

## **Manipulative Attribution of Man “Today and Tomorrow” in Margaret Atwood’s Madd Addam Trilogy**

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### **Abstract:**

The Booker Prize-winning author of *Oryx and Crake*, *The Year of the Flood*, and *Maddaddam* takes us on a journey into a near future that is both all too familiar and unfathomable in three breathtaking novels. A man tries to survive in a world where he might be the last human in *Oryx and Crake*. He sets out on a quest through the lush wilderness that was once a major city in search of the answers after the world was taken on an unrestrained genetic engineering ride by strong businesses. The long-feared waterless catastrophe that altered Earth as we know it and wiped out the majority of human life occurred in *The Year of the Flood*. And in *Maddaddam*, a small band of survivors team up with the kind, bioengineered quasi-human species known as the Children of Crake, who will rule over this new planet. These three books carry us from the end of the world to a daring new beginning in a grimly conceivable future influenced by plagues, floods, and genetic engineering. The Maddaddam Trilogy, thrilling, emotional, and a masterpiece of imagination, affirms the supreme tenacity of people, community, and love. This paper probes Atwood’s representation of life of today’s human and tomorrow’s post-human bringing the tenets of humanism and post-humanism.

**Keywords:** Human, Non-human, Humanism, Post-humanism, Hierarchy, Speculative, Bio-engineering

More than fifty books of fiction, poetry, and critical essays have been written by Margaret Atwood. Her works include the MaddAddam trilogy, *Alias Grace*, *The Robber Bride*, *Cat’s Eye*, and *The Robber Bride*. Once Donald Trump was elected, the Handmaids came to stand for resistance against the weakening of women, and the 2017 release of the award-winning Channel 4 TV series, her 1985 literary classic, *The Handmaid’s Tale*, made reappearance to the bestseller charts. *The Testaments*, her second book, was released in 2019. It received the Booker Prize, and it was awarded immediately away.

The Booker Prize, the Arthur C. Clarke Award for Imagination in Service to Society, the Franz Kafka Prize, the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, and the PEN USA Lifetime Achievement Award are just a few of the honours that Atwood has received. She was admitted to the Order of the Companions of Honour in 2019 for her contributions to literature. Also, she has experience as a puppeteer, playwright, librettist, cartoonist, and illustrator. She resides in Canada’s Toronto.

The same-named trilogy by Margaret Atwood was completed with the release of the book *MaddAddam* in 2013. The first book in the trilogy, *Oryx and Crake* (2003), alternates between a dramatised present of apocalyptic devastation and a masterful recounting of the events in the wastelands that led to that disaster. Jimmy-Snowman, who has divided himself into Jimmy (his persona in the corporate world) and Snowman, serves as the focal point for both the past and the present (his post-apocalyptic persona, in which he laments the losses and revels in his own seduction). *The Year of the Flood* (2009) centres on the experiences of two women (Toby and Ren) who are not a part of the corporate wonderland, demonstrating

what it is like to be a member of the 99% that make up the pleebland. It also alternates between the past and the present apocalyptic. In the post-apocalyptic *MaddAddam*, a motley crew of human survivors and the Crakers, the ecological humanoids created to take the place of humans, are shown starting again in a devastated world.

The most crucial thing to understand about Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy is that it falls under the speculative fiction category. Atwood believes that the purpose of science fiction is to bend contemporary norms into an extreme version in order to comprehend its stakes in the future. While Atwood would vehemently disagree with it and argue that the *MaddAddam* trilogy be considered as speculative, the world it depicts initially appears to be science fiction.

While the universe of the novel may appear future, it is working with conflicts, ideas, and technology that are firmly anchored inside our own reality. By setting this up, it is possible to further explore the stakes of the trilogy in connection to our own world. It would be interesting to learn how the trilogy views and interprets the interaction between human and nonhuman figures in particular. The two universes in the narrative are very different from one another. Prior to the fabricated calamity known as the Waterless Flood, the first planet shows a society dominated by hierarchies and conflicts. By appropriating and utilising various nonhuman beings to advance their own position in the world, humans positioned themselves at the top. After the end of the world, Atwood imagines a society in which people are no longer at the top of the food chain since the disease that caused the Waterless Flood wiped out the great majority of them. A few humans and other hypothetical intelligent nonhuman creations like Crakers and genetically altered pigeons are all that's left.

The trilogy must be viewed through a posthumanist lens in order to analyse these shifts in the social order. Posthumanism, in general, focuses on redefining the idea of the human, including how people see other objects and living creatures. Human and nonhuman categories dissolve to provide room for a less antagonistic classification of beings. Posthumanism, however, goes beyond just doing away with hard distinctions between humans and nonhumans. It can also serve as a general ethical framework that enables us as people to critically assess how our actions affect the environment. Posthumanism, advances humanism's goal of viewing the world as the product of human action rather than the work of any particular religion or deity. Instead of emphasising only human behaviour, posthumanism seeks to undermine a human-centered viewpoint in order to comprehend how all living things have an impact on the planet. We are therefore able to comprehend that the stakes of the future affect not just us as humans but also every other living thing in the globe as a result of this destabilisation.

The Human-focused hierarchy world and the posthuman world are two drastically different realms that are presented in the trilogy. Numerous characters in the novels are committed to upholding rigid hierarchical norms in order to preserve their own way of life. This involves everything from making money off and exploiting other people and animals for one's own needs all the way to forging entire religions centred on the use of fossil fuels and against renewable energy sources. The God's Gardeners, an eco-cult, have a pledge not to harm any animals, not even pests they encounter in their gardens. On the other hand, there are just as many personalities who represent a much more egalitarian way of life that views all life as fundamentally and equally precious. These two definitions serve as the archetypes, however many characters fall somewhere in between.

The trilogy's two worlds—the world before and after the Waterless Flood—examine the effects and outcomes of the two ways of thinking. The CorpSeCorps, which routinely take advantage of other people in order to advance their own world, are examples of the self-centered culture that the Human symbolises. On the other hand, the humans depict those who strive to reconcile their role in the world with that of other species and beings and who consider their impact on the earth, similar to those portrayed in the God's Gardeners. A Human-centered world predominates before the Waterless Flood and comes to determine how society will develop. This ultimately leads to a number of issues, both biologically and morally. Everywhere in the world, especially among individuals who want to see their society change, there is a persistent sense of emptiness and dread. The world has seen the writing on the wall; as stated by Crake, “As a species, we’re in deep trouble, worse than anyone’s saying.” (*Oryx and Crake* 294-295) Crake, one of the greatest scientists of

his time, is aware that if humanity sticks to the course they have chosen for themselves, they will perish. And even then, it hardly scratches the surface of what will actually matter to people.

The widespread exploitation of resources and other beings for personal benefit is one of the most significant ethical conundrums encountered in the human world. For instance, several corporations concentrate on bioengineering animal splices to produce products that people can use and mistreat however they see fit. Pigoons are an example of a spliced species with sentience, but there are many more examples of creatures made specifically for human needs. For instance, liobams (lion and rams) were made to please the Lion Isaihists, while wolvog were made to protect humanity. Other "natural" creatures frequently die off as a result of severe climate change, or they are co-opted or used for human purposes in different ways.

Before the Waterless Flood, it's a dog-eat-dog world where most individuals take advantage of any opportunity to advance their social status. The majority of humanity is then wiped out by the Waterless Flood, a man-made illness developed in the same labs that rule the pre-Waterless Flood Earth. The once exploited beings can then develop into a posthuman planet. The world still bears the imprints of the world before humans, but by working together, a variety of creatures are able to establish a new society. The MaddAddam trilogy is better understood when viewed through the lens of posthumanism since it promotes a posthumanized, community-driven version of humanity as opposed to the hierarchical, oppositional Human.

How to explain? "Jimmy is a name. Snowman has two names."

"His name is Snowman-the-Jimmy?"

"Yes," said Toby, because it was now. (*MaddAddam* 15)

The change of Jimmy, a significant character in the MaddAddam trilogy, serves as a major plot tension between the first and third novel. When the Waterless Flood begins, Jimmy adopts the name Snowman. He addresses the Crakers in this manner throughout *Oryx and Crake*, a novel about a group of biogenetically manufactured beings that resemble humans. Yet, the persona once known as Jimmy to the pre-Waterless Flood humans and Snowman to the Crakers comes together in the aforementioned exchange at the start of the trilogy's last volume. His name was originally Snowman, but the Crakers changed it to "Snowman-the-Jimmy" to connect his two distinct personas from the first book. He is now Jimmy and Snowman, not just Jimmy or Snowman. His two names combine to become Snowman-the-Jimmy.

These three characters' conceptions—Jimmy, Snowman, and Snowman-the-Jimmy—show how Atwood breaks down the distinction between humans and other animals and the factors that drive it. She starts by drawing what seems to be a hard distinction between Jimmy and Snowman. Jimmy is shown as the Human who is innately motivated by a hierarchy that serves his own self-interest and financial gain. The Snowman, on the other hand, undermines this notion of a more "human" person by risking his life to assist nonhuman animals like the Crakers. As a result, humanity is defined as either being Human or not Human, creating a binary manner of mind. Snowman-the- Then Jimmy breaks down the dichotomy that Atwood had established by combining their characters; the fusion of their names ultimately represents a fusion of Jimmy and Snowman's personality.

Snowman demonstrates how he is inherently aware of the wrongs Jimmy has perpetrated, his social consciousness having been aroused, from his use of his parents' suffering to his submission to the corporate system. The two characters stand for two opposing schools of thought; whereas self-interest has always been a priority for Jimmy, Snowman has grown increasingly committed in the community. In the conclusion of *Oryx and Crake*, this reaches a peak. He discovers indications that humans are still alive after the Waterless Flood, which appears to have destroyed human civilization. He then investigates these signals until he discovers a group of people setting up camp. He starts to ponder what he should do next at this moment. Does he "advance with a strip of bedsheet tied to a stick waving a white flag"? Tell them to "back away" and "leave that spraygun"? "Finish it now, before they see him, while he still has the strength"? (OC 373-374) These he decides not to do due to a variety of risks to his own person. He also ponders if he should kill them, wondering "Should he kill them in cold blood? Is he able to?" (OC 374) Whichever the course of action he selects, it is clear that he has changed significantly from his previous behaviour since he is now thinking about the consequences of his decisions in addition to how they will affect him. He now understands how his actions have an impact on him, the people he interacts with, and even the Crakers. Snowman shows signs of

development and is generally better able to consider all the elements of a situation and how they will affect other people.

*Oryx and Crake* frequently discusses the striking contrast between the equalising human and the hierarchical human. The final book of the trilogy, *MaddAddam*, breaks down this dichotomy between the two types of mankind. The first two novels in the series cover various characters throughout the time leading up to and immediately following the Waterless Flood. The two stories then intersect in *MaddAddam* at the same time, effortlessly fusing the two timelines. Jimmy winds up feverish and unwell in the care of those he had previously abused, including Ren and Amanda, both of whom he had spurned as lovers in *Oryx and Crake*, at this point following his frantic run towards the characters seen at the end of the first novel.

Toby's friendship with the bees is an example of a human-animal companion species interaction. The concept of co-evolution and cohabitation is deeply ingrained in this connection since in this particular instance, both the person and the animal involved grow and change one another irrevocably. Yet, the *MaddAddam* trilogy features other types of relationships as well. In instance, the human-pigeon partnership reflects a completely different type of human-nonhuman relationship. Pigeon/human dynamics are not fundamentally rooted in the same coeval, companion relationship as Toby and the bees. From the beginning, the relationship between people and pigeons has been more challenging.

In the end, the pigeons and humans decide that killing the Painballers is the only viable option. To carry them out, they all travel together to the beach. In addition to joining together to decide the destiny of the Painballers, the two's joint execution signifies the triumph of the posthuman connection of becomings over the Human-driven system, which is indicative of the Painballers as before. The success of their collaboration and the system they have established is reflected in this moment of coming together. They were only able to successfully fend off the dangers left from the Human-driven pre-Waterless Flood world because to their union. This demonstrates how crucial posthuman relationships are to the trilogy because the success of the pigeons and humans depends entirely on their alliance.

No matter how symbolic the choice to kill the Painballers may be, it may seem extreme and at odds with the God's Gardeners' ethos, who once took great pride in their pacifism. But, even while moving forward is unquestionably the best option for each group, it is still a decision that plainly affects them. They clearly have been affected by their acts and the circumstances around them, unlike the conscienceless, murderous Humans. They are aware, however, that they will only be able to put the principles of the old world behind them by this last act of violence. The groups may not ensure that their emerging society can survive and advance by making sure the Painballers cannot escape nor have any other negative effects on the groupings.

In result, Toby's writing and the history she offers is able to endure much longer than it would have otherwise, and is able to continue into an unknown future. Crakers are becoming-human through their uptake of writing and history-making. The same is true for humans, who are evolving into Craker as a result of their interactions with nonhuman animals like pigeons. The potential of the Crakers to not only speak with the pigeons but also to help them and include them into a type of community is increased by the fact that the Crakers serve as a vital conduit for humans and pigeons to actually engage.

By utilising posthuman techniques, it is possible to transform a trilogy that initially has a tone that is post-apocalyptic and pessimistic into one with a more upbeat conclusion. When we return to the alterations seen within the Crakers, this is made evident. When viewed through the prism of posthumanism, it becomes evident that their writing and understanding of human behaviours are not an attempt by them to evolve or devolve into humans. Instead, it is a sign that the strict distinction between humans and nonhumans has become blurred, opening the door for a fresh take on the future. It's significant that this vision rejects the pessimistic outlook of the remainder of the trilogy in favour of one that is significantly more upbeat.

The Crakers represent a collective and collaborative outcome that considers the work that the *MaddAddam* trilogy does to strip away boundaries, hierarchies, and binaries that kept a more unfavourable Human-driven system in place. This becomes clear when applying the culmination of understanding of posthumanism within the *MaddAddam* trilogy to them.

Under the Human-run society, when Humans solely had themselves in mind, the world came dangerously close to catastrophe. It's also significant that the future is not left entirely in the control of the

Crakers. To construct a beautiful innocent universe, this was Crake's original goal. The trilogy does not, however, advocate the eradication of humans in favour of a defenseless race of alien animals, nor do the books argue that people are a curse that must be removed from the world. The trilogy promotes development and awareness of the significance and roles that other beings play in the world. The future would look considerably grimmer if the Crakers were the only survivors at the trilogy's conclusion since the posthumanist story of transformation through cooperation and collectivity would have been completely destroyed.

With their perseverance, the beings in the trilogy succeed in eradicating the boundaries and hierarchies that had brought the earth to the brink of doom and paving the way for a shared universe in which many creatures might live and flourish. By viewing the trilogy through a posthumanist lens, one can transform what initially seems to be a cynical and apocalyptic trilogy into a parable that teaches us about the values that one should prioritise in our own world—those of fairness, understanding, and interspecies cooperation rather than exploitation, creating hierarchies, and setting boundaries.

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