Izabela Poręba

Dehumanizing Discourses: Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy on Post-Humans

ABSTRACT. Poręba Izabela, *Dehumanizing Discourses: Margaret Atwood's* MaddAddam *Trilogy on Post-Humans* [Dehumanizujące dyskursy. Trylogia *MaddAddam* Margaret Atwood o post-ludziach]. „Przestrzenie Teorii" 39. Poznań 2023, Adam Mickiewicz University Press, pp. 195–219. ISSN 1644-6763. DOI 10.14746/pt.2023.39.10.

This paper examines four discursive strategies: colonizing, animalizing, infantalizing and (plant) vegetative that characters in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy use to name the Crakers, post-humans with modified DNA structure. In discussing them, I expose a dehumanizing effect this seemingly neutral processes of naming and describing have. The interpretative findings discussed in this paper constitute a response to largely anthropocentrically oriented extensive criticism on Atwood's writing. By questioning the neutrality of the narrative through a postcolonial reading of the trilogy, I argue that *MaddAddam* challenges the divisions between human and non-human. The paper investigates whether these dehumanizing discursive tactics of animalization, colonization, infantilism or vegetation, which are fundamentally oppressive, can become a means of resistance.

KEYWORDS: Margaret Atwood, non-humans, postcolonialism, childism, *MaddAddam*, animalization

Beings whose ontological status is unclear inhabit the world depicted in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy in considerable numbers and variations. They are transgenic forms, created with the use of bioengineering methods, constructed to maximize the utilization of bodies that are considered not entirely human. This is how pigoons are made – pigs with a brain cortex modified with a human DNA – in whose bodies additional organs (kidneys, hearts) are grown in order to be transplanted into human bodies. ChickieNobs, for instance, are organisms that have only a mouth (it is necessary to provide them nutrients), from which about twenty chicken breasts stick out, ready to be "harvested" three weeks faster than on farms. Hitherto interpretations of Atwood's trilogy have often focused on these aspects of violating the boundaries between the human and the animal,[1] but

[1] See: J.B. Bouson, *„It's Game Over Forever": Atwood's Satiric Vision of a Bioengineered Posthuman Future in* Oryx and Crake, "Journal of Commonwealth Literature" 2004, vol. 39 (3); G. Cooke, *Technics and the Human at Zero-Hour: Margaret Atwood's* Oryx and Crake, "Studies in Canadian Literature" 2006, vol. 31 (2); J.O. Johnston, *Animal-Human Hybrids: Margaret Atwood's Oryx and Crake*, [in:] *Posthuman Capital and Biotechnology in Contemporary Novels*, New York 2019, pp. 67–101; Ch.-H. Ku, *Of Monster and Man: Transgenics and*

Przestrzenie Teorii 39, 2023: 195–219 © The Author(s). Published by Adam Mickiewicz University Press, 2023.Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the CC licence (BY-NC-ND, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

more importantly, researchers expressed the necessity to rethink the very concept of humanity (as described in the novels).[2]

However, the greatest difficulties with determining the ontological status of fictional creatures do not concern human-animal species and other bioengineering experiments, but the Crakers – human beings with modified DNA created by Crake (aka Glenn). These difficulties can be indicated in the narrative of the trilogy, in the efforts of the characters in naming the Crakers, but also – as I argue in this paper – in the criticism of the novel produced hitherto, in the efforts of critics made while depicting these post-humans. The subject of this article will be precisely the language in which these difficulties and efforts were recorded, as well as the source of this kind of barrier. Therefore, I am interested not only in **what** the discourse on the Crakers expresses, but also in **how** it is structured, according to what hidden, pre-statutory assumptions. The most important of them will be difficulties in recognizing these creatures as human, and various linguistic evasions not to question the concept of humanity.[3]

This fundamental difficulty will result, partially unconsciously, in the use of various discursive tactics by characters from the novels; tactics used by humans in order to take power over the described subject/object. The Crakers are commonly referred to using four such tactics: discourses of colonization, animalization, childism, and (plant) vegetation. Interestingly, these four languages of power exercised by human subjects are not quantitatively equally represented throughout the trilogy. In the first and second part – *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and *The Year of the Flood* (2009) – the most important is the language of colonization, in the second and third – *MaddAddam* (2013) – the animalizing type dominates, and in the third, the tactic of childism discourse on Crakers. The vegetation type is the rarest, it only appears several times in the first and third part of the Atwood's trilogy. These differences may prove not so much the susceptibility of specific characters in the novel to certain discursive tactics of exercising power over the subject of description, although they partly result from these conditions, but also from the feeling that basically each of these languages is compromised within the developing

---

Transgression in Margaret Atwood's Oryx and Crake, "Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies" 2006, vol. 32; V. Mosca, *Crossing Human Boundaries: Apocalypse and Posthumanism in Margaret Atwood's* Oryx and Crake *and* The Year of the Flood, "Altre Modernità" 2013, vol. 9.

[2] Chung-Hao Ku state that "since the pigoons and the Crakers are now endowed with human DNA, these two species push Snowman to reconsider what it means to be human in the age of transgenics" (Ch.-H. Ku, *Of Monster and Man*…, p. 109). See also: C.A. Howells, *Margaret Atwood's dystopian visions: The Handmaid's Tale and Oryx and Crake*, [in:] *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*, ed. C.A. Howells, Cambridge 2006, p. 170.

[3] Interestingly, such attempts seem easier when these boundaries are violated by beings more distant from the "demarcation line", that is, by human-animal hybrids.

narrative. I would like to reconstruct these four discursive types and reveal the premises on which they are based in order to present the Crakers in a different light, not as incompetent, not entirely human subjects, but rather as people. Furthermore, I argue that their humanity can be questioned only within strictly defined limits, formulated from a certain, very specific perspective. The subject of the analysis will be mainly those fragments of the narrative in which the Crakers appear (usually who do not speak themselves, but are rather "told" by others), and those excerpts from the criticism of the novel focusing on them published so far. This alternative reading of the post-human figures in *MaddAddam* is challenging – both in the face of the interpretations that have already been made and the narrative itself, which is constructed from a point of view that may appear transparent. It is not, strictly speaking, a realistic narrative of the omniscient and distanced observer, as it is repeatedly mediated by the voices of the characters (e.g. in the form of indirect speech or Toby's journal), but the narrative is completely permeated with this spirit of realism and objectivity. Only by questioning the neutrality of the story can we think of the Crakers differently, as subjects/objects of someone else's story, inferior to the ontological peace and sense of security of the remnants of humanity that survived the apocalypse.

Crakers's *Genesis*

There are two stories about the origins of the Crakers in the Atwood's trilogy. One is a *Genesis* myth that post-humans want to learn (initially, these myths are created by Snowman, aka Jimmy, the protagonist of *Oryx and Crake*; then, in *MaddAddam*, by Toby), the other is the story of the apocalypse narrated from Snowman's perspective. I will briefly reconstruct these two stories in order to familiarize the readers of this paper with the plot of Atwood's trilogy and to highlight the fundamental differences between a myth and a narrative that is intended to be more factual. Furthermore, I want to underline that while the human characters undoubtedly have knowledge (fragmentary or complete) about both of these variants of the story from the very beginning, as they themselves bring a mythical version to life, the Crakers learn their genesis only in the form of a myth.

The Genesis myth begins with the Egg in which Crake created new humans, separating them from Chaos with a safe shell. Chaos was everything outside the Egg, all the evil done by humans to other beings – human, animal, earth. Crake turned Chaos into nothingness to keep his Children and his beloved Oryx safe. After that, Crake departed to heaven, and Oryx, transformed into an owl, rose into the air and still looks after her Children.

And now the story on which the above-reconstructed myth[4] is based: in an undefined future, the world is heading towards an ecological catastrophe – violent and unforeseen natural disasters (floods, tsunamis, droughts) are becoming more and more frequent, and subsequent animal species that are known to us become extinct. It is also a world "in which the historical trajectory of neoliberal capitalism has reached its logical culmination"[5] – an extremely stratified society, divided into two classes: dominant and subordinate. The first of these, a technocratic elite, lives in separated Compounds, the rest – in pleeblands, in which there is not only poverty and exploitation but also a lack of a sense of security. In *Oryx and Crake*, we mainly get to know the part of the world that is separated by walls. It is there that Snowman (then Jimmy) meets Crake (Glenn) at HelthWyzer Public School and befriends him. Their joint activities are of a special kind: computer games (e.g. Blood and Roses, in which players traded with each other atrocities that were complemented by humans and civilization accomplishments – the exchange rates were as follows: "one *Mona Lisa* equalled Bergen-Belsen, one Armenian genocide equalled the *Ninth Symphony* plus three Great Pyramids"[6]) and websites (e.g. brainfrizz.com, deathrowlive.com or nitee-nite.com, where executions in various parts of the world were broadcast live), including pornographic ones. On one of these websites, called HottTotts, they saw Oryx, an approximately eight-year-old girl licking whipped cream from a gargantuan man, for the first time. The three friends lose touch with each other after graduating from high school – Crake is studying at the prestigious Watson-Crick Institute, Jimmy at the disgraceful Martha Graham Academy, and both have no contact with Oryx. Years later, Jimmy and Glenn reconnect. The young genius Crake, the head of the Paradice Project, designed as part of his experiments on human immortality, turns out to be secretly implementing his plan to bring destruction to humanity through deadly, sexually stimulating pills – BlyssPluss Pills. At the same time, he designs and perfects a new kind of human being, who are to live in harmony with non-human creatures. To this end, he modifies their sex drive (limited only to the cyclical mating periods, which was visible on the female body in the bluish tinge of the lower abdomen; moreover, during the

[4] I have reconstructed this myth on the basis of the chapter *The Story of the Egg, and of Oryx and Crake, and how they made People and Animals; and of the Chaos; and of Snowman-the-Jimmy; and of the Smelly Bone and the coming of the Two Bad Men*, with which the proper narrative of the third volume of the trilogy begins (M. Atwood, *MaddAddam*, Bloomsbury Publishing 2013, e-book).

[5] G. Canavan, *Hope, But Not for Us: Ecological Science Fiction and the End of the World in Margaret Atwood's* Oryx and Crake *and* The Year of the Flood, "Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory" 2012, vol. 23 (2), p. 142.

[6] M. Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, New York 2003, p. 79.

mating season, the woman had more than one sexual partner, and the idea of fatherhood was communalized), thus eliminating jealousy and competition, depriving the Crakers of the concept of private property and money and adapting their bodies so that they do not need to absorb animal proteins. Crakers also emit a characteristic citrus scent that repels insects; substances contained in male urine scare away wild game; and their socialization in the Paradice Project is planned in such a way that they do not develop abstract thinking (that capability, according to Crake, determines future wars, exploitation, fights for domination and violence). When the project is ready, Jimmy and Oryx, unaware of what they are actually distributing and advertising, help Crake to implement his plan and spread the deadly BlyssPluss Pills around the world. Crake kills Oryx in front of Jimmy and then dies himself, asking Jimmy beforehand to look after his creatures. At the same time, a global pandemic breaks out, which will soon wipe out most of the human species.

Now let us get back to the mythical story. Crake creates an Egg and closes the people brought to life there, cleans up the entire external Chaos for their safety, and then, together with Oryx, they leave their Children. It is impossible to construct a myth without far-reaching generalizations or without some divine elements of supernatural agency. This is also true of the Crakers' *Genesis* myth. Crake is a figure of omnipotence, a god capable of calling things and beings into existence and of cruel revenge, Oryx is a mother goddess, protector and teacher. The very act of annihilating almost the entire human population also appears to be act of caring. Earl Ingersoll argues that Glenn's actions cannot be excused irrespective of a pragmatic calculation (the earth would be swallowed up by a catastrophe anyway, leaving no bioforms alive), he expresses it quite bluntly: "No, in thunder! Atwood seems to be shouting. If traditional human qualities have to be sacrificed in order to survive, it may not be worth surviving."[7] In the name of human civilization, as Ingersoll argues, **it is not worth** saving other living forms, since the most important of them could not survive. However, when we look carefully at what Atwood thinks of all catastrophes that have befallen man, the certainty of this moral assessment (made from an anthropocentric ethical perspective) is called into question. The Canadian author writes about the Black Death: "Death pays all debts, and cancels a lot of them, so a great deal of working capital was eventually freed up. For the survivors, wages rose, due to a shortage of labour, and the cumbersome and demeaning feudal system came to an end. The position of women

[7] E. Ingersoll, *Survival in Margaret Atwood's Novel* Oryx and Crake, "Extrapolation" 2004, vol. 45 (2), p. 167.

improved."[8] Besides, what for Ingersoll is ultimately the most important proof of Atwood's unequivocal condemnation of the end of mankind are the Crakers. He writes: "Given their short and «happy» lives, the Children of Crake will have no use for much of what Atwood's readers are likely to treasure as high culture."[9] The ironic quotation marks, the shallowness of existences that do not produce "high culture" and, furthermore, "extremely bleak prospects for the very transaction of writing and reading"[10] are the reasons why Ingersoll recognizes that the Crakers are creatures less important than humans – this recognition is attributed not only to Atwood herself, but also "presumably" to her readers. No wonder that Ingersoll is troubled by the novel's open ending, which contains the utopian possibility of a world after the catastrophe[11], an ending that for many critics (and for the author as well) was an argument to think of *Oryx and Crake* as a "utopian dystopia"[12]. I want to investigate the traditional and fundamentally anthropocentric positions in which the description of the Crakers as subordinate beings has its origins, a description that Ingersoll takes for granted without critical distance from the narrative of the novel. The following types will be discussed: colonizing, animalizing, childist and (plant) vegetative, which together will allow an alternative reading of *MaddAddam* to be presented.

Colonial Discourse: The Desire for the Other, Mimicry, and Colonial Guides

When we look at the story about the Crakers from a postcolonial perspective, it transpires that their description is deeply rooted in colonial imagery – Snowman appears as a colonizer *pars pro toto*, and the Crakers as an allegory of the colonized. This kind of analogy is not based on recreating colonial exploitation (e.g. slavery) in the world of fiction, but on preserving a colonial way of describing those who are considered subordinate in the (un)consciousness and language of *MaddAddam*'s characters. This type of discourse is revealed in the way Snowman is described as a good guardian, fulfilling a civilizing mission, and Crake as an imperialist overwhelmed by

[8] M. Atwood, *Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth*, Toronto 2008, e-book.

[9] E. Ingersoll, *Survival…*, p. 171.

[10] Ibidem.

[11] Ibidem, p. 173.

[12] For the descriptions of "utopian dystopia", see: D.M. Mohr, *Transgressive Utopian Dystopias: The Postmodern Reappearance of Utopia in the Disguise of Dystopia*, "Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik" 2007, vol. 1; J.O. Johnston, *Animal-Human Hybrids…*; G. Canavan, *Hope, But Not for Us…*; M. Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale *and* Oryx and Crake *"In Context"*, "PMLA" 2014, vol. 119 (3).

the need to implement projects of Enlightenment reason. Eventually, it reveals itself in the terms used by the characters to name Crakers and in the disproportion that can be seen in how rarely Crakers can, as full-fledged subjects, construct knowledge about themselves (how rarely their voices are present in the narrative). All the above-mentioned discursive threads originate from the discourse accompanying colonization.

It is first worth considering what role Snowman plays for the post--humans. Melissa Silva de Sá argues that "Snowman is actually trying to establish a culture for the Crakers", a culture "that makes the Crakers overcome their limited linguistic and cognitive abilities."[13] At the end of the first volume of the trilogy, as she notes after Carol Osborne, they "**seem** to be **developing** a way of thinking that **resembles** the previous humans, with a religion and artistic expression."[14] Chung-Hao Ku writes that "gradual **development**" of the Crakers belies that they "have forgone symbolism and other maladies of human civilization."[15] From a postcolonial perspective, Snowman's role as a good protector who is to introduce crude people to civilization and culture cannot help but arouse suspicion. This is one of the most powerful arguments for colonization, feeding on the feeling that "for what one cannot accomplish in one's own Western environment […] one can do abroad."[16] The consequence of the belief in the superiority of the civilization of the colonizers is the domestication and acculturation of the Other. Snowman's success in introducing a dead human culture to the Crakers ultimately stems from a preconceived definition of humanity that does not include these characters. Crakers may seem inhuman – or "monstrous", as Gerry Canavan puts it – precisely because they do not share some important cultural features with the person reading and constructing the story itself.[17] If we look here at the teaching and care that lead the Crakers to take over the structures of thinking, abstract imaginations and vocabulary, these processes will no longer appear as their "development", but as a forced acculturation – the acquisition of elements of a foreign culture.

It is worth noting that the internalized colonization logic, which justifies considering the phenomenon of acculturation as at least neutral, or rather

[13] M.C. Silva de Sá, *Storytelling and Survival in* Oryx and Crake *and* The Year of the Flood, [in:] *Prospero and Caliban Revisited: Brazilian Critical Perspectives on World Literature in English*, ed. Gláucia Renate Gonçalves, José de Paiva dos Santos, Faculdade de Letras da UFMG 2020, p. 108.

[14] Ibidem, p. 108; emphasis added.

[15] Ch.-H. Ku, *Of Monster and Man*…, p. 124; emphasis added.

[16] E.W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York 1994, p. 159.

[17] G. Canavan, *Hope, But Not for Us*…, pp. 146–147.

positive, uses a clear value system. Silva de Sá states, for example, that "what is at stake [in Atwood's trilogy] is the survival of human culture."[18] Almost all critics write about the acculturation of Crakers, which from the primitive creatures introduces them to the childhood stage of civilization, tacitly assuming that the Crakers do not have their own cultural forms. It is true that they have no literacy (except for Blackbeard, and only in the last pages of *MaddAddam*), which many interpreters regarded as an argument to consider Crakers as not fully human: "language and writing are implicated in the definition of human life,"[19] judged Grayson Cooke. Valeria Mosca adds that language and rationality were traditionally the most frequently indicated determinants of humanity (Mosca tries to negate these definitions in her paper).[20] Ingersol, as I have mentioned above, also excludes the Crakers from high culture, affirming "extremely bleak prospects for the very transaction of writing and reading."[21] This recognition of the incomplete humanity of pre-literate cultures is troubling. It is all the more troubling that the Crakers do use language and speech to create forms of oral culture – we find out that they repeat the mythical stories told by Snowman among themselves, discuss and memorize them, sing, and that "even over such a short time […] they've accumulated a stock of lore."[22] One need only to look at the history of the human species to realize that literacy does not have such a long history, given that it did not extend to the majority of the population for a long time, and entire masses remained illiterate. Were they not human? The latent cause for neutralizing the themes of Snowman's teaching and benevolent care that are so reminiscent of the colonial discourse ultimately comes to the problem of understanding humanity.

The definitions of humanity reconstructed above are based on the belief that there is an essence of what it means to be a human, that humanity can be reduced to a phenomenon, that there is something "separating them [humans] from the animal or the vegetal world" as the only beings that had "in part freed themselves from their animality. Having broken the chain of biological necessity, humanity had allegedly almost raised itself to the

[18] M.C. Silva de Sá, *Storytelling and Survival*…, p. 107.

[19] G. Cooke, *Technics and the Human at Zero-Hour*…, p. 106.

[20] V. Mosca, *Crossing Human Boundaries*…, p. 46.

[21] E. Ingersoll, *Survival*…, p. 171.

[22] M. Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*…, p. 8. The issues of the primitiveness and adolescence of Crakers were also problematized by Coral Ann Howells, who in the Crakers' love for stories and in their predilection for narrative sees evidence that they are not entirely primitive creatures, as they may initially appear to readers (C.A. Howells, *Margaret Atwood's dystopian visions*…, p. 171).

level of the divine."[23] Achille Mbembe argues that humanism, which was at the foundation of the era of European imperialism, is based on a false universalism, and that the preachers of the civilizing mission have been unaware of this falsehood. The function of this universalism "lies in arrogating the power of self-recounting and of defining, in the place of others, where these same others come from, what they are, and where they must go."[24] This is the role that the protagonists of the Atwood's trilogy have taken on in the narrative, although most of them have taken it unconsciously. This ignorance is not as surprising as it might seem. Faced with a similar phenomenon (Europeans overlooking their role as imperialists), Said asked "how it was that imperial European would not or could not see that he or she was an imperialists" and thought of this phenomenon as frequent, if not typical.[25] What cannot be overlooked, however, when reading *Oryx and Crake*, is Snowman's **awareness** that he is acting as the Crakers' colonizer.

This awareness is usually marked in the narrative after Snowman recalls what he recognizes as quotations from obsolete books, some guidelines written "in aid of European colonials running plantations of one kind or another". He extracts the following scraps of colonial directives from oblivion: "strict adherence to daily routine that tends towards the maintenance of good morale and the preservation of sanity", "they would have been told to wear solar topis, dress for dinner, refrain from raping the natives", "when dealing with indigenous peoples […] you must attempt to respect their traditions and confine your explanations to simple concepts that can be understood within the contexts of their belief systems."[26] Snowman, therefore, not only knows the history of colonialism and the discursive framework that has accompanied the projects of subjugating one group of people to another, but he is also aware that his own role entrusted to him by Glenn as caretaker and teacher of the Crakers is morally ambiguous. Canavan has linked the genre (the apocalyptic novel) with a special kind of fantasy of being a frontier[27] – after the apocalypse, a whole land, so far well-known and divided, transforms back into a place to be colonized. According to Cana-

[23] A. Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, trans. S. Corcoran, Durham–London 2019, p. 13.

[24] Ibidem, p. 161.

[25] E.W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*…, p. 162.

[26] M. Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*…, pp. 4–5, 97.

[27] In discussions of *Oryx and Crake*, authors often referred to intertexts to the novel by Daniel Defoe, calling Snowman 'Robinson Crusoe', and the Crakers the collective 'Friday' (see E. Ingersoll, *Survival*…, p. 163; H.J. Hicks, *The Mother of All Apocalypses in Margaret Atwood's* Oryx and Crake, [in:] *The Post-Apocalyptic Novel in the Twenty-First Century: Modernity beyond Salvage*, New York 2016, pp. 27–28). Due to the extensive comparative reading of these two novels by Heather J. Hicks, I do not reconstruct the similarities between these narratives in this paper.

van, however, this model is quickly discredited in *Oryx and Crake*: "Jimmy's inability to draw a model from history that might help him navigate his new terrain, or to generate a new model on his own, reminds us of the fundamental exhaustion of the frontier myth."[28] But is it sure that, despite a realization of the ridiculousness and insufficiency of the only guidelines he knows about how to deal with the Other (guidelines coined in a colonial discourse), Snowman does not reproduce certain elements of this pattern? According to the narrator, he thinks about his pupils as follows: "Despite their irritating qualities – among which he counts their **naive** optimism, their open friendliness, their calmness, and their **limited** vocabularies – he **feels protective** towards them. **Intentionally or not**, they've been left in his care, and **they simply have no idea**. No idea, for instance, of how inadequate his care really is."[29]

It can be said that Snowman distances himself from the troubling issue of colonization discourse, as he is aware of the historical projects of imperialism and the inadequacy of his role in relation to "post-human noble savages".[30] Nevertheless, he undertakes the task. What lies at the root of these contradictions? From the narrative of the novel, we learn that the Crakers are **better** adapted to the post-apocalyptic world and live an almost idyllic community, while Snowman struggles to find food, shelter and source of heat. He even looks at the Crakers "with envy", or maybe with "nostalgia".[31] It can therefore be assumed that the Crakers can survive as autonomous beings with their own forms of social relations and culture, and yet it is precisely Snowman that needs the Crakers, not the other way around, and he realizes it in a moment of severe internal crisis. "Why don't they glorify Snowman instead? Good, kind Snowman, who deserves

---

[28] G. Canavan, *Hope, But Not for Us*…, p. 141. Justin Omar Johnston seems to think the same, pointing to the importance of the tree figure for the interpretation of *Oryx and Crake*. Snowman is sitting in the tree in the first scenes of the book, he is also there at the end of it, to finally descend from it to the ground. Johnston interprets the tree as an allegory of the tree of evolution of the human species, as a symbol of Snowman's hierarchical sovereignty over the Crakers. According to Johnston, the whole story can be read as events that ultimately lead to Jimmy's descent from the tree and therefore, to a different view of evolution itself (J.O. Johnston, *Animal-Human Hybrids*…, p. 72).

[29] M. Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*…, p. 153; emphasis added.

[30] Grayson Cooke's term; *Technics and the Human at Zero-Hour*…, p. 105.

[31] M. Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*…, p. 6. This difference between an adaptation of two different kinds of human beings to life after the apocalypse leads Chung-Hao Ku to the thesis of a radical reversal of roles in which it is the Crakers who become the favoured human subject, and the Snowman that represents the Other, resembling a Frankenstein's monster (*Of Monster and Man*…, pp. 112–113). This suggestion is certainly interesting but is entirely true only if we suspend the recognition of an ideological character of a discourse about the Crakers and if we ignore the fact that the Crakers literally do not exist outside this discursive frame.

glorification more – much more – because who got them out, who got them here, who's been watching over them all this time?"[32] – the Crakers should worship Snowman like a deity, and thus disinterested humanitarianism is exposed. Jimmy lives among strangers, but still "needs to be listened to, he needs to be heard."[33] He is awaiting a confirmation that he has not been thrown into nothingness with the rest of human civilization. Thus, although many of Snowman's statements show his irritation with an immaturity of the Crakers' reason, ultimately his fundamental need to find a human listener includes a gesture of recognition of the humanity of the Children of Oryx. About this, however, Snowman is ultimately uncertain – when he reaches a climax in his reminiscences of the pre-catastrophe, he makes a bitter complaint: "If only he had an auditor besides himself, what yarns he could spin, what whines he could whine."[34] Snowman gets caught up in irresolvable contradictions.

What role did their creator Glenn play in implementing the colonial discourse for the Crakers? It is interesting that one of the destructive traits of man that he eliminated from the creatures was racism or – to use a new-speak of technological corporations – "pseudospeciation". The problem of racism was corrected as the Crakers "simply did not register skin colour."[35] When Glenn first introduces the Crakers to Jimmy, he talks about them with a clear sense of racial superiority, and moreover, he describes them as objects: "You know how they've got floor models, in furniture stores? […] These are the floor models."[36] He thus suggests Jimmy what attitude he should have towards these "floor models". With the end of a human race, racism will still be preserved. Glenn himself should be seen as an heir to Enlightenment logic, the logic that played a significant part in legitimizing colonial dependence. Scientific narratives and calculations in the sense of *ratio* were needed to establish the discursive necessity of historical imperialism. Atwood expresses the certainty that this rationality (personified by Glenn) with a short history of barely two hundred years, has led to the unrestrained exploitation of land resources and to a limited understanding of subjectivity itself:

> Enlightened people came to believe that the Earth was nothing more than an assemblage of machines, and therefore that everything in it, animal life included, existed only to be re-engineered to do Man's will and work – like a water mill. Even

[32] M. Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*…, p. 104.
[33] Ibidem.
[34] Ibidem, p. 307.
[35] Ibidem, p. 305.
[36] Ibidem, p. 302.

> in the early twentieth century, the scientists were telling us – for example – that animals had no emotions, and could thus be treated as if they were inanimate objects. Which was much like what used to be said of the lower classes in England, and of slaves everywhere.[37]

The act of creation of the Crakers turns out to be closely related to the same logic by means of which it was possible to deny humanity to selected human groups (and feelings to inhuman bodies) and place them outside a historiography.[38] This exclusion from knowledge production, as well as a discursive subjugation in the narrative constructed by others, are also forms of manifestation of the power exercised by Glenn and Jimmy over the Crakers. These forms are the most visible in the last volume of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, in which they are also used to depict the Crakers as immature subjects (children alike), therefore I will focus on this issue in the following part of the paper ("Childism Discourse: Kids and Fish have no Voice").

I have indicated that the discursive framework of the narrative about the Crakers is inspired by colonial patterns. If the understanding of discourse was limited to Karen Barad's definition, according to which it means "not what is said; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said,"[39] it is worth examining further how a linguistic representation of Crakers was established in the trilogy. "**Savages** will tattoo anything. […] It's some **cannibal thing**", says one of the survivors, and adds, "Bet they'd **human-sacrifice** her in about two minutes."[40] The phantasms of wildness and anthropophagy, strangeness, primitiveness or indigenousness of the Crakers are parts of a colonial rhetoric's staffage. Usually, the signs of a difference between human subjects and the Crakers are not so clear-cut; they rather operate according to the logic of mimicry, as described by Homi Bhabha. Mimicry is "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, **as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite**"[41] (Bhabha 1994, 86). It is not that the Crakers are usually described as cannibals or savages, but their representation is often aimed at weakening their humanity: "the ways of Crake towards men or **semi-men**", "they just

[37] M. Atwood, *Payback*…

[38] See Ł. Ronduda, T. Szerszeń, *Tu i teraz*, [w:] *Oświecenie, czyli tu i teraz*, eds. Ł. Ronduda, T. Szerszeń, Kraków–Warszawa 2021, pp. 9–24.

[39] K. Barad, *Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter*, "Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society" 2003, vol. 28 (3), p. 819.

[40] M. Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, New York 2010, e-book; emphasis added.

[41] H.K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London–New York 1994, p. 86.

aren't capable, **not being human as such.**"[42] They are almost the same, but not quite. The sources of this ambiguity lie in the colonial desire for the Other – in the simultaneous desire to get to know them, but also to distinguish themselves from them (this resemblance is both terrifying and fascinating for the holders of colonial power). Nevertheless, thanks to even the most racist or grotesque images of animality and to a lining of this desire, which "reveal[s] the phobic myth of the undifferentiated whole white body,"[43] the entire paradigm of representation is under question.

Animalizing Discourse: Females, Males, Zoo, and Circus

The simultaneous desires to get to know the Other and to distinguish oneself from them are also expressed by the means of other tactics of representing Crakers, that is, a type of animalizing discourse. This language, used to describe an encounter with creatures "almost the same" as human entities, is full of animalistic metaphors – their usage problematizes even more the clarity of the border between what is human and non-human. In addition to the recurrent representations of the Crakers as animals or animal-like people who have not yet entered the path of civilization, this animalistic imagination is embodied in two specific motifs: the zoo and the circus. The following analysis will not be isolated from the above-discussed colonial type of description, on the contrary – my attempt was to link postcolonial criticism and new materialist studies. This approach is mainly due to the fact that the animalistic imagery is used in *MaddAddam* to describe human figures. In this context, postcolonial studies, drawing on historical sources, developed a critical apparatus for deconstructing human imaginations as animals, which proves to be instructive in reading Atwood's novel.

"«Walk slowly», she says in a low voice. «The same rules as for animals. Stay very calm. If we have to leave, back away. Don't turn and run.»"[44] – these are the first of the rules of behaviour towards the Crakers, formulated by Toby in the final scenes of *The Year of the Flood*. In these sentences, however, the protagonist's striking certainty is anchored that she is not dealing with animals but with human subjects, for whom **such treatment** will be appropriate. In the narrative following this excerpt, the humanity of the Crakers is clearly emphasized: "It's Glenn's **made-on-purpose people**", "There's a clearing, and in the clearing there's a fire, and around

[42] M. Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*…; emphasis added.
[43] H.K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*…, p. 92.
[44] M. Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*…

the fire **there are people**, maybe thirty of them", "Sometimes you can't believe in a thing until you actually see it, and **these people** are like that."[45] Why, then, are the rules for dealing with **these people** like with animals? Let us consider another example: Crakers' males detect the scent of one of the surviving scientists, which means that she is fertile, and interpret it as a signal to begin courtship. When they do begin, Toby protests – the narrator depicts it as follows: "said Toby sharply, **as if to dogs**."[46] When scientists working with Glenn before the catastrophe talk about the Crakers and their sex life, they talk about the "estrus" and the females and males participating in it.[47] After all, the ability to reproduce human-Crakers will, in the opinion of many of the characters, be the only decisive argument in favour of a humanity of the latter ("if they can crossbreed with us, then case made. **Same species**. If not, then not."[48]).

The anthropocentric reason, the product of which are the above-mentioned animalistic metaphors, and the project of environmental management find direct expression in the form of European colonialism.[49] In line with this project, the Nature was understood specifically – it included both native fauna and flora, as well as indigenous peoples. As Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin claim, slavery and genocide are based on "the categorization of other peoples **as** animals."[50] The procedure of animalization itself supported the logic of racial segregation and, according to Huggan and Tifiin, served to justify the exploitation of human bodies. Frantz expresses a similar observation: "the terms the settler uses when he mentions the native are zoological terms. […] Those hordes of vital statistics, those hysterical masses, those faces bereft of all humanity, those distended bodies which are like nothing on earth, that mob without beginning or end, those children who seem to belong to nobody, that laziness stretched out in the sun, that vegetative rhythm of life – all this forms part of the colonial vocabulary."[51] Reducing the colonized to formless mobs, to bodies similar to human yet dehumanized, was a direct motivation of a colonial violence, or rather – it invalidated the final argument that held back exploitation: that these bodies feel, think, desire. The ability of the humanitarian mind to kill

[45] Ibidem; emphasis added.

[46] M. Atwood, *MaddAddam*…; emphasis added.

[47] Ibidem.

[48] Ibidem; emphasis added. Only in the last pages of *MaddAddam* we learn that the Crakers are actually human, as three human-Crakers children were born.

[49] See P. Armstrong, *The Postcolonial Animal*, "Society & Animals" 2002, vol. 10 (4), p. 414; G. Huggan, H. Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*, 2nd ed, London–New York 2015, p. 6.

[50] G. Huggan, H. Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*…, p. 152.

[51] F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. C. Farrington, New York 1965, pp. 41–42.

and use violence in the name of humanism depends to a large extent on this recognition. Mbembe argues that "The colonial world, as an offspring of democracy, was not the antithesis of the democratic order. It has always been its double or, again, its nocturnal face."[52] Colonies were sufficiently distanced from civilization to be able to implement this desire to inflict harm, lawlessness – they were "nonplaces".[53] Does the world depicted in the Atwood's trilogy, a deserted world, a world after a catastrophe become this kind of nonplace, a grotesque utopia?

Both the zoo and the circus, which become particular varieties of the animalistic imagery in *MaddAddam*, also essentially serve to tame the Other, control them, observe: „«Wow», said Manatee, surveying the Crakers who were crowding in through the gate, talking among themselves. «It's the Paradice dome circus»"[54]; "«Seen them myself», says Croze. «We aren't supposed to go near them in case we mess them up. But Zeb says we can look at them from a distance, like the zoo»."[55] The bodies shown both in the circus and the zoo are exposed to human gaze from a safe distance. The observers can also leave at any time, while the fetishized bodies are immobilized. Immobilized in the sense, as Chokri Ben Chikha and Karel Arnaut write, that – like *Wunderkammer* – create a representation of the Other that corresponds to their stereotype image. Hence, they claim that Others, portrayed in human zoos, created in Europe and the United States from the 19th century onwards, **only performed stereotypes** about them.[56] The bodies exhibited in the zoos are ontologically suspended:

> They are unable to be killed except in exceptional circumstances and almost never for the purpose of direct consumption. Their bodies thus lose the attributes of meat, nonetheless without being transformed into pure human flesh. Third, such captive animals are not subjected to a strict regime of domestication. A lion at the zoo is not treated like a cat. It does not share in the private life of humans. […] For all that, the animal lives in a state of suspension. It is hence forth neither this nor that.[57]

Likewise, the Crakers are neither this nor that; neither fully human nor purely animal.

---

[52] A. Mbembe, *Necropolitics*…, p. 27.

[53] Ibidem.

[54] M. Atwood, *MaddAddam*…

[55] M. Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*…

[56] Ch.B. Chikha, K. Arnaut, *Staging/Caging „Otherness" in the Postcolony: Spectres of the Human Zoo*, "Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies" 2013, vol. 27 (6), p. 667.

[57] A. Mbembe, *Necropolitics*…, p. 167.

Childism Discourse: Kids and Fish Have no Voice[58]

The Crakers are thus de-subjectified partly in the discourse rooted in European imperialism, partly in reducing them to pure *zoe*. Their ontological incompleteness and ambiguity as human and not fully human beings was also expressed through treating them as child subjects, understood as persons just **becoming** adults. Until recently, such an attitude towards children was dominant.[59] Excerpts from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* can be perceived as the embodiment of such an attitude – children are presented by this philosopher as the property of a parent (father) and as entities with limited reasoning abilities.[60] The "becoming" paradigm also has its origins in the Enlightenment, perceiving children as "less than fully human, unfinished or incomplete."[61] Once again, Enlightenment reason, on the foundation of which European humanism developed, appears as an attempt to present an anthropocentric point of view as universal. It is also a specific kind of anthropocentrism – very selectively and restrictively defining which beings are human, which are inhuman and not fully human. "Enlightenment is man's leaving his self-caused immaturity. Immaturity is the incapacity to use one's intelligence without the guidance of another"[62] – with these words Immanuel Kant defines the Enlightenment, introducing into the very definition the necessity of "the guidance of another" over the immature mind, that is the female, slave and children's mind.

In the narrative and dialogues of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, the Crakers are presented as having immature reason. Therefore, they need guidance

---

[58] "Kids and fish have no voice" is a commonly Polish saying. It is used especially in the case of contact between an adult and a child, when the former wants to cut the discussion short and emphasize their authority. It can be understood as a measure of discursive violence that states that children's voices are not important enough to be taken into account.

[59] Alternative approaches are based on emphasizing the essence of the child's being in his present (childhood), instead of the perspective that privileges the future (becoming). Many researchers also postulate the rejection of this duality by combining both elements – being and becoming – which together can only give a full picture of the child subject (see: E. Uprichard, *Children as "Being and Becomings": Children, Childhood and Temporality*, "Children & Society Volume" 2008, vol. 22; J. Huang, *Being and Becoming: The Implications of Different Conceptualizations of Children and Childhood in Education*, "Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education" 2019, vol. 10). Furthermore, the mutually conditioning and constantly coexisting processes of being and becoming are not only a feature of children but also of adults (E. Uprichard, *Children as…*, p. 307).

[60] E. Young-Bruehl, *Childism: Confronting Prejudice Against Children*, New Haven–London 2012, p. 25.

[61] J. Huang, *Being and Becoming…*, p. 100.

[62] I. Kant, *What is Enlightenment?*, [in:] M. Perry, et. al., *Sources of the Western Tradition*, vol. 2, 3rd ed., Boston 1995, p. 56.

and protection. Hence, the characters choose which part of some knowledge is safe and can be passed on to the Crakers, and which parts of it they should keep for themselves:

> He should say something to them, though. Leave them with a few words to remember. Better, some practical advice. He should say he might not be coming back. He should say that the others, the ones with extra skins and feathers, are not from Crake. He should say their noisy stick should be taken away from them and thrown into the sea. He should say that if these people should become violent – *Oh Snowman, please, what is violent?* – or if they attempt to rape (*What is rape?*) the women, or molest (*What?*) the children, or if they try to force others to work for them… Hopeless, hopeless. *What is work?* Work is when you build things – *What is build?* – or grow things – *What is grow?* – either because people would hit and kill you if you didn't, or else because they would give you money if you did.
> *What is money?*
> No, he can't say any of that. *Crake is watching over you*, he'll say. *Oryx loves you*.[63]

Snowman decides not to tell the Crakers about the dangers that threaten them from people equipped with firearms. The reason lies not only in the impatience resulting from the projected need to answer a number of questions about incomprehensible words and the phenomena behind them (resembling children's curiosity about the world and an endless sequence of questions, each of which refers to the element of the answer given to the previous question). The reason is also to save the child-like innocence of the Crakers. It means cultivating reason in its immaturity.

The necessity of telling stories to the Crakers turns out to be burdensome for the characters. The narrator comments on this ritual taking place every evening (performed by Toby in the last part of *MaddAddam*) in the words: "Those stories take a lot out of her. […] there's so much she needs to invent. She doesn't like to tell lies, not deliberately, **not lies as such, but she skirts the darker and more tangled corners of reality**. It's like trying to keep toast from burning while still having it transform into toast."[64] The Crakers are repeatedly subject to exclusion by knowledgeable characters, and their ability to speak in the narrative itself is limited – the disproportion in this last feature is striking, which I will discuss below. The logic of childism (alternatively adultism) as corresponding to other processes of discursive exclusion and exercising power (racism, sexism, anti-Semitism) was described by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl as "a prejudice against children on the ground of a belief that they are property and can

[63] M. Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*…, pp. 366–367.
[64] M. Atwood, *MaddAddam*…; emphasis added.

(or even should) be controlled, enslaved, or removed to serve adult needs."[65] Young-Bruehl thus compares the dissection of the relationship between the owner and the owned, between the animal and its master, and children to "wild animals that should be physically controlled", which "must be broken or they will not be obedient."[66] Although there are no forms of physical violence among the means of exercising supervision over the Crakers, the mode of existence of these creatures and the attitude of other characters towards them stem from the logic of childism. Condescension extends not only to Craker children but also to adults – casting them as children (the only exception is Blackbeard). This tactic, according to Young-Bruehl, is based on the need felt by members of a certain group (survivors of the apocalypse) to control or remove the Other who threatens the cohesion of a group identity. Victims of this exclusion "are first charged with being childish, immature, limited, or not capable of being like the victimizer group."[67] In *MaddAddam*, however, it is not so much the chosen ones from the Crakers (as the scapegoats excluded from the group) but all of them that are subject to discursive exclusion.

It is worth drawing attention to the uniqueness of one exception – Blackbeard's status. Not only is he the only Craker person accepted by the group of human survivors, but he is a child as well. Why does he gain a different status? He seems to be the only subject fully shaped in a process of acculturation – he gets to know writing and learns to read.[68] Thus, it would seem he enters the realm of knowledge and comes out of adolescence, but it turns out that he only imitates behaviour that is strange to him, e.g. by taking over the role of a storyteller (imitating a ritual, he keeps eating cooked fish, which disgust him as a vegan).

Finally, the childist logic is reflected in the very structure of the narrative. It is here that power, supervision and possession are intertwined.

---

[65] E. Young-Bruehl, *Childism*…, p. 37.

[66] Ibidem, p. 20.

[67] Ibidem, p. 56.

[68] For more interpretations of Blackbeard, see Jane Bone's reading of Blackbeard as a „monstrous child" (J. Bone, *Environmental Dystopias: Margaret Atwood and the Monstrous Child*, "Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education" 2016, vol. 37). Although she notes the ambiguity of this representation, she argues that Blackbeard (and other Crakers) are perverted, absurd, artificial entities. In my reading, such a picture is only a way of representing these characters, which refers to the images of monstrosity, not their *mimesis*. See also Teresa Gibert's work on childhood themes in Atwood's novels, including the *MaddAddam* trilogy. She claims, for instance, that perhaps the shortened childhood and adolescence of the Crakers designed by Glenn is partly due to his own unhappy childhood, neglected by both parents (T. Gibert, *Unraveling the Mysteries of Childhood: Metaphorical Portrayals of Children in Margaret Atwood's Fiction*, "ES Review: Spanish Journal of English Studies" 2018, vol. 39).

Consequently, the Crakers are not allowed to speak on their own account. As in the Polish proverb, "kids and fish have no voice" – after all, the ability to speak belongs only to fully human adults. This becomes most visible in the third part of the Atwood's trilogy, where the questions, doubts, chants and spontaneous reactions of the Crakers during storytelling rituals are not recorded – beginning with dialogue pauses or noted in quotation marks (as was the case in *Oryx and Crake*) – but are removed from the narrative leaving only the voice of the storyteller:

> In the beginning, you lived inside the Egg. That is where Crake made you.
> Yes, good, kind Crake. Please stop singing or I can't go on with the story.
> The Egg was big and round and white, like half a bubble, and there were trees inside it with leaves and grass and berries. All the things you like to eat.
> Yes, it rained inside the Egg.
> No, there was not any thunder.
> Because Crake did not want any thunder inside the Egg.[69]

The Crakers through most of the narrative remain silent. It can therefore be said that their situation is based on a two-fold silence – the lack of a position to speak in the central narrative, and on the silences that stories presented to them are full of. The conversations with the Crakers follow the logic of childism.

Vegetative (Plant) Discourse: Potatoes and Ferns

The last and least abundant type of discourse used in the *MaddAddam* trilogy to question the humanity of the Crakers is a vegetative (plant) one. Plant metaphors are used especially in the third volume of the trilogy. By comparing Crakers to plants, Swift Fox (one of the survivors of an apocalypse) expresses their mental limitations: "Me, I did the brains. The frontal lobes, the sensory-input modifications. I tried to make them less boring, but Crake wanted no aggression, no jokes even. They're **walking potatoes**"; "Night all, have fun with the **vegetables**."[70] Equating the Crakers with plants is intended to reduce their life to vegetation, i.e. to show the Crakers' limitations only to physiological processes, that is, basic life processes regulating the body rhythm (cells, tissues) that take place without their awareness. It is a lack of awareness and limited thinking abilities that lurk in the form of plant metaphors.

[69] M. Atwood, *MaddAddam*…
[70] Ibidem, emphasis added.

While a comparison of the Crakers to potatoes or vegetables, connoting the issues of vegetation (a mind fallen into a coma), clearly has a pejorative undertone, in *Oryx and Crake* the plant metaphors are much more ambivalent. The comparison appears in a fragment of the narrative beginning as auctorial but fixing to a form of indirect speech, with Snowman gradually taking over the voice: "There's a distant, peaceful murmur from the village: human voices. If you can call them human. As long as they don't start singing. Their singing is unlike anything he ever heard in his vanished life: it's beyond the human level, or below it. As if crystals are singing; but not that, either. More like **ferns unscrolling** – something old, carboniferous, but at the same time newborn, fragrant, verdant. It reduces him, forces too many unwanted emotions upon him."[71] On the one hand, the comparison of a voice to rustling of ferns is a consequence of an explicitly expressed feeling that until the Crakers remain silent – "you can call them human", but a particularity of this voice and an inhumanity of a sound are contesting such an ontological thesis. The very comparison to a fern in its two temporal incarnations – to plants' remains fossilized in the form of a carbon and to fresh greens, full of vital juices – makes the uniqueness of this ontological solution questionable. Following Georges Bataille's findings, we can understand the metaphor of a fern's two-fold existence as a moment when the continuity of being is revealed in its discontinuity – the moment between a death of the first organism and an appearance of subsequent discontinuous organisms.[72] It is the explanation that allows us to consider the Crakers not as some creatures without origins, as fabricated entities, but as those that contain this component of "something old, carboniferous". Moreover, this understanding of plants turned into dead coal corresponds with the apocalypse that takes place in the world depicted in Atwood's novels – (almost) the entire human civilization has been turned into dead coal as well. Snowman feels like one of these charred beings, only by his mere presence does he "serve as a reminder to these people, and not a pleasant one: he's what they may have been once;" "I'm your past […]. I'm your ancestor, come from the land of the dead."[73] Why does such image "reduce him" and "force too many unwanted emotions upon him"? Because it testifies not only to a possible moment of continuity, but, above all, to the inevitable discontinuity of being, to death.

[71] M. Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*…, p. 105; emphasis added.

[72] G. Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. M. Dalwood, San Francisco 1986, pp. 12–13.

[73] M. Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*…, p. 106.

Conclusions

I have presented an alternative reading of the *MaddAddam* trilogy that allows us to deconstruct an image of the Other inscribed in the narrative – by means of colonial, animalizing, childist and vegetative (plant) discourses. The narrative of Atwood's books is composed in such a way that these solutions appear to readers as seemingly neutral, one that can be trusted. It is partly for this reason that in the criticism published so far the Crakers are usually described with the same language that have been used by the narrators and characters of *MaddAddam* – as monstrous, artificial, not fully human, and grotesque. Meanwhile, in this paper, the same language did not serve to describe this collective subject, but rather became a part of an interpretation as such, especially as a certain discourse – that is, the very frame of an utterance that defines the scope of possibilities, the scope of what can be said. The analysis of the four types of discourse has shown that they are used for two main purposes: to de-subjectivize Crakers and to question their humanity (or at least its full dimension), and – as a consequence of the first one – to create a negative representation of them. As I have argued, these definitions were possible only when an idea of humanity itself was described rigidly, in terms inherited from the Enlightenment.

Therefore, it may seem that the narrative serves to objectify the Crakers. Paradoxically, these arbitrary attempts to objectify the Crakers can lead to a crisis of a belief system that privileges such anthropocentric, rational, adult, non-animal perspective. Let us look at a colonial and animalizing discourse about the Crakers from this perspective. The concept of mimicry, as described by Bhabha, that is, a manifestation of one's own desire in the representation of the Other, will enable a better understanding of the human-Crakers relationship. Bhabha argued that while the difference between the subjects in mimicry is quite small, the colonial power also uses the rhetoric of "*menace* – a difference that is almost total but not quite."[74] It is in this second variant, and even more precisely in the clash of these two (mimicry and menace), that "history turns to a farce, and the presence to «a part» can be seen the twin figures of narcissism and paranoia."[75] It is under a racist gaze, said Bhabha, that an oppressed subject becomes liberated because the images of his animality and monstrosity can no longer be seen as representations, but rather as an expression of a phobia, a phantasm. This is how one can look at the discourse about the Crakers: as the result

[74] H.K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*..., p. 91.
[75] Ibidem.

of an entanglement of a desire for the Other and for its negation – inseparable care, disgust, and fear.

The comparison of the Crakers to animals, seemingly a sign of their dehumanization, may ultimately turn out to be, like mimicry, only an expression of fear that these creatures – like animals – cannot be fully subjugated. "Animalness" may prove to be a sign of freedom, an ontological inability to be subordinate, and if so, the consequences are severe. Then an entire work of reason in establishing minors, an entire idea of a civilizing mission, are both doomed to failure. "The animal is only a thing while man is able to deny its true nature", Bataille argues, "If we no longer had that power, if we were no longer in a position to act as though the animal were a thing, if, for instance, a tiger should leap out upon us, the animal would not be essentially a thing, it would not be an object pure and simple, it would be a subject with its own inner reality."[76] According to the author of *Erotism*, what cannot be reduced to an object is an animal's "sexual exuberance" and the fact that it does not internalize a need for work.[77] Work never presents itself to an animal as it does to a human that is reified, who is a member of modern capitalist society, i.e. as something independent of it, something that controls it. If we take into account how many of *MaddAddam*'s characters had been reified like this before the apocalypse, and how aptly the presented world embodies the late, developed stage of capitalism, then it may transpire that comparing human to animal, even if based on showing excessive rashness or trust towards one's own instincts, can serve as a sign of a freedom of the latter.

This brings us back to *MaddAddam*'s most important ontological issue: what ultimately matters to humans? It is in this question that the line of dispute between Jimmy and Glenn is drawn:

> "When any civilization is dust and ashes," he said, "art is all that's left over. Images, words, music. Imaginative structures. Meaning – human meaning, that is – is defined by them. You have to admit that."
> "That's not quite all that's left over," said Crake. "The archeologists are just as interested in gnawed bones and old bricks and ossified shit these days. Sometimes more interested. They think human meaning is defined by those things too."[78]

According to Jimmy, humanity comes from *bios*, culture, according to Glenn, from inanimate matter which, at least in part, comes from life, *zoe*. And, proportionately to this difference, the narrative will reproduce Jimmy's

[76] G. Bataille, *Erotism*…, pp. 157–158.
[77] Ibidem, p. 158.
[78] M. Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*…, p. 167.

position, and the Children of Crake will be the epitome of Glenn's beliefs. Until the present, humans have undoubtedly personified the *bios*, guided by an unrestrained logic of Growth, "like a giant slug eating their way relentlessly through all the other bioforms on the planet, grinding up life on Earth."[79] Hence, the interpretative hypothesis of Canavan is convincing. He saw the Crakers as an allegory of "the radical transformation of both society and subjectivity that will be necessary in order to save the planet."[80] The primitivist project of humanity, understood essentially as a negation of the superiority of Culture and a need to demarcate life into species or races, would be the utopian potential of Atwood's dystopia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Armstrong Ph., *The Postcolonial Animal*, "Society & Animals" 2002, vol. 10 (4), pp. 413–419.

Atwood M., *MaddAddam*, Bloomsbury Publishing 2013, e-book.

Atwood M., *Oryx and Crake*, New York 2003.

Atwood M., *Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth*, Toronto 2008, e-book.

Atwood M., The Handmaid's Tale *and* Oryx and Crake *"In Context"*, "PMLA" 2004, vol. 119 (3), pp. 513–517.

Atwood M., *The Year of the Flood*, New York 2010, e-book.

Barad K., *Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter*, "Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society" 2003, vol. 28 (3), pp. 801–831.

Bataille G., *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. M. Dalwood, San Francisco 1986.

Bhabha Homi K., *The Location of Culture*, London–New York 1994.

Bone J., *Environmental Dystopias: Margaret Atwood and the Monstrous Child*, "Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education" 2016, vol. 37 (5), pp. 627–640.

Bouson J. Brooks, *"It's Game Over Forever": Atwood's Satiric Vision of a Bioengineered Posthuman Future in* Oryx and Crake, "Journal of Commonwealth Literature" 2004, vol. 39 (3), pp. 139–156.

Canavan G., *Hope, But Not for Us: Ecological Science Fiction and the End of the World in Margaret Atwood's* Oryx and Crake *and* The Year of the Flood, "Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory" 2012, vol. 23 (2), pp. 138–159.

Chikha Chokri B., Karel A., *Staging/Caging "Otherness" in the Postcolony: Spectres of the Human Zoo*, "Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies" 2013, vol. 27 (6), pp. 661–683.

Cooke G., *Technics and the Human at Zero-Hour: Margaret Atwood's* Oryx and Crake, "Studies in Canadian Literature" 2006, vol. 31 (2), pp. 105–125.

Fanon F., *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. C. Farrington, preface J.P. Sartre, New York 1965.

[79] Ibidem, p. 243.

[80] G. Canavan, *Hope, But Not for Us…*, p. 152.

Gibert T., *Unraveling the Mysteries of Childhood: Metaphorical Portrayals of Children in Margaret Atwood's Fiction*, "ES Review: Spanish Journal of English Studies" 2018, vol. 39, pp. 29–50.

Hicks H.J., *The Mother of All Apocalypses in Margaret Atwood's* Oryx and Crake, [in:] *The Post-Apocalyptic Novel in the Twenty-First Century: Modernity beyond Salvage*, New York 2016, pp. 27–53.

Howells C.A., *Margaret Atwood's dystopian visions:* The Handmaid's Tale *and* Oryx and Crake, [in:] *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*, ed. C.A. Howells, Cambridge 2006, pp. 161–175.

Huang J., *Being and Becoming: The Implications of Different Conceptualizations of Children and Childhood in Education*, "Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education" 2019, vol. 10 (1), pp. 99–105.

Huggan G., Tiffin H., *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*, 2nd ed., London–New York 2015.

Ingersoll E.G., *Survival in Margaret Atwood's Novel* Oryx and Crake, "Extrapolation" 2004, vol. 45 (2), pp. 162–175.

Johnston J.O., *Animal-Human Hybrids: Margaret Atwood's* Oryx and Crake, [in:] *Posthuman Capital and Biotechnology in Contemporary Novels*, New York 2019, pp. 67–101.

Kant I., *What is Enlightenment?*, [in:] P. Marvin, et al., *Sources of the Western Tradition*, vol. 2, 3rd ed., Boston 1995, pp. 56–57.

Ku Ch.-H., *Of Monster and Man: Transgenics and Transgression in Margaret Atwood's* Oryx and Crake, "Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies" 2006, vol. 32, pp. 107–133.

Mbembe A., *Necropolitics*, trans. S. Corcoran, Durham–London 2019.

Mohr D.M., *Transgressive Utopian Dystopias: The Postmodern Reappearance of Utopia in the Disguise of Dystopia*, "Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik" 2007, vol. 1, pp. 5–24.

Mosca V., *Crossing Human Boundaries: Apocalypse and Posthumanism in Margaret Atwood's* Oryx and Crake *and* The Year of the Flood, "Altre Modernità" 2013, vol. 9, pp. 38–52.

Muzaffar H., *Margaret Atwood's Crakers and the Posthuman Future of Humanity*, [in:] *Bodies in Flux: Embodiments at the End of Anthropocentrism*, eds. B. Braid, H. Muzaffar, Leiden–Boston 2019, pp. 149–164.

Ronduda Ł., Szerszeń T., *Tu i teraz*, [in:] *Oświecenie, czyli tu i teraz*, eds. Ł. Ronduda, T. Szerszeń, Kraków–Warszawa 2021, pp. 9–24.

Said E.W., *Culture and Imperialism*, New York 1994.

Silva de Sá M.C., *Storytelling and Survival in* Oryx and Crake *and* The Year of the Flood, [in:] *Prospero and Caliban Revisited: Brazilian Critical Perspectives on World Literature in English*, eds. G.R. Gonçalves, J. de Paiva dos Santos, Faculdade de Letras da UFMG 2020, pp. 101–110.

Uprichard E., *Children as "Being and Becomings": Children, Childhood and Temporality*, "Children & Society Volume" 2008, vol. 22, pp. 303–313.

Young-Bruehl E., *Childism: Confronting Prejudice Against Children*, New Haven–London 2012.

Izabela Poręba – magister filologii polskiej i publikowania cyfrowego i sieciowego; doktorantka literaturoznawstwa na Uniwersytecie Wrocławskim. Aktualnie kończy pracę nad rozprawą dotyczącą postkolonialnej strategii prze-pisania. Jest redaktorką afiliowaną czasopisma naukowego „Praktyka Teoretyczna" oraz członkinią akademickiego centrum badawczego Ex-Centrum Olgi Tokarczuk. Najnowsze badania opublikowała w „Journal of Postcolonial Writing", „Academic Journal of Modern Philology", „Rusycystycznych Studiach Literaturoznawczych" i „The Polish Journal of the Arts and Culture". ORCID: 0000-0002-5223-8470. E-mail: <izabela.poreba@uwr.edu.pl>.

Izabela Poręba – MA in Polish Literature and Digital and Network Publishing; PhD candidate at the University of Wrocław. She is currently finishing her doctoral thesis about postcolonial strategy of re-writing. She is an affiliate editor of an open-access journal „Praktyka Teoretyczna" and member of Olga Tokarczuk Ex-Center. Academic Research Centre. Her latest research was published in "Journal of Postcolonial Writing," "Academic Journal of Modern Philology," "Rusycystyczne Studia Literaturoznawcze," and "The Polish Journal of the Arts and Culture." ORCID: 0000-0002-5223-8470. E-mail: <izabela.poreba@uwr.edu.pl>.