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Reasonably Insane
Affect and Crake in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*

> The ultimate language of madness is that of reason.
> —Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*

Introduction: The Future Present

In *Oryx and Crake,* the first novel in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy, narrator Jimmy believes he is the lone human survivor of a plague virus engineered by his erstwhile best friend, the genius scientist Crake.[1] The sequels, *The Year of the Flood* (2009) and *MaddAddam* (2013), elaborate on this fictional society and its eventual demise at the hands of Crake (as well as its aftermath) in the words of other survivors, but it is through Jimmy's recollections in *Oryx and Crake* that readers are granted an "insider's view" of Crake and the events leading up to the post-apocalyptic narrative present. It is easy for readers to pigeonhole Crake as a stock "mad scientist" villain at first due to his almost single-handed destruction of human life on earth, yet Crake's actions and motives are not easily disentangled from their context within a society where empathy is constantly devalued in favour of capital gain. Atwood poses the question of whether the mad scientist is still the villain if the society that he destroys is evil. And how does the mad scientist's characterization change if readers cannot easily identify him as a protagonist or freedom fighter because he does not appear to move against the system? Michel Foucault, in *Madness and Civilization*, asserted that madness begins where "the relation of man to truth is disturbed and darkened" (104); in the case of *Oryx and Crake*, madness is shown to have rooted itself in society's muddied relationship to morality, manifesting ultimately in Crake's genocidal machinations. Throughout the novel, Crake is interpreted by Jimmy and his peers as a "perfect" logical scientist who spurns emotion as a hindrance to the search for knowledge. As an exemplary hyper-intellectual character, Crake represents a disaffected norm that

Jimmy can neither emulate nor understand. Crake's affective reactions to troubling developments in the novel appear as a cynical acceptance of the status quo, especially when he discusses the merits of indiscriminate genetic modification and child slavery as logical in their economic contexts. Crake's own private feelings towards the depravity and wanton destruction that his society perpetuates are never articulated within the novel, and his anti-establishment scheming only becomes clear in retrospect. In Crake, Atwood creates a character whose reasoning against empathy is in perfect harmony with the moral tenets of his profit-driven society—right up until he calmly and rationally effects the extinction of the entire human race.

Atwood demonstrates through the narrative of *Oryx and Crake* that the "madness" of Crake's actions lies in the fact that they are not those of a rebellious individual, but instead the logical product of a society with an affective structure very like our own. In *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood switches the affective coding of the literary trope of the mad scientist. As J. Brooks Bouson notes, Atwood updates the stereotype of the amoral, unfeeling scientist through Crake (145). I maintain that Crake's depiction as a "puzzling, and troubling, character" (Bouson 145) in the opacity of his motivations and disanthropic[2] actions is produced by Atwood's construction of the society from which he becomes alienated as a hateful system both diegetically and extra-diegetically. Atwood challenges readers to empathize with Crake's twin drives to eugenics and genocide, as the dominant culture around him is engaged in the active persecution of humans and non-humans alike. While Crake's genocidal plan ultimately causes the death of millions, it also alleviates their suffering. While I agree with Hannes Bergthaller's observation that Crake is the vehicle through which Atwood exposes the flaws in the logic of the ecological imperative—the dictum that human beings should recognize they are a part of nature and act accordingly (731)—I add that it is as a result of his society's non-reactions towards abuses of power and destructive practices that Crake is able to operate unnoticed. In *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood creates a society where a determined villain aiming for its destruction must only effectively mimic corporate best practices: Crake realizes that, in order to bring down this system without being recognized as a subversive, all he has to do is be very good at his job.

I argue that Crake's sardonic misanthropy and Jimmy's inaction are normative responses to suffering within their society; the socio-economic structure of the world that Atwood creates in *Oryx and Crake* does not allow for any meaningful resistance to dominant social norms, repackaging

insurgency as anticipated acts from a defined opposition against which it can close ranks. In this article, I consider the function of Crake and Jimmy's societal milieu as a literary manifestation of Sara Ahmed's "happiness dystopia." Ahmed uses the term in *The Promise of Happiness* to describe how present-day Western (UK) society elevates citizens' happiness about their culture's achievements at the same time as it encourages wilful blindness to the suffering of the marginalized. Though *Oryx and Crake* was published six years before *The Promise of Happiness*, Ahmed's theories provide an apt, if retroactive, vocabulary to examine how Atwood articulates a fictional future society where the economic structure is perpetuated through the ignorance and *schadenfreude* prompted by suffering, and where this morally repugnant status quo is an accepted norm. I use the affective theories of Jonathan Flatley and Lauren Berlant as lenses through which to examine how the novel's dystopia is perpetuated by way of what Raymond Williams calls a "structure of feeling," one that promotes a hyper-capitalist commodity fetishism and labels any critique of the system as the result of unfounded paranoia. The structure of feeling encourages an extreme version of the mad scientist's obsession with knowledge and consequent spurning of emotion; Crake's actions through most of the novel are not viewed as alarming within the text by his coworkers or even Jimmy, who does not recognize until too late the signs of his best friend's rejection of a socio-economic structure that commodifies even violent actions as entertainment.

I: "Mad" Science and Outlaw Emotion

In literature, the mad scientist villain manifests obsessive tendencies with his[3] own work, accompanied by an unhealthy paranoia or cynicism. Yet in *Oryx and Crake,* Jimmy is unable to identify Crake as antagonistic to the societal status quo until after he has unleashed the virus that destroys humanity; as the narrative is focalized through Jimmy, the reader is encouraged to share in his interpretation of Crake's misanthropy as an expression of the affective norm that is deeply cynical, but not dangerous. Anne Stiles elucidates how in Victorian society and literature, the scientist's superlative mental ability was read according to neo-Lamarckian theories of degeneration, concluding that intellectual overdevelopment led to an atrophy of the emotions and consequent insanity (329). The Victorian trope of the mad scientist is a precursor to the contemporary character that Glenn Scott Allen identifies as the "Wicked Wizard," a villainous intellectual "whose work is abstract and with a value either unclear or threatening," and whose

poorly understood genius "seem[s] to operate outside the boundaries of 'natural' material laws" (7). Scientists like Crake, whose actions derive from theories prompted by emotions such as superiority, resentment, or other negative drives, are interpreted as "beyond threatening" to the system because they do not contribute to the community's productivity or accruing of capital; consequently, those scientists themselves are read as unnatural (Allen 190). The mad scientist traditionally goes too far in terms of taboos dictated by societal values, such as Viktor Frankenstein's meddling with the creation of life (to disastrous consequence) or Dr. Moreau's obscene torture of living animals to force evolution (again with deadly results). Mad scientists are usually punished within the narrative for their actions, which fall outside of what is deemed acceptable by society both within the novel and for the reader. They are punished most fundamentally for their failure to acknowledge or respect the value and "goodness" of social structures. According to the logic of literary tropes both traditional and contemporary, Crake—identified outright by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin as the "scientist-as-magus" (210)—should be the villain of the novel. Yet *Oryx and Crake* inverts signifiers of "goodness": Atwood presents the Compounds (the gated communities where Crake and Jimmy grow up) as a society where a disaffected response to suffering is not interpreted as insanity or madness, but in fact characterizes the practice of science and the capitalist economic system itself.

Atwood deviates from the traditional literary trope of the mad scientist in that, though Crake causes the death of millions, the structure of the society he works to destroy is not shown to be "good": the Compounds are dominated by a corrupt, "morally insane" affect that perpetuates—and enjoys!—the suffering of humans and animals and that has contributed to the degradation of the environment. The dominant society in *Oryx and Crake* operates on the principle that "science is an 'ideology-free zone,'" to use Glenn Scott Allen's phrase (5), existing apart from personal motivations or partisan loyalties, and so its scientist-workers more closely resemble the Wicked Wizard's foil, the Master Mechanic. This ideal capitalist scientist possesses intellectual power, but relies instead on his individual initiative to create "mechanisms which . . . visibly contribut[e] to the increased productivity of the entire community" (Allen 20). The research and development activities in the Compounds, though bearing more resemblance to those of Dr. Moreau than Benjamin Franklin, are not visibly deviant from the dominant society in the novel. Atwood takes to its extreme the "artificial split between

emotion and thought" that Alison M. Jaggar asserts was created by the rise of modern science and maintained to preserve the purity of knowledge (117). I argue that it is precisely because of this split that Crake is able to manifest his own goals unnoticed. Usually, the mad scientist character is depicted as obviously consumed by his own inquiry and unable to identify his actions as taboo. Readers are given to understand that he has been prevented from the recognition that affect should exist separate from knowledge by his own intellect. He becomes an "affect alien" within his own society who does not "experience pleasure from proximity to objects that are attributed as being good" (Ahmed 41) and becomes alienated from those objects as a result. The negative emotions such as cynicism, apathy, pessimism, or anger that he does display are branded as "outlaw emotions" that are conventionally unacceptable to the paradigm in which he operates (Jaggar 131). Scientists who visibly manifest outlaw emotions are interpreted as dangerous, as they possess the knowledge and tools to act on these emotions, and are labelled "mad" or insane because they do not seem to recognize or care about the consequences of their actions. According to the inverted moral priorities of the Compounds, however, Crake's enthusiasm for genetic modification regardless of consequence, his enjoyment of violent computer games and child porn, and his insistence on the top-secret nature of his later work do not "read" diegetically as the actions of a mad scientist.

II: Compound Futures: Corporate Capitalism in a Happy Dystopia

Atwood sets the storyline of *Oryx and Crake* in a near-future world that is a recognizable extension of postmodern, Western society, magnified in terms of its scientific progress, social stratification, and xenophobia. The narrative is restricted to Jimmy's first-person viewpoint as an affluent, educated, white male resident of the Compounds, which are separated from the cities of his world (nicknamed the pleeblands) and each other by heavy security. Jimmy first meets Crake in a Compound elementary school and readers are gradually shown Crake's deviation through his contrast with Jimmy. Both Crake and Jimmy are the sons of worker-scientists; Jimmy's father was a "genographer, one of the best in the field" (Atwood 22), working to develop organs in pigs capable of xenotransplantation, and his mother is a microbiologist. (Jimmy himself is a "word person," to his father's disappointment.) The scientific elite are such because of their Master Mechanic-like abilities to add value through their knowledge to the corporate structure in the research and development of new biotechnologies for the market at large. Each

company has its own Compound where the "top people" (26) and their families are housed, and each Compound's borders are tightly policed by a privatized security company nicknamed the Corps (short for CorpSeCorps, which in turn is short for Corporation Security Corps) that functions as a law enforcement agency. Life in the Compounds is "the way it used to be when Jimmy's father was a kid, before things got so serious" (27), implying that this class-segregated future has developed from a society that is recognizable to the twenty-first century reader, and also that with this future comes an undefined but immanent threat to its way of life.

The political and economic situation of Jimmy and Crake's world mimics that of futures typical to science fiction, which magnify what theorist Carl Freedman terms the "monopoly-capitalist state" of modern America, where "actual political power is largely concentrated in a relatively compact network of corporate, military, and governmental bureaucracies" (19) instead of any one political party. Freedman employs a Marxist lens to conclude that the structure of consumer capitalism is one that enables paranoia, or paranoid affect, as individuals must "seek to interpret the signification of the objects—commodities—which define us" (18). He further argues that the genre of science fiction therefore holds a "privileged relationship" to paranoiac ideologies as prompted by capitalism (19-20).[4] In *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood continues this pattern of paranoia in the commodity fetishism of Compound consumerism, which leads to a xenophobic jealousy of its products: CorpSeCorps is shown to be working on a double front as a result of this. The presence of corporate security guarantees that the commodities produced in each Compound are not seized and exploited by the lower-class pleeblanders, while at the same time ensuring that the scientists who produce the commodities are protected from being seized and exploited by the "other side, or other sides . . . other companies, other countries, various factions and plotters" (Atwood 27). Security is a highly sought-after service due to the perceived necessity of safeguarding objects from dangerous others, who exist outside of and away from life inside the Compounds.

The Compounds maintain a secure, unthreatened way of life by keeping visible suffering such as poverty and violence outside their walls, accessible only through media outlets as distant objects, products made available for consumption. As a result, the society of Crake and Jimmy's childhood operates on the principles of the happiness dystopia: a place where happiness about the status quo is demanded from its citizens, despite suffering that affects non-dominant groups within society (Ahmed 163). Ahmed observes how

affect can be carefully constructed to hide dystopian elements in contemporary British society, asserting that "to see happily is not to see violence, asymmetry, or force" (132). If suffering is represented at all in the happiness dystopia, it is as something that occurs at a safe distance, to other people who may or may not be real, and it brings pleasure instead of discomfort. Jimmy recalls the childhood entertainment he shared with Crake of visiting websites to view violence that may or may not have been real. On "hedsoff.com," for instance, "which played live coverage of executions in Asia, . . . Crake said these bloodfests were probably taking place on a back lot somewhere in California" (81). Crake and Jimmy also watch Western death row sentencing at sites such as "shortcircuit.com," "brainfrizz.com," and "deathrowlive.com," where condemned criminals "hammed it up" with jokes, foul language, or attempted escapes, though "Crake said . . . [t]wo to one it was all rehearsed" (82). Through Crake's comments, Atwood shows that while Crake and Jimmy recognize the existence of suffering and acknowledge death, these phenomena are presented and interpreted as both performances and commodities. The actions of violence, asymmetry, or force are displayed unceasingly for immediate viewer consumption, and in that display they have been drafted into service to create pleasure by way of providing a spectacle. The violence is therefore dismissed by the characters as unreal or staged, setting up a "*happy consciousness* which facilitates acceptance of the misdeeds of this society" (Marcuse qtd. in Ahmed 169). Though panoptic, the happy sight of Compound denizens creates a doubled vision: one that sees the negative effects of injustice and abuse, but subsequently interprets them as a product of deliberate construction for entertainment purposes, effectively covering them from sight once more.

Technology and science are co-opted into the creation and maintenance of the double vision that pervades the Compounds' happiness dystopia so completely that its citizens are conditioned not to recognize violence when it does occur right in front of them. During his visit to the prestigious Watson-Crick Academy, where Crake is studying for a degree in transgenics, Jimmy is dazzled by its palatial grounds with drought- and flood-resistant flowers, genetically engineered butterflies, and imitation rocks made from recyclables that absorb water and release it according to the humidity of the air (Atwood 199-200). The "wonders of Watson-Crick" quickly turn into a horror show, however, when Jimmy is shown the latest genetically engineered animals, including a chicken that is an unrecognizable "bulblike object. . . . Out of it came twenty thick fleshy tubes, and at the end of each tube another bulb

was growing" (202), farmed to provide an efficient and rapid supply of breast and thigh meat for ChickieNob fast-food restaurants. Jimmy is horrified; Crake's co-worker is amused. Atwood takes to its logical extreme the trend within the history of modern scientific development and factory farming where emotional judgments are viewed as detrimental to the acquisition of knowledge and nature is "stripped of value and reconceptualised as an inanimate mechanism of no intrinsic worth" (Jaggar 116).[5] At Watson-Crick, profit has become inseparably linked with knowledge, and Jimmy's reaction to the bioengineered chicken as a transgressive "nightmare" is viewed as risible and backwards by the Academy's students: the animal-machine has acquired recognizable worth through its usefulness as a product to generate profit for the students who "invented" it (Atwood 203). The products of the combination of capitalism and science are happy objects, to borrow Ahmed's phrase: they are "objects that affect us in the best way" (22). If profit is happiness, and objects bring profit, then the objects that produce the most profit produce the most happiness and affect the citizens of Compound society best, regardless of any moral or ethical consequences.

III: Functions of the Structure: Mood, Cruel Optimism, and Paranoia

In *Oryx and Crake*, the main characters' lack of emotional response to obvious suffering and the derision of moral values as useless (or active hindrances) to their hyper-capitalist system work to present an overarching dystopic mood. I am using the term "mood" in the same sense as Jonathan Flatley, who draws on the work of Heidegger to define "mood" as the affective atmosphere "in which intentions are formed, projects pursued, and particular affects can attach to particular objects" (5). Flatley later paraphrases Silvan Tompkins to elaborate further on how affects occur within a network or system that filters our perceptions of the world around us and determines our reactions and emotions therein (14). An individual's emotions are necessarily shaped by the mood created by the affective structure of the society in which they live. Jimmy's helpless pessimism and Crake's cynicism are influenced and magnified by the ideology and attitudes of the culture of the Compounds. I here use Raymond Williams' phrase "structure of feeling" as defined by Flatley to refer to the affective system of society (both that of the Compounds as constructed by Atwood as well as that of the reader), which operates to facilitate and shape individuals' affective attachments to the various objects they are presented with (Flatley 26).[6] The alternating fascination and boredom of Crake and Jimmy in response to snuff sites,

child porn, and other violent phenomena presented to them as harmless entertainment signals to the reader that the diegetic structure of feeling of the Compounds is at direct odds with the moral values of the reader's extra-diegetic one. Even when confronted with abuses that transpire at their places of work or study, Compound citizens are not unduly bothered, seeing happily at all times because of the structure of false consciousness that is in place. Readers may identify the structure of feeling in *Oryx and Crake* as a dystopic one, but to the majority of citizens in the Compounds and pleeblands alike, it is completely logical and normalized.

This constructed asymmetry of affect between how readers and characters in Atwood's fictional society construe the "goodness" or "badness" of their way of life results from the happiness dystopia's utilization of what Lauren Berlant has termed "cruel optimism": first in preventing a consciousness of harmful events, and second in facilitating inaction by suppressing the desire for change. Berlant asserts that a relation of cruel optimism exists when "something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (2); the irreconcilable nature of this attachment is what causes Foucault's "break with the immediate" that makes madness possible (220) and which, I argue, makes it *logical* within the society of *Oryx and Crake*. Significantly, in the case of Atwood's happiness dystopia, cruel optimism is manifested in the ways in which the citizens of the Compounds are "bound to a situation of profound threat that is, at the same time, profoundly confirming" (Berlant 2) due to their attachment to conventional fantasies of a future good life within that system. In the structure of feeling of Compound society, objects in the circulation of capital are not just happy in that they confer pleasure in the present but, as Ahmed discusses, because they embody a deferred happiness, or function as vessels that carry hope for future happiness (181). The good life is an attainable goal if only that hybrid rakunk (raccoon-skunk) is bought, that ChickieNob is consumed, or that current events bulletin is watched on the news at six in order to make an accurate forecast about OrganInc Farms investment futures. Present action on issues such as ruinous drought, rising sea levels, international upheaval, or even the Corps' abuse of power and egregious use of force against its own citizens is not taken by Compound denizens to forestall future disaster. Current events are perceived by the average resident of the Compounds as happy or even confirming objects providing valuable information for consumption, with the potential to bring a future "good life" within reach of the consumer. The confirmation offered by happy objects repackaged from unhappy events is a confirmation of knowledge that pacifies: the individual

is still aware and alert to the threat of a dangerous situation, but interprets the reception of news as if it were action, despite remaining passive and more likely to defend the status quo than take up arms against it.

A refusal of happy sight and dissatisfaction with the system's products marks any dissenter not as outside the structure but instead as the fulfilment of a necessary role still within it; the paranoid revolutionary is the already-anticipated opponent against which citizens must unite to protect their own happiness and way of life, solidifying the values of the society under threat. Jimmy's mother directly opposes the Compound structure of feeling when she destroys her family's computer and runs to the pleeblands, leaving behind a note about how she had "suffered with conscience" in "a lifestyle that is . . . meaningless in itself" (Atwood 61). Yet later, when asked about her motives, Jimmy is dismissive: "I think she got involved with some God's Gardeners-type outfit. Some bunch of wackos" (Atwood 213). With this instance, Atwood illustrates the way in which the rebellious subject is coded by the structure of feeling as suffering from delusions either stemming from mental illness or having fallen under misguided, cultish influences. The mistaken subject marks themself through a stated conviction that they are the possessor of true knowledge about the nature of the objects around them, their relationships, or the way the world works.[7] The rebellious subject distrusts the knowledge that is provided and universally accessible through the structure of feeling, rejecting the promise of happiness that objects[8] purport to give, and invests instead in a belief that true happiness will only be attainable after the object's true nature has been exposed, placing their faith in "knowledge in the form of exposure" (Sedgwick 138). In *Oryx and Crake,* the rebellious subject is an object of mockery, inviting scorn from Compound citizens. Jimmy's mother had been the subject of his derision long before her flight from the Compound, but subsequent references to God's Gardeners or other resistance groups are coloured in the text by their association with his "strange, insufficient, miserable mother" (67); the individuals who make up these groups are assumed to be fundamentally flawed in their personalities and thus susceptible to delusion. This commentary collapses the (already very thin) line between the diegetic structure of *Oryx and Crake* and the extra-diegetic narrative of late capitalism, wherein paranoia's history as a symptom of a greater mental disorder (Freeman and Freeman 133) means that an argument labelled "paranoid" is not received as a legitimate critique of the system, but instead proof that the dissenter conforms to the common image of the "troubled, suspicious, hostile,

fundamentally isolated loner . . . suffering from what is called paranoid *bias* or projective distortion" (Paradis 19). Both in the novel and in our world, the insane individual cannot launch a critique of the way society is structured because it is implied that the unreason and wrongness is located within the diseased individual, not society as a whole. Instead of effecting a break with the structure of feeling, any critique of the happiness dystopia loops the subject back in to the rhetoric of cruel optimism and a reliance on the confirmation that comes from knowledge.

IV: I'm Not Crazy! Everyone Else is Crazy!

In this world of mad scientists and moral insanity as the logical norm, Crake blends in perfectly as the mad scientist *par excellence*; jaded and cynical but seemingly devoted to developing products that contribute to the fantasy of the good life. Crake "passes" diegetically in a way that Jimmy cannot. Though Jimmy is the son of scientists, surrounded by technological wonders, he has difficulty grasping the technical machinery behind it all; as a consequence, the futuristic details of *Oryx and Crake* seem very vague to readers—the powers of Wicked Wizardry at their peak, but blended with the heroic features of the Master Mechanic's role "as a sort of resources scout for the capitalist" (Allen 21). In the Compounds, the alien affect of the Wicked Wizard is harnessed to and directed by capitalism, so that the emotional peculiarities of the mad scientist and his willingness to engage in "unnatural" methods are seen as assets instead of drawbacks. Compound society magnifies the tendencies within our own that "[constitute] a milieu favourable to the development of madness," as Michel Foucault put it in his study of madness (217). The Watson-Crick Academy is nicknamed Aspergers' U (Atwood 193); the Victorian interpretation of genius as a pathological symptom of mental disorder is acknowledged and reduced to a joking stereotype, part of Atwood's biting satire of the idea of the benevolent and knowledgeable man of science. The mad scientist's assumption of the position of god is also a foregone and accepted conclusion within the novel as the business of genetic modification (or "create-an-animal") is "so much fun . . . it made you feel like God" (51). The power and potential the mad scientist derives from his emotional detachment, obsessive work ethic, and superior knowledge is redirected into officially sanctioned channels of entertainment and production that can be consumed by others.

Crake's "madness" does not stem from voiced critiques or overt rebellious acts against the status quo on his part. By the end of *Oryx and Crake*,

Jimmy and subsequently the reader realize that as Crake was cognizant of the structure of feeling in the Compounds, he also recognized that any protests or revolutionary action had always already been anticipated. In a system where destructive practices are normalized and where criticizing the status quo as dystopian is a threat to the operation of what is interpreted as a happy society, Crake's own subversive actions are unrecognizable. When Crake informs Jimmy that HelthWyzer, a major medical corporation, is intentionally planting viruses in their vitamin supplements to boost the demand for cures and keep business running, he marks himself only as an admirer of "an elegant concept" (212). In contrast, Jimmy reacts with disbelief at first, then derision, and demands to know if Crake is "going paranoid, or what?" (212). To be paranoid is to invest faith in the reaction of others to knowledge of others' transgressions; Crake's father's assumption that others would be motivated by horror to move against HelthWyzer resulted in his betrayal and murder by his confidants. Crake thus recognizes that faith in knowledge to motivate others to act morally is a false hope and deliberately avoids it. Crake's path involves manipulating the system to its logical end. The virus that destroys human life is developed and distributed by Crake using the same methods HelthWyzer had used for its own scheme (325, 346); everything he needed had already been developed, thought of, and made available for use. Hope operates diegetically to either lock subjects within a relationship of cruel optimism, or as a mistaken belief that something exists outside of it, but both directions are taken into consideration beforehand by the system. Crake's disanthropic vision of a world without humans (including himself) avoids an investment in the hope of future happiness as promised to the subject of cruel optimism by removing himself as a subject of the future.

V: It's (our) Mad World

The structure from which Crake unsubscribes in *Oryx and Crake* is blatantly constructed by Atwood as a vision of the future of Western society in the age of late capitalism. The blurb on the back cover of *Oryx and Crake* asserts that "Atwood gives us a keenly prescient novel about the future of humanity—and its present," and that the novel operates as a cautionary fable of "a world that could become ours one day" (n. pag.). The divorce of knowledge from emotion that Jaggar identifies continues apace in the novel's society, which illustrates N. Katherine Hayles' nightmare of a future culture of posthumans who regard their own bodies (and those of others) as

fashion accessories to be augmented or modified at will (5). The culture in the Compounds is completely ascribed to the informatics of domination—the oppositional dichotomies that Donna Haraway observed already at work in the stratification of society during the mid-80s, up to and including the classification of certain emotions as natural and others as unnatural or freakish. Happy sight disables any possibilities outside of these binaries; the citizens of Compound society in *Oryx and Crake* think of the natural world and the lives of animals and people as "biotic components [and] in terms of strategies of design, boundary constraints, rates of flows, systems logics, costs of lowering constraints" (Haraway 21). In an incisive indictment of Western late-capitalist science fetishism, *Oryx and Crake* depicts a future where economic imperatives drive the progress of science, rather than empathy or ecological concerns, and, as Bergthaller notes, Atwood depicts the triumph of "aggressive posthumanism" in the novel as indistinguishable from catastrophe (729). Crake's final (official) bioengineering project results in the humanoid, yet animal-like, Children of Crake: ostensibly "floor models" demonstrating the ability of parent company RejoovenEsense to create "totally chosen babies that would incorporate any feature, physical or mental or spiritual, that the buyer might wish to select" (304). The "designer baby" debate is writ large and literally into a society that is conditioned to view everything as objects for consumption, and especially everything science has produced for capitalism as happy objects.

Oryx and Crake takes to their extremes the binary trends in current Western society to separate intellect from feeling, ethics from profit, and science from bias. The refusal to see the ways in which these enforced dichotomies inform each other materially, Atwood implies, creates conditions ideal for "mad" affect to grow and attach itself to those with the knowledge and means to act in the same way as Crake. If contemporary Western cultures are headed down the same path towards a world like that of *Oryx and Crake*, the same factors that enabled disaster at the hands of one rogue scientist in the novel might soon, or have even already begun to, exert their influence. Both postmodernism's "waning in affect" (61) as observed by Fredric Jameson *and* Brian Massumi's claim of a "surfeit of affect" (88) ring true: it is the privileging of certain affects at the expense of others, and their classification not as outlaw emotions or alien affects but as integral to production in consumer culture, that threatens. Daniel Freeman and Jason Freeman track the rise of paranoia in postmodern Western, specifically British, society as it parallels the acceleration of urbanization

(52-54). They assert that "[Western] consumer capitalism . . . predisposes us to suspicious thoughts" (155). The paranoiac's investment in knowledge is a result of attempting to "understand what's happening to us" (Freeman and Freeman 90), but instead of confirmation, it brings distress and agitation from a failure to acquire that knowledge. Foucault observed that knowledge's formation of "a milieu of abstract relationships" around feeling caused the subject to risk "losing the physical happiness in which [their] relationship to the world is usually established" (218). Thus, Crake's "solution" to mortality isolates the stress-inducing function of knowledge and removes it from the equation entirely. "'Immortality,' said Crake, 'is a concept. If you take "mortality" as being, not death, but the foreknowledge of it and the fear of it, then "immortality" is the absence of such fear'" (Atwood 303). In Crake's "mad" philosophy, true happiness comes not from the confirmation of knowledge, but the lack of need for that knowledge or confirmation in the first place.

Conclusion

In *Oryx and Crake*, Jimmy is a product of the affective system and Crake only pretends to be, though all the while he uses the system to achieve his own disanthropic goals. Crake relies on the ignorance induced by his own society to work towards its destruction, yet his machinations remain unrecognizable because they are not plans that include himself within their future framework. Crake is difficult to define: he is not the protagonist, but neither is he truly an antagonist. Bouson observes that Atwood presents Crake not just as "a scientist imperialist, but also a trickster-jokester figure" who creates a "grand game-like illusion" in the process of achieving his end goals (141). However, Crake's game would not have been possible without the structure of feeling of the Compounds providing both the board and the materials necessary—both access to the technological tools he needs and the blasé attitudes towards their use to destroy or re-structure the genetic material of animals and humans. In the affective paradigm of the novel, he is not the hero or even the anti-hero, but neither can he strictly be called a villain. Diegetically speaking, once all the facts are in, Crake is not paranoid: Crake is justified. Crake is not emotional: Crake is rational. Crake is not unfeeling: Crake has morals. Jimmy, still stuck in the structure of binary oppositions, asks himself if Crake had been "a lunatic or an intellectually honourable man who'd thought things through to their logical conclusion? And was there any difference?" (Atwood 343). In Crake, madness and moral

fortitude are conflated, and do not originate in a recognizably alienated individual, but in a character that acts according to the affective structure of his society, and almost perfectly.

NOTES

1 The boy who would grow up to be Crake is known as Glenn only briefly during the narrative. Jimmy refers to Crake mainly by his alias, identifying him first and foremost as the adult man who deliberately destroys humankind, and I follow suit.

2 Greg Garrard identifies disanthropy as a uniquely subject-less drive, wherein an individual's "ordinary misanthropic hatred of 'the crowd . . .' is distinguished by *his absence* from the future he envisages" (41). Garrard discusses this drive in the context of ecocriticism and environmental movements. In the novel, Crake kills off humanity, murders his lover, and forces Jimmy to execute him so he is not alive to see the new world he has ushered in.

3 Generally, it is always "his." Female mad scientists are rare.

4 Freedman's conclusions focus on Philip K. Dick's writing exclusively, yet apply to the genre of science fiction as a whole; Dick is claimed by some to be "the greatest of all SF authors—'the Shakespeare of science fiction,' as Fredric Jameson has called him" (qtd. in Freedman 20), and his influence over the genre cannot be overstated.

5 This attitude crystallized most visibly in the vivisection debate of the late nineteenth century, as scientific inquiry came under attack and was even halted at times by animal rights activists protesting the inhumane treatment of the animal subjects of experiments. Claude Bernard, a nineteenth-century scientist, dismissed anti-vivisection campaigners' concerns, asserting that an animal is "a wondrous machine" (254) and that vivisection is "only an autopsy on the living" (256). Bernard's comments draw on arguments made by pro-vivisectionists at the time that animals do not feel pain on the same level as humans, or even at all, as they are "lower" on the evolutionary scale.

6 Flatley elaborates that "[w]hen certain objects produce a certain set of affects in certain contexts for certain groups of people—that is a structure of feeling. And sometimes structures of feeling are personal and idiosyncratic, but more often they are not: a social group of which the subject is a member shares them" (26).

7 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick asserts that "paranoid knowledge . . . has . . . a practice of disavowing its affective motive and force and masquerading as the very stuff of truth" (138).

8 The anxiety or paranoia prompted by a distrust of happy objects and their producers *could* be seen as oppositional to cruel optimism, though in fact it operates as an appendage of it: when the happy objects fail to be confirming, the individual consumer begins to suspect not the economic system but *the commodities themselves*. Freedman quotes Philip K. Dick's assertion that "the ultimate in paranoia is . . . when every*thing* is against you" (15, his emphasis) to point out the direct production of paranoia through object fetishism.

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