



INSTITUTIONEN FÖR
SPRÅK OCH LITTERATURER

THE FALSE PROMISE OF 'USTOPIA'

Margaret Atwood's MaddAddam Trilogy: Utopian
Feminist Romp or Dystopian Postfeminist
Cautionary Tale?

Susanna Rokka

Essay/Degree Project:	Masters essay, literary specialisation, 30 credits
Program or/and course:	EN2M10
Level:	Second cycle
Term/year:	Vt/2016
Supervisor:	Maria Olaussen
Examiner:	Margret Gunnarsdottir Champion
Report nr:	xx (not to be filled)

Abstract

Title: The False Promise of 'Ustopia'. Margaret Atwood's MaddAddam Trilogy: Utopian Feminist Romp or Postfeminist Cautionary Tale?

Author: Susanna Rokka

Supervisor: Maria Olausson

The Canadian author Margaret Atwood's dystopian MaddAddam trilogy is a text that attempts a critical rebalancing of an established gender hierarchy. The novels expose the fundamental power imbalances present in a binary gender system. As the trilogy enters a speculation into a post-apocalyptic fall-out of environmental disaster and autocratic corporations, a global pandemic and extreme bio-scientific experimentation provide the catalysts for feminine subjective becoming. Here a narrative of gender identities, and their unstitching, reveals the structures that conceivably brought on the global crisis in the first place. I argue that the trilogy's dystopian tendency is a trope that acts to bring patriarchal gender structures to the fore, but that utopia can also be glimpsed. In doing so, Atwood examines normativity, exposes hierarchies and explores established ways that seek to rupture stable categories. Through an analysis of the trilogy's protagonists I show how unyielding the binary gender system is against a critical redressing of established power structures. Atwood subverts the binary stronghold by presenting characters that resist categorization and promote subjective mobility.

Keywords: feminism, subjectivity, gender, dystopia, utopia, Margaret Atwood

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Previous Research	4
Theory	5
Method	10
1. ‘Ustopia’: Interrupting the Binary Deadlock	11
1.1 Critical Dystopia: Dislocated Subjects	11
1.2 Alternate Becomings: Toby	15
1.3 Feminist Figurations: Goddess or Cyborg?	18
2. Gendered Subjects and Narrative Becoming	24
2.1 Feminine Subjective Becoming: Toby	24
2.2 Post-apocalyptic Binaries	28
2.3 Toby Appropriates the Story of Zeb: The ‘Herstory’ of Zeb	30
2.4 Oryx as Postfeminist Figuration	33
2.5 The Crakers as Utopian Feminist Figurations	38
Conclusion	44
References	49

Introduction

Margaret Atwood's dystopian MaddAddam trilogy, *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013) is set in a post-apocalyptic, posthuman and postfeminist near-future. The trilogy is a profound critique of a capitalist society where bioscience in the hands of an uncompromising pursuit for profit has led to a pronounced disregard for all life forms. Connecting the various socio-political, cultural, philosophical and humanist concerns in MaddAddam is a multi-layered narrative where Atwood positions the various perspectives of her protagonists to reveal the struggle of subjective becoming under an immutable gender hierarchy. From Toby, Jimmy and Crake to Oryx and the transhuman Crakers, each act their assigned part in a society built on the systemic subordination and commodification of women. The Crakers ultimately come to symbolise both the end and the beginning of humanity, as the trilogy comes to a close. Before investigating the Crakers' role in the trilogy closer, the genealogies and interrelations of 'woman', 'feminine subjectivity' and 'feminism' must be examined against a binary ranking order. Ultimately, I argue that the MaddAddam trilogy upends a hierarchical gender binary and presents the possibility of an outcome that is mutually constructive, complex and inclusive.

Atwood presents the instability and inferior position of the feminine subject as ingrained in a society built on a capitalist market economy. In such a society, with their bodies valued as objects of exchange, defined entirely by their ability to titillate and reproduce, women are ultimately disembodied. This is a troublesome position since, as a harbinger to a contemporary narrative of bodily fragmentation, historically the feminine subject lacks discursive unity. Although the women's movement, namely first wave feminism, abetted in destabilizing the dominant male discourse that promoted a unified subject, a symbolic absence persisted in the location of woman. As Rosi Braidotti notes, with its legacy as 'the dark continent of discourse', the feminine subject emerged as subject *par excellence* in the seventies through second wave feminism in general and the French school in particular (2011:179). By naming and embodying the feminine experience linguistically, French feminism aimed at destabilizing the established Cartesian body/mind dualism that fixed the subject in hierarchically organized oppositional binaries such as passion/reason, nature/culture, feminine/masculine. The consequences of such a binary mode of representation are acutely felt in MaddAddam. J. Paul Narkunas points to 'an ironic residual Enlightenment humanism' amid the posthumanist narrative; that is, a cyborg twist

on the Enlightenment philosophy that privileged sight as the route to rational knowledge production (Narkunas 2; Lykke 139-40). The figure of the cyborg, half human, half machine, acts to bridge the fractures in a technologically and scientifically mediated world. Existential concerns, such as the bewildering socio-economic disparities that contemporary culture presents, are negotiated through the cyborg figure. A feminist figuration, the cyborg heals bodily fragmentation and stimulates subjective becoming. In *MaddAddam*, the conflicting politics between different generations of feminisms are at first unequal to the task of promoting gender equality. A central question to this paper is whether the site of the feminine/masculine divide is a beneficial point of departure for a feminine subject in progress, and whether feminism has abetted or hampered this cause. In order to define a reading appropriate for the emerging feminine subject in *MaddAddam*, investigating narratively informed gender provides an entry point beyond the binary. Thus, applying the cyborg figure to my reading of *MaddAddam* has the aim of uniting and making manifest a complex feminine subject.

Through postmodernity the critical absence of a unified feminine subject opened up opportunities for re-presenting it as a site of multiple possibilities. However, third wave feminism experienced a backlash as empowerment through sexual expression was seen by some as incongruous in an era of digitalised and mass-marketed pornography. As a generation of second millennium postfeminists emerged that openly celebrated their bodies and their sexuality, confident in the belief that gender equality had been established, they inadvertently sustained capitalist misogyny (Tolan 282). Through the various manifestations of generational feminisms in *MaddAddam*, the trilogy emerges as a pessimistic tale where women are either made powerless or prevented from influencing socio-cultural change. Thus, in this essay, a postfeminist position is aligned with dystopia. In *MaddAddam* the female characters' pre-apocalyptic existence is defined by lack of agency and voice under systemic masculine repression. The two-gender divide perpetuates a suppressive force to the formation of the feminine subject. This is when the cyborg is introduced as an ideological departure from, and beyond, binary systems of thought. The cyborg suggests identity beyond gender, time and space – a release from subjective fixity, and resistance of female objectification. It stands for regeneration rather than reproduction, and restoration/regrowth, rather than rebirth. As such the cyborg is a figuration that repairs the dematerialization that threatens posthuman existence, imbues it with potential, and crucially restores the fractured feminine subject. In *MaddAddam* Atwood has created a world fit for cyborg figurations by up-ending definitions of literary genre.

Atwood offers through *MaddAddam* a contribution to contemporary debates on the posthuman subject and its critical locations. It has been suggested that one of the defining characteristics of advanced capitalist society is the dislocation of the space-time continuum, which produces paradoxical social effects for its denizens to navigate (Braidotti 2011:175). Atwood illustrates this in the trilogy not only through characters with fractured subject positions, but also through genre denomination. 'Ustopia' – a term coined by Atwood, is a conglomeration of dystopia and utopia that encompasses these antitheses into a location which permits both to co-exist. Ustopia is hence a form of feminist critical dystopia that opens up the narrative in *MaddAddam* to allow cyborg figurations. Cyborgs and posthumanism signify a thinking beyond the human and the concomitant boundaries and social systems that accompany a generic, or patriarchal, discourse on Western human subjectivity. In *MaddAddam* Braidotti's fluid and trans-geographical existential condition 'nomadic' has been established (Braidotti 1994:1). As a means to theorize contemporary subjectivity, which is trapped in a phallogentric, or built around the masculine, view of the subject at large, the feminist 'nomadic mode' offers a novel means of escape from traditional discourse on the female subject. The cyborg transforms discursive intangibility and lack into subversive potential and substance.

In this essay I will focus on a number of the main protagonists in the *MaddAddam* trilogy in order to unpick the gendered themes of power disparity and subject manifestation against a backdrop of dystopia/utopia. I will apply cyborg and nomadic figurations to my analysis in order to investigate how posthuman, and postfeminist, readings of the narrative influence the critical outcomes of these aforementioned characters. Through my analysis I will position Atwood's staging of nature/culture, and other binaries in *MaddAddam*, as the starting point to my discussion. I have organised my analysis by focusing on Toby's character, but I thereby follow with a brief reading of Oryx and Jimmy, closing with the Crakers, as this arrangement places the abovementioned feminist generations and ideologies in chronological order and emphasises their critical trajectory. Toby's route to subjective becoming presents an incorporation of, not only various femininities, but also masculinities. I argue that the *MaddAddam* trilogy, through its Ustopia-denomination, overturns not only gender binaries, but suggests alternative means of subjective becoming and their critical representation.

Previous Research

What unites most scholars studying the first or the second of the three volumes that make up the MaddAddam trilogy is a focus on the theme of bio-science, the question of ethics (or lack thereof) in a corporate hegemony as well as numerous attempts at genre classification. Numerous scholars, such as Valeria Mosca, Fiona Tolan, J. Brooks Bouson and Lauren J. Lacey have focused on one or more of the subjects of feminism, genre and language in the trilogy. Mosca links in her paper ‘Crossing Human Boundaries: Apocalypse and Posthumanism in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*’ ‘multiple genre affiliation’ to her struggle to properly define the ‘as-yet unfinished MaddAddam trilogy’ (38), and leaves any final conclusion open to what the third instalment might bring. Mosca uses posthumanist theory to explore the limits of literary representation, and posits that human language is under threat from alternatively communicated realities. Tolan questions in her book *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction* the efficacy of contemporary feminism as a result of her diagnosing a distinct loss of the female voice in *Oryx and Crake*. J. Brooks Bouson notes in ‘We’re Using Up the Earth. It’s Almost Gone’: A Return to the Post-Apocalyptic Future in Margaret Atwood’s *The Year of the Flood*’ the parallel between corporate cannibalism and the male commodification and consumption of women in the first two instalments of MaddAddam trilogy. Lacey investigates the subversive potential of feminist science fiction, using Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*, as well as a number of titles by other female authors, in *The Past That Might Have Been, the Future That May Come: Women Writing Fantastic Fiction, 1960s to the Present*. Paul Anca Farca, Soraya Copley and Susan Watkins all link feminist apocalyptic narratives to the deconstruction of established views on gender.

Thus the themes that Atwood utilises to communicate the various intersecting politics in the trilogy span a broad spectrum. From criticizing global corporatization to characterizing the trajectory of gender politics, from portraying eco-critical activism to problematizing the primacy of science over life, together these concerns examine the effects of male hegemony, but ultimately make manifest the root causes for the disjointedness that characterizes contemporary feminine subject formation. None of the above scholars have, however, discussed the MaddAddam as a complete trilogy, nor has feminine subjective becoming been investigated in relation to character trajectory in the MaddAddam trilogy.

Theory

The problematizing of gender roles and gendered subjects, specifically female subjects in an anthropo-/geno-centric world and in an androcentric social system, is a subject of extensive and diverse transdisciplinary academic work. Scholarly output such as Donna Haraway's studies on the cyborg, Rosi Braidotti's work on displaced, nomadic female subjects and Judith Butler's thought on a destabilized feminist discourse, all work across 'multiple intersections in and around gender, gender relations and gender powers' (Lykke xi). Butler's work is situated in cultural theory, Braidotti's in feminist continental philosophy, and Haraway's in a feminist science. Uniting them is an idea of the postmodern female subject as a site of possibility for subverting conventional ideas of feminine subjectivity. In the MaddAddam trilogy, female subjective becoming is made manifest through narrative structure and the use of various figurations and tropes that are conjured through the use of metaphor. Topically, scientific progress in a market economy and its concomitant effects on human gender relations and gender powers, is one of the trilogy's main concerns. In order to read the characters as feminist figurations and embodiments of feminist generations, Braidotti's nomadic movement alongside Haraway's cyborg provide ideal analogies.

Donna Haraway's highly influential work on primates *Primate Visions* (1989) lead to a watershed in feminist scientific knowledge production. Tracing its epistemology to a thinking on the Cartesian mind/body divide, Haraway identifies the binaries embedded in scientific thought processes and links these to a two-gender system. For Haraway, this binary thinking colours the biological sciences and has thus imprinted a phallogocentric paradigm on the way the human subject is viewed. It exposes an essentialist thinking of the female subject that ties it to systematic socio-biological domination. This is where the figure of the cyborg enables a disruption of the discourse. Enter the cyborg as an ideological departure from, and beyond, binary systems of thought. Haraway writes in her influential 'A Cyborg Manifesto' that '[p]ainful fragmentation among feminists (not to mention among women) along every possible fault line has made the concept of *woman* elusive' (Haraway 155). It is this elusiveness that Atwood tracks in MaddAddam; the female characters in the trilogy negotiate diverse systemic repressions and tragic personal fates, but through reading Toby and Oryx as cyborgs they are released from a binary dead-lock into a diverse environment with plentiful opportunities for multitudinous subjective expression.

Through the 'ustopia' trope Atwood ascertains a balancing act through time: between a feminist history of masculine submission, and a future in which binary gender may be overcome. The outcome comes to be in the cracks between the two extremes of dystopia and utopia. Narratively the former is represented in MaddAddam through its cautionary tale-effect. The first two instalments of the trilogy, as pointed out by Mosca, are 'meta-narrative[s], cautionary tale[s] about our cautionary tales' (Jeggings qtd in Mosca 49). Lacey finds a similar tendency in *Oryx and Crake*, and notes that the defamiliarising effect that a dystopian narrative has on the 'present, lived experience of the reader' offers distance for reflection and potential for change (104-5). Thus in the wake of destruction new potential, utopia, is offered up. Utopia emerges through the cracks in a critical dystopia, such as the one presented in MaddAddam, and makes possible the cyborg figuration. Part of thinking on the cyborg is relocating the subject from its fixed position as well as deconstructing 'objectivity', a process that Haraway has dubbed 'situated knowledges'.

Importantly, Haraway's work focuses on rethinking bio- and techno-scientific objectivity and offers alternative ways of figuring heretofore established discourse. A harbinger for a feminist science, Haraway introduced the figure of the cyborg, half human half machine, to subvert established discourse on science, but more importantly, to allow for new ways of thinking. Part of thinking about the cyborg, a figure that disrupts linearity and synchronicity, is questioning scientific objectivity as based on the Cartesian divide. As a counter-measure to established positions in all academic knowledge production, Haraway applies 'situated knowledges' wherein she locates herself historically, geographically, academically, thus calling for a reciprocal self-examination from recipients of her texts. The method of 'situated knowledges' is implied in my reading of the MaddAddam trilogy through the application of the cyborg figure. Noting the emergence of cyborg tendencies in the trilogy's female characters signifies a resistance to reading them as victims or doomed women caught in a patriarchal structure. The characters' potential and subversive power is made manifest through the cyborg figure. However, the cyborg is not a goal in itself, but rather the process towards cyborg becoming. Rosi Braidotti's approach similarly counters the historically established tradition of subjective fixity in favour of progressive multitudinous subjects, or 'nomadic' subjects (1994:3). A 'nomadic' subject denotes a continuous process of subjective becoming, which counters any rigid definition, or fixed position, of the contemporary subject.

Braidotti's 'nomadic subjects' are 'nonunitary' – split, in-process, knotted, rhizomatic, transnational', and they are situated and embodied through an approach that Braidotti terms 'cartographic'. Braidotti diagnoses a fracture between lived experience and theoretical representation in the era of postmodernity. To repair this gap, experienced as a sort of layered, simultaneous reading of time, alternative figurations need to be developed. Braidotti terms this thinking as the process of becoming 'nomadic'. The nomadic subject is embodied and gendered along the axes of space (geopolitical, social, ecophilosophical) and time (historical, genealogical); it is a figuration that functions to simultaneously unsettle and empower the experience of a global, unfixed subject position (Braidotti 1994:3-4). In *MaddAddam* Atwood has created a dystopian future in which nomadic representation is offered up through narrative organisation and character formation. Through the former time, space and location are disrupted: the trilogy recounts a non-linear storyline where past and future are inter-mingled, where science has interrupted reproduction and geography has collapsed under the pressures of globalisation. Through the latter, Atwood presents a cautionary tale of the destructive tendencies of a binary gender system, and its negative effects on individual characters. Since Atwood suggests a way out of traditional categorization through her utopia trope, the nomadic figure as applied to *MaddAddam* navigates an alternative reality that makes possible a posthuman future.

Braidotti's latest publication *The Posthuman* offers a contribution to contemporary debates on the posthuman subject. In line with Braidotti's influences in French philosophy such as Gilles Deleuze's thinking on identity, difference, and Luce Irigaray's thought on the female body as commodity in a capitalist context, posthumanism for Braidotti signifies a thinking beyond the human and the concomitant boundaries and social systems that accompany a generic (patriarchal) discourse on Western human subjectivity. Braidotti explores in her work the fluid and trans-geographical existential condition 'nomadic' (Braidotti 1994:1). As a means to theorize contemporary subjectivity, which is trapped in a phallogocentric view of the subject at large, Braidotti argues the feminist 'nomadic mode' as a novel means of escape from traditional discourse on the female subject. Furthermore, she claims that 'the human as concept has exploded under the double pressure of contemporary scientific advances and global economic concerns' (Braidotti 2013:1). For Braidotti the posthuman subject succeeds a contested postfeminist condition, ultimately with the aim of

decentering 'man', '-man' or 'Man' as criterion. This propels a destabilizing of the traditional human subject placing its status in crisis, but also opens up ways to explore philosophical alternatives. Situating Braidotti's work as an exploration of an existential condition where the human subject is caught in the historical tug-of-war between nature and culture, and beyond that in a technologically mediated place, further propels a detachment from a historical legacy of thinking of the human subject and human nature. Posthuman subjectivity is a paradigm that shuns a social-constructivist approach à la Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler, instead focusing on a nature-culture continuum as a more robust foundation for study and critique (Braidotti 2013:3). Braidotti fashions posthuman feminist subjectivity as a form of 'self-styling', which involves 'complex and continuous negotiations with dominant norms and values' (35). The approach is essentialist, yet flexible. It empowers the subject through granting agency, and implies however it evades the external impact of culture that Butler straight-forwardly tackles.

Judith Butler's thinking is based in cultural theory and her seminal text *Gender Trouble* is widely considered one of the founding texts of queer theory (Lykke 32; Butler 1990:x). Most famously Butler argues that the natural-seeming coherence between gender, sex and desire is a cultural construction upheld through repeated acts over time (Butler 1990: 9-12). Refusing a binary essentialist notion of gender and sex, Butler's thinking disrupts what she terms the 'heterosexual matrix'. Based on a mutually restricting and reinforcing system of power, a binary gender system acts as a regulatory force shaping subject and identity. This is a fundamental logic in feminist discourse. It is therefore imperative to examine feminism as a component in thinking on subjectivity, and to question whether or not feminism as a cultural trajectory has abetted women's emancipation from subordination in a patriarchal social system.

Butler urges a destabilizing of conventional gender categories and flouting of gender constructs as socially constructed and performative rather than essentially inherent or naturally pre-determined. Butler situates identity in gender and problematizes the binary dead-lock (crisis) in which a queer subject might find themselves in a heteronormative culture. Linking gender-identity to sexual practice is problematic because it resists the resignification needed to expose a system of male supremacy and female subjugation for what it is: mutually constraining and reciprocally enabling. The problem that some feminists have with Butler's recommendation is a fear of losing agency for women as a coherent political entity (Haraway

135), but Butler argues that the concept of agency is already regulated in institutional practices through 'enabling constraints'. The idea of a coherent inner self is a 'regulatory fiction' that impedes a feminist idea of complex and multitudinous agency (Haraway 135). The idea of a universal concept of 'woman' produces feminist 'othering' (feminist racism) through a presumption of the 'specifically feminine' as differentiated from the masculine. The masculine/feminine binary forces that specificity into a restrictive structure, but any other power relations in the concomitant intersections of class, race and other power relations are separated. Thus, according to Butler, the idea of a uniform identity is a moot point (Butler 6). The nature/culture divide makes up the foundational regulatory fiction in a male hegemony.

The resistance to a sliding scale of gender variables within a heteronormative discourse rests on a power imbalance, thus categorising 'woman' as a stable category undermines feminism (Butler 1990:7). Butler places subject formation in contemporary society in a judicial system of power. A subject is thus produced through reciprocal 'representation'. In a judicial system of power a subject is regulated, controlled and protected (Butler 1990:2-3). For Butler Western feminism is troublesome as a political entity when it runs the danger of 'othering' non-Western cultural practices to strengthen the universality of patriarchy. This may be a symptom of the 'heterosexual matrix', which regulates gender/power relations (Butler 1990:5-7).

In the continental philosophical tradition the discursive construction of 'the body' as ontologically distinct from 'the mind' mirrors the binary gender system. In the fields of feminism and cultural theory, the mind/body hierarchy is associated with male/female respectively, and imbued discursively with gender asymmetry. According to de Beauvoir, the female body is marked within a masculinist discourse, wherein the male body is considered universal and remains unmarked (Butler 1990:17). In Luce Irigaray's linguist-feminist approach, both marked and unmarked are products of a 'phallogocentric' signifying system with the result that the feminine is inadequately represented, and ultimately excluded altogether. The trouble with both de Beauvoir and Irigaray is, for Butler, that both philosophers reproduce a binary gender system in their attempts to undercut gender hierarchy.

Method

In my reading of the *MaddAddam* trilogy I apply elements from the above presented feminist theoretical frameworks, and utilise concepts that reveal and mirror disruptions to specific ‘stable’ categories, themes and subjectivities presented in the narrative. Haraway’s cyborg figuration, Braidotti’s nomadic process of becoming and Butler’s ideas on feminine subject formation in the ‘heterosexual matrix’ all aid to bring up these tendencies in the narrative of *MaddAddam*. I argue that the main themes of dystopia and apocalypse in the trilogy are tropes that act to rupture time and space, thus enabling alternative readings and understandings. I demonstrate that the utopia/dystopia binary is combined in the narrative creating a textual space for feminine subjective becoming.

In my investigation of female subjectivity and feminism as a cultural trajectory I show how the characters of Toby and Oryx destabilize fixed categories and subvert established nominations. I figure Toby and Oryx as cyborgs and trace their feminine subjective becomings using a nomadic trajectory. Finally I investigate alternative figurations to thinking forward on female subjectivity and the possibilities for novel discursive figurations that the trilogy presents. I apply the concepts of Haraway, Braidotti and Butler synchronically as it provides a complex, multitudinous approach that opens up the narrative to multiple options.

1. 'Ustopia': Interrupting the Binary Deadlock

1.1 Critical Dystopia: Dislocated Subjects

Atwood unsettles the narrative in *MaddAddam* through her 'Ustopia' denomination. Ustopia as a narrative trope collapses familiarity and implodes fixed categories; thus combining the two genres dystopia/utopia releases them from their binary status and makes possible a continuous and inclusive reading of the trilogy. Subversion of genre convention in this way is a method that contemporary feminist writers use in order to reveal hidden structures and to destabilize hegemonic discourse. It produces a critical distance from a standard text, and its concomitant conventions. Not only does it provide an opportunity for present social criticism, but it also introduces a narrative space for future potential (Lacey 104-5). Constructing *MaddAddam* as an Ustopia releases Toby's character to a postfeminist reading. Initiating this reading is an analysis of how a Utopian narrative generates, and welcomes, alternative figurations, followed by an investigation of Toby's subjective becoming, realised through the nomadic mode and the critical cyborg figuration. But first, here follows a brief summary of the trilogy.

Oryx and Crake opens with Jimmy-Snowman waking at dawn from his elevated position in a tree, on a beach. It soon becomes clear that he is the sole human survivor of a flesh-eating virus that has wiped out all humankind. Pre-pandemic time Jimmy-Snowman worked together with bio-scientific mastermind Crake and his female partner Oryx in a gated corporate compound and was responsible for engineering some of the strange animal hybrids that now populate the wreckage-laden landscape surrounding Jimmy-Snowman. Crake not only masterminded the creation of a colourful transhuman species named eponymously, who now provide Jimmy-Snowman with quasi-human companionship, but it turns out Crake was also responsible for releasing the viral pandemic. In the erupting chaos Crake and Oryx perish, and Jimmy-Snowman negotiates the post-apocalyptic chaos guided by the disembodied voice of Oryx, until one day he discovers a band of rag-tag survivors on the beach. One of them is Toby.

The second instalment of the trilogy, *The Year of the Flood*, introduces Toby surveying her surroundings from the roof of an abandoned beauty spa, where she has been ensconced since the pandemic. Toby's story is mediated in flashbacks, just like Jimmy-Snowman's, and covers the same timeline from a different perspective. Toby's story is one of loss and survival in the violent pleebland slums, until one day she is rescued by an eco-religious group called the God's

Gardeners, lead by the sanctimonious Adam One. Zeb, Adam One's brother, and an assortment of other 'Adams' and 'Eves' live together on a verdant rooftop elevated above the slums. After some time Toby gets entrusted with a role in the Gardener's secret network, who perform acts of terrorism to undermine the hegemony of corporate power. Toby's role as an undercover operator takes her to the AnooYoo Spa where she ends up barricading herself as the pandemic hits. *Flood* closes on Toby breaking her isolation to save a couple of younger women, Amanda and Ren, from the hands of a band of evil men, the Painballers. As they set up camp on a beach, Jimmy-Snowman comes bounding out of the bushes.

MaddAddam, the final instalment to the trilogy, brings together the storylines of the two preceding novels and advances them forward. The Painballers have been chased off temporarily, more survivors have joined in and a community has developed consisting of humans and Crakers. Threatening the group are genetically modified feral Pigoons, a cunning human/pig hybrid, as well as culture clashes between the humans and the Crakers, and finally the still-at-large Painballers. The novel tells of Toby and Zeb getting together as a couple and Zeb recounting his pre-pandemic story to her in nightly instalments. In the daytime Toby tends to the comatose Jimmy-Snowman, as well as the three human women who've fallen pregnant. At night Toby is responsible for telling the Crakers a story, before she is free to spend time with Zeb. The culmination of the trilogy is a mighty clash between the humans and the Painballers and the novel closes with a Craker child writing a creation narrative of sorts featuring all the aforementioned humans. The novel, and indeed the trilogy, is open-ended, which is a characteristic of critical dystopias, lending it 'a horizon of hope' (Lacey 106). As mentioned above, the co-mingling of genres is a way of confronting power inequalities latent in traditional discourse. Not all critics approach the trilogy from this perspective, but most undertake the task of attempting to find a label.

The task of categorizing the MaddAddam trilogy seems to delight and bewilder critics in equal measure (Jameson, Maxwell, Mosca). Foremost there seems to be a general unease about how it does not follow standard dystopian narrative structure, but is rather 'ingeniously intertwined' with instances of utopia (Jameson 434). I would suggest that the haste to categorize MaddAddam is a symptom of the uneasy feeling it engenders on reading. The parallel narrative threads and the multiple takes on events produce a sense of 'lines being crossed' (Mosca 41), but uncertainty and unease about what those lines are about. Trepidation and apprehensive recognition is characteristically produced through a dystopian text, in which 'our current reality is

defamiliarized in fiction' (Lacey 104). It is this kind of disquieting feeling that Sigmund Freud described in his 1919 essay 'The Uncanny': something familiar that has become frightening, 'disturbing' (Freud 124; Mosca 41-2). The uncanny moment acts to destabilize a fixed perspective and undermines a traditional reading.

The uncanny feeling that dystopian fiction triggers involves what postcolonial scholar Homi Bhabha terms the 'unhomely moment'. Bhabha argues that in fiction this is produced through 'a logic of reversal' between public- and personal narratives. Bhabha draws parallels between the binaries public/private and male/female, and argues that in the precise moment when the meanings to each double are capsized, the 'unhomely' is revealed and rewritten. The feeling of the 'unhomely' is a sentiment Toby feels acutely in her post-pandemic isolation in the AnooYoo spa. Her recollections of an idyllic past are gradually tinged with an 'oppressive sensation' of the 'obvious and so unthinkable' (TYOTF 284) reality of impending earthly devastation. Here, the apocalypse as narrative trope denotes an upending of a familiar order, a collapse of normative structures. The post-apocalyptic moment is one where the familiar order of the past is upended and the present chaos engenders the uncanny sensation of an unthinkable future.

Genre convention dictates that a dystopian novel is bleak and devoid of hope: the only utopia that can exist is outside the story, and indeed several critics (Mosca, Bouson, Tolan) read the MaddAddam trilogy as a dystopia (Barr 18). The apocalypse in the MaddAddam trilogy, the climactic re-setting of time ushered in by a global viral pandemic, named 'The Waterless Flood' by the Gardeners, provides a 'before' and 'after' in the narrative timeline. However, this re-setting of time does not provide a re-booting of the dystopian elements in the pre-apocalyptic narrative. Neither does it serve up a nostalgic utopian past for the trilogy's characters to look back on, but merely gives variations of dystopian narratives that are layered and interspersed with one another. This layering, however, creates multiple fissures and opens up possibilities for subversion, the ultimate of which is revealed as the trilogy concludes. I will continue investigating this aspect below, but first of all in order to locate the unhomely, a narrative denomination must be given to the MaddAddam trilogy.

Atwood chooses to name this hybrid genre 'ustopia', a conglomeration of utopia and dystopia, because for Atwood, one contains the other at all times. This creates a way of reading, writing and understanding the MaddAddam narrative in endless, non-conclusive and non-restrictive ways. The text is multifaceted in that it points to the destructive ways in which

humanity has treated the environment and all living things, meanwhile providing hope through infusing a call for political action. This call for action is multitudinous and as individualised as are the various characters in the trilogy. Jimmy-Snowman and Toby are two every(wo)man characters who provide the cohesive lens and framework for *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*. The two novels are not written as prequel and sequel, but rather as reciprocal re-tellings of the same events and, I would argue, provide a subjective becoming for Toby, and the death of subjectivity for Jimmy. Jimmy's story is one of nihilism and self-flagellating hyperbole; Jimmy figuratively develops a discursive devotion to Oryx, which I will analyse in detail further below. First, I will discuss Toby, who on the other hand, is a survivor, and because she has made particular/specific choices, she is all alone.

In the third instalment of the trilogy, the eponymously titled *MaddAddam*, is the culmination to the 'Ustopia' of the two preceding novels: 'Ustopia is a world I made up by combining utopia and dystopia – the imagined perfect society and its opposite – because, in my view, each contains a latent version of the other. In addition to being, almost always, a mapped location, Ustopia is also a state of mind, as is every place in literature of whatever kind' (Atwood 2011). Where OAC and TYOTF demonstrate this 'Ustopia' through mapping, side by side the contained miniature utopias of the corporate compounds and the dystopian slums of the pleeblands. 'Dystopia contains within itself a little utopia, and vice versa' (Atwood 2011). Atwood proclaims the co-existence of different worlds and time-lines in Ustopia, and OAC acts neither as prequel or sequel to TYOTF but as both simultaneously, or a 'parallel narrative' (Jameson 434). Each holds within it the other almost ad infinitum. Baccolini terms a text like *MaddAddam* a 'critical dystopia' and identifies a gendered predilection for science fiction by feminist (women) writers who in their works address both dystopian and utopian themes. Together they contribute to 'deconstructing tradition and reconstructing alternatives' (Barr 13). For Baccolini the interaction of gender and genre that happens when woman writers of science fiction genre-bend and appropriate dystopian conventions constitutes an 'oppositional writing practice' which creates an 'opening for utopian elements' (Barr 13). Furthermore, genre-bending acts as a breaking up of prescriptive, almost legislative, genre definitions which creates a binary normal/deviant (Barr 15), but through subverting a conventional dystopia, for example through an ambiguous open ending, utopia becomes possible (Barr 18). Thus, resistance to closure is a means of writing subjectivity for groups outside of hegemonic discourse (Barr 18).

By resisting closure a feminist critical dystopia invites ambiguity and thus possibility. It opens up a space for opposition for those individuals and groups whose 'subject position hegemonic discourse does not contemplate'. Genre-blending is thus a resistance to universalist assumptions of objective knowledge, fixity and singularity. By opening up to multiplicity, fluidity, ambiguity and 'situated knowledges', genre conventions are deconstructed (Barr 18). Toby negotiates her post-apocalyptic existence through re-telling the collapse of a familiar societal structure and its subsequent fall-out, eventually re-evaluating and finding potential in her present situation. I would argue that Toby embodies the trajectory of a second-wave feminist becoming, negotiated in a postfeminist environment/location. The socio-cultural, bio-scientific and eco-political climate that Toby navigates mirrors a contemporary human condition that is increasingly fractured, sexualised and disinherited.

1.2 Alternate Becomings: Toby

Toby's becoming into a nomadic subject position is double-edged. On one hand, Atwood clearly establishes the multitudinousness of femininity, contrary to the essentialist tendency which is in evidence throughout Atwood's writing (Tolan 297), on the other the disorientation, dislocatedness and temporal disruption that is symptomatic of human existence in advanced capitalist society. Braidotti urges to 'identify lines of flight' (Braidotti 2011:9) that land not in a no-man's land between binaries, but to find a space that manages to embrace them from within. The mission is to find a more complex location for transformation and resistance. Toby's narrative journey through different socio-economic strata, her infertility and androgynous physique figuratively locate her on a path to nomadic becoming, and the question remains how successfully she inhabits any other alternative figurations. I would argue that Toby's character struggles to embrace full agency as a teller of her own narrative. This is evident in how Toby escapes into Gardener dogma, lends her voice to tell a male story, ultimately handing her story and its telling to a male figure. Toby exists in an in-between space, and as the trilogy comes to an end we find that she has effectively allowed herself to be written out of her own story. This suggests that Ustopia, a bit of both, is not a place for becoming but rather, anticipates gender stasis. A nomadic feminist becoming calls for a redefinition of sexual difference, rather than alignment/symmetry and thus, as it would be, cancellation of dissimilarities. Equalization on dissymmetrical terms, marking out the male role anew is needed, too (Braidotti 2011:187). As previously mentioned, I will briefly analyse limited aspects of the male role by looking at Jimmy-

Snowman's character in the Oryx chapter of this essay. Another male figure, Zeb, plays a crucial double role in Toby's life, which ties in closely with the process of her subjective becoming. In this later analysis I will return to Toby's pre- and post-apocalyptic negotiations under the effects of a repressive dominant social structure. But first, another look at 'Year Twenty-Five, The Year of the Flood' (TYOTF 3), which marks the twenty-fifth year since CorpSeCorps re-set time to mark total autocracy, and the year when the global virus eliminated most of humanity. This is the place in time that re-sets Toby's story and sets her on a path to multiple becomings.

Toby's post-apocalyptic existence narratively picks apart the scraps of a collapsed genocentric structure. Toby's organizing principle in the AnooYoo Spa is to reappropriate the material means around her for survival, and to reconfigure her self: '[t]here's no need to label herself now that nobody's left to read the labels' (TYOTF 20). Figuring Toby's narrative trajectory in *Flood* as nomadic becoming, describes not only the narrative structure in the Toby chapters in *Flood*, but also the way Toby works towards understanding herself and her circumstances. Braidotti diagnosed in postmodernism a 'fracture' between lived experience and its representation, and Toby's character is symbolic of this notion: time, place and subject are scrambled and unfixed. Toby's experience while she hides away from the pandemic is crassly symbolic: locked up in a beauty spa while humanity festers outside. Regeneration and degeneration are joined in her thoughts: 'I could have a whole new me, thinks Toby. Yet another whole new me, fresh as a snake. How many would that add up to, by now?' (TYOTF 283). The act of peeling back old skin to reveal a fresh layer underneath jars with the image of the multiple selves discarded. Toby's inability to join her fractured selves together into a whole, combined with her dislocatedness, and the collapse of humanity and society leave Toby suspended in time and place. Delving in the past, struggling in the present, 'She can't live only in the present, like a shrub. But the past is a closed door, and she can't see any future. Maybe she'll go from day to day and year to year until she simply withers, folds in on herself, shrivels up like an old spider' (TYOTF 114). Raffaella Baccolini notes that in a dystopia subjugation of the individual brings unanimous closure (quoted in Lacey 108). Toby is a survivor of a brutal totalitarian system, and this ambivalence in Toby's story creates entry for utopia.

Through Toby's character Atwood effectively illustrates the fallacy of a unitary feminine subject, and the struggle to accept and organize the realization of this. The alternative would be an essentialist paradigm, a woman to represent all women, an impossible notion, since the feminine subject is defined by lack in traditional philosophical discourse. Essentialism, leading to

categorization, lies at the heart of traditional scientific knowledge production, and it is imperative to think beyond it in order to bring feminine subjectivity into being (Haraway 155). Toby is rational, practical and unsentimental, and next to her, most of the other female characters appear like caricatures acting out exaggerated versions of femininity. This disparity, I argue, highlights the generational shift in feminisms in the trilogy and I will return to this below. Meanwhile Toby appears in contrast as half-woman, half-something-else, with the former represented as absence through Toby's sterility and her lack of stereotypically feminine physical attributes, and the latter half is represented through Toby's agency: she is armed and physically strong. Before she gets to this stage, pre-pandemic Toby is almost destroyed as an effect of the totalitarian rule of the corporations, and at the hands of a possessive and sexist masculinity.

Toby's character undergoes dismemberment through un-gendering and physical appropriation. Toby's partially defeminized body takes her outside of time, because her fertility has been prematurely disrupted, and because she is an orphan. Following her rejection of a normative heterosexual partnership (she can't afford it), being forced to surrender her identity and her home after her parents' untimely deaths (they owned a rifle and private firearms were outlawed by the corps), and her accidental neutering (she sold her eggs for money and got sterilized by an unclean needle), Toby effectively steps outside of normative chronology. Toby disappears into the pleebland slums, where she initially puts time on hold through anaesthetising herself with self-destructive behaviours and substances, until one day she decides that she wants to 'live differently' (TYOTF 39). Toby's character thus has no background and no identity, her orphanhood and infertility render her timeless, and her physicality, slim, slight, with cropped hair, makes her appear androgynous.

Toby negotiates a cyborg becoming: in a techno-scientifically mediated world, continuous regeneration and reinvention of the self is a survival technique, of retaining female agency in a structure that is built on hierarchically organized binaries. Without means, Toby has no option at this point but to take a job in the pleeblands, where bodily disposability is the norm. Organ harvesting and corpse disposal are a daily occurrence (TYOTF 40). The rumour is bodies are ground through the meat mill at SecretBurgers, where Toby operates the grill. Despite her not being his usually preferred voluptuous type, Toby's dislocatedness and fractured self soon becomes obvious to her sadistic boss, Blanco. Blanco's role in Toby's narrative is to act as a reminder of structural male violence, of which there is no escape for Toby. In order to survive Toby has to keep on transforming, and ensuring that she is continuously on the move. However,

part of negotiating the norm of female subjugation in MaddAddam involves coming up against male hegemonic power. Blanco is a product of corporate-monopolized violence (Narkunas 4) with a past as a CorpSeCorps security guard, but the murder of a high-class prostitute, followed by a stint in Painball, have reduced Blanco to a testosterone-driven brute. Blanco is ‘bouncer-shaped - oblong and hefty – though running to fat’, hairy and heavily tattooed. His most prominent tattoo features the image of a heart on his chest hanging on a chain wound around his neck that ‘went right down his back, twined around an upside-down naked woman whose head was stuck in his ass’ (TYOTF 43-4). Blanco has etched into his skin a crude image of feminine dismemberment: the heart, the severed head, ‘[emblems] of his sexist view of women as mindless and replaceable bodies’ (Bouson 13). Blanco effectively brings Toby into narrative dismemberment and physical obliteration in his appropriation of her body. Reduced thus, the God’s Gardeners appear as a *deus ex machina* and sweep Toby away with them to their rooftop stronghold, but not before Blanco has shared his parting message to her “I’ll slice off your tits!” (TYOTF 51). Blanco’s threat of mutilation is a reminder of men’s violence towards women, sanctioned within the binary gender system as represented in the MaddAddam trilogy. The fractured and compartmentalised female subject must seek a critical re-thinking.

1.3 Alternate Figurations: Goddess or Cyborg?

Different generations of feminisms meet and fail to integrate in the MaddAddam trilogy, and Atwood tracks this through Toby, Oryx and the other female characters. The seeming inability to form a unified female body of voice could on one hand signal a feminist crisis, but on the other hand, the proliferation of feminisms enables for heretofore unthought-of possibilities and offers persuasive resistance to stagnation. Toby’s narrative trajectory negotiates with second-wave feminist manifestations such as ecofeminism, French- and essentialist feminisms towards cyborg feminism. Finally her encounter with postfeminist characters such as Ren, Swift Fox, and the Crakers propel Toby into a position where she comes to activate a process of inversion between subject and object. I will discuss this in Chapter 3. In the beginning of *The Year of the Flood*, however, Toby’s character is traumatized by her past and her movements are reactive rather than proactive, signifying her lack of agency both as a subject, and as part of a larger suppressive structure. In the MaddAddam trilogy the CorpSeCorps represent the dual evils of global corporations and male supremacy, which in protecting their dominant status act as the enforcers of binary fixity. This rigid structure holds the women in the trilogy in a position secondary to that

of the male characters. For Toby to escape Blanco, and the violent misogyny his character represents, it takes more than physical relocation and bodily transformation.

Toby's trajectory through temporary and spatial dimensions is narratively represented through the Gardener's appropriation of her physical self. Toby is swept up to the rooftop and placed in novel circumstances that force her to once again renegotiate her self. Toby goes through a subjective dormancy of sorts once she gets taken up by the Gardeners who are a group of militant vegetarians living out a self-sustainable existence above and apart from the corporate compounds. Gradually, Toby transitions into an in-between state where '[s]he was neither the one nor the other' (TYOTF 116), suggesting Toby's release from a static gender binary. Together with the Gardeners and her mentor and mother figure Pilar, Toby learns to coast on time: '[t]hus the time passed. Toby stopped counting it. In any case, time is not a thing that passes, said Pilar: it's a sea on which you float. At night Toby breathed herself in. Her new self. Her skin smelled like honey and salt. And earth' (TYOTF 121). Thus the elements mix and space and time become jumbled.

Mentored by Pilar, Toby suspends the male/female dynamic of her previous existence. The Gardener's rooftop provides an escape from violence and subordination, but does not offer a path of becoming for Toby, but rather a pleasant, if ineffectual extension of her in-between state. Second wave feminist, doyenne of *écriture féminine*, Hélène Cixous, writes: 'masculine or feminine, more or less human but above all living [...] I see her 'begin' [...] And her text knows in itself that it is more than flesh and blood [...] a turbulent compound of flying colours, leafy spaces, and rivers flowing to the sea we feed [...] Seas and mothers' (Cixous 88-9). Cixous likens the becoming of the feminine subject to an all-encompassing matriarchal cosmic flow that subsumes both the masculine and the feminine, which is realized through writing. Thus, Toby's induction to Gardener life provides a figurative detour through *écriture féminine* and ecofeminism towards cyborg feminism. The almost other-worldly Garden, elevated above the dystopian mess of the pleebland slums, shimmers almost like a mirage, introducing utopia. The rooftop garden to Toby 'wasn't at all what [she] had expected [...] it was so beautiful, with plants and flowers of many kinds she'd never seen before. There were vivid butterflies; from nearby came the vibration of bees. Each petal and leaf was fully alive, shining with awareness of her. Even the air of the Garden was different' (TYOTF 52). Eventually Toby is introduced into a leadership position, and she becomes 'Eve Six', and with that title she becomes an active part of the Gardeners' underground resistance network signifying a germination of agency for Toby

(TYOTF 224). Technologically mediated, with cells planted in all the most influential corporations, the Gardeners outwardly display a peacefully realised eco-activism that acts as a cover for their corporate sabotage. The Gardeners' influence spans in all directions, their cells are embedded in positions both high and low, and for Toby this new awareness of duplicity under duress forebodes a cyborg becoming. Before that Toby retains her status quo existence: dormant, waiting for the apocalyptic moment, The Flood, which will catapult her into transformation.

Critics have noted that the God's Gardeners group is Atwood's narrative poke at essentialist ecofeminism, its concomitant goddess worship and earth Mother figuration embodied by the 'walnut-faced' Pilar (MA 241). Essentialist feminism effectually asserts a sort of 'hyperseparation' between the sexes that aligns it with Descartes' body/mind binary (Garrard 27-8); two mutually reproductive positions that stagnate in a deadlock. As time passes Toby comes to physically resemble a tree trunk, or a plank, 'thin and hard' (74), and her extremities 'stiff and brown, like roots' (TYOTF 19). Settling with the Gardeners, their rituals and chants, their discourse, imprint in Toby an essentialist dogma, metaphorically making her see herself as connected with the earth, feet in the dirt, growing upwards toward the light. Toby's thoughts about trimming to allow fresh growth, 'apply sharp tools to yourself, hack off any extraneous parts [...] Your head, for instance', mirrors the mind/body divide (TYOTF 282). This thought provides the tipping point that takes Toby from ecofeminism towards postfeminist cyborg-ism: regeneration rather than reproduction, reflected also in the way the young Gardener disciple Ren looks up to, and counts on Toby's guardianship. Ren compares it to a 'space-alien type of force field', identifying Toby as a monster with extra-terrestrial powers, rather than an earth goddess (357). This foreshadows Haraway's critical desire in *MaddAddam*: 'a monstrous world without gender' is about to be realised (Haraway 181).

J. Brooks Bouson notes that *The Year of the Flood* provides a re-visionist reading of *Oryx and Crake* (11), and the critic also highlights the different positions of the older Toby, feminist, and the younger Ren, decidedly postfeminist. While Toby remains unceasingly aware and sexually traumatized by the violence in male-female relationships, the younger Ren who, despite having been raised in the Gardener's cult, is a product of 'postfeminist culture with its bottom-line corporate business culture mentality [...] views herself solely as sexual commodity' in a manner of 'passive acceptance' (14), quite apart from Toby who continues to have nightmares about Blanco long after her escape. The two women's subject positions accentuate 'the thin line' between the third wave feminist's, or postfeminist's, 'embrace of her sexuality and the sexist

world of the prefeminist past' (15). Indeed the line is generational and does not unite women's individual experiences of gendered subordination into a collective discourse/politic of collective feminine subjectivity. Embodied selves negotiate the gender binary.

Simone de Beauvoir contends that the female body is marked within masculinist discourse, whereas the male body, in conflation with the universal, remains unmarked. The French feminist and linguist Luce Irigaray takes this reading of de Beauvoir further, reversing the claim that woman 'is sex' to mean that woman wears masculine sex while masquerading as other (Butler 17). In *MaddAddam* the figuring of desire takes the form of female subjugation in the hands of males. I maintained above that the female body is commodified in the market place; in *MaddAddam* this structure is replicated in intimate male/female relationships. The figure of Zeb, Toby's love-interest, holds multiple examples of masculinity, as he concedes himself, paraphrasing the free verse of Walt Whitman's 'Song of Myself': '*I contain multitudes*' (TYOTF 321). Zeb represents recognition initially ignited by fear for Toby, as when she first encounters him on the Gardener's rooftop she notices his likeness with Blanco, his 'general shape and hairiness', as 'he wasn't softly fat, but he was large', his gear consisting of 'a black fleather jacket of the kind favoured by solarbikers', that aligns him with pleebland mobsters such as Blanco, rather than the genial God's Gardeners (TYOTF 123; 293; 127). Toby is still suffering post-traumatic episodes from her time in Blanco's grip, and her nightmares feature 'his skinless-looking blue-veined hands coming for her neck [...] During the worst times with him, during the most terror, she'd focus on those hands coming off at the wrists. The hands, other parts of him. Grey blood gushing out' (TYOTF 116). In Zeb, Toby sees a fellow outsider and is attracted. The mirroring of events that occurs one day when Zeb returns to the rooftop, injured, his 'tree-stump hands were clutching to his stomach; blood was coming out from between his fingers' (TYOTF 127) places Zeb as Blanco's uncanny, twinned image: truncated arms, flowing blood. Thus Zeb embodies latent violence and sexism, but also offers redemption from stereotypical masculinity. Despite offering a benign alternative to Blanco's designations 'Skinny bitch!' and 'You're meat!' (44; 303), Zeb too evaluates Toby's body and thus, both verbally and through action, validates her female corporeality, rather than her human physicality. At this point in the narrative Toby has let her mind and body be defined by Gardener doctrine, but the death of Earth Mother Pilar is an event that marks a feminist generational shift for Toby.

Toby's developing romance with Zeb stands as a metaphor for her negotiation of the interrelationship between her mind and her body. Toby starts to abandon the rigid 'tree-stump'

fantasies in favour of a more fluid physicality. In order to illegally bury Pilar, Zeb and Toby go undercover clad as park rangers to a pleebland park, an event that foreshadows the illicit feeling of the consummation of their relationship in *MaddAddam*. Zeb ‘winked at her, then reached across her and opened the truck door. ‘Cut yourself some slack. I bet you used to be a babe until the Gardeners got to you.’ Used to be, thinks Toby. That about sums up everything. Nevertheless she was pleased: she hadn’t had a gender-weighted compliment for some time’ (TYOTF 221). Shortly after which a male stranger yells at Toby ‘Hey, Park bitch [...] Show us your shrub!’ a narrative reminder of the two sides of misogyny: on one hand abusive and reductive, on the other signifying welcome attention for a woman socialised to desire the male gaze. Zeb takes on the role of her protector when they drive into the park and ‘cheerfully’ notes that ‘[w]herever there’s Nature, there’s assholes’ (222). Zeb reduces and naturalises the sexist comment shouted at Toby, suggesting that in a masculinist discourse, here represented by the pleeblands, Toby’s being there dressed in overalls just like Zeb, rather than dolled up in a feminine way, is symbolical of Toby receiving abuse for not being a participant in the masculine-feminine play of reproductive desire. Toby is exposed through her failure to comply with conventional expressions of femininity, and her exclusion from the heterosexual matrix is marked by Zeb’s wistful comment. Toby’s non-compliance signifies the contradiction in the process of her subjective becoming. Negotiating the space in-between two clearly outlined gender definitions is a lonely existence. Perhaps if Toby looked womanlier she would attract less negative attention?

Irigaray argues that women participate in men’s desire as a form of ‘masquerade’: whether this connotes feminine concealment, or a form of masculine exclusion, both alternatives can be read in *MaddAddam* (Butler 65). During the time Toby hides on the rooftop from Blanco, he meanwhile survives multiple stints in Painball and comes after Toby with terrifying regularity: ‘stringy-assed bitch! [...] You’re meat!’ (303). In a final attempt to protect both the Gardeners and Toby, Toby is sent undercover as an agent to a secret location. When Toby makes herself ready to flee the Garden she feels it like ‘a wrenching, a severing, a skin peeling off’ (307) suggesting that identity production in a Western male hegemony rejects a female subject who does not capitulate to the heterosexual matrix; Toby must transform yet again. Once more the male gaze, in the shape of the benign figure of Zeb, is at work: ‘Think of yourself as a chrysalis’ Zeb tells her (312). Toby’s identity is erased further as her fingerprints are erased, signalling the remove her physical transformation takes her to: a lower voice, darker skin, almond-shaped eyes, long hair, breast implants and green eye-colour, favoured by Zeb (TYOTF 311). Toby now

participates in a masquerade under the name of 'Tobiatha', wearing the costume of a manageress at a beauty spa: '[t]he alterations hadn't made her stunningly beautiful, but that wasn't the object. The object was to make her more invisible' (313). Her undercover position delivers a 'placid', 'calm' daily routine for Toby, but also makes her more noticeable to Zeb: '*The hair's great babe. Love the slanty eyes*' (TYOTF 315; 322). In her disguise Toby is subsumed into stereotypical femininity and acts along, keeping the peace. Shortly afterwards the plague hits and humanity expires. This location in the narrative signifies a major turning point for Toby's character. Until this point Toby has experienced variants of second-wave feminism, but all of them have failed to activate her own agency. The upheaval of cultural and societal structures that *The Flood* represents brings the necessary impetus to a feminist subjective becoming for Toby.

2. Gendered Subjects and Narrative Becoming

2.1 Feminine Subjective Becoming: Toby

Atwood figures feminine subjective becoming narratively through Toby's character. Toby oscillates between the opposing gender binaries unable to find a suitable manifestation of her subjectivity. Having been exposed to a number of feminisms, as described in Chapter 1, Toby comes to witness the disintegration of society through the erasure of humanity. This places Toby in a position unrestricted by convention or external influence. Toby begins a process of becoming which she can only realise fully through the interaction with other women, and fellow survivors. Her dream of an idyllic past is a narrative parable for a feminist utopia that turns out to have been a dystopia in the making.

Toby's post-apocalyptic existence functions as a feminist parable for feminine subjective becoming. The experience of altered space-time dimensions together with a fractured corporeality emphasize a change. In *The Year of the Flood* in general, but in the spa narrative in particular, Toby experiences time layered several times over: multiple versions of the past simultaneously. The vacuum of the spa acts as a trigger location for 'the unhomely' where Toby works through the multiplicity of her lived experience, as if peeling off the layers of her selves one by one. Braidotti's nomadic becoming is thus narratively realized within the confines of the spa: the concept of the uncanny pinpoints the unease experienced when attempting to deal with a multitudinous subject. In this unhomely environment categories are upended, and what emerges are contradictions that bring about a crisis of the subject. Dismembered male bodies and disjointed female subjects litter the grounds surrounding the spa fortification and signify Toby's post-apocalyptic reality (TYOTF 19). Humanity has been cataclysmically disjointed, the structures of society have come down: Toby needs to reconfigure herself. As I argued above: Toby is a figure that rejects stereotypical femininity and heteronormativity, not by choice but due to systematic repression under a totalitarian regime. The collapse of the structure empowers Toby to reconfigure herself, but the next thought is naturally, if Toby is the last woman on earth, whether gender is still relevant. Braidotti's nature-culture continuum comes into play here and locates Toby on a sliding scale spanning from human to posthuman. As a product of a culture that has imploded, and with nature literally encroaching closer and closer everyday, in the post-apocalyptic moment Toby is neither one nor the other.

The nature-culture continuum that Braidotti expounds is contextualized through the Gardener's cult and its post-apocalyptically sustained effect on Toby. Equal parts sceptical and acquiescent, Toby learned it was enough for the Gardeners to be 'acting as if you believe' (201). This 'as if' leaves Toby hanging in the balance between the choices of acting or giving up. Toby goes from feeling 'suspended' and 'frozen', but the narrative trajectory pushes relentlessly forward, from a present where the worst has already happened. Thus a present that hangs in an apathetic suspension of whether to do/act, or give up: 'Either choice is equally pointless' (282 TYOTF 282). 'My body is shrinking, she thinks. I'm puckering, I'm dwindling. Soon I'll be nothing'. Toby faces equally impossible alternatives once the need for categorization has been obliterated. On the positive side 'There's no need to label herself now that nobody's left to read the labels (20), but on the negative side 'she withers, folds in on herself, shrivels up like an old spider' (114). Toby lives out her days by the rhythms of the moon, in a cyclical rendering of the passing of time. Through replicating the eco-religious fastidiousness of the God's Gardeners, Toby imparts structure onto her time and also ritualises her own narrative. Yet while doing this, she continues rebelling against Gardener dogma in her thoughts. Toby agrees with the sentiment, but not the rhetoric of the Gardeners, yet seems unable or unwilling to think outside it. The spa compound acts like a structure that holds in place a simulacrum of her existence with the Gardeners. Toby has even planted her own garden on the spa rooftop. Toby lives out her post-apocalyptic existence in her fortress, on constant watch against invasion and in disbelief at the absence of the masculine: 'No men [...] Maybe I lost my mind, thinks Toby. Not lost. Temporarily misplaced' (422). Thus the feminine subject is outlined, time and again, essentially lacking and permanently vigilant against intrusion: 'every hollow space invites invasion' (6). Atwood figures Toby as a narrative exercise in feminine subjective becoming.

The detachment that Toby experiences in the apocalyptic moment produces a narrative crisis of the subject-object relation. During her time isolated in the spa, Toby experiences such a remove from her former pre-flood self that she can barely reconcile it with her current one. The disjunction in Toby forces her to take a critical look at her past:

'where is Toby in this picture? For it is a picture. It's flat, like a picture on a wall. She's not there. She opens her eyes: tears on her cheeks. I wasn't in the picture because I am the frame, she thinks. It's not really the past. It's only me, holding it all together. It's only a handful of fading neural pathways. It's only a mirage' (TYOTF 284).

Toby's thoughts provide insight to the mechanics to the figuring of her self, how she produces and processes the narrative of her own story and introduces a split between body and mind: 'I wasn't in the picture because I am the frame'. This event mirrors Haraway's contention that the body should be 'anything but a blank page for social inscriptions, including those of biological discourse' (197): Toby's physical self is the vessel for her story, yet she herself is paradoxically lacking. Haraway expounds 'situated knowledges', which figure the object of knowledge as agent, rather than 'a screen' that projects so-called 'objective knowledge' (198). Toby realises the fallacy of 'objective' knowledge as projected by her body, and sets to actively communicating and shaping this knowledge herself, from within herself. This propels Toby to start writing a diary. By narrating her experience, Toby embodies the concept of 'situated knowledges', which dislodges objectivity from its static and absolute position and introduces multiplicity and alternative perspectives. Toby's act of diary-writing becomes a crucial part of destabilising the subject-object dichotomy once she meets the Crakers. Before that, Toby battles to overcome pre-apocalyptic objectification in the literal as well as narrative sense.

The remnants of misogynist objectification remain imprinted on Toby even after the erasure of humankind. In her post-apocalyptic paranoia Toby fears being watched by a 'male gaze'. Toby acts in survivalist mode, 'listening, as animals do' and 'feeling that someone's watching her', producing the sense that she is hunted, despite her being buttressed within the spa building (TYOTF 6;17). The confounding co-existence of states of stability and flight precipitate the nomadic mode: in order to gain agency Toby must leave the spa. Toby's rescue of fellow survivor Ren mirrors, in the coming-together of their stories, the generational divide between second- and third wave feminism in that, while Toby is well aware of the violence in male-female relationships, Ren has adapted to and seemingly accepted her own sexual commodification (Bouson 14). A common tendency in criticism of the female characters in Atwood's oeuvre is to focus on themes of survival and victimhood (Bouson 12, Tolan 287), of females being victims of circumstance, 'female prey' (Bouson 12-13). Several critics also note that the characters of Ren and Amanda Payne, as well as Oryx, are Atwood's poke at third wave feminism (Narkunas 16, Bouson) in the way that these young women, rather than being empowered through embracing their sexuality find themselves using their bodies as commodity in order to survive in an increasingly misogynist society. Toby's narrative subverts these criticisms. On the day of Ren's arrival Toby is expectant of a silent 'crack', or a visual 'break' of the day as it breaks (TYOTF 6;17), denoting an impending rupture of perception.

Thus the potential of an alternative feminist expression for Toby arrives in the shape of a fellow female survivor. Ren embodies for Toby an activation of female solidarity that helps Toby negotiate a subjective becoming. Toby's thoughts work towards bridging the mind/body divide, and her actions propagate the mind-body continuum expounded by Braidotti. An example is how Toby hears Zeb's voice in her head, representing the voice of reason: '[t]ools are more important than food. Your best tool is your brain' (TYOTF 435) which propels Toby to shear Ren's and her own hair short, so as not to provide potential attackers with a 'hair handle [...] all the better to grab you by and slash your throat' (435-6). This act signifies Toby's resistance to the tradition of the Cartesian mind/body divide and drives an impetus to prevent recurrence. Thus, Toby is propelled forward, out of the confines of the spa, in search of other human beings. Her mission is double: to rescue Ren's friend Amanda and to kill her captors: Blanco and his evil band of Painballers. Toby's decision to break out and fight rather than to continue to hide is the moment in time when her story crosses Jimmy-Snowman's: Toby is part of the rag-tag party that ends up on Jimmy-Snowman's beach, and this is also the point in the narrative when the final instalment of the trilogy, *MaddAddam*, is launched.

Throughout *Flood* different images of Toby's sense of herself abound. Her inner voice is often appropriated by Gardener rhetoric, but sometimes disturbed by morbid deviations: '[applying] sharp tools to yourself, hack off any extraneous parts that might need trimming. Your head, for instance' (282). This thought provides a morbid illustration of the Cartesian mind/body divide. Atwood illustrates through Toby's character the mind-body relationship and the inherent power imbalance that subjugates the body to the mind's rational will. Toby's macabre thought of hacking her head off is a mind over matter tug-of-war that narrativises the continuous negotiations that Toby figures against the norms and values imprinted on her by the Gardeners. Equally, in the conclusion to *Flood*, Toby actively resists the thought of getting her head severed from her body, signifying a transformation and a transition into a new mode of being.

It is in these moments of decisive action that cyborg agency can be glimpsed in Toby. This momentum carries Toby to overcome her fear of male violence. Categorising Toby and other female characters as 'victims' of male violence, as Bouson does, locks them in a system of power-weighted binaries. From my perspective, a different approach must be devised, and Toby embodies the bravery and compassion this requires. Figuring Toby as a cyborg opens up new perspectives and glimpses of utopia. Fashioning cyborg subjectivity as a form of 'self-styling' involves 'complex and continuous negotiations with dominant norms and values' (Braidotti

2013:35). This approach is essentialist because it does not propagate a thinking beyond binaries, yet it is flexible. It empowers the subject through granting agency, but requires continuous re-assessments. Toby's name in itself denotes the expectation of a feminine subjective becoming: To-Be (TYOTF 418).

2.2 Post-apocalyptic Gender Binaries

Despite her role as the character in *MaddAddam* that embodies feminine subjective becoming, Toby is not immune to the biological play at hand. As the remaining survivors and Crakers set up community in the final instalment of the trilogy, Toby compares herself unfavourably against the other females of the group, excepting the Craker females. Because the Crakers are, in their neo-human existence, described as docile, ever-masticating and slightly ridiculous in their earnestness, they are not taken seriously, despite being physically perfect in a most uncanny way. This becomes clear in Toby's thoughts on Swift Fox, the camp vixen. Concerning Zeb, Swift Fox's 'ovarian offerings' would be a wiser investment than the barren, middle-aged Toby's (thinks Toby), yet Zeb has chosen Toby before Swift Fox, despite the latter's body language: 'the eyelash play, the tit thrusts, the hair-tuft flinging, the armpit display. She might as well be flashing a blue bottom like the Crakers. Baboons in spate' (MA 89). Pushing such thoughts away Toby continually struggles with her femininity. When a young Craker boy earnestly asks her whether she has a pair of breasts Toby thinks to herself '[y]es [...], so far'. Is he expecting one breast, or three, or maybe four or six, like a dog?' bringing to mind the way male Crakers' erect members stand to end 'wagging from side to side like the tails of friendly dogs' (MA 20). When the same Craker boy asks Toby whether she will ever have a baby, she thinks '[w]hat is he asking? Whether non-Craker people like her can have babies, or whether she herself might have one?'. For Toby the question is not biological, but socio-cultural, economical and existential: 'If her whole life had been different. If she hadn't needed the money. If she'd lived in another universe' (90-1) and when sensing Toby's sadness the young Craker asks: 'what sickness do you have? Are you hurt?' (MA 91), re-affirming the corporeality of his question. Thus, Toby's hard-earned cyborg agency is obliterated. In facing the abundance of fertility in this post-apocalyptic existence Toby regresses to second-wave feminism, unable to cope with the overtly sexual behaviour of the younger, feistier female camp members.

Here Toby's narrative reveals a cultural conditioning, which shows that although Toby initially resisted the God's Gardeners and their essentialism, their culture has become embedded

in her sense of self. As argued above, when first introduced to the Gardener's rooftop Toby initially lacked a sense of identity, one which the Gardeners eventually filled with their eco-religious discourse. Post-pandemonium Toby's material surroundings of a beauty complex wherein she barricaded herself represented a temple to female beautification and a foregone culture's reverence of youthfulness. Everything in there was innocently pink and smelled sweet, in contrast to the smells of burning and putrefaction felt outside. Like a post-apocalyptic heroine Toby tramped around in feminised combat gear, lugging a rifle on her shoulder. As long as she was on her own, Toby covered all the mirrors with sheets, emphasising her aloneness and her growing unitary agency. Outside the gates what was left of humanity was festering on the lawn, slowly putrefying, symbolizing a dying civilization, emphasised by the abundant vegetation and the genetically modified animals now running feral. To survive, Toby ate the stock of beauty products, symbolically incorporating their promises of capitalist notions of femininity. Toby joins the MaddAddam community holding within her the capacity for a multiplicitous femininity, but she finds that in doing so, she would have to continuously assert herself.

Toby's understanding of the younger, more overtly sexual members of the post-apocalyptic community, especially Swift Fox who embodies a third-wave feminist politics through her casually overt sexuality, reveals a divided view: 'Swift Fox likes to potty-mouth the crowd, especially the men; to demonstrate that she isn't just a pretty body, is Toby's guess. She wants to have it both ways' (MA 206). Toby's thoughts reveal the remnants of a binary thinking, as she still thinks of the body subjugated by the mind, any equalization unattainable as long as women such as Swift Fox play up to an exaggeratedly sexualised femininity. This idea culminates when the pregnant Swift Fox is held back at camp and Toby and the men go out to fight: '[g]ender roles suck' Swift Fox exclaims, prompting Toby's mental retort '[t]hen you should stop playing them' (342). This revelatory paradox between feminism and postfeminism exposes another self-perpetuating binary. Toby sticks to one role, whereas Swift Fox self-absorbedly shape-shifts depending on the circumstances. 'Men are always telling women what to do with their uterus' (369), says Swift Fox who also does not mind partaking in mating rituals with the Crakers. These consist of four Craker men, the 'fourfathers' (380) and one woman, and are from the human's perspective a gang-bang with the woman, as always, playing the role of 'receptacle of male biological instinct' (Narkunas 14). From the Crakers' unself-conscious view, the ritual is simply a biologically efficient way of ensuring pregnancy as well as obfuscating paternity. In the end, four Craker hybrids are born, and the human males and females of

reproductive age have all paired up. Thus the text reveals a default essentialist gender setting: the women give birth and stay in camp, the men hunt and tend to their women.

The gender binaries produced through biology override verbal articulation. Swift Fox's protestations about gender roles are contradictory and derogatory to women from Toby's point of view. Toby has been cultured to resist binary gender expression such as overtly seductive body language and revealing clothes. Swift Fox on the other hand, is a product of third-wave feminism and does not hesitate to deploy her body to engage male favour. She appropriates feminist-speak in order to re-appropriate her physical motives. Thus, Swift Fox's exclamations identify the fluidity and transformative power of language and the way it builds a gendered subjectivity.

2.3 Toby Appropriates Zeb's Story: The 'Herstory' of Zeb

In the school of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, thinking on gender is built on language and sign, as opposed to biology. Lacanian thought structures logocentricity as the manifestation of gendered subjectivity, which for the subject is a negotiation of choices based on culture and language. The French feminist Luce Irigaray places thinking on gender and language a step further and dubs it phallogocentrism, centered around a symbolic phallus. Thus, language and narrative are already male-centric and in order to overcome this, *écriture féminine*, as mentioned above, subverts grammar and syntax. Other ways of feminist linguistic and narrative resistances is the aforementioned genre-blending that critical dystopias present. Atwood further disrupts conventional discourse through toppling the masculine as universal subject. Despite critical fears that Atwood had disbanded her feminist affiliations by featuring a male protagonist and narrator in *Oryx and Crake* (Showalter 35; Tolan 286), *The Year of the Flood* immediately refuted such fears. In MaddAddam narrative agency is by turns embodied by a host of female, as well as male, characters. As the trilogy advances these characters' subjectivities are increasingly found to be multi-faceted and contradictory. Next, I will look closer at the connection between the act of story-telling and narrative subjectivity as these reveal how Jimmy-Snowman is

As previously established, in the epistemology of enlightenment-era science couplets such as passion/reason, nature/culture, feminine/masculine provided the structure for knowledge production and placed the masculine as primary point of reference, with the feminine as secondary 'other'. This classical vision fixed the disembodied, reasoning subject in a power relation over materiality (Braidotti 2011:167). Within the dichotomy of 'mind over matter', the binaries involved become fixed as stable categories. Thus, the ontological subject is produced

through reciprocal acknowledgement. In a system of power, such as the CorpSeCorps, a subject is regulated, controlled and protected (Butler 2-3). As Butler notes, Western feminism is troublesome as a political entity when it runs the danger of ‘othering’ non-Western cultural practices to strengthen the universality of patriarchy. This may be a symptom of the heterosexual matrix, which regulates gender/power relations (5-7). In *MaddAddam* a Western capitalist structure is fixed to form a global view where the ‘other’ is entirely represented by the feminine subject. In the continental philosophical tradition the distinction between mind and body is hierarchical and based on the mind subjugating the body. The discursive construction of ‘the body’ as ontologically distinct from ‘the mind’ mirrors the binary gender system. In the fields of feminism and cultural theory, the mind/body hierarchy is associated with male/female respectively, and imbued discursively with gender asymmetry. According to Simone de Beauvoir, the female body is marked within a masculinist discourse, wherein the male body is considered universal and remains unmarked (Butler 17). Luce Irigaray’s linguist-feminist approach, where both marked and unmarked are products of a ‘phallogocentric’ signifying system, results in the feminine being inadequately represented, and ultimately excluded altogether. Atwood illustrates this in the end of the *MaddAddam* trilogy through Toby’s narrative, where her voice is ultimately subsumed by masculine figures.

In *MaddAddam* narrative subjectivity and voice are articulated as masculine by design. Jimmy’s act of story-telling in *Oryx and Crake* projects a male-centric discourse on the Crakers, as does Toby’s story-telling in *MaddAddam*. Toby’s recounting features the caveat that she is merely picking up the gauntlet where Jimmy left off, but even so Toby chooses to tell Zeb’s story to the Crakers, rather than her own. Jimmy, on the other hand, figures that he as lone survivor holds the position as the Craker’s guru and protector. So, Jimmy acquires his narrative alter ego ‘Snowman’, a moniker that can be disarticulated into ‘Is-No-Man’. Each week Jimmy-Snowman tells the Crakers a Genesis-like story, featuring Crake and Oryx as god- and goddess creators of the world and all living things, with the mythical Snowman as the voice of the storyteller. This name dismantles phallogocentric discourse; literally Jimmy-Is-No-Man, the one who writes the story is no longer ‘man’. The violent fracture of the oppositional female/male binary has imploded and the universal subject has been dismantled. Once the group of survivors that include Toby set up camp on Jimmy-Snowman’s beach, Jimmy falls into a coma and his agency is thereafter excluded through most of *MaddAddam*, potentially leaving space for a female storyteller. Narratively Jimmy represents the suspension of a male-centered phallogocentric discourse,

meanwhile the narrative voice is shifted to Toby. Disjointing Toby's name into 'To-Be' mutates her name, her logos, into a becoming. Toby, however, does not take over as the alter ego narrator of the story of *MaddAddam*, but rather, retells a story that goes back in time to parallel her own pre-apocalyptic trajectory unto The Flood. Zeb's story, told to and retold by Toby takes focus, alongside a young Craker boy, who takes up after Toby.

Having been reluctantly appointed as Jimmy's story-telling proxy while Jimmy lies in a coma, Toby attempts the story of Zeb. Toby does this for several reasons: to have a coherent, running oral narrative to present to the expectant Crakers each night, but also the more subterfuge reason of getting Zeb to tell her his story. Thus, Toby seemingly gains a voice through narrating Zeb's story. Yet, while doing so, she complies with a somewhat ridiculous ritual set up by Jimmy. The Crakers expect certain ceremonial features from their story-telling event, and thus, to keep the peace, Toby complies. Second, and more problematically, is the fact that despite being the voice of the story, she is entirely missing from it. Toby's story, according to Toby, happens in the present, together with Zeb, and mostly in bed wrapped in post-coital bliss. Toby's attitude is recognizably one of relief: she has lived for many years alone without anyone to share her innermost thoughts with, and is yearning for male appreciation of her body, in its many guises, both sexist, post-sexist, ironic and 'genuine'. Rather than being a narrative cipher or a narrating 'subjective becoming' Toby is just being, giving herself up to Zeb. As much as a relief this is, it is hard not to notice the element of subterfuge in Toby's and Zeb's relations. Toby and Zeb seem intent on keeping their relation a secret. Especially Toby seems particularly keen not to disturb the balance, not to rock the boat of her learning Zeb's story, in order to re-tell it properly to the Crakers. Thus, it seems, Toby herself perpetuates certain ritualistic aspects of discourse, and hides this within the subterfuge of 'owning' Zeb through his story.

Toby's refusal to make her own story into Craker lore is symptomatic of the enduring centrality of phallogocentric discourse. While Jimmy-Snowman is in a coma Toby takes up the duty of telling the Crakers their nightly story, a practice Jimmy initiated when they stayed on the beach, and which has developed into legend. Pondering how to continue satisfying the Crakers demand for stories of becoming, Toby writes herself out of her own story. By writing Zeb's story Toby mythologises the events of his life, meanwhile satisfying her own desire to internalise him through the sequences of his life before her presence in his life. Toby writes for an unknown readership, at first not considering the Crakers as a participating audience, later experiencing a mounting sense of responsibility when the Craker children practice

writing, her thoughts a meta-narrative to agnostic humanity: '[h]ow soon before there are ancient texts they feel they have to obey but have forgotten how to interpret? Have I ruined them?' (MA 204). Toby thinks of writing her private diary as suspending time; thus she writes herself into becoming: 'when time had begun again and real people had entered it' (MA 282). Toby's writing displays a simultaneous writing into becoming, and a re-telling of Zeb's story to the Crakers that bears Toby as disembodied voice of the narrative; the narrator-god of discourse as far as the Crakers are concerned. In the conclusion to the trilogy a young Craker boy has copied down Toby's oral myth of Zeb, which writes out Toby's presence from the narrative altogether, but in doing so it mythologises Toby into the disembodied goddess-voice in 'The Story of Toby' (MA 471). Ultimately Zeb and Toby as subjective beings are exceeded; instead they are elevated into discourse. In telling Zeb and Toby's story, the young Craker male embodies the mechanics of voice and subject. The young Craker builds his tale elevating Toby's words from directive to dogma, and turns a narrative into an object, a physical book. Toby is transformed from her position as objectified female into the subject of a foundational narrative. Thus the subject-object dichotomy is overturned.

The subject-object binary is mirrored on the male/female binary. The male represents the dominant subject in a power relation, placing the female is in the object position.

2.4 Oryx as (Post)feminist Figuration

The MaddAddam trilogy charts the trajectory of generations of feminisms, embodies feminine gender in splintered bodies, as heterogenous subjects, and describes a postfeminist and posthuman future. It is an Utopian future where feminism has not succeeded in granting equal rights for women as a gender, but rather appears to have relinquished politics in favour of capitalism (Tolan 282). Tolan argues that in *Oryx and Crake* postfeminism is concomitant with a post-political state, and draws parallels to third-wave feminism. Elaine Showalter and Tolan fear for the feminine voice, which is effectively silenced due to Atwood's choice of making a male character protagonist of the novel (Tolan 282; Showalter 35). Although Jimmy is the main focaliser in the novel, Oryx's character, described alternately as 'an enigma' and a character with the 'most explicitly sexual history' (Tolan 286), is essentially one that plays with contemporary cultural expectations of women and contains the problematic of the porn debate and female objectification. Oryx's character also nudges at the problematics inherent in third-wave feminist politics: female sexual empowerment in a culture that commodifies women's

bodies. As part of Atwood's exploration into narratives of female victimization and resistance, Oryx embodies feminine subject formation in an environment where a character like her would be deemed voiceless and without agency (Showalter 35). Oryx is 'an exquisite Asian prostitute', Crake's 'lover and disciple' and the 'elusive' Oryx is the 'vehicle' for Atwood's indignation at trafficking, 'child slavery, prostitution, sex tourism and other extreme forms of female victimisation' (Showalter 35). Foremost, I argue that *Oryx and Crake* deals with narrative exploration of feminine subject formation and male neutralization of the same, in an otherwise mutually destructive capitalist market economy. Furthermore, the disproportionate distribution of power between subject-object that pornographic images create is subverted by Oryx's character through her resistance to restrictive labels, objectifying and defiance to subjective coherence.

Oryx is a narrative paradox and her ambiguity acts as resistance to female objectification. Oryx's image is first introduced to Jimmy through a website for paedophiles. Jimmy is instantly captivated by Oryx, who stands out among all the other children through the piercing look she gives him through the lens. For Jimmy the digitalisation, mass-production and constant availability of extreme and explicit sexual images is unremarkable. His cultural conditioning and his status as a white Western male has made him indifferent towards the consumption of these images and of the disposable bodies they display. However, by watching Oryx Jimmy's guilt contextualizes his complicity in the sexual debasement of females. He has not personally hurt or debased Oryx by watching the online video featuring her performing sexual acts, but the 'contemptuous' look she had given him from the other side of the camera had 'burned' and 'eaten into' him: 'It was all too complicated' (OAC 104). Jimmy ends up printing out and keeping the picture of Oryx's gaze. Her face and her look is two-dimensionally captured as opposed to when Jimmy first sets eyes on her on the HottTotts proxy sex-tourism web site: '[s]he was just another little girl on a porno site [...] but for some reason Oryx was three-dimensional from the start' (102-3). Through Jimmy's male gaze Oryx gains a dimension, albeit one that Jimmy provides without her consent. As an adult Jimmy encounters Oryx again, as if she has materialised from his fantasies straight into real life. Oryx is somewhat hazy on the details of her geographical origins, somewhere in rural South-East Asia, but 'It didn't matter', 'I don't care. I never think about it. It's long ago now'' (134;136), says Oryx thus renouncing time and location for a nomadic approach that offers resistance to Jimmy's efforts to define her based on his presumptions of her cultural-, ethnic and geographical background. Tolan succinctly argues that

Oryx' relationship with the Western male is a story of how Oryx effectively subverts female objectification and subordination to the Western narrative that upholds a male hegemony.

Oryx's story is one of power and its uneven distribution in a gender binary. Jimmy, previously so carefree about pornography until he meets Oryx, is desperate to cast her in the role of victim so that he himself can play the part of saviour: 'It's all right,' he'd told her, stroking her hair. 'None of it was your fault', but Oryx eludes and undermines Jimmy's efforts to cast her in the role of debased victim 'None of what, Jimmy?' (OAC 132). The narrative effect of Oryx' elusive character produces a widening of the scope: 'In refusing to acknowledge or take possession of the image [of her as a victim], Oryx opens up her history, merging it with that of countless other young girls trapped by poverty and abuse' (Tolan 287). Their exchanges on the subject of Oryx' past increasingly frustrate Jimmy while Oryx remains opaque and her answers repeatedly undermine his attempts at labelling her as sexually exploited. When Jimmy tells her 'It's all right... none of it was your fault' Oryx says 'none of what, Jimmy?' and when Jimmy pushes on 'Why won't you tell me?' she says 'Why do you care? [...] I don't care. I never think about it' (OAC 136). Oryx destabilizes Jimmy's position in their relationship through continuously undercutting his attempts at defining her. The role of rescuer would place Jimmy at an advantage to control her narrative. When Oryx seduces Jimmy the two-dimensional image of her becomes three-dimensional reality. Jimmy's desire for Oryx to be as pliant and available in real life as she is on-screen merges with his own passivity as a former consumer of the images of her (289). As noted by Tolan, '[p]ower is the dominant referent in Oryx's narrative'. Oryx is a product of advanced capitalism's contradictory social effects: 'the coexistence of advanced technologies with neolithic conditions of poverty' and the resultant dismembering, capture and commodification of bodies (Braidotti 2011:176). Commercial images of sex perpetuate a 'subject-object dichotomy' that trades on the visualization of 'the unrepresentable' and the undisclosed (Braidotti 2011:200).

Pornographic representation is a 'confessional genre', and its premises the monetising of images that violate privacy and intimacy (Braidotti 2011:200). Oryx is, as Bouson starkly observes, one of the number of postfeminist women in *MaddAddam* 'who has learned to use their sex for barter' (Bouson 12) because early on she learned that her body: alive, healthy and clean 'had money value' (OAC 146). Aside from Oryx unsentimentally stating that in her experience 'everything has a price', other women in the trilogy, such as pleeblanders Ren and Amanda, are used to bartering, 'you trade what you have to. You don't always have choices' (TYOTF 70), and

using their bodies as articles of trade. These women use sex as a currency, and dispense with love, because ‘love was useless, because it lead to dumb exchanges in which you gave too much away, and then you got bitter and mean’ (TYOTF 260), ‘Love’s never a fair trade’ (TYOTF 270). Oryx oscillates in Jimmy’s perception of her: once object of his own (and Crake’s) mass-consumerist voyeurism which is perverse and paedophilic, then as his real life object of flesh-and-blood lust and desire, until finally her physical body is in his bed and he acts out what he has seen on screen, and more. Jimmy continuously tries to persuade Oryx that what they do is ‘different’ and ‘real’ as opposed to the pornographic images that inspire him to perform the self-same, but Oryx undermines his claims for release from complicity: ‘Jimmy, you should know. All sex is real’ (OAC 169). Thus, Oryx rebalances the initial power disparity in their relationship. When Oryx refuses to let Jimmy label her or grant him absolution, she effectively instates Jimmy as representative of all consumers, of all bodies, not only her body. Real sex and pornographic images are layered and intertwined in Jimmy’s and Oryx’s relationship. The fracture between lived experience and representation can be repaired through figuring Oryx in nomadic mode (Braidotti 2011:3-4).

The changeability and trans-geographical nature of Oryx, and the way her character collapses measures of dimensions and time positions her as a nomadic figuration. Nomadic subjects are ‘nonunitary’ – split, in-process, knotted, rhizomatic, transnational’, and they are situated and embodied through an approach that is termed ‘cartographic’. The nomadic subject is embodied and gendered along the axes of space (geopolitical, social, ecophilosophical) and time (historical, genealogical); it is a figuration that functions to simultaneously unsettle and empower the experience of a global, unfixed subject position (Braidotti 2011:3-4). Oryx’s transient quality as a character nevertheless represents active resistance to the impulse of ‘othering’ that her background engenders. However, it is Jimmy’s gaze that supplies Oryx with a third dimension; the reading of Oryx’s story is filtered through Jimmy. Oryx is singularly represented through Jimmy: in pornographic images and later on, post-flood as a disembodied voice when Jimmy identifies as ‘Snowman’. Yet, Oryx offers subjective resistance and feminine agency when she ‘refused to feel what he wanted her to feel. In refusing to let Jimmy shape her story Oryx nevertheless retains his interest through her sexual allure and exotic appeal. Her body, ‘small-boned, exquisite’ (OAC 103), her facial features feline, bug-like, otherworldly, exotic, almost transhuman (132). This almost alien quality mesmerises Jimmy, but when he tries to pin Oryx

down on sight of recognizing her extraordinary eyes from an image from a child porn-site she merely says ‘I don’t think this is me’ [...] although later allowing that

‘It has to be!’ said Jimmy. ‘Look it’s your eyes!’ ‘A lot of girls have eyes,’ she said. ‘A lot of girls did these things. Very many.’ Then, seeing his disappointment, she said, ‘It might be me. Maybe it is. Would that make you happy, Jimmy?’ ‘No,’ said Jimmy. Was that a lie?’ (OAC 105).

The narrative structure in which Jimmy attempts to frame Oryx replicates a dislocation of body parts that mirrors digital images, cut through the frame of a lens. The uncanny moment appears for Jimmy when he first spots Oryx among the Crakers in the bio-dome: he ‘had a moment of pure bliss, pure terror, because now she was no longer a picture – no longer merely an image, [now] she was real, three-dimensional’ (362-3). The look that Oryx gives Jimmy burns into him and parallels an existential guilt that Jimmy harbours; the dichotomy of bliss and terror is one that captures the fetishist aspects of Oryx and Jimmy’s relationship (Tolan 287-9). Alternating domination and subjugation, the power play between them leaves Jimmy suspended without agency. Atwood illustrates this metaphorically through an uncanny dream of Jimmy’s:

‘[y]oung slender girls with small hands, ribbons in their hair, bearing garlands of many-coloured flowers. The field would be green, but it wasn’t a pastoral scene: these were girls in danger, in need of rescue. There was something – a threatening presence – behind the tree. Or perhaps the danger was in him. Perhaps he was the danger, a fanged animal gazing out from the shadowy cave of the space inside his own skull. Or it might be the girls themselves that were dangerous’ (OAC 307).

The love triangle between Oryx, Crake and Jimmy implodes once Crake releases the pill that kills humanity. As a calculated act of self-destruction Crake kills Oryx, compelling Jimmy to shoot Crake. Crake’s and Oryx’s corpses remain at the entrance to the bio-dome, and later on Jimmy is faced with them. Oryx’s look dematerialises with her death, and her decomposed body, with her ‘face down [turned] away from him as if in mourning’ (391) remonstratively deprives Jimmy of her corporeality. Instead, Jimmy conjures Oryx’s voice in his head, and fantasises about her, but as Tolan notes, it is a ‘highly fetishized capitalist incarnation’ of Oryx, as an object of pornography that conveys only a two-dimensional image of her (296). Hereby Atwood confirms a masculine bias that perpetuates through Jimmy’s survival. Oryx remains the elusive object of Jimmy’s desire

Reversing Simone de Beauvoir’s poignant contestation in *The Second Sex* (1949), in *Oryx and Crake* a woman is born, rather than becomes, a woman. *Oryx and Crake* ends with Jimmy

discovering that he is not the lone survivor after all, but a group of tattered human beings have set up camp nearby Jimmy's base and this scene catapults us into its sequel *The Year of The Flood*. One of the rag-tag survivors is Toby, the protagonist in *Flood*. At this point the storyline loops back and maps the circumstances of Toby's survival post-pandemonium. *Flood* opens with Toby surveying her surroundings from the relative safety of a barricaded beauty spa. The lay of the land is technicolour bright with neon-furred animal splices running feral and human wreckage in the form of body parts lying randomly scattered amongst the rampantly growing weeds. The landscape acts to signify the dematerialization of humanity. Like Jimmy, Toby spends much of her time reminiscing about the past in an attempt to escape the terror and loneliness of the present. Toby's story arc explores the multiple femininities and gender manifestations that she takes on through both her pre- and post-apocalyptic life.

2.5 The Crakers as Utopian Feminist Figurations

In order to distort categorization Atwood has created a group of bio-engineered, polyamorous, vegetarian human proxies to inhabit the postfeminist utopia of MaddAddam. The presence of these figures, the Crakers, appears as an ironic narrative comment on the future of humanity. Their behaviour, which naively appropriates extreme environmentalism, herd-like acquiescence to biology and misogynist human behaviour, contrasts strongly with the humans. The Crakers were created by Crake to replace humanity. But since a group of humans survived the pandemic, an inter-cultural community springs up. This post-apocalyptic enclave of human and humanoid survivors instigates the final instalment of the trilogy. In *MaddAddam* the 'Ustopia' of the two preceding novels culminates, and Atwood concludes the trilogy on 'a note of ambiguous indecision' (Tolan 296), not least on the subjects of gender and subjectivity.

The Crakers, part of a grand scheme at the RejoovenEsence compound, the Paradise Project, were created by Crake as a new start for humanity. Combined, '[t]hey were inextricably linked - the Pill and the Project. The Pill would put a stop to haphazard reproduction, the Project would replace it with a superior method' (OAC 357). Many of the Crakers' genetically engineered attributes act to redress both smaller and more overarching human 'anxieties' (356), from worries about physical perfection and dietary needs to illness, aging and death. Designed as 'floor models' (355) the idea is that prospective parents can come in and shop for their preferred physical, mental and spiritual features and incorporate those in their perfect baby. Beauty and physical flawlessness are givens, of course, but also the ability to feed on indigestible vegetable

matter, mosquito-repellent skin and self-healing properties. What's more, several world leaders are interested in the possibilities that creating a bespoke, docile population offered (357). Humanity's ills stemmed, according to Crake, from its 'ancient primate brain', which is responsible for the destructive forces in the world: racism, hierarchies, territorialism, meat-eating and misdirected sexual energies such as unrequited love. The Crakers are engineered using features from other mammals in order to simplify both the physical and mental aspects of the court-ship ritual. When a female Craker is ovulating, she turns blue in the buttocks thus attracting the attention of the male Crakers who then 'dance' for her, out of whom she picks out four chosen males to mate with. The mating takes the form of a non-stop gangbang, ending only when the female's blue buttocks have faded signifying she has been fertilised. Because the Crakers' children are reared communally they do not know who their parents are and thus property and heritage are done away with, and due to their superior adaptation to their environment, likewise the needs for shelter, weapons and 'harmful symbolisms' (OAC 359). Thus, the Crakers represent bio-scientific advancement. Their biological traits and behaviours are created to counter a destructive human way of living that has come to be as a result of power-, economic- and gender disparity. Human reproduction has become a process of bodily fragmentation, as all parts of the human body and its mechanisms are commercialised. The Cartesian mind/body divide is reversed in that the mind no longer controls the body. Instead, it oscillates between the profit-oriented objectification of the body, and the subjugation of the mind under scientific authority. Initially the Crakers represent a body over mind relation, which begins to capsize once Crakers and humans start to associate.

The capitalist society depicted in the MaddAddam trilogy is one where socio-cultural constructivist notions of subject formation are entirely conquered through bio-scientific manipulation. Queer does not play any significant part in the privileged compounds, where every human aspect and feature can be bought: '[g]ender, sexual orientation, height, colour of skin and eyes – it's all on order, it can all be done or redone' (OAC 340; Dunlap 6). The poor and desperate masses in the pleeblands are controlled by the pharmaceutical corporations, whose ultimate cure for overpopulation is the BlyssPluss pill, a combined sexual prophylactic, stimulant and immunizer. It all takes place in a dystopia where law and government eventually give way to total corpocracy under the 'faceless power centre embodied in the CorpSeCorps' (Jameson), the name itself a double-entendre since bodies are commodity and corporations control human society, or the situation can be said to be that of 'corporate cannibalism' (Bouson 1). As such,

once humanity has died off, the transhuman Crakers are introduced as cultural blank slates, but rather than remaining purely driven by biology, as Crake had envisioned, the Crakers are not impervious to influence. Bearing in mind that the Crakers ‘start from scratch so they like repetition’ (OAC 363) connotes that the Crakers are initially all body, all biology, driven by pheromone-driven behaviours. But due to their natural inquisitiveness the Crakers are developing their own mythology. This is perhaps most clearly illustrated in how the Crakers gradually assimilate their own cultural habits, which engender offshoots into behavioural acts that were supposedly ‘eliminated’ from their genetic make-up. Thus, the Crakers are starting to form a subjectivity of their own, which overturns the Cartesian mind/body divide.

The Crakers, masterminded by Crake to correct ‘the flaws in the design’ of humanity, reveal the binaries concealed in scientific knowledge production (OAC 115). This can be illustrated through Haraway’s ‘god-trick’, which denotes an epistemological concept that situates a ‘faceless, bodiless and contextless knower [into an elevated position enabling it to] produce objective knowledge’ (Lykke 4-5). As an antidote to so-called objective knowledge, situated knowledges place accountability on the researcher who produces knowledge, thus ‘locating’ the epistemological process. The MaddAddam trilogy carefully maps the ‘situated knowledges’ that position Crake’s inception of the Crakers. As creator of the group of neohumans, Crake is neither faceless, bodiless nor contextless, and thus the Crakers become one (very human) individual’s perspective on how best to correct humanity’s ills. Crake’s grandiose and visionary plan when creating the Crakers is a claim for ‘immortality’ based on a hierarchical model of human exceptionalism. To accomplish this mission Crake declares that ‘[t]he proper study of Mankind is Man’, establishing that the Crakers are by no means a clean slate, or a fresh attempt at a retake where humankind went wrong (OAC 346). Crake’s statement places ‘man’ firmly as the norm for the future of humanity. Thus, Atwood emphasises the crisis of the traditional human subject, caught in the historical tug-of-war between nature and culture (Braidotti 2013:1). The stricture of this binary ordering sets back any critical attempt by postfeminism or posthumanism to decenter ‘man’, ‘-man’ or ‘Man’ as criterion. Jimmy, who provides the ‘everyman’ and ‘neurotypical’ perspective to Crake’s megalomaniac scientist, is not taken with the grandiose concept that the Crakers embody, instead they ‘leave him chilled’ (OAC 115). Jimmy’s objectifying gaze appraising the bodies of the Craker women, ‘admirably proportioned [like] ads for a high-priced workout program’, reduces the Craker women’s bodies to two-dimensional marketing imagery, personality-free ‘living statues’ (114). According to Jimmy, the fact that the Crakers are ‘perfect’,

means that they lack human qualities, such as flaws. Alison Dunlap argues that the Crakers as a humanoid species are re-engineered to 'defy animal/human, nature/culture binary oppositions' (3) and as such collapse hierarchical behaviours. I will investigate below how Dunlap's argument applies to the Crakers' behaviour once they begin to inter-socialise with humans. But in considering the Crakers their conception turns out to be different from their physical manifestation. The Crakers develop independent thought and thereby traditional binaries are duplicated through the mind/body, nature/culture divides.

The Crakers are created to be physically human but without a human mind. Initially Crake designs the Crakers in the belief of a biological determinism that allies humans with animals (Dunlap 7), thus engineering himself, Crake, out of the equation. Paradoxically, despite his Enlightenment ideals, Crake engineers the Crakers to be all body, no mind, because Crake has witnessed the evils of humankind, and decided that due to the creativity of the human mind, it is too easily lead astray from performing constructive acts. But Crake has to compromise in his creation of the Crakers and leaves intact the part in the human brain that develops reverence, because 'take too much out in that area and you got a zombie or a psychopath [...] these people are neither. They're up to something though, something Crake didn't anticipate' (OAC 186). Atwood foreshadows the annulment of the mind in the mind/body divide through Crake orchestrating his own death at the hands of Jimmy. To incite the killing, Crake slits Oryx's throat, metaphorically separating the mind from the body, thus symbolically perpetuating this binary divide. Through the death of the feminine body that Jimmy desires, Jimmy is denied his role in an oppositional gender system.

The deep gender divide that exists as long as female bodies are culturally considered a commodity, is disrupted through the Crakers. The context in which Crake operates is an economy where a trade in organs and bodies is commonplace, and where essentialist notions of gender reduce women's bodies to a means for trade in a male hegemonic economy. Narkunas notes that the Crakers are bio-engineered to do away with any 'inefficient human values and practices' such as destructive and territorial tendencies (Narkunas 14) as well as diseases and overpopulation (OAC 345). Crake's female contemporaries, as characterised by Ren and Amanda, find that using their bodies is an efficient way to get ahead when love fails. These postfeminist female characters participate in the cultural trajectory that emphasises the binary gender divide and imposes hierarchies according to marketable value. On the receiving end both Jimmy and Crake think nothing of perusing hard-core porn websites (Oryx), using prostitutes provided by student

services (Oryx again) and getting ‘worked over’ at a sex club by Ren (OAC 340), meanwhile Oryx and Ren provide the exchange through which Jimmy and Crake perpetuate and strengthen their male homosocial bond (Butler 55). The majority of the Crakers’ genetically engineered attributes act to redress both smaller and more overarching human flaws. Designed to be effectively indestructible as a humanoid concept, they are fast-maturing, placid, polyamorous, survive off plant material and are designed to drop dead at thirty. Still, culture clashes occur in their interactions with surviving humans.

The Craker species is created to be docile, vegetarian and seasonally reproductive, yet in their interactions with humans they replicate the tendencies evident in a male hegemony. The male Crakers effectively gang rape both Amanda and Ren (Narkunas 15), and although it is narratively construed as a trans-species miscommunication, the male Crakers acting out of biological instinct, consent is omitted. As both women fall pregnant as a result of the assault, Narkunas interprets this as violence to women being perpetuated (15). Another example of patriarchal features, that have supposedly been engineered out, is the Craker men pissing to create boundary walls to deter predators, which is essentially territorialism and ownership reasserting itself. Initially, the Crakers act outside of any human notions of ethics or culture, blindly following biological stimuli, but eventually they start to negotiate and modify their behaviours according to human patterns: *‘should we mate with her? No, we should not [...] These women scream with fright, they do not choose us [...] they do not like a wagging penis. We do not make them happy’* (MA 124). Thus, they start to assimilate behaviours to negotiate cross-cultural and inter-species communal living. This is the narrative moment when the category ‘woman’ is split, as the Craker males have identified that human women are different to the Craker women.

The Crakers can only come into being through being compared to human beings, and their physical, mental and spiritual features spark from contrast. Rather than the future of humanity, the Crakers represent the embodiment of humanity’s absence from the earth. As such they signify lack, and death. Thus, in a narrative where Jimmy is ‘no-man’, the Crakers initially represent the no-human. The bridging concept between the two human species is the onset of the Crakers’ myth-building and worship-making, and furthermore the inter-mingling of genes. Thus, God is not dead, but re-invented and re-told, and the myth of humanity is perpetuated. This is illustrated most clearly at the end of *MaddAddam* when Craker males and human females begin to mate and cross-fertilise and the expectation of hybrid progeny becomes reality. Utopia can thus be glimpsed: it is a utopian future that incorporates human flaws.

Conclusion

The problematizing of gender roles and gendered subjects, specifically female subjects in a male hegemonic social system, are themes that appear in all of Atwood's novels. I argue that the MaddAddam trilogy brings these themes to the fore through Atwood's usage of the combined binary genres dystopia/utopia and through the main characters' embodiment of alternate feminist figurations. By applying the figure of the cyborg, the multitudinous and fractured nature of feminine subjectivity is healed and boosted. Furthermore the nomadic process is clearly tracked in the ruptured chronology of the novels, adding new dimensions and infinite possibilities to the narrative. Finally, by destabilizing established feminist discourse and by critically assessing the male narrative, the potential for new ways of thinking on the feminine subject are offered up.

In the trilogy Toby's character embodies feminine subjective becoming, and figuring Toby as a cyborg allows for openings in the narrative to think on new possibilities and alternate ways of thinking on femininity. Through her trajectory in MaddAddam Toby encounters as well as embodies various feminisms and manifestations of femininity, and it is in the meeting and melding of these that further possibilities are located. Ultimately, and potentially, uniting the trilogy is an idea of the postfeminist subject as a site of possibility for subverting conventional ideas of feminine subjectivity. The multitudinous feminine subject, in constant danger of disintegration and dispersion from under the demands of contemporary existence, must be continuously re-assembled under novel figurations in order to survive. The powers of capitalism, as embodied in MaddAddam by the CorpSeCorps, have far-reaching arms that can turn all features of corporeality into objects of monetization, and whose aim it is to capitalise on each aspect of life beyond the point of exhaustion. The resulting compartmentalisation of subjective becoming is one that influences Toby's character's narrative trajectory, and it is one that she ultimately must succumb to. This due to Toby's deferral to a pre-existing discourse on femininity and its accompanying critical outcomes. Atwood illustrates the dissolution of civilisation as figurative bodily disjointedness.

Dismemberment affects various areas of human existence from health and death to fertility and sexuality. Bodily dematerialization appears to different degrees in advanced capitalist society; subjective unity is thus not only impossible, but a moot point. Corporeal fragmentation is core issue in MaddAddam, as corporations effectively have monopoly on life, and flesh is reduced to profit value. The autocratic fictional body of CorpSeCorps

effectively owns, or is a subsidiary to, all biotech firms, and their security. Due to effectively having monopolised violence and the control of weapons, they ultimately control the law itself and ultimately who is a legitimate subject of law (Narkunas 4). The CorpSeCorps, a trope for corporate cannibalism, ‘feed’ on human resources, and thus even corpses have marketable value – from harvested organs, and the flesh of dissidents, which is fed to the population in strangely addictive burgers, to the cryogenically frozen heads of the rich. Thus, the commodification of the human body and the resources it offers through the brain, and other parts or products of, such as sexuality and procreation, are business as usual in MaddAddam. All aspects of life and the body are mapped out for profit, monetization and marketing. The cyborg figuration disrupts the dematerialization of the feminine body, encourages a rethinking of bio- and techno-science, and promotes alternative ways of figuring heretofore established discourse. The cyborg, half human half machine, subverts established discourse on science, but more importantly, allows for new ways of thinking on gender. Critical application of the cyborg figuration enables an ideological departure from, and beyond, binary systems of thought.

My essay has shown how Toby embodies alternative and multiple femininities and various gender manifestations through her story arc. Toby’s experience as a romantic post-apocalyptic fighting-to-be cyborg, finally reunited with Zeb, the ‘beta chimp’. Their pairing is a relationship that goes beyond reproduction. Essentially, what they embody is a male-female relationship where the regeneration of humankind happens outside of their bodies, figured by the hybrid human-Craker offspring. Aging and time are dimensions that Toby has overcome through her infertility: she has stepped outside of chronology. Toby also exists outside gender, she is androgynous, and wields subjective agency through introducing a way of preserving story-telling narrative to the Crakers. Toby’s story of emancipation is that she is orphaned, rendered infertile, starved, sexually abused then rescued, briefly nurtured by the Gardeners, then walled up inside her fortress, her past flowing through her every action in a suspended present while she fights for self-preservation.

Despite the narrative tropes of utopia/dystopia and the possibilities for change and subversion that rest within this binary the trilogy remains seemingly resistant to the introduction of a concept of gender equality and the suggestion of an autonomous feminine subject. Instead, the trilogy’s dystopian conclusion, a study of futuristic history-making, reprises a familiar pattern of exclusion of the feminine in a historical narrative. Rather than

rupture, reprise, instead of redress, regress. The feminine subject remains constrained, and ultimately silenced, within an established structure of male hegemony. Not until the subject-object dichotomy is overturned, such as when Oryx resists pornographic objectification through tipping the power in her favour with Jimmy, and when Toby metaphorically regenerates through the apocalyptic moment, can the feminine subject begin to become.

Toby and Oryx both stand outside of normative femininity due to their orphanhood, childlessness, remove from origin and fluid identities. Reading both of them as cyborgs opens up the possibility of a non-essentialist criticism of the trilogy. Both characters' narratives are layered in time, creating an experience of scrambled chronology, further depicting them as in-process, 'becoming'. As a means to overcome the gap between lived experience and theoretical representation Braidotti's nomination 'nomad', denoting a way of thinking that explores subjective loss of unity, is a deliberate move towards repairing that dematerialization. Nomadic thinking encompasses a multitudinous, fluid and trans-global trajectory: Toby and Oryx are cyborgs. To allow critical thinking on contemporary feminine subjective becoming, it is imperative to investigate established discourse and lexicon, and Atwood's play with irony and double-meanings, as well as genre-blending in the MaddAddam trilogy illustrates this.

Atwood describes the systematic sexual subjugation of the female characters in MaddAddam using a black humour that highlights both the absurdity and a chilling familiarity to the reader. The critic J. Paul Narkunas argues that all the younger women in *Oryx and Crake* are sexually abused in one form or another, 'creating a self-perception of women's bodies as their only means of exchange', all due to essentialist notions of gender (14-5). Narkunas hypothesises that this is a poke from Atwood's part at third-wave feminism and the idea of empowerment through sexual expression. The postfeminist context places women as objectified bodies in a marketplace economy, one that is self-perpetuated when women use sex-work as a path towards emancipation. Atwood gets this point across through characters like Ren and her stripper colleagues whose bodies are used to defuse male aggression through sex and flirty jokes: '[t]ake two, honey, they're cheap!' (TYOTF 240). The fact that they have to use their body as merchandise is a matter of context, and this applies to all female characters in the trilogy. In both *Oryx* and *Flood* Amanda, Ren, Oryx and Toby are each introduced to the cost of independence: by trading their bodies for survival. Violence to the female body persists even in the Crakers, who were bio-engineered to use

sexual activity only as a means of reproduction. Ironically the Crakers, when they encounter human females, are unable to overcome their desires, causing confusion and distress. Narkunas points out that the engineering of the Crakers is limited to a male perspective and a patriarchal experience, which Crake himself was unable to breach (15). Thus, a male-centric discourse is perpetuated.

In the trajectory of narratives in the MaddAddam trilogy, there is a relay of voices that track subjective becomings and deaths. Beginning with Jimmy-Snowman in *Oryx and Crake*, followed by two females: Toby and Ren in *The Year of the Flood*, concluding with a conglomeration, and a fusion, of voices and narratives in the final instalment *MaddAddam*. The subjective becoming of Oryx, in *Oryx and Crake*, succeeds through narrative resistance, by being a 'narrative cipher', and a 'character [who] comments on the narration of subjectivity' (Narkunas 16). Oryx subverts the subject-object dichotomy, and the firmament of a mere two-dimensional image through being 'three-dimensional from the start' (102-3), yet delicate and see-through like 'filigree' (OAC 126). This paradoxical quality of Oryx's manifests a resistance to any preconceived ideas of the feminine subject as subservient or lacking agency. Figuring Oryx as a cyborg promotes a thinking that thwarts the rigid boundaries of the heterosexual matrix and implodes unitary or binary categorization. Oryx gains agency through her refusal to be seen as a victim or let herself be projected upon by the male characters around her, this tendency also makes her character applicable in a greater context of victimization and female commodification. Oryx's character also lends itself to a debate on the structural female subordination inherent in a binary gender system, and manifests the othering tendency inbuilt in Western feminism. When Oryx is killed, her character's death, having her throat slashed, represents a figurative severing of the body from the mind.

The question remains, however, whether a mere overturning of the founding binaries of knowledge production will promote gender symmetry. Atwood has let the ending of the trilogy remain open and ambiguous, promoting reader participation with the text. The trilogy features pockets and openings for discussions on gender, but returns conclusively to a male/female binary that hangs in the balance. This dynamic makes Utopia possible, but could dismantle it all the same. The MaddAddam trilogy makes room for alternative figurations and non-traditional readings while allowing for feminist tensions, but Atwood's

essentialist bent pervades, as does the masculine body as carrier of universal agency and voice.

References

Atwood, Margaret. *MaddAddam*. London: Virago, 2014.

-. *Oryx and Crake*. London: Virago, 2004.

-. 'The Handmaid's Tale and Oryx and Crake 'In Context''. PMLA Vol. 19, No 3 (May 2004): 513-17

-. 'The Road to Ustopia'. The Guardian 14 October 2011. Accessed on 28 April 2016 at 1:30 pm.

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/oct/14/margaret-atwood-road-to-ustopia>

-. *The Year of the Flood*. London: Virago, 2010.

Baccolini, Raffaella. 'Gender and Genre in the Feminist Critical Dystopias of Katherine Burdekin, Margaret Atwood and Octavia Butler'. *Future Females, The Next Generation: New Voices and Velocities in Feminist Science Fiction Criticism*. Ed. Marleen S. Barr. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers: 2000. pp 19-34

Bouson, J. Brooks. "We're Using Up the Earth. It's Almost Gone': A Return to the Post-Apocalyptic Future in Margaret Atwood's The Year of the Flood'. *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. Vol 46:1 (March 2011): 9-26

Braidotti, Rosi. *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994

-. *The Posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity, 2013

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. London: Routledge, 1999

Copley, Soraya. 'Rereading Margaret Piercy and Margaret Atwood: Eco-Feminist Perspectives on Nature and Technology'. *Critical Survey* Vol 25:2 (2013): 40-56

Dunlap, Allison. 'Eco-Dystopia: Reproduction and Destruction in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*'. *The Journal of Ecocriticism*. Vol 5:1 (January 2013): 1-15

Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*. London: Penguin, 2013.

Haraway, Donna J. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Free Association Books, 1991

Howells, Coral Ann. Ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP: 2006

Jameson, Fredric. 'Then You Are Them'. *The London Review of Books*. Vol 31:17 (2009): 7-8. Accessed on 18 August 2016 at 23: 11.

<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v31/n17/fredric-jameson/then-you-are-them>

Lacey, Lauren J. *The Past That Might Have Been, the Future That May Come: Women Writing Fantastic Fiction, 1960s to the Present*. Jefferson: McFarland & Co: 2014

Lykke, Nina. *Feminist Studies: A Guide to Intersectional Theory, Methodology and Writing*. London: Routledge, 2010

Mosca, Valeria. 'Crossing Human Boundaries: Apocalypse and Posthumanism in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*'. *Altre Modernita* (05/2013): 38-52

Narkunas, Paul J. 'Between Words, Numbers and Things: Transgenics and Other Objects of Line in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddams*'. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*. Vol 56 (2015): 1-25

Showalter, Elaine. 'The Snowman Cometh'. *The London Review of Books*. Vol 25:14 (2003): 35. Accessed on 18 August 2016 at 18:11.

<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v25/n14/elaine-showalter/the-snowman-cometh>

Tolan, Fiona. *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction*. New York: Rodopi, 2007.

Watkins, Susan. 'Futureshock: Rewriting the Apocalypse in Contemporary Women's Fiction'. *Literature Interpretation Theory*. No 23 (2012):119-3