--"

"*Bacillus thuringiensis*," Geek said. "Organic farmers use it topically, and very sparingly, and that's the point. These are very high concentrations you're talking about.

Do we know what happens to people who ingest that much?" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 271).

Similar to the use of hormones in chicken and cattle farming, the use of the toxin is meant to enhance the farmers' productivity and, consequently, their profit. The natural cycles are sped up in order to gain more, no matter the cost on life creatures. In the same argument, Geek, a member of the Seeds of Resistance, attacks the capitalist system even more clearly, attacking corporate marketing, he says, "The masses aren't starving because there isn't enough food.

There's a surplus – you know that! People are starving because that food isn't being distributed fairly, to those in need. The population explosion argument is the oldest spin in the books!" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 272). The novel's climax and strongest attack on neoliberal ideology happens during the Idaho Potato Party organized at the Fullers family farm by the Seed of Resistance. One of the stands is a workshop where they give away free seeds "against capitalism and the privatization of food production by greedy multinational agribusiness corporations" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 293), which is a topic that will be explored in the final paragraph of this section. However, the main episode is the speech given by Lloyd to his fellow farmers. He recounts the history of the Terminator gene and strongly criticizes its use, from what can be described as an eco-religious perspective:

"It has come to my attention that in 1998 the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Delta & Pine Land Company [...] announced that they had developed and received a patent for a new agricultural biotechnology that quite literally takes the breath of life right out of a seed. This patent permits its owners to create a sterile seed by cleverly programming a plant's DNA to kill its own embryos. This technology, nicknamed the Terminator, can be applied to plants and seeds of all species, including food crops, thereby, and in one ungodly stroke, breaking the sacred cycle of life itself." [...]

He raised his hand in the air. "Mrs. Fuller and I say this: *God holds the only patent!* He is the Engineer Supreme! And he has given up His seeds into the public domain!" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 301-302).

Capitalism's mistreat of nature is outrageous whether someone is religious or not. The corporations try to profit at the expenses of everything and everyone else. With the government laissez-fair attitude, corporations run the risk, if they have not done so already of creating

irrevocable damages to nature. Moreover, not only they profit from unnatural paces of production, but they also profit from patenting what should never be patented.

The novel concludes with a scary perspective, that is with forms of neo-colonialism that will bring genetically modified organisms to developing countries, a Duncan & Wiley's representative argues that "the future lies in the Third World. In Mother India. That's where the starving populations are, who need our help. And now that you mention it, maybe we could move you over to Cynaco's rice division in Delhi once this potato situation is in hand" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 277). His argument is more shocking, because of the missionary-like rhetoric he adopts, since he is trying to sell their profit-oriented actions as a means to help poor people in the developing countries. At the end of the narrative, in the face of the various protests in Idaho regarding the NuLife line and GMOs in general, Cynaco's representatives decide to terminate the potato line. However, because they see in the Third World a new and unregulated market where their business could profit (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 343-344).

Nevertheless, there is also the flip side to this, a more positive note emerging from the joined forces of the Seeds of Resistance and the Fullers. With the newfound help of the activists, the Fullers develop a seed-library data base to give away their seeds for free, showing that they criticize capitalism and care more about maintaining the ecosystem and a flora variety rather than profiting from nature. Their seeds have been collected for years and it has been said that "some of these seeds could be the last specimens of their kind left on the planet!" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 162). As affirmed by Lloyd in his speech at the Idaho Potato Party, "Our seeds contain our beliefs. That's why we urge you to continue to save them and propagate them and pass them on to others to do the same, in accordance to God's plan" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 302). With the help of the activists, the Fullers' business is transformed in an online platform to share and distribute their seeds for free, it becomes a no-profit organization. The webpage aims at being a vehicle for solidarity among farmers, since once they receive the seeds

for free, they have to make them “available to other members, also free of charge” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 357).

Ozeki openly supports forms of solidarity and of individual activism. For instance, the internet is an extremely significant vehicle to spread nature-friendly ideas, but it is the people who should rise up to the occasion and take action, hopefully while putting aside their differences. In her own way, by writing these extremely detailed and scientifically accurate novels, Ozeki is doing her part to promote ecological awareness and action. In both *My Year of Meats* and *All Over Creation*, she has shed some light over two very controversial and ecologically-relevant topics, while at the same time criticising the capitalist and neoliberal structures that support nature and animal exploitation. The Anthropocene not only has capitalism at its roots, but it is seeing its influence spread by the day and most importantly, it is affecting the daily lives of people.

### 3. Compounds and Bioengineered Animals

In the course of a decade, Margaret Atwood has completed a trilogy of speculative fiction consisting of three novels, *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013) all centred around different characters and, often, different storylines. The narrative set in the fictional present is post-apocalyptic, as it is focused on the events happening after a genetically-created disease swept away most of humanity. However, since this chapter of the dissertation is aimed at presenting the capitalist background, the neoliberal and hegemonic structures that sustained the society before the collapse are going to be explored in the following paragraphs. As commented by Amelia Defalco, the trilogy presents an overview of the convergence of capitalism and biotechnology, which results in a society that commodifies even life itself (432-433). Atwood’s society and its downfall are a claim that there is no future for today’s capitalism (Northover, 83). Moreover, Canavan argues that Atwood’s

pre-plague society is far more scary than the post-apocalyptic side of it “Atwood presents a vision of deregulated neoliberalism, ecological catastrophe, unchecked accumulative profit-seeking, and nightmarish repetition of the same that could make even Ayn Rand think twice about the wisdom of the free market” (142).

As previously briefly mentioned, the first novel is centred around Jimmy, a boy from a wealthy Compound and the only friend of Crake, the scientist who created the disease and spread it through the BlyssPluss pill. Jimmy comes from an extremely privileged background, as his society is divided into Compounds and pleeblands and everything is under the control of the CorpSeCorps, a private security corporation that gained an excessive amount of power. Living in the Compounds is extremely safe, especially compared to the gangs-filled pleeblands, “despite the fingerprint identity cards now carried by everyone, public security in the pleeblands was leaky: there were people cruising around in those places who could forge anything and who might be anybody, not to mention the loose change – the addicts, the muggers, the paupers, the crazies” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 31). However, the Compound’s high level of security controlled by the CorpSeCorps is perceived as controversial even by some of its inhabitants. For instance, during Jimmy’s childhood, his father described the Compound in which they lived as “the way it used to be when Jimmy’s father was a kid, before things got so serious, or that’s what Jimmy’s father said. Jimmy’s mother said it was all artificial, it was just a theme park and you could never bring the old ways back, but Jimmy’s father said why knock it? You could walk around without fear, couldn’t’ you?” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 31). Later in the novel, Jimmy’s mother clearly states that she feels like a prisoner, while her husband is not interested in personal freedom as much as he cares about their safety (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 60). The surveillance guaranteed by the CorpSeCorps is aimed at protecting the intellectual property produced in the Compound, it being either a physical thing or scientists themselves (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 32). According to Paul J. Narkunas, the

corporations in the novels are the domineering force and most importantly, “CorpSeCorps represents how the sovereign control of nation-states is outsourced to corporations” (4-5). Therefore, the society depicted by Atwood is more terrifying since it is not merely controlled by the free market, but by a violent corporation that will do anything to protect its interests. Chris Vials argues that Atwood subtly criticized the idea of neoliberalism, because she does not portray an openly antagonistic dictatorship, but a heavily consumerist society through which “she shows us the tyranny inherent in its very utopian idea of freedom, which ultimately restricts human action through diffuse channels based in quotidian realms” (237). As also mentioned by Narkunas, Vials comments on the absence of a centralised state, as its main consequence is to increase the daily violence, he says, “Here, the self-regulating market has banished the dictator by eliminating the nation-state itself: in its place, we have a kind of ‘un-state’ that replicates the logic of the market, with power flows lacking a definitive origin point, yet exercises absolute and brutal sovereignty all the same” (242). It is the daily choices made by the inhabitants in the Compounds that signal their restricted freedom and Vials identifies in speculative fiction the perfect vehicle to destabilize the reader’s notion of neoliberal utopia and to criticize it (239-240) and a detailed analysis of the everyday life and its objects as a means to examine and challenge the status quo, in particular climate change, is precisely the thesis of this dissertation.

In Atwood’s world, there are various types of Compound, “each named for a pharmaceutical or bio-engineering firm, and which operate like autonomous cities with their own schools, shopping malls, and even golf courses” (Vials 240). Each of them has a specific function, for instance, Jimmy grew up in the OrganInc Farm, a Compound dedicated to bioengineer animals. There is also HelthWyzer, the Compound dedicated to the health and well-being of the higher classes of society. Or again, NooSkins, a Compound also dedicated to the wellbeing of its inhabitants, but more on the side of plastic surgery and of beauty. Life in the

Compounds might seem ideal, however there are severe restrictions to personal freedom, as claimed by Jimmy's mom. Jimmy remembers other parents complaining, "*Remember when you could drive anywhere? Remember when everyone lived in the pleeblands? Remember when you could fly anywhere in the world, without fear? [...] Remember when voting mattered?*" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 72). In Ozeki's novels the US government was either ineffective or was taking the wrong decisions for its citizen's wellbeing, while here it simply does not exist anymore. Their freedom relies on customer choices engineered to create profit to the Compounds, as stated by Narkunas, "the MaddAddam trilogy portrays a world where transgenics fill gaps in human existence by offering new possibilities for monetizing existence" (7). Furthermore, in *MaddAddam* the narrative displays a further investigation into the life at the Compounds, following the life of the future God's Gardener Zeb. The corporate job he gets infiltrate and shape every aspect of his life. For instance, he joins HelthWyzer as a young bachelor and he is assigned a flat that automatically reflects his supposed lifestyle:

Inside HelthWyzer he was assigned a bachelor condo unit in the residential tower. Nothing rundown about these facilities: nice landscaping around the entranceway, swimming pool on the roof, and the plumbing and the electricals all worked, though the interior design was a little Spartan. There was a queen-size bed, an optimistic signal. Bachelor did not mean celibate in the world of Helth Wyzer West, it appeared (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 239).

Furthermore, HelthWyzer aspires to control not only its employees lifestyles, but also their behaviour, therefore everyone needs to be happy all the time to promote a positive company's image, "the officially promoted view of HealthWyzer was that it was one big happy family, dedicated to the pursuit of truth and the betterment of humankind [...] all staff were expected

to be unremittingly cheerful, to meet their assigned goals diligently, and – as in real families – not to ask too much about what was really going on” (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 284).

Looking more closely at the activities carried out in the Compounds, the task that stands out the most throughout the trilogy is the creation of bioengineered animals. At the OrganInc and HelthWyzer compounds they create wolvogs, a hybrid between a dog and a wolf “bred to deceive” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 241), rakunks, pets similar to raccoons created as an hobby, because “there’s been a lot of fooling around in those days: create-an-animal was so much fun, said the guys doing it; it made you feel like God” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 57), or even the liobalms described in the second novel, an seemingly-gentle hybrid between a lion and a lamb, who could also attack men to kill them (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 112-113). There is even a green rabbit (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 168; Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 55) that, according to Koziół, has been inspired by an contemporary art performance (“Crake’s Aesthetic: Genetically Modified Humans as a Form of Art in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*,” 498). Another creature is the Mo’Hair, a genetically modified cow, whose purpose is to grow long hair to be implanted into humans (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 283). However, the scariest and most significant bioengineered animals are the pigoons, however that was “only a nickname: the official name was *sus multiorganifer*” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 25). Bioengineered at the OrganInc Farm, they are pigs with modified bodies, whose aim was “to grow an assortment of foolproof human-tissue organs in a transgenic knockout pig host – organs that would also be able to fend off attacks by opportunistic microbes and viruses, of which there were more stains every year” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 25). The pigoons are designed to produce the maximum amount of organs and meat (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 26). Looking back at *My Year of Meats* by Ozeki, it is the cattle farming process brought to the extreme. Humans do not limit themselves to change pigs’ bodies from outside, by injecting growth hormones, but they change the intrinsic genetic material of the animals. Jimmy’s father

is one of the chief genographer on the pigoon project, while his mother is still extremely critical once they implant human necrotex tissue in a pigoon, she says, “What you’re doing – this pig brain thing. You’re interfering with the building block of life. It’s immoral. It’s . . . sacrilegious” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 64). Her reaction is similar to Lloyd’s one in front of genetically modified organisms in *All Over Creation* by Ozeki, they both view bioengineering as an act against God and against nature. Unfortunately, there is not enough space in this dissertation to ponder over such ethical questions, however, what can be easily argued is that such a careless behaviour shows a lack of respect towards animals that are seen as mere objects to play with. The significance of Atwood’s speculations is evident here, as:

Xenotransplantation experiments with pigs were already a common practice when Atwood published the first volume of her trilogy. Using animals for medical experiments may be seen as part of a larger practice of treating animals as property to be utilized for whatever purpose their human owners deem useful’ (Kozioł, “From Sausages to Hoplites of Ham and Beyond: The Status of Genetically Modified Pigs in Margaret Atwood’s MaddAddam Trilogy,” 263).

The logic of profit is imperative, and humans are at the centre of it. However, it is significant that Atwood denounces such an anthropocentric practice that is happening even today. Similar to Ozeki, Atwood tries to raise an ecological awareness in her readers to make them understand what surrounds them. Later in the novel the situation aggravates, as the animals are no longer treated as objects but they become things, literally. When Jimmy visits his friend Crake, now working at the HelthWyzer Compound, he witnesses the biological advancements on his father’s technology. The corporation now does not produce pigoons, who were stilly fully-

formed animals like normal pigs, but they produce chicken parts, especially breasts, without any heads. Moreover, it is explained that:

“No need for added growth hormones,” said the woman, “the high growth rate’s built in. You get chicken breasts in two weeks – that’s a three-week improvement on the most efficient low-light, high-density chicken farming operation so far devised. And the animal-welfare freaks won’t be able to say a word, because this thing feels no pain.” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 238).

Similar to what happens in *My Year of Meats*, the corporations do whatever it takes to maximise the production and their profits. Moreover, the woman from the Compound also shows an arrogant attitude towards animal-rights activists, by calling them “freaks” and by implying that their actions are useless. She does not pose any ethical questions to even herself about what they are doing to animals or to the idea of being at HelthWyzer, her only concern is profit.

Just like DES in *My Year of Meats* and the Terminator gene in *All Over Creation* were dangerous for humans and nature, similarly, the Compounds are extremely hazardous for the health of their inhabitants, all for the sake of profit and for the status quo. For instance, HelthWyzer is responsible of simultaneously creating diseases and their antidotes and in this way, they do not risk running out of money. Crake, following his father’s footsteps, uncovers the whole scheme:

“HelthWyzer,” said Crake. “They’ve been doing it for years. There’s a whole secret unit working on nothing else. Then, there’s the distribution end. Listen, this is brilliant. They put the hostile bioforms into their vitamin pills – their HelthWyzer over-the-counter premium brand, you know? They have a really elegant delivery system – they

embed a virus inside a carrier bacterium, E. coli splice, doesn't get digested, bursts in the pylorus, and bingo! [...] Naturally they develop the antidotes at the same time as they're customizing the bugs, but they hold those in reserve, they practice the economics of scarcity, so they're guaranteed high profits." (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 247-248).

Although, Crake's view is cynical, as he admires the process, he has no interest in denouncing the scheme. Unlike his father, who discovered the secret operations of HelthWyzer and was killed for it, as the CorpSeCorps murdered him and pretended he had committed suicide (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 214). It could be argued that Crake did not uncover to the world the operation because he was afraid of CorpSeCorps retaliation. However, considering he then created in-lab a disease and that he spread it through the BlyssPluss pill, a drug that was designed to enhance sexual performance and shield from all of the sexually-transmitted diseases, it can be that he kept quiet to carry out his plan. Without focusing excessively on Crake and going back to HelthWyzer, their actions are terrifying, because they purposefully cause men to get sick in order to profit from it; diseases are not only incidental, like in the novels by Ozeki, where people got sick because there were more important issues to pay attention to. The system promoted by HelthWyzer privileges the wealthy, of course. The people of the pleeblands are probably unable to pay as much as the Compound inhabitants for their health, therefore they are destined to succumb. The scheme is described also in the third instalment, *MaddAddam*, where the process is rundown, "they're using their vitamin supplement pills and over-the-counter painkillers as vectors for diseases – ones for which they control the drug treatments. [...] They make money all ways: on the vitamins, then on the drugs, and finally on the hospitalization when the illness takes firm hold. And it does, because the treatment drugs are loaded too" (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 309).

The pleeblands side of the story is explored more thoroughly in the second instalment of the trilogy, *The Year of the Flood*, as the novel tells the story of two pleeblands women, Toby and Ren, who both come from very unprivileged backgrounds and end up joining an eco-cult, the God's Gardeners, which mixes religion and ecological issues. The CorpSeCorps do not present an aura of security and protection in the pleeblands, on the contrary, they are a dangerous corporation because they are corrupt. They are even more dangerous for minorities and women, as stated by Vials, "in the future neoliberal world projected by the novel, the apparent anarchy of the CorpSeCorps pleeblands has enabled a patriarchal accumulation so rigid as to violently regiment every moment of the women's time; and its restriction of movement for women evokes the figure of the female slave" (249). In particular, Toby's and her family's story is a warning about corporate greed and much resembles the narratives from Ozeki's novels. During her childhood and adolescence, the CorpSeCorps were accumulating power, Toby remembers how they "started as a private security firm for the Corporations, but then they'd take over when the local police forces collapsed for lack of funding, and people liked that at first because the Corporations paid, but now CorpSeCorps were sending their tentacles everywhere" (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 30). Therefore, when Toby's father refused to sell his land to a corporate developer, her mother suddenly got extremely sick because she took HelthWyzer vitamin supplements and her father had to sell his property to pay for her health insurance. Toby's mother has been described as a guinea pig (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 125). A hegemonic power structure that spreads in multiple fields is at the base of the Corporations power. Although the CorpSeCorps are supposedly a distinct sector, their business is intermingled with the HelthWyzer profit scheme. The mega-corporations help each other out at the expenses of the individual citizens. As her family has lost all of their money, Toby is forced to work for the fast-food chain SecretBurgers, where she is in the hands of her misogynist boss Blanco, who often rapes her. As the CorpSeCorps are the only form of

police available, there is no one left to defend her, until she is able to run away and join the God's Gardeners. Ren experiences a similar helplessness when she runs away from home and starts working at a strip club, Scales and Tails, where the dancers have been operated on to grow scales (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 90). Similar to the individual narratives in *My Year of Meats*, women and unprivileged individuals have their bodies technologically changed to provide a form of satisfaction to the (supposedly white) middle-class, straight men.

The corporate society has found a way to profit even from men themselves, as it has instituted the Painball Arena. A televised killing-contest for condemned criminals, who had to kill all of their opponents to gain their freedom (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 118). Considering what has been described of the world of MaddAddam up until now, it should not be a surprise that no form of life is respected, and everything has a value and is marketable.

Another dystopian Corporation is the AnooYoo Spa, where Toby works before the flood, i.e. before the disease created by Crake. The Corp's products are the customers, because it is a beauty salon enhanced with biotechnology advancements. Their motto is "We're not selling only beauty [...] We're selling hope" (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 315). As the MaddAddam society is a cautionary tale for the contemporary Western society, it was inevitable to find a satire on the obsession on youth and eternal beauty. The topic can be studied from an ecological perspective, because the idea of stopping time to remain forever young goes against the paces of nature. It uselessly tries to keep a façade of youth, because people are incapable of getting to terms with the natural life cycles.

The list of marketable items is never ending is Atwood's speculative fiction, so much so that it comprises religion. In the third novel, *MaddAddam* (2013), the flashbacks follow the story of Zeb, another member of the God's Gardeners who survived the plague. Zeb is the son of an unnamed Rev of a self-funded Church of PetrOleum, which had many connections with the Corporations people, "a lot of Corps guys would turn up at the church as guest speakers.

They'd thank the Almighty for blessing the world with fumes and toxins, cast their eyes upwards as if gasoline came from heaven, look pious as hell" (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 137). The Rev's Church is founded on an - almost offensive – interpretation of the Bible, according to which, when Jesus said, "Thou art Peter. And upon this rock I will build my church," he meant petroleum and not Saint Peter. The Rev argued that oil was "the sign of special election" (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 138). Venerating oil and profiting from it, in the face of an unprecedented climate crisis, is a way of mocking all the beings that are suffering from it and those who actively try to fight climate change.

Moreover, in the trilogy, even eco-sustainable charities are just a money-making scam. After running away from home, Zeb joins Bearlift, a company whose purpose was to save polar bears by providing them the Compounds' leftovers as food. The form of activism promoted by Bearlift is passive and almost useless, as argued by Zeb, "it lived off the good intentions of city types with disposable emotions who liked to think they were saving something – some rag from their primordial ancestral past, a tiny shred of their collective soul dressed up in a cute bear suit" (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 74). The company's intentions, although in some ways positive, are mostly problematic, since it promotes an eco-sustainable activism made of feel-good actions that are almost irrelevant in their benefits, but most importantly have terrible negative consequences. Indeed, the polar bears were not helped in adapting to the changing climate, but Bearlift only "taught them that food falls out of the sky" (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 74). The trilogy shows various references to climate change events, but only in passing, without dedicating too much attention to it. It can be reasoned that Atwood avoids focusing on it, because in her speculative world it is already too late to change the course of the events, since all of the climate references are disastrous. Her novels are anthropocentric in the sense that they do not extensively describe nature, but they rather show the path where humankind might end up, in order to force today's readers to do something about it. For instance, when Zeb's

brother is talking about where their father might run away, he says, “Not in Grand Cayman, he won’t, said Adam. They’re mostly underwater” (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 150). Humankind has caused their natural habitat to melt and then proceeded in making the bears unable to survive, while washing away its guilt in a sugar-coated activity. It is a senseless activism, not only in the way they treat the animals, but in the way they treat their own crew, “Bearlift got its supplies on the cheap: it considered its cause to be so noble and worthy you were supposed to be humble, eat food stand-ins, save the good stuff for the bears” (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 81). It goes without saying that the Bearlift crew would have been more helpful to the Earth and to the animals, if they had tried to protest in a more active way. Although Bearlift was set up with the best intentions, it was included in the CorpSeCorps policies, and of course, it was not for selfless purposes:

The Corps didn’t like Bearlift, but they didn’t try to shut it down either, though they could have done that with one finger. It served a function for them, sounded a note of hope, distracted folk from the real action, which was bulldozing the planet flat and grabbing anything of value (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 85).

Atwood’s satirical depiction of Bearlift and its useless form of activism reminds of the green-washing policies of many companies, which is advertising eco-friendly products or policies without making any substantial changes to their contribute to pollution (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 74).

In the *MaddAddam* trilogy, Margaret Atwood depicted a cautionary tale for today’s society, as she represents a world that has brought the Anthropocene to its most extreme consequences. Atwood combines current neoliberal and biotechnological practices and has shown that everything could one day be marketized. It can be argued that her speculative fiction

is a means to effectively inform her readers regarding climate change. Albeit her novels are extremely anthropocentric, she helps her readers better understand the technologies they use in their daily lives. Moreover, as previously stated, she avoids accuses of escapism, precisely because every technological advancement in her novels already exists. Especially the disease that kills everyone, it is not something that happens mysteriously, but it is man-made and it could happen today. Therefore, Atwood encourages her readers to pay attention to the neoliberal structures that govern their world and the advancements they promote in relation to technology.

CHAPTER II  
ECOLOGICAL FOODWAYS AND ACTIVISM

*How shrunk, how dwindled, in our times*

*Creation's mighty seed -*

*For Man has broke the Fellowship*

*With murder, lust, and greed.*

*Oh Creatures dear, that suffer here,*

*How may we Love restore?*

*We'll Name you in our inner Hearts,*

*And call you Friend once more (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 16).*

*Suddenly I understood why I'm doing all these political actions. It's because I gotta make sure there's still some nature around you when you grow up, in case you decide you dig it, too. [...]*

*Resistance is fertile! (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 416).*

### 1. Vegetarian Ecofeminism and Ordinary Choices

Food choices are at the core of humankind's daily life. Although they sometimes seem fully pre-set and almost careless, they are imbued with political significance. Moreover, new materialist critique has argued for the significant role played by materiality (Coole & Frost 1-3), and this view is applied on food in this chapter, as they are empirical objects connected to and produced by the socioeconomic structures. Food is therefore associated with the capitalist paradigm, as "the capitalist system is not understood in any narrowly economic way but

rather is treated as a detotalitized totality that includes a multitude of interconnected phenomena” (Coole & Frost 29). Margaret Atwood herself, in the Introduction to *The Edible Woman* (1969) argued for the centrality of food for human beings, she said, “Eating is our earliest metaphor, preceding our consciousness of gender difference, race, nationality and language. We eat before we talk [...] you are what you eat” (2). Therefore, Amitav Ghosh’s critique of the realist novel, as a genre that cannot challenge climate change, does not address the way that it deals with everyday life, and food is an essential component of it.

Food choices in general can play a significant part in the fight against climate change, for instance green activists promote buying local and organic products, in order to decrease nature exploitation. Not to mention the use of plastic supplies for the consumption of food and its ecological impact. However, the largest carbon footprint in the food sector is created by meat production and consumption, as it involves water use, topsoil erosion, and even the greenhouse effect, as detailed by Carol J. Adams:

The average amount of water required daily to feed a person following a vegan diet is 300 gallons; the average amount of water required daily to feed a person following an ovo-lacto-vegetarian diet is 1,200 gallons; but the average amount of water required daily to feed a person following the standard United States meat-based diet is 4,200 gallons. [...] Vegetarians also point to other aspects of livestock production that precipitate ecocide: cattle are responsible for 85 percent of topsoil erosion. Beef consumption accounts for about 5 to 10 percent of the human contribution to the greenhouse effect. Among the reasons that our water, soil, and air are damaged by meat production are the hidden aspects of raising animals for food (Adams 130).

Therefore, meat production and consumption should be avoided at all costs from a simple data factor, it is not even necessary to involve ethical dilemmas. As also stated by Susan McHugh, meat production accounts for 18% of global greenhouse emissions and the numbers are growing to this day, as the consumption of meat on a world-scale is expected to double by 2050 (McHugh 185). Meat consumption is one of the very limited areas in which an individual lifestyle choice can have an effect regarding climate change, as stated by a recent *The Guardian* article with the rather telling title “Why Eating Less Meat is the Best Thing You Can Do For the Planet in 2019.” Therefore, to promote a reader’s reaction regarding climate change, Margaret Atwood and Ruth Ozeki might have written about the only viable topic that can be explored in the realist novel. As “the personal is political,” everyday food choices are replete with political significance.

Arguably, the MaddAddam trilogy and the novels *My Year of Meats* and *All Over Creation* are examples of vegetarian ecofeminism, and as such display interconnectedness at the core of their narratives. All of the novels do not engage merely with ecological themes, but they also challenge racism, sexism, and homophobia. As previously stated, feminism does not merely focus on women, but it is a well-rounded method of reality analysis (Gaard 117). As contended by Daniel R. Mintz, vegetarians are objectors to normative practices and its participants (497) and the more so, vegetarian ecofeminists oppose various discriminating actions. Carol J. Adams placed vegetarian ecofeminism at the root of ecofeminism in general, by arguing that its origins come from the radical feminist communities of the 1970s (127). Ecofeminism stems from the parallelism between the oppression of nature and of women, both connected to the patriarchal logic of domination (Adams 127-128). In a more nuanced overview of the history of vegetarian ecofeminism, Greta Gaard has argued that the movement started in the 1980s and that it mostly focused on speciesism, as a practice “inherently linked to racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and naturism” (Gaard 117). Furthermore, vegetarian

ecofeminism embraces an approach based on both sympathy and “a reasoned analysis of cultural and political contexts” (Gaard 123). Therefore, such activists have been able to trace back the history of speciesism in order to challenge other discriminatory practices and to adopt an including attitude, a strong political analysis has been carried through and it allows vegetarian ecofeminism to eschew problematic stances. Gaard has provided examples of this practice:

The association of African Americans with animals has been used to legitimate enslaving both groups, the association of women with animals was used as an additional factor in legitimating three centuries of witch burnings and the association of indigenous people with animal sexuality was used to legitimate colonialism (132-133).

Arguably, a type of feminism that does not include a speciesism critique reinforces various discriminatory practices, which support and promote the logic of patriarchal domination. As stated by Gaard, “Excluding the oppression of nonhuman animals from feminist and ecofeminist analyses can only give us analyses that are, at best, incomplete” (133). Gaard’s analysis echoes the one of Adams (140) and Val Plumwood’s (in Lupinacci, 655), because it places dualisms, such as white/coloured, hetero/homosexual, rich/poor, at the centre of vegetarian ecofeminism’s fight.

Cathryn Bailey has provided a nuanced approach to vegetarian ecofeminism, by looking at it under the name of “ethical vegetarianism,” in order to defend it from accusations of it being an example of white privilege (39). Even though this branch of feminism aims at disrupting binaries, it risks reproducing a white hegemony through foodways (Bailey 40). Bailey argues that “in trying to tie concerns about racism, sexism, and classism together, it can risk appearing to oversimplify in ways that can be damaging” (50), for instance when

vegetarians criticize working-class people for eating meat or when improper comparisons between animals and humans are made (Bailey 43-46). However, Bailey believes that a feminist discourse that involves a nuanced overview of foodways is necessary because of the inherent nature of food, since man's identity and the sense of self and community are based on food (Bailey 50). Moreover, accusing vegetarian feminism of promoting white privilege and sexism is dangerous, as:

It allows the continued masking of the ways in which racism, classism, and imperialism have created foodways privileging the global elite. It also serves to divide and isolate the most oppressed, limiting human animals with respect to their ethical agency and access to quality food and leaving nonhuman animals where, for most of us, they have been all along – on our plates (Bailey 58).

This chapter is going to provide a close reading of the MaddAddam trilogy and of *My Year of Meats* and *All Over Creation* in relation to the movements of vegetarianism and feminist vegetarianism, as all of the characters that embrace alternative foodways are central to the various storylines. However, the two authors present two different levels of analysis, even if they both have food choices at the core of their storylines. It will be argued that Ruth Ozeki's depiction of vegetarians is more traditional and it follows a more black-and-white narrative, while Margaret Atwood's is more nuanced, since she both criticizes exploiting biopolitics and fake meat and, at the same time, does not offer an entirely positive picture of a group of vegetarian activists. As it stated in the introduction, the dissertation is not divided into single compartments, but all of the themes are connected with each other. Therefore, there will be multiple points of contact in this chapter with both the first chapter, the third chapter, and even with the conclusion.

## 2. Vegetarians and the Seeds of Resistance

In both *My Year of Meats* (1998) and *All Over Creation* (2003) by Ruth Ozeki, the storylines are set in motion by vegetarian characters and their foodways are central to the main narratives. Moreover, their description is highly intersectional as it differs from normative representation of white, middle-class, heterosexual beings. As reported by Saeed Kalajahi:

[Ozeki put] meat at the symbolic center of her first, and potatoes at the symbolic center of her second novel points at the significance of the real, material stuff of everyday life for the formation of individual and cultural identities. In an interview she gave after the publication of *All Over Creation*, Ozeki acknowledged her interest in “meat and potatoes, hamburgers and French fries” as “the staples of the American diet. We are,” she said, “a nation of meat and potatoes. When you’re writing a novel, you want to write about issues of identity—in this case, national identity” (Clyne 2003). (83)

For instance, in *My Year of Meats*, the director Jane Takagi-Little features in the documentary tv show *My American Wife!* a biracial couple of vegetarian lesbians, which is unusual since the show is sponsored by BEEF-EX and it should promote beef recipes, and also because its guidelines state that it should feature normative and “wholesome” families (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 16-18), as stated by Nina Cornyetz, “the Japanese sponsors are interested only in the cultural myth that will best sell meat to the Japanese consumer by reproducing the stock images of American abundance. Representation = selling cultural illusions is literalized in the debut of characters as caricatures replicating reciprocal Japanese and American racist stereotypes” (212). The couple has two kids and they present their vegetarian recipes on the tv show, and

the two situations are closely linked. The process that lead them to embrace the vegetarian lifestyle is the discovery of the use of DES in cattle farming while they were pregnant, which will then lead Jane to create a documentary on the topic. Their normativity disrupts the status quo, both because of their identities and their life choices. Although their foodways are not embedded with activism, they are still able to influence Jane. Moreover, they exemplify vegetarian ecofeminism because of the multiple layers of identity they possess, as a biracial lesbian and vegetarian couple. Their willingness to be feature in the show might be a sign of a new trend surrounding LGBT+ families, which is homonormativity, a process that normalizes queer families in order to disassociate them from counterhegemonic and nonconforming characteristics, they become part of the status quo (Walks 124-125). However, Lana and Dyann are still able to hold on to a disruptive essence, typical of LGBT+ identities (Ahmed 177-178), because they disrupt the norm by presenting their vegetarian lifestyle into a TV program that promotes beef. Their ordinary food choices are the origin of their challenge both to neoliberal practices and nature's exploitation. They are able to present an example of different foodways that are more in tune with nature and possibly to influence Ozeki's readers to modify their food choices. As argued by Kalajahi, Ozeki "presents the authentic as an indispensable attribute of an ecologically viable culture and as a marker of representational sincerity in a globalized media economy" (83). Food in Ozeki represents the multi-layered relationships between humans, flora and fauna, and even the history of the United States (Kalajahi 83).

In the second novel by Ruth Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, an alternative lifestyle is promoted by an activist group called the Seeds of Resistance. Their activism permeates every aspect of their life, from their living accommodation, to their food choices, of course. They have been briefly mentioned in Chapter I, but now it is essential to present a more detailed overview of the group. At the beginning there is four of them, but in the first scene in which they appear, a young boy from Idaho decides to join them. The group promotes dissent to

protect nature and their lifestyle is as ecologically conscious as possible and specialise on genetically modified organisms, one of the members describes their activism as extremely various, he says, “We target a range of food-related issues. Right now it’s genetic engineering. We drive around the country to communities and engage with the people and do actions. Basic biotech. Consciousness raising 101. [...] Biotechnology [...] robocrops. Frankenfoods. Fish genes spliced in tomatoes. Bacterial DNA into potatoes” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 53). Looking at the centrality of food in Ozeki’s works, the political orientation of the Seeds of Resistance is not surprising. However, their activism covers all sides of life, for instance, they travel with the Spudnik, a van that runs with vegetable oil (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 49) that they often steal from fast-food chains, “she gets twenty-one miles to the gallon on the highway, and on the interstates of America you’re never too far from a fuel source. Seems to prefer McDonald’s to KFC, but she’ll run on just about anything, even Dunkin’ Donuts” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 49). Besides, they are not a single activist entity, but they are part of a larger environmentally-friendly activist campaign. For instance, they have created a commune in San Francisco, whose members protest by planting trees on public lands, they call it “Guerrilla gardening” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 256-257). The narrative also mentions global organizations that are in some ways connected to the Seeds, for example they often talk about the World Trade Organization (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 399), showing that the fight for climate change can only be tackled by a community effort, also based on individual choices.

In the course of the narrative, different political actions carried out by the Seeds are described. For instance, they infiltrate a supermarket, in order to educate the mothers who are shopping there about genetically modified organisms and in particular food products improperly labelled, one of the seeds says:

“That’s the problem, isn’t it? He held out his finger to the infant in the shopping cart, making her dribble and coo. “We don’t know because they don’t tell us! They’re genetically engineering poisons into potatoes these days. But they refuse to label it, so how are you supposed to know what you’re feeding your baby?” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 89).

They even dress up as Mr Potato Head to convince the children and they do not limit themselves to talking only about potatoes, as they lecture their audience about all sorts of foods, they tell them, “Approximately sixty to seventy percent of processed foods now contain some form of genetically modified corn or soy. That means infant formulas, baby foods, pizza, soda, chips...” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 92). Further in the narrative, they organize a protest against Cynaco, the company of the genetically modified potatoes. Their protests have always an educational side, as they distribute copies of a report on Cynaco, while dancing dressed up as mutant vegetables (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 259). The most significant protest they enact is the previously mentioned Idaho potato party, when they educate Idaho farmers and the neighbours of the Fullers on the NuLife line of potatoes and the Terminator gene in their “teach-in” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 273). All of the workshops they set up are food-related:

“A New Niche Market – Unprecedented Profits in Organic Potatoes” had attracted a few of the local farmers’ wives. Others were taking garden tours with Momoko and Lloyd and learning their seed-saving techniques. Charmey was offering “The Art of the Sprout,” a cooking workshop using sprouted seeds. At three there would be a performance of *The Tragedy of Cynaco the Evil Cyclops: A Morality Play in Three Acts*. [...] Frankie was making seed bombs at the “Guerrilla gardening” workshop (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 291).

The Party is a success, mostly because of the public support of the Fullers. Nonetheless, the Seeds of Resistance did their part, by creating different types of workshops.

Unsurprisingly, the Seeds of Resistance are vegetarians (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 377) and their attitude towards nature in general promotes a view of symbiosis. As explained by Geek, one of the activists, “We depend on plants. They depend on us. It’s called mutualism. The balance between nature and culture. At least, it used to be. But now the balances are shifting. You see, Frankie, there used to be this line that nature drew in her soil, which we simply weren’t allowed to cross” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 124). They promote a holistic view of nature that seems to subscribe to deep ecology. Moreover, on the basis of the Seeds beliefs of interconnectedness, Ozeki’s novel subscribes to the vegetarian ecofeminist paradigm, as the Seeds are aware of the multi-layered connections between every living being. For instance, one of the members, Lilith, runs a website called “The Garden of Earthly Delights” to promote a women-friendly eroticism:

She envisioned a women-only space where sex could be both fun and sacred. Where women could log on and look at empowering images and exchange stories and get turned on. She wanted the gateway to be nonthreatening, so she chose food production as a theme, because traditionally that’s been woman’s work and as such is a good platform for social critique’ (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 152).

Women’s issues and vegetarian foodways are literally intermingled in the website run by Lilith. Although a bit radical, the Seeds are able to expand the entities they are fighting for. Although the website promotes a sometimes problematic view of the Earth as Mother, Lilith intones “*In the beginning [...] the Goddess gave birth and form to Herself [...] We honor her fecundity,*

*the spontaneous regeneration of her procreative force, the spark of her being*” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 186), as it resembles notions of it as Gaia.

When the Seeds of Resistance read the newsletters sent by Lloyd Fullers to his Fullers’ Seeds customers, they declare to have found their *guru* (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 106) and they decide to visit him in his Idaho farm to visit him and his wife Momoko. Their faith in Fullers’ Seeds presents almost religious undertones, as the Seeds of Resistance say:

“We’re on a pilgrimage,” Geek said. His eyes were shining behind his lenses, as though the contemplation of my parents had lifted him into a transcendental state.

“Why on earth...?”

“They’re awesome! [...] Totally radical.”

[...] They’re the prophets of the *Revolution!*” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 140).

Moreover, during the Idaho Protest Party, it is Lloyd who pronounces the most significant speech against genetically modified organisms (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 301-302). As explored in Chapter I, the Seeds of Resistance will once again join forces with the Fullers to create a website to share for free their seed and preserve nature’s rich variety. Although coming from two different ideologies, they interact and create something together for nature’s sake. Similarly, Frankie, the newest and youngest member of the Seeds, joins them in the beginning because he is fascinated by their rebellious nature, but by the end he conscientiousness stays with them to keep the fight for nature (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 416).

Although Ozeki’s intentions are commendable, the representation that she offers of an activist group is very traditional. The Seeds are the picture-perfect image of what a green activist group should look like. Nonetheless, they are able to present individual every day actions that could influence the fight against climate change. A similar logic can be applied to

the couple of vegetarian lesbians, they all saw a problem that threatened nature and decided to adapt their lifestyle in order not to promote it. By including these characters in her novels and by depicting them as examples, the realist novels by Ozeki can potentially influence her readers to do the same.

### 3. Adams, Eves, and Pigeon Pies

As previously explored, the MaddAddam trilogy by Margaret Atwood is heavily influenced by biotechnological innovations regarding genetically modified organisms and these advancements naturally converge into new types of foods cultivated in laboratories. Their taxonomy will be paralleled by an exploration of the various green movements that are depicted in the trilogy. However, it will also be argued that Atwood presents a more nuanced picture of green activists, compared to Ozeki's traditional rendering. Moreover, Atwood's novels can be classified as a works of vegetarian ecofeminism because of the way animals interact with humans and the way they present themselves in the world.

*Oryx and Crake* forms an introductory narrative to the MaddAddam world and its inhabitants. As the narrative switches back and forth from a pre- and post-plague world, the main narrator, Jimmy, is able to present a detailed picture of the types of food consumed in the dystopian world, the way animals are treated, and the few dissenting green voices to the neoliberal and technology-centred hegemony of the corporations. The novel is extremely anthropocentric and the fact is probably due to the narration's chronology and the role of Jimmy as the main narrator. He never develops a vegetarian consciousness, he mindlessly consumes the food products that are placed in front of him without questioning them, but he still presents instances of an eco-consciousness. Jimmy's earliest memory is that of a bonfire, "an enormous pile of cows and sheep and pigs" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 18) when he was five or six years

old. The animals were being burned because someone, maybe from a cult, had infiltrated the OrganInc Compound and compromised them (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 21). At the time, he worried about the ducks pictured on his shoes, afraid that they might get hurt in the bonfire, Jimmy remembers that “he’d been told the ducks were only like pictures, they weren’t real and had no feelings, but he didn’t quite believe it” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 17). Moreover, he also emphasizes with the real animals that the Compound people were burning, even though his father told him that they were like “steaks and sausages,” since they were dead, Jimmy was still anxious about it (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 20). He remembers thinking:

Steaks didn’t have heads. The heads made a difference: he thought he could see the animals looking at him reproachfully out of their burning eyes. 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 (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 20).

This passage can be read through the idea of carnistic theory developed by Melanie Joy. Joy argued that in order to be able to eat animals, human beings have developed a carnistic cognitive trio, which “distorts our perception of reality” (116). The trio is comprised of objectification, which is the process of perceiving animals as inanimate things, which explains why they are called “units” at the slaughterhouse (Joy 117-118). Another aspect of the trio is deindividualization, which is the act of seeing animals only as part of a whole and not as individual beings, in order to generate the emotional distance to eat them (Joy 119-120). The third and final process of the cognitive trio is dichotomization, which furthers irrational practices of dividing animals into edible and inedible categories (Joy 122-123). For Joy, technology is particularly detrimental as it transforms animals in units on the assembly line and it is making it easier by the day to do so. Case in point to Atwood’s scene, when the animals

are disassembled, it is easy to eat them, because humans are not wired to recognize them as living beings (Joy 117-118). However, if the process goes wrong in some ways, for instance in this case they have not been dismembered, carnism loses some of its illusion framework. According to Sławomir Koziół, the scene is central, because “Atwood represents here a clash between the child’s innocence (Jimmy is five and a half at the time) and the experience of adults. Jimmy’s memory is that of a huge pyre of burning animals—cows, pigs, and sheep—that looks like a bonfire to him” (“From Sausages to Hoplites of Ham and Beyond: The Status of Genetically Modified Pigs in Margaret Atwood’s MaddAddam Trilogy,” 265). *Oryx and Crake* does not present an extremely nuanced description of green activists and vegetarians, however there are hints of their existence scattered throughout the novel. For instance, a woman entered into the HelthWyzer Compound with a “hostile bioform concealed in a hairspray bottle” to cause disruptions there (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 60). Or there are scattered descriptions of riots against the genetically modified Happicuppa coffee beans, “the resistance movement was global. Riots broke out, crops were burned Happicuppa cafés were looted, Happicuppa personnel were car-bombed or kidnapped or shot by snipers or beaten by mobs; and, on the other side, peasants were massacred by the army” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 210). It is worth noticing that during these protests, the activists were wearing “God is Green” t-shirts (211). However, their riots were forced to come to a conclusion, after the anti-Happicuppa “fanatics” placed a bomb at the Lincoln memorial that killed five people (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 212).

In *Oryx and Crake*, Jimmy’s roommate at the Martha Graham Academy foreshadows the significant role of the green cult the God’s Gardeners in *The Year of the Flood*. For his roommate is the “vegan pyromaniac” Bernice, who set fire to Jimmy’s shoes because they were made of leather (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 239). As briefly mentioned in Chapter I, the two protagonists of the second novel are Toby and Ren, two pleeblands women who join the

religious cult of the God's Gardeners to find a safe space and not necessarily for religious reasons. The Gardeners form a cult, because they follow strict environmentally-friendly rules while they wait for the Waterless Flood, a mysterious but horrific event that will swipe away humankind (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 71). The Gardeners are vegetarians, in order to join the cult, a new member needs to take the Vegivows (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 22). Veganism is briefly explored indirectly for the first time in *The Year of the Flood* through the theme of eating eggs, it is the only time that this type of diet is explored in Atwood's trilogy:

Adam One said that eggs were potential Creatures, but they weren't Creatures yet: a nut was not a Tree. Did eggs have souls? No, but they had potential souls. So not a lot of Gardeners did egg-eating, but they didn't condemn it either. You didn't apologize to an egg before joining its protein to yours, though you had to apologize to the mother pigeon, and thank her for her gift (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 161).

It is curious that veganism does not find further space in Atwood's trilogy, given how pervasive are the food-related descriptions and especially considering how this diet is more stigmatized nowadays than vegetarianism. Perhaps, there are other references to it in other Atwood's novel and the topic could be a source for further investigations into her work.

Even after the Flood, the former Gardener Toby still tries to respect her vegetarianism in an apocalyptic world, "she could shoot a green rabbit, maybe; but no, it's a fellow mammal and she isn't up to that kind of slaughter" (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 384). It is worth noticing how this passage in Atwood's novel is extremely similar to one in *Everything is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer, in which he describes his grandmother's refusal to eat non-kosher meat even while she was starving during the war (Foer). Going back to Atwood's

novel, the God's Gardeners actively try to spread their vegetarian beliefs in the pleeblands and it is in the occasion of a procession that Toby first joins them:

The leader had a beard and was wearing a caftan that looked as if it had been sewn by elves on hash. Behind him came an assortment of children – various heights, all colours but all in dark clothing – holding their slates with slogans printed on them: *God's Gardeners for God's Garden! Don't Eat Death! Animals R Us!* They looked like raggedy angels, or else like midget bag people. They'd been the ones doing the singing. *No meat! No meat! No meat!* they were chanting now (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 48).

The Gardeners also educate themselves and their children on eco-sustainable practices, for instance children follow a course called Young Bioneer, in which they are taught that “nothing should be carelessly thrown away, not even wine from sinful places. There was no such thing as garbage, trash, or dirt, only matter that hadn't been put to a proper use. And, most importantly, everyone, including children, had to contribute to the life of the community” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 83). As argued by Defalco, the Gardeners embrace their human vulnerability and interdependency among species (445), which can be described as a vegetarian ecofeminist attitude. Similar to the novels of Ruth Ozeki, in Atwood's trilogy an ecological consciousness is linked to religion, and in particular to Christianity (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 234), as the Gardeners' doctrine is closely linked to the Bible. Their lives are scanned by different festivities that are celebrated throughout the year, for instance “Saint Bashir Allouse Day” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 20), the author of a book on the birds of Iraq. Or, they have “The Feast of Adam and all Primates,” in which the Gardeners celebrate their descendancy from primates (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 61), they also celebrate the

“Festival of Arks,” in which they celebrate all species, or “Pollination Day,” in which they remember those who contributed to forest preservation (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 328). All of the saints celebrated by the Gardeners are historical figures linked to nature, like Saint Crick, Saint Euell Gibbons, Saint Dian Fossey, Saint Rachel Carson (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 112, 149, 372, 444). Moreover, the Gardeners live on the rooftop of a building and they sustain themselves with the vegetables produced in their Garden (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 52). The products they sell are popular, even among the inhabitants of the compounds, because their vegetables “stank of authenticity” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 170); it seems a form of hypocrisy the fact that they consume so much of genetically modified organisms, but at the same time search for authenticity and ethics in their vegetables.

However, the representation of the Gardeners appears problematic from different points of view. As all cults, they are strictly divided into a hierarchy and the members at the top of the scale were divided into Adams and Eves (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 54-55). Such a binary division of the cult escapes from conforming to the vegetarian ecofeminist paradigm. Even if they respect and refuse to eat non-human creatures, they lack an awareness on gender and sexuality and their fluidity. Another problematic instance is the aforementioned Festival of Arks, during which the Gardeners mourn the lost species, but at the same time they affirm that God intended them to be new Noahs and consequently, animal saviours, “according to the Human Words of God, the task of saving the chosen Species was given to Noah, symbolizing the aware ones among Mankind” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 108-). As much as the Gardeners are trying to defend animals, their doctrine is extremely anthropocentric, and even more dangerously, it affirms speciesism instances, as it creates a hierarchy between humans and animals, where humans are the designated saviours. The depiction of the Gardeners at one point becomes a critique in itself, through Toby’s thoughts “no matter how much the Gardeners deprived themselves of proper food and clothing and even proper showers, for heaven’s sake,

and felt more high and mighty and virtuous than everyone else, it wouldn't really change anything. They were just like those people who used to whip themselves during the Middle Ages – those flagrants” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 136). Although they try to influence society, their status of religious cult isolates them from actively generating a substantial change. Moreover, the Gardeners' view of nature borders with a Gaia perspective, in the sense that they personify the Earth and they perpetrate an anthropocentric view. For instance, Toby is told “Nature never does betray us” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 203), in a way it gives its rightful agency to nature, but at the same time the Earth is being regarded as a human being. Paul J. Narkunas agrees on this and takes a step further by placing the Gardeners and the people from the Corporations on the same side, he states that “My contestation is that Atwood demonstrates through her MaddAddam trilogy how the technocapitalists and their theological-environmentalist opponents project their own values on the natural environment, simultaneously anthropomorphizing and managing life as a biopolitical tool” (3). Atwood's representation of ecological activists vastly differs from the one presented by Ruth Ozeki. The portrayal offered in the MaddAddam trilogy is more nuanced, as it does not present a completely positive picture of the green activists. The Gardeners live in a harsher reality compared to the Seeds of Resistance, and as a consequence, their vision of life becomes bleak, especially at the end of the second novel. Right before the Waterless Flood, Adam One gave a speech to the other Gardeners promoting the destruction of humankind, in order to start life again, because the earth has been ruined by the current human species, he said, “No, my Friends. It is not this Earth that is to be demolished: it is the Human Species. Perhaps God will create another, more compassionate race to take our place” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 508-509), in the novel there is indeed a more compassionate race, the Crakers created by the secret scientist group called MaddAddam.

In the first instalment of the trilogy there is also an anticipation of the MaddAddam group, scientists who rebelled against the Corporations system and joined forces with the God's Gardeners and who are at the centre of *MaddAddam*. In the first novel, the group is introduced through an online game, aptly called Extinctathon, whose aim is to list the names of extinct animals (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 251). Then, they are shown as being part of Crake's Paradise Project that is behind the creation of the Crakers, the new and improved human race (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 352). In the second novel, the remaining members of the original MaddAddam group teams up with what is left of the Gardeners after the plague (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 466-467). They describe themselves as "brain slaves," who were helping Crake on his project to perfect humanity (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 56). All the members of the MaddAddam people have nicknames linked to a specific extinct animal, for instance Swift Fox, Ivory Bill, White Sedge (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 61), which is telling considering that now they are the ones on the way to extinction.

The Crakers were created by Crake, with the unknowing help of the MaddAddamites, without all of the human characteristics that he considered flaws. They mate in a group during a ritual so that no one can get jealous, moreover they do not comprehend the idea of love (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 123). The Crakers follow a vegetarian diet, in the sense that they eat only leaves (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 12), more precisely, "in fact, they are caecotrophs, a trait borrowed from rabbit DNA" (Canavan 142). Arguably, Crakers are the perfected version of the God's Gardeners, who are vegetarians, but still have a carbon footprint, and who are torn apart by inside rivalries (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 320-321). According to Adam One, Gardeners were not supposed to form attachments to objects, although they often still did (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 199). The Crakers are created with the tools to avoid humankind's fall, according to Adam One:

The Fall of Man was multidimensional. The ancestral primates fell out of the trees; then they fell from vegetarianism into meat-eating. Then they fell from instinct into reason, and thus into technology; from simple signals into complex grammar, and thus into humanity; from firelessness into fire, and thence into weaponry; and from seasonal mating into an incessant sexual twitching. Then they fell from a joyous life in the moment into the anxious contemplation of the vanished past and the distant future (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 224).

This theory can find confirmation in the fact that Crake had been in contact with the Gardeners from a very young age and that he even used to work for them for a while (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 290-291). Moreover, Crake met both Zeb and Pilar, Toby's mentor, when he was just nine or ten years old (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 286-293). Crake sees the BlyssPluss pill and the Crakers as the only way to save the Earth, "sometimes he'd say he was working on solutions to the biggest problem of all, which was human beings – their cruelty and suffering, their wars and poverty, their fear of death" (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 364). Although they do not entirely agree on Crake's method, the MaddAddam group agrees that the Crakers needed to be protected from human beings, because of their aggressive nature (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 171). The idea the MaddAddamites have of Crake's vision presents hints of a postcolonial critique, as they say that Crake's view is problematic since, "he'd have seen the Crakers as indigenous people, no doubt [...] and *Homo sapiens sapiens* as the greedy, rapacious Conquistadors" (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 171). The view based on the division of people between good savage and evil Western man is faulty, as it does not include any nuances and still divides humankind into hierarchies.

As previously explored, only the God's Gardeners and the Crakers are committed vegetarians and vegans. However, the food taxonomy in the trilogy is long and varied, as a

testament to Atwood's creativity and in-depth precision. Arguably such a detailed list of types of food matches with the fact that all of the technological advancements narrated by Atwood are either in the making or have been created already. The food mentioned in the trilogy is highly possible in nature and it supports the main thesis of contrasting climate change in the ordinary. The list includes: "Svetlana No-Meat Cocktail Sausages," "ChickieNobs Bucket O'Nubbins," "SoyOBoyburgers," "SoYummie Ice Cream, a HelthWyzer Own Brand, in chocolate soy, mango soy, and roasted-dandelion green-tea soy," (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 4,7, 85, 203), "soybits and soydines," "Fish sticks, 20 percent real fish" (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 18, 257), "Frankenburgers" made of pigoon meat, "Choco-Nutrino" a soy substitute of chocolate after the real crop had failed, "NevRBled Shish-K-Buddies for those who wanted to eat meat without killing animals," (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 28, 172, 285). Even the coffee beans are genetically modified by HelthWyzer, in order to enhance productivity:

Until then the individual coffee beans on each bush had ripened at different times and had needed to be handpicked and processed and shipped in small quantities, but the Happicuppa coffee bush was designed so that all of its beans would ripen simultaneously, and coffee could be grown on huge plantations and harvested with machines' (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 210).

It is impressive for such an anti-green culture as the ones of the Corporations and Compounds, to produce so many varieties of vegetarian and vegan food alternatives. However, it might be a consequence of the technological advances rather than an ethical necessity. For instance, there is no respect for endangered species, they are co-opted as a new source for profit, the chain of restaurants called Rarity "served steak and lamb and venison and buffalo, certified disease-free so it could be cooked rare – that was what 'Rarity' pretended to mean. But in the

private banquet rooms – key-club entry, bouncer-enforcer – you could eat endangered species. The profits were immense; one bottle of tiger-bone wine alone was worth a neckful of diamonds” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 37). Moreover, before joining the Gardeners, Toby works for a while for the unscrupulous food chain SecretBurgers, which took its name from the fact that no one knew what sort of animal protein was in the burgers, as its motto said, “*Because Everyone Loves a Secret!*” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 40). However, the company is so dubious that people suspected that not only they used animal protein in the burgers, but also human protein, “Was there a human fingernail, once?” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 40). Susan McHugh in her essay “Real Artificial: Tissue-Cultured Meat, Genetically Modified Farm Animals, and Fictions” presented an overview of the meat products featured in the trilogy, by inquiring the relationship between fake meat and environmental ethics of responsibility (183). According to McHugh there are three types of genetically modified sources of meat in Atwood’s trilogy: the ChickieNob Nubbins, the harvested chicken breasts that are produced in isolation and not by raising a living being (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 238). Even the ex-Gardener Ren eats them, because “ChickieNobs were really vegetables because they grew on stems and didn’t have faces” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 154). The kangalamb, a purposefully genetically created type of meat, “a new Australian splice that combined the placid character and high-protein yield of the sheep with the kangaroo’s resistance to disease and absence of methane-producing, ozone-destroying flatulence” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 344). This type of meat shows even shows an environmentally-conscious nature, as it is aware of the substantial carbon footprint generated by cows in real life (Adams 130). The third type of meat is the one produced by pigoons, the genetically modified pigs. According to McHugh, the first type of meat is a “victimless meat” one, the second one is produced in order to “minimize the environmental impact of livestock production,” while the third one is a “by-product of medical technology” (183). The aesthetic experimentations of Atwood enable

discussions about “violence-free meat” that are relevant to today’s society, considering for example organic animal farming, as it promotes a logic of salvation while still objectifying and slaughtering animals (McHugh, 187). Kanga-lamb meat and ChickieNobs both are signs of corporate greed and only generate horror in the characters that are confronted with bio-engineered meat (McHugh, 192). However, according to McHugh, the real ground-breaking representation of GMOs can be found in the pigoon, as “Atwood’s transformation of meat animals to hunters of humans spells out the conceptual and physical dangers to the human of thinking of environments as common grounds” (194), as shown by the way they develop throughout the novels. Similar to the relevance of green activist, their role increases in importance throughout the trilogy. In the beginning, they are presented merely as a source of food produced at OrganInc, Jimmy’s father and his co-workers are responsible both of creating them and eating them. When Jimmy visits his father at the workplace they say:

“Pigoon pie again,” they would say. “Pigoon pancakes, pigoon popcorn. Come on, Jimmy, eat up!” This would upset Jimmy; he was confused about who should be allowed to eat what. He didn’t want to eat a pigoon, because he thought of the pigoons as creatures much like himself (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 27).

Much like in the bonfire episode, Jimmy shows a potential for developing a vegetarian consciousness, however, his surrounding environment prevents him from further critically analysing the situation. As previously explored, the relationship between pigoons and humans further complicates when they are created with human brain tissues. As argued by Koziol, “The vast ‘gulf between civilized man and the brutes’ that allows most of the humans to eat animals and experiment on them without any qualms becomes problematic with the arrival of transgenic experimentation involving human genes” (“From Sausages to Hoplites,” 267).

The pigeons' role in the narrative and their change from objects to subjects start to happen in *The Year of the Flood*, when Toby realizes that they set up a funeral for one of their ranks, "could the pigs have been having a funeral? Could they be bringing memorial bouquets? She finds this idea frightening" (Atwood, 394). The pigeons show traces of human behaviour because they mourn one of their piglets and this appears as frightening because it disrupts the hierarchy between animals and humans and its own foundation, even to an animal activist such as Toby. After the plague, pigeons become subjects, in particular once they engage with humans (Kozioł, "From Sausages to Hoplites," 277) and this is one of the key elements of *MaddAddam*. The pigeons create various strategies to better attack the group of MaddAddamites and Gardeners, for instance they divide themselves in groups to attack and eat their crop (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 190-191). They are a threat to the remaining humanity and they also serve a cautionary function, since "Atwood's transformation of meat animals to hunters of humans spells out the conceptual and physical dangers to the human of thinking of environments as common grounds" (McHugh, 194). As argued by Defalco, the pigeons:

Outside of the lab, [they] are no longer bioscientific objects, their meaning determined by their medical usefulness, but rather inscrutable living, feeling things. I use "thing" here with purpose, not to emphasize their object status, but to undermine it. Following Brown, I understand "thingification" as a process that removes objects from circuits of use, producing a new awareness of their aesthetics, materiality, and sensuality (Brown, "Secret Life" 2-3) (444).

In *MaddAddam*, after one of their piglet gets killed by the same enemies that are threatening the MaddAddamites and the Gardeners, the pigeons march towards the remaining humans to forge an alliance, their words are of course translated by a Craker, Blackbeard, Toby's young

helper (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 323). They move like a caravan, carrying the dead piglet with them “fifty adults, that is: several of the sows have litters of piglets, trotting along beside their mothers. In the centre of the group, two of the boars are moving side by side; there’s something lying crossways on their backs. It looks like a mound of flowers [...] What? Thinks Toby. Is it a peace offering?” (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 325). Blackbeard recognizes them as not entirely animal, nor human, because of the human tissue they have in their brains. The pigoons ask the humans for help, “And in return, if you help them to kill the three bad men, they will never again try to eat your garden. Or any of you,” the only one of their ranks the humans are allowed to eat is the piglet, since it is already dead (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 328-329). However, they cannot eat the piglet, so they decide to bury it, “It would be right. Under the circumstances,” argues Toby (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 334). Therefore, all of the Gardeners go back to their vegetarian lifestyle, after having abandoned it in front of the plague. They have communicated with the pigoons, so eating one of them must feel like an act of cannibalism to them. They restore their Vegivows once they see a dissolution of the binary animal/human, as now they are on the same team as the pigoons. In the final section of the novel, the humans and the pigoons attack together their oppressors and there are able to win, by joining their forces, literally, as the humans bring guns and the animals their smell and sight (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 428). The humans’ view of the pigoons change drastically because of this, while describing their action and one of the humans being carried by a pigoon, Toby has to correct herself, “[He was] clinging to its back. *Her* back. The pigoons were not objects. She had to get that right. It was only respectful” (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 427). Their newfound equality is also present in the funerals the held after the attack, humans, pigoons, and Crakers all together, as told by Blackbeard “and the Pig Ones carried Adam, on branches, with flowers, and the dead Pig One too, which was harder for them because she was big and heavy” (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 443). Afterwards, the pigoons promise they will never hunt humans anymore and the humans

promise the same (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 451), however, the pact does not involve the rest of the animal kingdom, “all other species are, however, up for grabs” (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 455). They form an “inter-species cooperation” (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 454).

The fact that the pigoons acquire a superior status compared to the regular pigs can be problematic and anthropocentric, if viewed as a consequence of them having been created with human brain tissue. It might indicate only this type of animal could be potentially equated to humans. However, at the same time, the novel hints at the extinction of the human species in favour of either a Crakers domination or a domination of the progenies of both humans and Crakers, as three of the women get pregnant from Crakers (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 331-332, 458). As stated by Defalco, “the novels cannot guarantee *human* survival, but they imply that some form of hybrid animal, one that eschews familiar taxonomies, will carry on. These living things might survive and evolve, sounding the death knell of the anthropocentric exceptionalism that was the foundation of the predisaster, biocapitalist world” (447). Therefore, the idea at the core of the narrative is that of interconnectedness and hybridity often promoted by vegetarian ecofeminism, although in not such genetic terms. For Lucy Rowland, the inclusionary practices employed by Atwood in the trilogy, but in *MaddAddam* in particular, are a sign of her embracing of ecofeminism (47), the species hybridity is highly disruptive to the culture/nature binary (55).

As it has been explored in this chapter, both Atwood and Ozeki promote views of interconnectedness and hybridity, in order to represent the future of humankind and its relationship with nature. Both representations do not eschew accusations of anthropocentrism, as all of the narratives are connected to human characters. However, the authors are able to show the impact of everyday individual choices related to food through the depiction of different activist groups. Both Atwood and Ozeki are able to promote a new type of realist novel, one that channels its ordinary focus into examining alternative and ecological food

practices. Although they do not engage with the catastrophic events hinted by Amitav Ghosh, they can still write significant ecological fiction, the more so because it is all based on existing technological advancements, even the ones regarding a dystopic future.

### CHAPTER III THE FUTURE IS FEMALE

*It was like I had this wilderness inside that was driving me [...] I ran away because I loved him. I ran away because he used to love me, and then somewhere along the line, when he couldn't control me anymore, he just stopped (Ozeki, All Over Creation, 241-242).*

*Saint Rachel [Carson] was attacked by the powerful chemical corps of her day, and scorned and pilloried for her truth-telling, but her campaign did at last prevail (Atwood, The Year of the Flood, 445).*

#### 1. Disruptive Women

Women have long been associated with nature, either because of an innate sentimental connection to the Earth or because of a superior sensibility. This dissertation follows recent feminist critiques and refuses this perspective, as perpetrating an innate connection between women and nature only promotes the Western and capitalist domination (Oksala 218). In her analysis of the MaddAddam trilogy, Lucy Rowland detailed the development of feminism in a way that it can also be applied to Ozeki's *My Year of Meats* and *All Over Creation*. Rowland argues that in recent times ecofeminism has gained momentum and has created a large number of criticism (49). Ecofeminism disrupts the bond between nature and women, by claiming that the binary nature/culture is part of the dominant logic of Western thought and should be eliminated (Rowland 53). This chapter of the dissertation analyses the female figures in the works by Margaret Atwood and Ruth Ozeki, following an idea of interconnectedness promoted by ecofeminism. The women are looked through lenses that connect them to racial, LGBT+,

and postcolonial issues. Furthermore, all the women in their novels play a central role narrative-wise. The women are the key actors in various pivotal moments and they also all embody ecofeminist theory.

## 2. Ozeki's Activist Women

The main characters in Ozeki's novels are all women, perhaps because they are inspired by real life events, as it has been mentioned in the Introduction. However, a key argument to inscribe her fiction under the ecofeminist paradigm is that all of the key pro-nature actors in the narrative are all women. Even if the female characters do not play the roles of activists, they still engage with ecological issues in various ways.

The main character of *My Year of Meats* is the American-Japanese documentary filmmaker Jane Takagi-Little. Her storyline is matched for relevance by the one of Akiko, the Japanese wife of Jane's producer. They live on two opposite sides of the world, both physically and culturally, as Jane is an independent journalist and Akiko is forced by her husband to be a housewife. However, their storylines are connected by the prevailing themes of motherhood and of defying of norms. Their pregnant bodies, the body of a DES-exposed girl, Rosie Dunn, and the ones of the vegetarian lesbian couple are at the core of the novel, as Ozeki's work positions "women's bodies [as] particularly fraught sites" that both "bear the disproportionate effects of global capitalism" and can become "potential sites of resistance to global capitalism," (Harrison, 465). Similarly, Monica Chiu states that "the novel uncovers the female protagonists' growing awareness of the inextricability of men and meat and how this culturally sanctioned alliance often marginalizes women and poor minorities" (100). Therefore, this part of the dissertation analyses one by one the different female figures in the novel, as they are all connected with DES and meat issues.

Jane starts the documentary exposé on the DES hormone after having witnessed its harmful effects while filming *My American Wife!*. However, long before creating something of her own and while still working on the tv documentary, Jane had also decided to divert from the production's instructions and decided to film more intersectional types of families and not only white, middle-class, and heterosexual ones. Jane's disruptiveness comes from her own radical nature, in a typical postcolonial fashion, she could never fit in because of her family and race background:

In spite of the Little, my dad was a tall man, and I am just under six feet myself. In Japan this makes me a freak. After living there for a while, I simply gave up trying to fit in: I cut my hair sort, dyed chunks of it green, and spoke in men's Japanese. It suited me. Polysexual, polyracial, perverse, I towered over the sleek, uniform heads of commuters on the Tokyo subway. Ironically, the *real* culture shock occurred when I left Japan and moved here in New York [...] Being racially "half" – neither here nor there – I was uniquely suited to the niche I was to occupy in the television industry (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 13).

Jane deviates from the norm according to many different points of views, her sexual orientation and race are disruptive. Her identity is the basis of the process that leads her to a critical and ecological awareness, since she starts documenting non-normative families before turning to report on DES. However, at the beginning of the novel, Jane only sees her identity negatively, as she connects it to her inability to bear children, she remembers "I have thought of myself as a mulatto (half horse, half donkey – i.e., a "young mule"), but my mulishness went further than just stubbornness or racial metaphor. Like many hybrids, it seemed, I was destined to be nonreproductive" (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 183). Later in the narrative she will discover that

her infertility, which caused a rupture in her first marriage (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 183), was caused by the fact that her mother had been prescribed DES while she was pregnant of Jane, “Doc must have subscribed to the *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, seen the ads. So he gave her a prescription, probably about 125 milligrams of diethylstilbestrol, otherwise known as DES, to take once a day during the first trimester of me. To keep me in place, floating between her delicate hips” (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 187). Her inability to bear children is not connected to her racial identity. However, Jane’s body and ecological issues are tightly connected, as she can feel the results on her own skin. Her infertility is clearly connected to the effect of DES-exposure:

Once the link between DES and human cancer was established, other effects were discovered as well. In addition to the cancer, DES-exposed daughters were suffering from irregular menstrual cycles, difficult pregnancies, and structural mutations of the vagina, uterus and cervix (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 150).

Jane is unable to carry through a pregnancy because of the hormones prescribed to her mother, it is a curse that is passed along the female family line.

The producers want at the centre of *My American Wife!* a “middle-to-upper-middle-class white American woman with two to three children” (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 18) and this type of woman is the direct opposite of Jane’s persona and, similarly, is an unattainable identity for Akiko. Furthermore, the wives on the programme can be viewed as butchered animals, packaged and ready for the men’s consumption (Chiu 112). However, in the course of the narrative it becomes clear that they are more than the picture perfect image of a Stepford wife, as “the driving forces of these families are the women, the American wives, such that womanhood bears the ideological burden of demonstrating the progressive nature of the U.S.

family and, by extension, the U.S. nation” (Cheng 195). The families filmed by Jane, “the hybridized, cross-racial families, initially victims of dislocation and fragmentation, are freed from the patriarchal logos, reconceptualized as natural and thus ‘pure’” (Wallis 851) and they get their revenge and vindication against hegemonic forces. Clearly, on a BEEF-EX sponsored TV documentary, the most disruptive couple filmed by Jane is the one of the biracial vegetarian lesbians, as they defy the programme guidelines in terms of their sexuality, race, and their food choices. While filming the family, Jane thinks that “Lara and Dyann suggested Pasta Primavera for the Recipe of the Day, yet even with a scene of the sweet babies in the garden picking plump and luscious vegetables, I didn’t think I would get away with this. I mean, lamb was one thing, and lesbians were another, but vegetarian lesbians were something else entirely” (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 208). After they talk about how they found a sperm donor on record, Lara and Dyann explain to Jane that “they were vegetarians for political reasons” (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 211), they describe to her the process that lead them to avoid meat of any kind:

“You know, we’re vegetarians by default. I mean, we like meat, like the taste of it, but we would just never eat it the way it’s produced here in America. It’s unhealthy. Not to mention corrupt, inhuman, and out of control, you know?” [...]

“When we were trying to get pregnant, it was amazing what we found out. Do you know that sperm counts have dropped by about fifty percent in the past fifty years? That’s just one report, but a lot of scientists think there’s something to it. They think it’s related to the increase of hormones used in industry, especially in meat production. So we just figure, with babies, you know, why risk it? I mean, you are what you eat, right?” (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 212).

Lara's sentence "you are what you eat" is extremely significant, as it both refers to ideological choices but also to the physical reactions of the body. Moreover, their studies on hormone effects during pregnancy lead Jane to both a self-realization connected to her infertility and to her decision to create a documentary on DES. Unfortunately, Lara and Dyann were not aware to be taking part in a BEEF-EX sponsored programme, because otherwise they would not have accepted the offer to participate. Similarly, their presence is not appreciated by the producers, who deem it unacceptable and they threaten to fire Jane (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 214).

After finding many books on DES and the meat industry, Jane decides to find a meat factory to shoot and exposé (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 240-241). She asks Lara and Dyann for more information before starting her documentary and it is when Lara connects vegetarianism to both practical and ethical motives, "The meat thing in particular interested me, so I pursued it and started to dig up all sorts of nasty information about the industry [...] We simply decided to try not to eat contaminated food when we were pregnant [...] But then we started to feel that eating meat was, not wrong exactly, but not the best of all ethical choices, either, you know?" (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 243). Jane embraces their ideological beliefs, so she gets in touch with the Dunn Cattle Farm to film there. Once the crew gets there, the factory looks like an island, "an enormous patchwork comprising neatly squared and concentrated beef to be" (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 300). Jane starts to mischievously interview Gale, the eldest son of the owner, regarding their farming methods, in order to find out if they use any DES. Before providing a long list of immoral types of feed they use for the cattle, such as plastic, or even their own excrements, Gale refuses to admit they use DES, but he argues that they only use legal hormones (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 303-305). The scene changes when Gale is visited by his little sister Rosie, she often helps him mix the feed for the feedlot and in exchange he gives her a lollipop, which he picks up from a refrigerator where they keep the hormones for the cows:

He grinned and stood and went to the dusty refrigerator. As he opened it, I got a glimpse of the shelves inside, lined with row after row of little rubber-topped bottles. Gale reached into the freezer section above and pulled out a bright-blue popsicle on a little plastic stick from a tray of molds. He saw me watching.

“You want one?” he asked. I shook my head. “You mix ‘em up with Kool-Aid. Rosie loves ‘em. Can’t have a visit with Uncle Gale without an ice pop, hey?” (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 310).

Jane feels suspicious of the dust that covers the feedlot and especially the area where the feed is prepared, not just for the animals or the humans there, but because at the time she is pregnant with a baby that will soon abort in the same farm. Rosie’s character become central once the crew looks back at the footage shot at the Dunn farm, as they realise that she has breasts even though she is only 5 years old, the reason is of course growth hormones exposure, “It’s premature thelarche,” said Dave. “I read about cases in Puerto Rico. Precocious puberty. These little girls with estrogen poisoning. They thought it was some kind of growth stimulants in meat or milk or poultry. I think they suspected DES. You asked Gale about it, so I guess you know about DES?” (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 317). The crew then associates Rosie’s unwellness with her eating popsicles in the feedroom. Jane decides to talk to Rosie’s mother, Bunny, about the situation. Her first reaction is of denying the hormone-exposure and saying, “She takes after me, you know, in the breast department [...] John says I should be proud” (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 321). However, after Jane tells her “I had a kind of estrogen poisoning too. Different – I got it from my mother – but, well, it screwed me up inside. I had a growth, like a cancer, on my cervix. And my uterus is deformed. These things are dangerous, Bunny” (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 322), Bunny agrees on the crew filming Rosie and the way DES has affected

her body. They film Rosie in the middle of the night, right before interviewing Bunny about it, and the effects of the hormone on her body make the crew shiver, “naked, Rose was not plump at all. The plumpness was an illusion created by two shockingly full and beautiful breasts, each tipped with a perfect pink nipple. Suzuki, behind me, shuddered. The girl was five years old” (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 323). Previously DES and hormone-exposure had damaging effect on motherhood, however, in this case it is a mother, who acts against it and rebels against the system. For the sake of her daughter, Bunny risks her marriage and her financial security. According to Emily Cheng, there is another layer of analysis of this scene, “On the other hand, considering Ozeki’s emphasis on the production process and the association of patriarchy and capitalism, we may understand this scenario as a statement of the impossibility of separating a private sphere of family and a refusal of the privatizing of public discourse and capitalist social relations” (214). Moreover, Rosie’s body is a metaphor of the damaging logic of patriarchal domination over nature and women (Kalajahi, 87). Afterwards, Bunny herself embraces a rebellious attitude and finally takes agency and full control over her life, she says “I realized that I ain’t never really ever made a single decision in my life, you know. Just kinda drifted from one thing to the next, following the direction these darn things pointed me in, you know? [...] The pageants, the strip clubs, John ... on the whole, I’ve been darn lucky. But last night? Well, it was like I finally made a choice, talkin’ to the camera, and it felt good. Like I was takin’ a stand” (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 348). Therefore, in Ozeki’s novel, motherhood, ecocritical consciousness and rebelliousness against the patriarchy are all tightly connected, and they influence each other. The visit of the Dunn’s farm is the tip of the iceberg that will convince Jane to run collect all of her knowledge on hormones and cattle farming and try to create a documentary on it.

Akiko’s journey shows a parallel between disrupting the norm, running away from the life she was supposed to live, and motherhood. At the beginning of the narrative she is

relentlessly trying to get pregnant for her husband's sake, however, she does not seem to be able to. Her husband, Joichi, forces her to constantly eat meat to get back to health and to pregnancy, however she vomits after every time that she eats meat (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 48). Her husband, although not white, is the exemplification of patriarchal domination in a marriage, since he tries to take control over her body, "But suddenly her periods became his business, and as soon as they did, she stopped having them entirely [...] Now, in the third year of their marriage, he was stony with rage" (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 59). Her epiphany happens after watching the documentary episode featuring the aforementioned vegetarian lesbians, as she comes to terms with her sexuality and with the patriarchal systematic oppression she is facing:

There were tears of admiration for the strong women so determined to have their family against all odds. And tears of pity for herself, for the trepidation she felt in place of desire and for the pale, wan sentiment that she let pass for love [...] Yes, and there was something else as well. Something that the black woman had said, which resonated in her. Something about impossibility and desire, or lack of it [...] She wanted a child, she'd never wanted [her husband], once she became pregnant, she wouldn't need him ever again (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 216-217).

Simultaneously, Akiko embraces both her desire for motherhood and her possible homosexual orientation. After discovering that she got pregnant after her husband brutally raped her, Akiko decides to buy a single ticket to New York (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 372-374). Sure that she is expecting a baby girl, Akiko decides to move to the United States more for her daughter's sake than for her own, "It doesn't matter so much for a son, but since she's a girl, I want her to be an American citizen" (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 374). Social relationships between women

are also central to the narrative, not just the superficial connections between Jane and Lara and Dyann, and Bunny, but especially the more intense one between Jane and Akiko, for she ends up in Jane's apartment as soon as she gets to the United States. Jane helps her buy a train ticket to visit the lesbian couple and at the same time she gets the motivation she needed to finish her documentary (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 388-390). Jane describes the process that led her to engage with such themes:

Of course I knew about toxicity in meat, the unwholesomeness of large-scale factory farming, the deforestation of the rain forests to make grazing land for hamburgers. Not a lot, perhaps. But I knew a little. I knew enough. But I needed a job. So when *My American Wife!* was offered to me, I chose to ignore what I knew [...] I would like to think of my "ignorance" less as a personal failing and more as a massive cultural trend, an example of doubling, of psychic numbing, that characterizes the end of the millennium. If we can't act on knowledge, then we can't survive without ignorance (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 393).

The passage echoes the ecocritical ideas developed by both Naomi Klein and Melanie Joy. While Klein associates ignorance with climate change denial, as something everyone knows about but refuses to acknowledge (Klein 1-5), Joy connects it with the so-called "carnistic matrix," which separates humans' knowledge of what meat is to their ability of eating it (Joy 115-134). In the end, Jane's documentary is a success and it gets a conversation going about the use of hormones in factory farming (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 424), she knows it is not the effort of a single individual but that she has a whole team of women who supported her, therefore, her final act is to send the tape of the show to Bunny and Dyann and Lara (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 394).

Motherhood is a central theme even in Ozeki's *All Over Creation* and it is tied to ecological rebelliousness. The main character is Yumi, the daughter of an American and Japanese farming couple. Having run away from home after she has had an abortion, Yumi is considered the black sheep of the Idaho farm in which they live, "people said I was the apple of Lloyd's eye, the pride of his heart, until I went rotten" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 5). Moreover, in another section of the novel Yumi is aptly described as "a bad seed if there ever was one" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 190). She started being a rebel, almost without a cause, during her adolescence, which only increase after she had an affair with her history teacher at fourteen (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 34). After she left home, she only kept in touch with her mother every once in a while, but she refused to come back until her father suffered an extremely heavy heart attack. Consequently, Yumi came back with her three children, who all had different fathers (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 37-44). Yumi had described the motif behind her running away from home and her rebellious nature a "wilderness inside that was driving me" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 241). At one point her wild nature becomes uncontrollable to her father, so she explains that she had to run away for both of their sakes (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 242).

Yumi's mother, Momoko, who is a tiny Japanese woman who speaks a not-entirely-correct form of English, shows multiple signs of a passive resistance and resilience all throughout the novel. After Yumi ran from home, Momoko turned against her husband, "that night Momoko more or less stopped speaking to him. She moved into my bedroom, where she lived for close to a decade. After his heart attack she took care of him, preparing his meals and bringing them to his bedside and later, when he was better, leaving them on the kitchen table. But she didn't eat with him" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 112). However, her most rebellious act was to start growing a seeds garden, it was a useless task for her husband, but she helped preserve many species of vegetables, Momoko was even often thanked by her customers, for

instance one wrote to her, “My wife and I want to thank you for your heroic efforts to preserve the rich diversity of heirloom tomatoes” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 113). Momoko was also able to escape the role of the housewife, much like Akiko did, as “Lloyd found it disconcerting to realize that his wife had a set of connections and friendships, a whole new world, about which he’d known little or nothing” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 114). The activist group the Seeds of Resistance greatly admire Momoko’s work, because her garden is seen as a “vault, full of treasures” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 161). They value Momoko’s work and they start to help her, by cataloguing and planting with her (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 163). Much like Bunny in *My Year of Meats*, her initial rebelliousness begins when she embraces agency and starts something on her own, but then it expands to include fighting against toxic capitalist forces. As previously mentioned in Chapter I, the Seeds of Resistance set up a website to give out the Fullers’ seeds freely, in order to avoid any type of capitalist profit and to maintain the Earth’s seeds variety. Unlike Lloyd, who was extremely defensive about their seeds, Momoko agrees on the Seeds’ decision, she says, “No. Keeping is not safe. Keeping is danger. Only safe way is letting go. Giving everything away. Freely. Freely” (Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 358). Momoko understands that the only safe way to preserve nature is to detach humankind from capitalist logic, as its greediness is ironically not productive.

Cass, Yumi’s best friend stayed in the town she grew up in and she took care of Yumi’s parents. She tried multiple times to get pregnant, but she was never lucky in her endeavours. Like Jane in *My Year of Meats*, there is the suspect that her infertility might be a result from chemical exposure, but they were never able to properly trace it (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 76). However, Cass has unreasonably linked her abortions to the fact that she had helped Yumi to get an abortion when they were teenagers, “I started to think it was all your fault. Each time I miscarried and saw the blood, it just brought it all back. I felt like God was punishing me for helping you out. Crazy, huh? But if that’s the case, then how come you’re here now with three

great kids? You know what I mean? It doesn't make sense. If anyone deserves to get punished, it was you, right?" (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 79). Cass develops a particularly strong bond with one of the female Seeds of Resistance, Charmey, a young girl who gets pregnant in the course of the novel, so much so that she feels like a mother to her, because of her age and because of her state:

When Charmey was hungry, Cass felt the pangs. When the baby kicked and fluttered, burped and hiccupped, these mundane signs of life made Cass stop what she was doing and catch her breath. Charmey sensed the pull, and she shared the baby's gestation, drawing Cass's hand to her abdomen and pressing it against the swell until Cass could tell the difference between a punch and a roll, a poke in the cervix and a kick in the ribs (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 334).

The experience of motherhood connects Charmey and Cass in the same way that it had connected Bunny and Jane, they were not stories of happy pregnancies, but they were enough to connect them. Moreover, Cass is the one to convince her husband not to go through with the lawsuit against the Seeds of Resistance, which had led to the majority of them to prison, including the father of Charmey's baby, Frankie (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 336). After the accidental explosion of the Seeds' vehicle, Charmey dies, leaving behind her baby girl, Tibet. In the end, her biological father, Frankie, decides to give Tibet to Cass, so the narrative comes full circle in a way. Cass feels guilty because it is something that she had already desired:

She was so ashamed, because of course this idea was not new to her. How could it be? It was the single hope she had been struggling to overcome since the night of the explosion, when Frankie handed her the baby and ran out the door. She had despised

herself for feeling it then, and she continued to feel sick with guilt every time she fed the baby or bathed her or sang her to sleep (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 402).

However, Frankie believes it is only right she adopts the baby girl, because he believes it is something Charmey herself would have wanted. All the women in Ozeki's novel are connected to each other through the experience of motherhood, whether they become mothers themselves or because of a shared act of caring about each other. As previously explored, it is a theme that was at the core of *My Year of Meats* as well, and similarly was also connected to ecological issues. They all rebel in different ways to the patriarchal logics of domination that try to impose them a single and individual existence, while they are able to find strength in their union. They help each other in practical ways, simply even by buying a train ticket, but also by educating each other regarding ecological issues, in order to live healthier lives. It is precisely because of the intermingling between motherhood and ecological practices that Ozeki's novels fit into a standard type of ecofeminism, which even includes at times vegetarian ecofeminism.

### 3. Atwood's Female Rebels

The women in the MaddAddam world are often objectified and mistreated just like in today's society. Outside of the privileged areas of the Compounds, their bodies are in a continuous state of threat. For instance, women and the way they are mistreated are a popular form of entertainment online, however, the product is extremely violent. They are "unimaginable violent and sexual acts" (Narkunas 9), in which the commodification and their mistreatment is considered a socially acceptable practice. For instance, Jimmy and Crake watched HottTotts, a global sex-trotting site. "The next best thing to being there," was how it was advertised, "it claimed to show real sex tourists, filmed while doing things they'd be put in jail for in their

home countries” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 103). This is how they first saw Oryx, when she was only eight years old and forced to engage in sexual acts with an older man and two other little girls (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 103-104). Afterwards, Oryx will become central to the narrative, because she will be the one to teach the Crakers how to survive in nature and teach them botany and zoology (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 363). Although she was forced as a child to participate in illegal sexual acts and exploited during her adolescence, Oryx gains agency and plays an important role, albeit in the making of the new human species created to substitute the homo sapiens sapiens after the plague.

Going back to the violence against women, Zeb’s father figure, the Rev, the head and founder of the Church of PetrOleum, was an avid consumer of internet pornography. Furthermore, his taste was extremely violent:

He favoured those sites involving whips, penetration with bottles, and nipple-burning. He was also a big fan of the historical re-enactment beheading sites, which were relatively expensive, maybe because of the props and costumes – “Mary, Queen of Scots: Feel This Hot Red-Head Sprout,” “Anne Boleyn: Royal Slut! Did It with Her Brother, She’ll Do It with You, Then You Get to Slice Her Dirty Little Neck,” “Katherine Howard: Turn This Stone Cold Fox Stone Cold with One Whack of Your Powerful Blade,” “Lady Jane Grey: Make This Elite Virgin Pay the Price of Snootiness, Blindfold Optional.” These gave you the sensation, right in your own hands, of what it felt like to decapitate a woman with an axe. (‘Fun! Historic! Educational!’) (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 145).

Clearly, the type of pornography the Rev is interested in is doubly violent towards women’s bodies, as the sexual act is connected to violent practices to inflict on them. The technology

has been so developed to provide a real-life sensation to those engaging with these online websites, “the effects were so amazing and 3-D that you ducked the gush of blood” (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 146). It would be naïve to believe that violent porn practices are not easily accessible today, however, Atwood has brought to the extremis the mercification of women and their bodies. It is particularly shocking the 3-D sensation provided as it shows a not-even-latent desire and urge to physically hurt women. The Rev even brutally killed his first wife Fenella, the mother of Adam One, because he wanted to remarry a woman he had impregnated and could not afford the scandal. Therefore, he told everyone she had abandoned him and their child and no one tried to look into it better, because “bad mothers are always a good story” (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 153). Another type of women’s exploitation happens in the pleeblands and especially in the Scales and Tails club, where women are morphed into lizards and have to dance for their clients or even perform sexual acts for them:

Scales had pictures on either side of the entrance – light-up holophotos. The pictures were of beautiful girls covered completely with shining green scales, like lizards, except for the hair. One of them was standing on a single leg with the other leg hooked around her neck. I thought that it must hurt to stand like that, but the girl in the picture was smiling.

Did the scales grow or they were pasted on? Bernice and I disagreed about that. I said they were pasted, Bernice said they grew because the girls had been operated on, like getting bimplants (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 90).

The bodies of the Scales and Tails dancers are violated in a different way than the ones online, but nonetheless, their bodies are changed to become more appetible and more productive. One wonders if they were forced to be operated on, or if it was their free choice. These women are

all unnamed, therefore the reader is lead to concentrate on the ones what play a more relevant role in the narrative. The women who have a name are often disruptive and unruly, they enact different types of ecofeminist guerrilla and challenge the capitalist and exploitative status quo. Their resilience is admirable and it is often linked to ecological and vegetarian practices.

In *Oryx and Crake*, the majority of the women are ecological activists and their personas shine through the novel, as it is the one most focused on the pre-plague capitalist way of life. First of all, there is Jimmy's mother. As previously argued in Chapter I, she was extremely critical of the Compounds, the corporations, and bioengineering alike and she felt like she lived in a prison (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 60). The situation escalates when Jimmy's mother runs away from home precisely because of her disagreements on their lifestyle, in her note to Jimmy she wrote "*Dear Jimmy, it said. Blah blah blah, suffered with conscience long enough, blah blah, no longer participate in a lifestyle that is not only meaningless itself but blah blah*" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 69). Moreover, before leaving she had trashed Jimmy's father computer with a hammer, a powerful gesture that is meant to disrupt the patriarchal hegemony (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 70). Afterwards, she takes her dissent even further, by actively engaging in eco-guerrilla acts. Years after they last saw each other, Jimmy sees his mother on a TV coverage of the Happicuppa riots, "there in the shouting crowd, clutching a sign that read A Happicup is a Crappi Cup, with a green bandana over her nose and mouth, was – wasn't it? – his vanished mother. For a moment the bandana slipped down and Jimmy saw her clearly – her frowning eyebrows, her candid blue eyes, her determined mouth" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 212). Jimmy's mother makes an appearance in *The Year of the Flood*, because she can briefly find safety at the God's Gardeners' rooftop. She loses all of the mystical aura of a fearless rebel she has acquired in Jimmy's mind, because the reader is able to get to know her better. In a fashion typical in Atwood's works, women are flawed characters, they are not entirely good or entirely evil, and they possess a layered personality, like they do

in real life. She is introduced as an unnamed character at first, and then through her code name, Hammerhead, she was able to bring the Gardeners “a gift of genome codes, for which we owe her, not only temporary asylum, but secure External placement” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 294). However, since the perspective is not her son’s, she is no longer depicted in heroic tones:

She was thin and blue-eyed, and far from calm. Like all Corp defectors, she thought she was the only one ever to have taken the momentous and heretical step of defying a Corp; and like all of them, she desperately wanted to be told what a good person she was [...] In reality she hadn’t told them anything they didn’t already know – it was that old human-to-pig neocortex transplant material – but it would have been less than kind to say so [...] The Hammerhead paced the floor and gnawed her fingernails until Toby felt like hitting her. We didn’t ask you to come here and put all our necks in a noose over a teaspoonful of stale-dated crap, she wanted to say (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 296).

Still in the second instalment, Toby sees Jimmy’s mother again while she was under cover at the AnooYoo spa, because she was not able to escape to another state and to freedom. Toby realized that it might have been the end of Jimmy’s mother, “She’s still in the area, taking the risks, on the run all the time. Most likely she’d been sucked into the urban green-guerrilla scene; in which case her days were numbered, because the CorpSeCorps were said to be bent on eliminating all such activists” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 318-319). Years later, Jimmy will be forced by the CorpSeCorps to watch a footage of her mother’s execution, at first he is unsure about her identity, but then it is confirmed by her mentioning the pet he used to have as a child, before his mother took the rakunk away with her, “pan to close-up: the woman was

looking right at him, right out of the frame: a blue-eyed look, direct, defiant, patient, wounded. But no tears. Then, the sound came suddenly up. *Goodbye. Remember Killer. I love you. Don't let me down*" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 303). Her last words can be interpreted both as her wish to be recognized by her son, by referencing something familiar to the both of them, and a way to urge him to join the ecological fight against the corporations. Afterwards, the Crakers will look at Oryx as a goddess, the mother figure to all flora and fauna. Lucy Rowland has divided the three novels into three types of feminism. For instance, Rowland argues that *Oryx and Crake* is a critique of cultural feminism and the belief of women's special connection to nature, Atwood's criticism leads to a positive end, "although ecofeminism finds its roots in some cultural feminist ideologies, Atwood's interrogation of the fundamentally flawed aspects of cultural feminism can direct new strands of ecofeminism toward more productive ends" (Rowland 50). In later passages, the role of women in the other two instalments of the MaddAddam trilogy will be analysed.

Another disruptive ecological fighter is Bernice, Jimmy's roommate from the Martha Graham Academy. However, she is described as almost a parody of the other eco-activists, she is a "fundamentalist vegan [...], who had stingy hair held back with a wooden clip in the shape of a toucan and wore a succession of God's Gardeners T-shirts, which – due to her aversion to chemical compounds such as underarm deodorants – stank even when freshly laundered" (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 221). Bernice exemplifies Atwood's satirical account of ecological extremism, as previously explored in Chapter I, because she sets fire to Jimmy's shoes because they are made of leather (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 221). Although well-intentioned, her activism is blind, it does not convince other people to follow a more ecological lifestyle, but it just leads them farther away from it, for instance she used to call Jimmy a "meat-breath" (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 345). In *The Year of The Flood*, it is narrated that Bernice has actively joined the God's Gardeners but that later she "had been spraygunned in a raid on a

Gardeners safe house” (Atwood, *The Year of The Flood*, 346). Another relevant female figure in the narrative is Amanda Payne, a conceptual artist that dates Jimmy for a while after he graduated (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 283). She works on Vulture Sculptures, “the idea was to take a truckload of large dead-animal parts to vacant fields or parking lots of abandoned factories and arrange them in the shapes of words, wait until the vultures had descended and were tearing them apart, then photograph the whole scene from a helicopter” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 287). For her artwork she had been criticized by many people, even from the God’s Gardeners and Bernice themselves. Amanda is another means of criticizing and satirizing on a type of extreme eco-activism that does not present a critical approach to issues but sees the world in black and white. Although she had been a God’s Gardeners when she was a child and she has been described as a “bioartist” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 357), she was never an active ecofeminist. It can be argued that she exemplifies a type of art that only exists for art’s sake, although radical and conceptual, it does not engage with political themes or with ecological activism. Nowadays this type of art is irresponsible and selfish, because engaging with ecological issues is not a hobby but it is an imperative duty for all of humankind.

Rowland states that *The Year of the Flood* exemplifies post-feminism, as before the plague women are led to believe they have obtained equality because they are able to choose which products to consume, buying becomes an act of empowerment and personal choices equate freedom (50-51). However, as much as that might be true for women in the corporations, it cannot be applied from the Eves of the God’s Gardeners. They do choose to live an alternative lifestyle, but they try to spread ecological issues to larger parts of society and they actively refuse a neoliberal and capitalist style. Two of the main members of the God’s Gardeners are certainly Pilar and Toby, who will both be the Eve Six of their community.

As previously explored, Toby joined the Gardeners in order to escape her brutal SecretBurgers boss Blanco. She had started working for him after she had been sexually

molested multiple times working as a furzooter, “furzooters put on fake-fur animal suits with cartoon heads and hung advertising signs around their necks, and worked the higher-end malls and the boutique retail streets [...] In the first week she suffered three attacks by fetishists” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 38). After leaving this job, she started working for SecretBurgers, where she is forced to do any of the sexual acts her boss wants her to, he says to her, “Cross me up, I’ll snap you like a twig” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 45). It is clear how this is not a case of post-feminism, because Toby is not able to choose freely, otherwise she would not have ended up working for the fast food chain. Although they are problematic, as it has been explored in Chapter II, Toby gains freedom and agency living with the God’s Gardeners. At first, she is sceptic about the cult, but nonetheless decides to work for them to pay back her staying at the rooftop, “so she set to work making herbal lotions and creams. There wasn’t much chopping involved, and she had a strong arm with the mortar and pestle. Soon after that. Adam One asked her to share her skills with the children, so she added several daily classes to her routine” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 55). Later in the novel, Toby meets Pilar, the Eve Six of the Gardeners, who will soon become her mentor and who is in charge of the bees and the mushrooms. Pilar sees the bees as her equals:

Pilar took her to visit the beehives, and introduced her to the bees by name. “They need to know you’re a friend,” she said. “They can smell you. Just move slowly,” she cautioned as the bees coated Toby’s bare arm like golden fur. “They’ll know you next time. Oh – if they do sting, don’t slap them. Just brush the sting off. But they won’t sting unless they’re frightened, because stinging kills them” (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 119).

Pilar's relationship with the bees is egalitarian and she does not perceive them as ontologically different from herself. Moreover, she is doing an extremely significant ecological act, as the bees, much like today's bees, "all over the world had been in trouble for decades. It was the pesticides, or the hot weather, or a disease, or maybe all of these – nobody knew exactly" (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 119). While Toby is helping Pilar, she too acquires an ecological attitude and world view that was previously unknown to her, "at night, Toby breathed herself in. Her new self. Her skin smelled like honey and salt. And earth" (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 121). Similar to the characters in Ozeki's novels, Pilar and Toby develop a mother-daughter bond, as the former teaches everything she knows to the new member of the Gardeners. As much as it might seem that Pilar is the figure of an old, benevolent, quirky witch, her images is drastically removed from this picturesque and idyllic perception, when it is discovered that she is in touch with Crake and that they might have collaborated on the BlyssPluss pill since he was a boy (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 175). They met at the HelthWyzer Compound, because Pilar was a friend of Crake's father, who died because he wanted to expose the corporation's scams. Pilar has a darker side to her character, a ruthless one that takes hold by helping Crake, albeit she does it for the survival of the earth and all of the living creatures in it. As much as she has little faith in humankind, her faith in nature cannot be scratched, she tells Toby, "Nature never does betray us. You do know that?" (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 203). Pilar's radicalism is applied to herself and her own body, because when she discovers she has a too advanced cancer, she decides to commit suicide, and according to the Gardener's religious guidelines, to return her body to the earth:

"As we say, shrouds have no pockets – all earthly things must be passed from the dying to the living, and that includes our knowledge. I want you to have everything I've assembled here – all my materials." [...] Toby knew the theory: Pilar believed she was

donating herself to the matrix of Life through her own volition, and she also believed that this should be a matter for celebration (Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 214).

Pilar's rigorous character renders her strict to humankind but she does not make an exception for herself. Her ecologism is rational and harsh, although she presents herself through a façade of sensibility, but she is all rationality. Pilar subverts the tropes of ecofeminists being connected to nature through their sensible qualities. After Pilar's death, Crake decides to carry through with his BlyssPluss plan by himself without any help from the Gardeners. In the third instalment, Toby discovers that her former mentor might have had more to do with the plague than she thought she would have, for Pilar might have given Crake various viruses to exterminate humankind:

‘Do you think Pilar knew what use he'd make of those microbes or viruses or whatever they were?’ she asks.

‘Eventually?’ She remembers Pilar's wrinkled little face, her kindness, her serenity, her strength. But underneath, there had always been a hard resolve. You wouldn't call it meanness or evil. Fatalism, perhaps.

‘Let's put it this way,’ says Zeb. ‘All the real Gardeners believed the human race was overdue for a population crash. It would happen anyway, and maybe sooner was better. (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 403).

Not only is Pilar rational with her own death, but she also decides to adopt the same view for humankind's survival. Her character is highly intriguing because of her double-sidedness, since she seems both a positive witch, but also an evil schemer. Pilar's layered personality is a testament to Atwood's master in refusing black and white representations of human beings and

a binary view of good and evil. While previously the only despicable character to have been associated with the plague was Crake, who had been vastly hated, with the exception of Jimmy, this time is the beloved Pilar to be connected to the BlyssPluss pill. Perhaps it can be considered as a warning to the readers, that their actions might have had a positive result, since humankind and nature cannot continue on such a capitalist trajectory like today's.

In *MaddAddam*, all of the characters from the previous novels resurface and interact with each other. Toby, Amanda, and Ren among other play a significant role in the final novel. Going back to Rowland, her main thesis is that *MaddAddam* represent ecofeminism, in particular through the image of the God's Gardeners, as it "explicitly condone[s] a refusal to recognize the existence of a nature in opposition to a culture and instead encourage the idea of a heterarchical web that includes humanity" (65). As also stated by Calina Ciobanu, women play the biggest part in the opposition to the Anthropocene, underlining the anthropo- part of the word, "the trilogy as a whole insists that any possibility of imagining a posthuman future will depend not just on situating human-kind as one species among many, but on unsettling *mankind's* primacy in relation to *womankind* as well" (154). Keeping in mind that the most distinctive ecofeminist trait of the trilogy is how much it relies on interconnectedness, then, women promote it, willingly or not, by creating a new type of hybrid human/Craker species. At first the MaddAddamites reflect with the Gardeners on the possibility of there ever being a cross-species between homo sapiens sapiens and Crakers and the debate becomes the site for the revindication of women's reproductive rights, which echoes Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*:

'Point being: two different species,' says Beluga.

'Women aren't dogs,' says White Sedge. 'I am finding this exchange offensive. I don't think you should refer to us like that.' Her voice is calm but her spine's like a ramrod.

‘This is merely an objective scientific discussion,’ says Zunzuncito (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 254-255).

Amanda accidentally gets pregnant after the Crakers mate with her, thinking she wants to, because they are wired to mate in group once the woman is ovulating (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 123). Afterwards also the MaddAddamite Swift Fox and Ren become pregnant and they are all carrying Crakers’ children (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 331-332). It is important how the pregnancies are discovered, the scene is set when the humans join forces with the pigoons, who leave a dead piglet for them to eat. Ren refuses to, “Oh, I couldn’t [...] It would be like eating a baby’ and then Amanda starts to cry” (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 331). As previously mentioned, the pigoons have human tissues in them, therefore the empathy that the human beings feel might be problematic. At the same time, the pigoons clearly look like and behave like normal pigs, therefore, it is necessary to underline the way in which the newfound mothers go back to their vegetarian roots, even if after the plague food of any form is scarce. In the end there is a short update on the wellbeing on the women pregnant with Crakers and everything is fine, “the three mothers and the four children are all doing well, and the Craker women are ever-present, purring, tending, and bringing gifts. The gifts are kudzu leaves and shiny pieces of glass from the beach, but they are well meant” (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 462).

As in Ozeki’s novel, Atwood herself presents a type of ecofeminism that is intertwined with motherhood and vegetarianism. Interconnectedness is not merely a moral state, but also a physical one, as the women are about to create a new species, and for Ozeki, it is connected with gender, class, and race issues. Moreover, the mothers in the works by both Atwood and Ozeki, are supported and taken care of by a female network. Their aim is not to exclude men entirely for the picture and adopt a radical attitude, but they want to promote the beauty and strength of female bonds. As argued by Ciobanu, the future in Atwood’s novels rests on the

women, who are carrying the future generations of humans (154). Similarly, the future in Ozeki's novels presents itself as women-oriented, as all of the pregnant women in both *All Over Creation* and *My Year of Meats* are expecting daughters.

CONCLUSION  
THE GREAT RESILIENCE

*The Earth forgives the Miner's blast*

*That renders her crust and burst her skin;*

*The centuries bring Trees again,*

*And water, and the Fish therein.*

[...]

*Give up your anger and your spite,*

*And imitate the Deer, the Tree;*

*In sweet Forgiveness find your joy,*

*For it alone can set you free.*

*(Atwood, The Year of the Flood, 510-511).*

1. Ecological Resistance

In the MaddAddam trilogy and in the novels by Ruth Ozeki that have been explored in the course of this dissertation, there are two underlying narratives that kept resurfacing over again, that is, religion and the arts. The two themes are in different ways at the core of the ecological forms of resistance displayed in the narratives, since the rhetoric of all of the activists presents religious tones and the survival of the humanities is central in Atwood's post-plague world. Furthermore, religion and the arts are two themes that simultaneously support and deny the main thesis by Amitav Ghosh, because he believes in the power of religion (as stated in the conclusion of *The Great Derangement*), but at the same time strongly criticizes the state of the humanities today. Therefore, it seems only fitting to explore the two themes in the conclusion,

alongside a general overview of the content of the whole dissertation. Religion presents itself as a new topic to be now fully explored, after having been only briefly mentioned in different chapters, while the arts are the framework of this dissertation, which started with a bleak image of the humanities and closes with a more positive depiction of their state.

Amitav Ghosh himself has infused the conclusion of *The Great Derangement* with religious tones, as he has dedicated the last few pages of the work to a close comparison between the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change and the encyclical letter of the same year 'Laudato Si' by Pope Francis I. In Ghosh's analysis the letter emerges as the better text out of the two in dealing with climate change, the letter is clear and lucid (Ghosh 151) and, most importantly, "does not anywhere suggest that miraculous interventions may provide a solution for climate change," but it tries to create a reconciliation between Christianity and humankind's domination over nature (Ghosh 153). Moreover, the letter criticises the current neoliberal hegemonies, while "in the text of the Paris Agreement, by contrast, there is not the slightest acknowledgement that something has gone wrong with our dominant paradigms" (Ghosh 154). According to Ghosh, today's limited signs of hope are all connected to religion, such as "the increasing involvement of religious groups and leaders in the politics of climate change" (Ghosh 159). If political groups can join forces with religious groupings, there may be a solution to climate change (Ghosh 161).

Similarly, the theme of religion is a thread that connects both the MaddAddam trilogy and the novels by Ozeki, in particular *All Over Creation*. The Ozeki's novel sees the unlikely collaboration between the activist group the Seeds of Resistance and the extremely religious and conservative Lloyd Fuller, the old father of the protagonist. Although they come from the opposite ideological poles, they are able to find something in common in their shared love for nature. Long before meeting the Seeds, Lloyd wrote newsletters to his customers that are embedded with religious tones, for instance he wrote:

Mrs. Fuller and I believe, firstly, that anti-exoticism is Anti-Life: “God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body” [1 Corinthians 15:38]. Secondly, we believe anti-exoticism to be explicitly racist [...] Mrs. Fuller and I believe the careful introduction of species into new habitats serves to increase biological variety and health. God in His great wisdom has given us this abundance. “O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riche” [Psalms 104:24-25] (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 67).

As explored in Chapter II, Lloyd’s ecologism is religious-based. He believes that exploiting nature is inherently bad, because it goes against God’s will and not because of ecological or animal-friendly ethics. In another letter Lloyd writes about genetic engineering, “for having eaten the apple from the Tree of Knowledge, now mankind knows sorrow and death; and here we must ask: is our answer to that original transgression, once again, to defy God’s Will and to set our sights on the Tree of Life, Itself? Do not forget the Lord put a flaming sword at the entrance of Eden, to keep Man away” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 105). Furthermore, Lloyd decides to join forces with the Seeds of Resistance not because they admire him and compliment him because of his seeds policy, but because they tell him about the Terminator gene, which is a threat to life itself according to Lloyd and the reason he decides to rebel (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 266-267). There is another proof of Lloyd’s religious ecologism further down the narrative, when the Fullers and the Seeds of Resistance hosts the Idaho Potato Party. He concludes his speech by saying “Our seeds contain our beliefs. That’s why we urge you to continue to save them and propagate them and pass them on to others to do the same, in accordance to God’s plan. In this way we chose to praise our Lord and to fulfil His design – of which mankind is just one small part” (Ozeki, *All Over Creation*, 302). Although Lloyd’s view

is strongly criticized by Ozeki, as he is presented as a sort of villain, or at least a negative father figure because he had abandoned his daughter, by the end he acquires a positive aura because of his ecological actions and beliefs. A similar shift happens to the God's Gardeners in Atwood's *Maddaddam* trilogy.

A first instance of religious tones in Atwood's trilogy is presented in *Oryx and Crake*, when Jimmy's mother criticizes the intense biological engineering carried out at the HelthWyzer Compound because it is a "sacrilegious" practice (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 64). The theme of religion is embraced in the second instalment with the God's Gardeners. Ozeki's *Seeds of Resistance* are similar to Atwood's God's Gardeners because they both possess a religious cult-like structure and organisation and because they are both ecological groups. Like a coven, the Seeds of Resistance possess a branched support network, they help each other, and they all follow the same rules dictated by ideology. However, while the Seeds are a positive activist group, the God's Gardeners are not, as argued by Rowland, "[the cult] demonstrates how religion can be hijacked for personal, financial, and political gain and how it can be used as a tool of oppression" (62). As it has been explored in Chapter II, the God's Gardeners are problematic from various points of view, however, they are depicted in a positive light in the third instalment of the trilogy, as stated by Rowland, "as well as addressing these clearly misogynistic ideas, Atwood uses *MaddAddam* to highlight the benefits of an eco-religion like that of the God's Gardeners. She emphasizes the importance of maintaining a sense of considered morality in the face of evil, a trait actively encouraged by the Gardeners" (63). It should be noted that among the few survivors of the plague, the vast majority of them are former Gardeners. Both authors present ideas that closely resemble Ghosh's, as humankind could greatly benefit from the intermixing of religion and ecology. The texts by Atwood, Ghosh, and Ozeki are all of different kinds, their purposes are different and so is their genre,

however, they were able to have an underlying eco-religious thread, which could be significant for further studies on the topic.

## 2. Resisting Arts

Amitav Ghosh believes that humankind is facing a crisis of the imagination, a derangement (Ghosh 11). The state of things is so desperate that Ghosh even argues for a revolution of the most traditional of the literary genres, the realist novel. This dissertation has proven that there is a beacon of hope in the field of contemporary fiction and that the literary landscape is not as bleak as it has been portrayed by Ghosh. Ruth Ozeki has shown a strong determination to inform her readers about ecologically-damaging practices, such as the use of growth hormones or the improper use of genetically modified organisms. Her type of fiction is not entirely traditional, in the sense that at times her fiction turns into a journalistic report, in order to be as believable as possible. However, Ozeki can also entertain her readers by structuring her novels with captivating plots and intriguing characters. Although she uses words that can be considered as dry, she frames them with extremely sentimental narratives that emotionally involve, while informing, her readers. Even if she does not talk about the state of the arts directly, her novels present a strong defence for the humanities.

The *MaddAddam* trilogy by Margaret Atwood is also a sign of the current vibrancy of the humanities. As stated in the Introduction, the novels themselves defy Ghosh's critique of magic realism and surreal novels, because the technological advancements are not extraordinary, but they are all either in the making or have been created already (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 475). Most importantly, the disease contained in the BlyssPlus pill is man-made, it is not an extraordinary larger-than-life event. The fact that Atwood's works of fiction are set in a speculative future defy even more vigorously the idea of a deranged imagination than

Ozeki. Alan Richard Northover has stated that Atwood is able to master Biblical myths and subvert them, “instead of a prophecy of a final, catastrophic end, the apocalypse is understood in its original sense of revelation (of a new age), a liberation or salvation from current difficult times” (83). It can also be argued that, other than a salvation from difficult times for the character in the novel (as the trilogy ends on a positive note for Crakers, MaddAddamites, Gardeners, and animals alike), it is also a rescue of the current state of the arts. As this dissertation has shown, Atwood’s level of detail in depicting an imaginary world is impressive. Relentlessly she has created a detailed taxonomy of genetically modified organisms and numerous varieties of food. However, Atwood, first of all, challenges Ghosh’s theory is the way the humanities, or the arts in general, are represented in the trilogy.

As explored at the beginning, the liberal arts colleges, such as the Martha Graham Academy that Jimmy attends, present an extremely gloomy image of the state of the humanities. Crake has a rather negative image of Jimmy’s school, “Art [...] I guess they still do a lot of jabbering about that, over where you are” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 196). The universities dedicated to the humanities are in ruins and no one is interested anymore in disciplines that are not immediately linked to profit such as the science or technology ones. Even well-known Harvard is portrayed in a state of physical decay, “It was like going to Harvard had been, back before it got drowned” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 203). Crake believes that any type of artistic inclination would be detrimental for the new and improved Crakers (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 419-420). As brilliantly summarized by Paul J. Narkunas:

For Crake, the human’s greatest folly is faith or belief in the nonmaterial or some transcendent entity like God, religion, or nature with a capital N. In fact, he adamantly wanted his Crakers to avoid what he called symbolic thinking by hardwiring them to avoid such things [...] Therefore, with the Crakers he believes that he can biologically

evolve out of existence such inefficiencies as reading, writing, and symbolic systems so that they would not be able to rebuild the society he so creatively destroyed. Yet the editing out of symbolic systems creates a species with no concept of right or wrong, ethics, or how to cope in the hostile world in which they have been bioengineered to survive (16).

Although Ghosh's theory comes from the belief that the humanities have failed and not that they are inherently destructive for human beings, his negative view parallels Crake's. Sławomir Koziół in "Crake's Aesthetic: Genetically Modified Humans as a Form of Art in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*" argued that Crake's genetic manipulation of the Crakers is in itself an art form. However, this dissertation does not follow Koziół's theory, as there are far more proofs of Crake's negative vision of the arts in general scattered throughout the trilogy, for instance, Canavan reflects on their ability to form abstract thought:

The Crakers seem even to have a diminished capacity for abstract thought, a key part of Crake's attempt to craft a more ecological, rational, and sustainable human being. It is never entirely clear whether this diminished capacity originates in the genome or in early childhood language instruction, or perhaps both [...] But a secondary advantage of modifying the Crakers' ability for abstract thought prevents them from replicating *Homo sapiens*' previous attempt to master nature through technical artifice (Canavan 146).

Jimmy himself remembers Crake's strictness about forbidding the Crakers to have any abstract thoughts, "It was one of Crake's rules that no name could be chosen for which a physical equivalent – even stuffed, even skeletal – could not be demonstrated. No unicorns, no griffins,

no manticores or basilisks” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 8). Moreover, even the MaddAddamites agree on this, they had tried to remove creativity from the Crakers under Crake’s command, although unsuccessfully, “‘The singing was not my idea,’ says Manatee sulkily. ‘We couldn’t erase it without turning them into zucchinis’” (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 57). Even if they genetically wired them not to express themselves artistically, the Crakers resiliently do that. However, the question is tricky, it is hard to decipher how much of the Crakers’ behaviour is inherited and how much of it is cultural, the topic is later further discussed by the MaddAddamites:

Do they even have what you could call a culture, separate from the expression of their genes? Or are they more like ants? What about the singing? Granted, it must be some form of communication, but is it territorial, like the singing of birds, or might it be termed art? Surely not the latter, says Ivory Bill. Crake couldn’t account for it and didn’t like it, said Tamaraw, but the team hadn’t been able to eliminate it without producing affectless individuals who never went into heat and didn’t last long (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 170).

Whether inherent or cultural, it is clear how Crake tried to erase all forms of abstract thought from the Crakers. He did not see the new humans as a form of artistic expression, but as a way to remove creativity from the Earth.

On the contrary, as hinted by the Crakers’ resilience, Atwood’s greatest strength is the inherent force in all of the various types of arts in her novels, as argued by Narkunas, “Atwood describes the human as creative force and material limit embedded in reality that no technological and financial innovation can transcend due the materiality of the body and the limits of human intelligence or mind” (5). For instance, at the beginning of the trilogy Atwood

meticulously describes Amanda's art, the Vulture Sculptures (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 287), which are words composed by food leftovers and left to be eaten, and dissolved, by vultures. Amanda's art is given a powerful interpretation by Northover, as:

Besides showing the impermanence of written words before the forces of nature, her art also reveals the violence behind these words, the violence with which human civilization imposes itself on nature. The fact that animals eat the humans' words could be interpreted, too, in apocalyptic terms, as looking towards the end of the human oppression of animals (89).

Nonetheless, the most significant approach to art is precisely the one from the Crakers. All throughout *MaddAddam*, Toby and Zeb are depicted narrating their myths about the creation of everything, they call it "the Story of Oryx and Crake" (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 11-13), which then expands into including other myths, such as the myth of how Zeb ate a bear (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 67-69). Even Jimmy is seen as the sacred messenger of the God-like Crake, therefore, it is for only him that they make an exception and kill a fish to give him, because they are killing a Children of Oryx for him in a ritual-like ceremony (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 116). The Crakers start to develop their own religious cult, as much as Crake tried to avoid it, "the fact that the Crakers have begun to develop symbolic thinking, including creating their own religion, against the plans of their creator, is a reminder not only that creators of perfect worlds tend to make mistakes, but also that there is something essential to the survival of the Crakers that is expressing itself in their innate desires" (Harland 595).

Moreover, it is significant that in *MaddAddam*, Toby is able to teach the young Craker Blackbeard how to read and write (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 250), so much so, that she writes a book about her adventures after the plague, "But at the end of the world, Atwood reserves

another possibility—a mode of reproducing the world beyond reproduction—for ‘woman’ as well. This she leaves to Toby, who gives birth not to a baby but to a book” (Ciobanu 161). The fact is even more significant because it is continued in the end by the Crakers themselves, as the human race verges towards extinction. Not only they are fascinated by mythological stories, such as the one of Oryx and Crake, but they start producing their own forms of artistic expression. At first, Toby was very concerned about having taught Blackbeard how to write and she shared the same perplexities of Crake:

Later [...] she finds him at the sandbox. He has a stick, and the paper. There’s his name in the sand. The other children are watching him. All of them are singing.

Now what have I done? She thinks. What can of worms have I opened? They’re so quick, these children: they’ll pick this up and transmit it to all the others.

What comes next? Rules, dogmas, laws? The Testament of Crake? How soon before there are ancient texts they feel they have to obey but have forgotten how to interpret?

Have I ruined them? (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 250).

Toby shares Crake’s concerns over the power of the arts and its effects on the Crakers, as it maybe could be the one flaw in the design that will bring them to their doom. However, their resilience and attraction to the arts are a beacon of hope in the dark post-plague world. Blackbeard is fascinated by writing, he asks multiple times Toby to teach him and he keeps practicing (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 262, 318). At the end of the novel, Blackbeard gracefully assumes the role of storyteller, in order to help Toby:

‘I am writing the story,’ she says. ‘The story of you, and me, and the Pigoons, and everyone. I am writing about how we put Snowman-the-Jimmy and Adam One into the ground, and Oates too, so that Oryx can change them in the form of a tree’ [...]

‘There,’ says Blackbeard. ‘Telling the story is hard, and writing the story must be more hard. Oh Toby, when you are too tired to do it, next time I will write the story. I will be your helper’

‘Thank you,’ says Toby. ‘That is kind.’

Blackbeard smiles like daybreak (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 456).

In Blackbeard’s remark about the hardships of writing stories, the reader can have a glimpse into Atwood’s mind, as she relentlessly keeps writing in a world that becomes more similar by the day to the one in her speculative fiction. Unlike Ghosh, she does not believe in a fatal crisis of the imagination, but she gives the humanities another chance. Therefore, the novel ends with Blackbeard, now all grown-up, telling about Toby’s book to new Crakers, “and she showed me, Blackbeard, how to make such words, on a page, with a pen, when I was little. And she showed me how to turn the marks back into a voice” (Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 467). Afterwards, he narrates the Story of Toby, which he had invented and comprises the final years of both Toby and Zeb.

Although the human race might disappear after the conclusion of the MaddAddam story, the arts will not because of the Crakers. As argued by Canavan, contemporary human beings have no future in Atwood’s speculative world, whose representation is a speculative projection of today’s society:

There is no hope for liberal individualist consumers living in the pseudo-utopia of late capitalism; our system—and the subjectivities and ideologies it produces, to say

nothing of its material excesses and cold consumer comforts—is genuinely doomed. To the extent that Crake’s murderous, Frankensteinian actions do indeed usher in a kind of utopia, then, we must understand that it is not a Utopia for us—not for us the way we now are, the way we now live (154).

It should also be noted that the few humans that initially survive the plague are all opponents to the neoliberal Corporations and Compound world, they are either Gardeners or MaddAddamites. Although by the end of *MaddAddam*, it seems that today’s humankind has not future in Atwood’s vision, symbolized by the impending death of all of the remaining humans and by the births of the hybrid children, there is still hope. There is a chance for a human(oid)s-filled future, precisely in the hybrid between humans and Crakers, just like the post-plague world saw a swarm of bioengineered creatures.

Moreover, Atwood’s trilogy is a powerful reminder of the power of the humanities, which will be able to find a place in the future in any possible scenario, even in the hands of the Crakers. Atwood’s take on the humanities does not only promote an admiration for “the uniqueness of human consciousness” (Defalco 436), but it reminds its readers that the “human consciousness [is] one form among many, embodying a challenge to the kind of human exceptionalism necessary for the liberal humanist’s treatment of the Earth as simply a storehouse of available material” (Defalco 436). Defalco argues that Atwood’s trilogy promotes view of interconnectedness (437), exemplified by the fact that art and history are continued by a hybrid form between Crakers and humans. Furthermore, it is important to underline how Atwood is not promoting a primitivist perspective through the Crakers. As summarized by Canavan, a primitivist perspective argues for its moral superiority and for its inherent eco-friendliness, “the primitivists frequently go still further, claiming not only that the conditions of hunter-gatherer life are happier and freer than civilization, but that they have the additional

advantage over capitalism of being genuinely sustainable as well” (148). The Crakers do not survive in the end because they are the good savages that run away from technology. Just like in Ozeki’s novels, the main characters are not morally superior because they decide to abandon civilization. On the contrary, they are able to survive and they are superior because they realize the necessity of interconnectedness and they refuse to exploit nature.

Atwood’s greatest challenge to Ghosh’s theory is not only contained in her novels but is promoted by her novels. Her works, just like Ozeki’s novels, are essential to the legacy of the humanities because they saw the current ecological issues and decided to act on it. As stated by Naomi Klein, indifference, or “cognitive dissonance” is the biggest supporter of climate change (Klein 2). Atwood herself has argued that the act of fiction writing is a way to defend the community’s morality and ethics (Defalco 448). They dispute the derangement theorised by Ghosh because they do not wait for a fatal climate crisis to happen, but they decided to write against climate change. Just like the arts survive in a dramatic context at the end of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, there is hope that the works by Atwood and Ozeki can play an active role against the derangement of the imagination and against climate change.

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