

## **I. Introduction**

### **Margaret Atwood and Literary Focus**

This thesis seeks to study Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, focusing the issue of the challenge to the patriarchal status quo in the novel. Bringing the idea of feminist dystopia, this thesis focuses upon the inequality of society and intensifies to highlight the need for change in the contemporary society. Through critical analysis of Atwood's sketch of female as well as male characters, this research aims at deconstructing the binary of gender/sex in the novel, and also presents how femininity is valorized in the novel by showing that the traits known to be masculine can be displayed by women and vice-versa. This study follows the lead of feministic dystopian vision which critiques on the abuses of the 20<sup>th</sup> century patriarchy that is usually developed in de-familiarized unreal settings. A close reading of the novel reveals that the characters in the novel, especially Oryx and Crake stand for femininity and demonstrate how femininity is also an important aspect of the society.

Margaret Atwood is a Canadian novelist and was born in Ottawa, Canada in 1939 and grew up in northern Quebec and Ontario. She has won several awards for her writing and gained international acclaim. Her novels are seen as feminist although her style is very individual. Atwood has helped to define and identify the goals of contemporary Canadian literature and has earned a distinguished reputation among feminist writers for her exploration of women's issues. Her novels are well crafted and her manner of writing is very personal and the way in which she successfully presents each character. This being makes her language, expression and ideas vary enormously, each character being unique.

While she is best known for her work as a novelist, she has also published 15 books of poetry. Many of her poems have been inspired by myths and fairy tales,

which have been interests of hers from an early age. Atwood has published short stories in *Tamarack Review*, *Alphabet*, *Harper's*, *CBC Anthology*, *Ms.*, *Saturday Night*, and many other magazines. She has also published short stories, literary criticisms, social history and books for children. Her work is acclaimed internationally and has been published all around the world. She is the recipient of the numerous honors, such as Sunday Times Award for literary excellence in UK, The National Arts Club Medal of honor for literature in US and she was the first winner of the literary prize.

Despite all her work, this research gives emphasis on her novel *Oryx and Crake*, which is found interesting, where Atwood explores issues of gender along with femininity and masculinity. Specially, the character Jimmy/Snowman is the first male protagonist whom Atwood has written, but he is complex in his detachment from others, his use of child pornography, and his poor relationships with his girlfriends. By comparison, Oryx could have been the quintessential female “victim”, but Atwood depicts her as a strong, resilient type who seems to have come to terms with her past. However, the relationships depicted in the text are very uninspiring and negative. In particular, it explores the significance of female characters often overlooked as intelligent, strong, and valuable beings. Females and those associated with femininity are seen as weak, unintelligent, and valueless on the hands of masculinity. The only valid life-styles are those that contribute to society in a malleable way. However, this research asserts that the feminine characters in the novel are noteworthy, important, and influential characters as they offer a critical review to overcome the masculine attitude to look upon the feminine traits.

Atwood has published various noteworthy novels too. *The Handmaid's Tale* received the first Arthur C. Clarke Award in 1987. The award is given for the best

science fiction novel that was first published in the United Kingdom during the previous year. It was also nominated for the 1986 Nebula Award, and the 1987 Prometheus Award, both science fiction awards. The work is a dystopian novel, a work of science fiction or speculative fiction, set in the near future, in a totalitarian Christian theocracy which has overthrown the United States government, the novel explores the themes of women in subjugation and the various means by which they gain agency.

*The Year of The Flood* is a novel released on September 22, 2009 in Canada and the United States, and on September 7, 2009 in the United Kingdom. The novel was mentioned in newspaper review articles looking forward to notable fiction of 2009. The book focuses on a group called God's Gardeners, a small community of survivors of the same biological catastrophe depicted in Atwood's earlier novel *Oryx and Crake*. The earlier novel contained several brief references to the group. It answers some of the questions of *Oryx and Crake* and reveals the identity of three real human figures who appear at the end of the earlier book and sets the scene for the final book of the trilogy, *Maddadam*. *Maddadam* concludes the dystopian trilogy which began with *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and continued with *The Year of the Flood* (2009). While the plot from the previous novels run along a parallel timeline, *Maddadam* is the continuation of both books. *Maddadam* is written from the perspective of Zeb and Troy, who were both introduced in *The Year of the Flood* (2009).

Her novel *The Robber Bride* was first published by McClelland and Stewart in 1993. Set in present-day Toronto, Ontario, the novel begins with three women (Roz, Charis, and Tony) who meet once a month in a restaurant to share a meal. Atwood claims that of all the characters she has written, she identifies most with Zenia.

Another novel by Atwood *The Blind Assassin* was first published by McClelland and Stewart in 2000. Set in Canada, it is narrated from the present day, referring back to events that span the twentieth century. The work was awarded the Man Booker Prize in 2000 and the Hammett Prize in 2001. It was also nominated for Governor General's Award in 2000, Orange Prize for Fiction, and the International IMPAC Dublin literary award in 2002. Time Magazine named it the best novel of 2000 and included it in its list of 100 greatest English-language novels since 1923.

Another award winning novel by Atwood is *Alias Grace*, a historical fiction novel first published by McClelland and Stewart in 1996. It won the Canadian Giller Prize and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. The novel is written from various points of view, told mostly through the eyes of Grace Marks, one of the important character in the novel, and her doctor, Doctor Jordan (employing first and third person respectively). The shifting point of view makes the text appear disjointed and adds to the effect of uncertainty in the narrative. When written from Grace's point of view, the reader is never sure if Grace is speaking or thinking as Atwood refuses to use punctuation to indicate either.

### **Atwood and Feminism**

The emergence of feminist theories in 1960s and its evaluation as a counter discourse create an environment of feminist resistance against patriarchy and patriarchal society that restricted women's freedom and blocked their individual development. The deeply rooted patriarchal cultural foundations of the society were systematically questioned with the birth of feminism. Before 1960s the concept of masculinity used to be taken as privileged over feminists and feminisms.

Feminism is a general term covering a range of ideologies and theories which pay special attention to women's issues. It is a discourse that involves various

movements, theories and philosophies which are concerned with the issues of gender difference, advocate equality for women and campaign for women's movement, which began in the late eighteenth century and continuous to campaign for complete political, social and economic equality between men and women. *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* defines feminism as "The belief and aim that women should have some rights and opportunities as men; the struggle to achieve this aim" (466).

Feminism further is defined by Rosemarie Tong in *Feminist Thought* as:

As a movement seeking the reorganization of the world upon a basis of sexuality in all human relations; a movement which would reject every differentiation between individuals upon the ground of sex would abolish all sex privileges and sex burdens and would strive to set up the recognition of the common humanity of woman and man as the foundation of law and custom. (7)

Atwood, who was surrounded by the intellectual dialogue of female faculty members at Victoria College at University of Toronto, often portrays female characters in her novels. Still, Atwood denies that *The Edible Women*, for example, published in 1969 and coinciding with the early second wave of the feminist movement, is feminist and claims that she wrote it four years before the movement. Atwood believes that the feminist label can only be applied to writers who consciously work within the framework of the feminist movement. Being a postmodern writer, Atwood offers various ways, mediums, practices, patterns, and norms of society and culture that lead to the conditioning of psyche of both men and women that result in the shaping and 'becoming' of feminine and masculine gender identities. She explores through both male and female characters how society and culture can influence and mould the identities of men and women according to the constructed stereotypes of masculinity

and femininity.

Being a feminist novelist, Atwood sketches female characters as protagonist. Coming on age during the feminist revolution of 1970s, Atwood never shies away from hard hitting political statements like unfettered, unguided nationalism, the penchant for violence in America's and antiabortion demonstrators in her novel. She serves as content and the strident voice in the political and social movements speaking out against anything that doesn't push society towards tolerance and understanding.

One of the best examples is Atwood's *Cat's Eye*, which deals with women's issue. In this novel Atwood has shown the situation of women in patriarchal society. Atwood's fiction mostly portrays the realistic pictures of women and their subordinate experiences and sufferings in patriarchal society. She raises issues of marginalization regarding "search for female identity". The protagonist of the novel Elaine has no agency in her family so she decides to create her own identity as successful painter. Although patriarchy stands a barrier to create her identity, she struggles with patriarchal society and creates her own identity as a painter. So far as female characters in this text are concerned, the writer has glorified particularly the female characters, who search their identity struggling in patriarchal society, the novel primarily focuses on the female characters and their situation in such society of Canada and their search for identity struggling in patriarchal society. In such society a woman suffers a lot and is treated as a non-human being.

### **Atwood and Dystopian vision**

The term 'dystopia' (bad place) has recently come to be applied to works of fiction, including the science fiction, that represents a very unpleasant imaginary world in which ominous tendencies of our present social, political, and technological order are projected into a disastrous future culmination. Examples are Aldous

Huxley's *Brave New World*(1932), George Orwell's *NineteenEighty Four*(1949), and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*(1986).

A typical work of dystopian fiction describes a grand scheme a grand scheme for moral, social or cultural improvement that has gone terribly wrong. In fact, the word 'dystopian' comes from Greek root words that signify a "bad or destructive (dys-) place (topos)." The dystopian genre can also be understood as a darker version of another, much older mode of writing; utopian fiction, or fiction that imagines an idealized and fantastically harmonious society. While major works of utopian fiction appeared in ancient times and in the Renaissance, dystopian fiction flourished in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and- unlike standard utopian fiction- has remained enormously popular up to the present day. Very often, dystopian novels and short stories are set well into the future. And some of the most important dystopian works are also classics of another relatively recent genre: modern science fiction.

Atwood is one of the world's most celebrated writers. Among her many books are a handful that some might call science fiction, notably *The Handmaid's Tale* about a future America ruled by religious fundamentals, and *Oryx and Crake* trilogy, about a mad scientist who attempts to replace humanity with a genetically engineered race of his own creation.

Atwood's novel often portrays dystopian vision. She often shows a clash in a dystopian future, with its hilarious vision of a humanity driven to the brink of extinction by its own jaded appetites. Atwood's phenomenal dystopian thriller- cum satire is set in a feral, post- apocalyptic world in her novel *Oryx and Crake*, in which a man named Jimmy explains to a band of genetically modified humanoids called Crakers and shows how it was their brilliant scientist creator, Crake, came out to wipe out humanity.

Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* offers a bleak look at what the future could hold if current trends continue to develop and reach fruition. The novel is a dystopian nightmare which subjugates women to the point of sexual slavery, severely impacts and indoctrinates them in a psychologically- damaging manner, and denies them the basic freedoms which most women in Western civilization take for granted.

The developing knowledge of life sciences provides the foundation for Margaret Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake* as she examines human promise gone awry in a near-future dystopia. Processes of embodiment, and feedback systems illuminate humanity's organic connections with nonhuman others: this relatedness is the key to the interspecies gene-splicing taking place in the novel. In this world, human being is redefined in the context of other being and the post- human arises through genetic intervention, inheriting on earth in which the original humans are virtually extinct.

Dystopias are natural frames of estrangement, scenarios that detach us from our sense of the normal. But, *Oryx and Crake*'s dystopian future also indicts contemporary alienation, the rift human culture has instituted between itself and the natural world. Dysfunctional examples of the division abound in *Oryx and Crake*: from the nature- less pleeblands to the synthetic creations of the compounds, un- tampered nature is held apart as Other and as raw material.

### **Atwood and Feminist Dystopia**

Often, a feminist science fiction novel is more of a dystopia. Dystopian science fiction imagines a world gone terribly wrong exploring the most extreme possible consequences of current society's problems. In a feminist dystopia, the inequality of society or oppression of women is exaggerated or intensified to highlight the need for change in contemporary society.

As feminist science fiction is an imaginative genre, the critique of the abuses



of the 20<sup>th</sup> century patriarchy is usually developed in de- familiarized, unreal settings. Consequently, current problems are re- contextualized, a technique which is meant to give the reader a new perspective on certain aspects of life they might otherwise take for granted, such as the inadequacies of patriarchy and women's marginality in society.

The view of gender construction as feminist dystopian fiction presents is very beautifully expressed in the words of gender critic Kate Millet in her book, *Sexual Politics* (2000), where she states:

As patriarchy enforces a temperamental imbalance of personality traits between sexes, its educational institutions, segregated or co-educational, accepts a cultural programming towards the generally operative division, 'masculine' and 'feminine' subject matter assigning the humanities and certain social sciences (at least in their lower and marginal branches) to the female and sciences and technology, the professions, business and engineering to the male... The humanities, because not exclusively male suffer in prestige: the science, technologies and business, because they are nearly exclusively male reflect the de- formation of the 'masculine' personality. eg. a certain predatory or aggressive character.(435)

Female authors of dystopias are not only concerned with criticizing the more general problems of their day and age such as the growing importance of technology and the strain of civilization on individual liberty, but also with confronting the problematic position of women in a patriarchal society- both on a literary and on a societal level. In order to be able to operate in a culture and a genre which are characterized by a male bias, they are forced to express themselves in the dominant language but at the

same time they try to convey their personal, often subversive point of view.

While reviewing some of the most well-known dystopias of the past century, it comes to a point that female authors have carried little weight when it comes to the dystopian genre. As Sarah Lefanu has suggested, the dystopian genre is not only characterized by “a male bias” but is also underpinned by a “cultural and political male hegemony”(187). Moreover, Lefanu adds that, “as a result, this literature written by women is often subversive, satirical, and iconoclastic”(187). Moreover, she argues that the second wave feminists were also mainly concerned with the issues of “gender and sexuality as social constructs, thus posing a challenge to notions of a natural law regulating feminine behavior and an innate femaleness that describes and circumscribes ‘women’”(187).

Another feminist critic Rita Felski in her essay “The Dialectic of ‘Feminism’ and ‘Aesthetics’” states:

The emergence of a second wave of feminisms in the late 1960s justifies the analysis of women’s literature as a separate category, not because of automatic and unambiguous differences between the writings of women and men, but because of the recent cultural phenomenon of women’s explicit self-identification as an oppressed group, which is in turn articulated in literary texts in the exploration of gender-specific concerns centered around the gender-specific concerns centered around the problem of female identity. (423)

Another critic Judith Butler in her essay “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire” states:

If it is possible to speak of a ‘man’ with a masculine attribute and to understand that attribute as a happy but accidental feature of that man,

then it is also possible to speak as a happy but accidental feature of that man, then it is also possible to speak of a ‘man’ with a feminine attribute, whatever that is, but still to maintain the integrity of the gender. (284)

Also in the words of a feministic dystopian critic Toril Moi in her essay “Feminist, Female, Feminine” states:

Over the past decade, feminists have used the terms ‘feminist’, ‘female’, and ‘feminine’ in a multitude of different ways. I will, suggest that we distinguish between ‘feminism’ as a political position, ‘femaleness’ as a matter of biology, and ‘femininity’ as a set of culturally defined characteristics.

‘Femininity’ is a cultural construct: one isn’t born woman, one becomes one, as Simon de Beauvoir puts it. Seen in this perspective, patriarchal oppression consists of imposing certain social standards for ‘femininity’ are natural. Thus a woman who refuses to conform can be labeled both unfeminine or unnatural. It is in the patriarchal interest that these two term stay thoroughly confused. (247)

So, what a feminist dystopian critic believe is to show how women are socially presented and are expected to be. They point out the vices of the patriarchy and focus on the hidden mystery that what generally the attribute termed as ‘femininity’ is more over not only concerned within females but males can also posses the quality.

Margaret Attwood being a postmodern writer marks out the instability of gender categories, where both male and female characters transgress the gender boundaries which are believed to be naturally ordained. She clearly demonstrates through various instances how gender of both men and women are artificial and

socially constructed under the patriarchal guidance and ideology. Since gender identity is all about performance learned through discourse, male and female characters exhibit both masculine and feminine identities irrespective of their sex. This is more prominently brought up in the novel through the characters of Oryx and Jimmy. Jimmy, being a male displays interest in arts, and defends it against masculine science represented by his scientist friend Crake. Whereas, Oryx being a woman is described as an 'expert' business woman and Crake too trusted her "more perhaps than he trusted Jimmy"(368).

However, this study does not offer a comprehensive analysis of feminist theories. Rather, feministic dystopian vision is explored in the novel. In the novel, society gives less importance to femininity. Females and most specially those associated with femininity are seen as weak and unintelligent, and valueless, as well as science as elite. Crake represents masculinity whereas Oryx and Jimmy represent femininity. By presenting the division of such traits within the characters, Atwood works at showing that the feminine qualities in the world are just as important as the masculine, as they are an important part of human nature. Moreover, she marks a significant theoretical connection between the feminism and dystopian world vision in order to unmask the importance of female or feminine traits.

Throughout the novel, *Oryx and Crake*, the feminine characters are used and then pushed aside. But, by presenting the feminine traits and feminine world prevail in the end, Atwood demands for the importance of femininity and as well as focus upon the inequality of society or oppression of females intensified to highlight the need for change in contemporary society.

The primary objective of the thesis is to bring the idea of deconstruction of the binary of gender/sex in the novel. This study offers an analysis of feministic dystopian

vision to demonstrate how femininity is valorized in the novel. This study makes significant contribution mainly in two areas of concern. First, it brings the characters within the purview of critical analysis. Second, this research makes a significant theoretical connection between the feminism and dystopian world vision in order to unmask the value or importance of female or feminine traits in the novel.

### **Critical Reviews**

Since the publication of *Oryx and Crake* in 2003, many critics have provided analysis from multiple perspectives. Dinette DiMarco notes that the figure of Crake “emerges as the quintessential homo faber” (171), illustrating the instrumentalism Atwood critiques in the text. DiMarco argues that Atwood raises the possibility of counteracting this instrumentalism through positive social change as enacted by Jimmy/Snowman(172). Jayne Glover comments on Crake’s instrumentalism through an eco-critical perspective, analyzing his “hyper separation from Other, both from nature and from people in general”(55). Bouson examines the “bio-tech, post-human angles” of the novel, exploring the satiric commentary Atwood aims at current transgenic research, noting how the figures of Crake and Snowman “become jokester and ‘human joke’ in Atwood’s bleak humor” (140,151). Looking to the mythic aspects of the novel, Grayson Cooke observes the technical role of “language and writing” as a link to the “beginning and end of ‘life’ and the ‘human’ as they are commonly understood” (106), and Chung-Hao Ku interprets the varying aspects of monstrosity in Atwood’s text, from the pathetic figure of Snowman, to the in-human Crakers, to human science through the figure of Crake: all speak of “soft boundary between human and monster” (109).

On the other Natasha Walter states:

Atwood does delve more deeply into Jimmy’s mind. She is rightly

celebrated for her explorations of female point of view, but here she manages writing convincingly from the point of view of a man-and a man, what's more, brought up in an emotionally stunted environment saturated with pornography and commercialism. Jimmy comes rather poignantly alive, especially in the parts of the novel that deal with his unhappy childhood and his relationship with his depressed and rebellious mother. (384)

Another critic Nan A. Talese, in *The New York Times*(2003), offers with a statement that, "In her towering and intrepid new novel, *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood, who is the daughter of a biologist, vividly imagines a late twenty-first century world ravaged by innovations in biological science"(376).

While I do not necessarily disagree with these critics, and unlike all the criticisms illustrated above, this study deals with gender issues according to the cultural expectations of femininity and masculinity that both man and woman internalize and mould themselves according to the stereotypes available of each gender identity. This study thus presents a call for feminine importance in the society. The primary objective of the study is to bring the idea of feminist dystopia so as to focus upon the inequality of society or oppression of females and feminine person, intensified to highlight the need for change in contemporary society. Through critical analysis of Atwood's sketch of female characters, this research aims at deconstructing the binary of gender/sex in the novel and also makes a demand for an emergence of feminine importance by showing that the traits known to be masculine can be displayed by women and vice versa.

Atwood uses two of the important characters Oryx and Jimmy to show a society that does not value feminine, but also in the end she shows that the feminine

qualities in the world are just as important as the masculine, as they are an important part of human nature. Another important figure of the novel, Jimmy is showing his femininity through his desires to experience love and through the challenges of finding love. Despite Crake's efforts to end religion and inquisitiveness the Crakers are human enough to question their existence and worship the ones who have made them. Crakers learn to worship and, value words and stories.

## II. Valorization of Femininity

*Oryx and Crake* begins after the collapse of civilization by an event that is not identified immediately. The novel reveals its story in a flashback technique. The protagonist is Snowman, who is a post-apocalyptic hermit character. He resides near a group of what he calls Crakers- strange human like creatures. They bring him food and consult him on matters that surpass their understanding. As the story develops, these creatures are revealed to be the product of genetic engineering. In the flashback of Snowman, we learn that the protagonist was once a young boy named Jimmy. His world was dominated by multinational corporations which kept their employees' families in privileged compounds separated from a global lower moiety of pleeblands. Shortly after Jimmy's family moved to the HelthWyzer Corporate compound, Jimmy met and befriended Glenn (referred throughout the novel as Crake), a brilliant science student.

Jimmy and Crake spend a lot of their leisure time playing online computer games, or watching graphic surgery and child pornography. On the trip through the dark underbelly of the web, they come across an Asian child pornography website, where Jimmy is stuck and haunted by the eyes of a young girl (referred as Oryx throughout the novel).

The two male characters pursue different educational paths: Crake attends the highly respected Watson- Crick Institute where he studies advanced bioengineering, but Jimmy ends up at the loathed Martha Graham Academy, where students study literature and the humanities, which are not valued fields of study except for their commercial and propaganda applications. After finishing school, Jimmy ends up writing ad copy and Crake becomes a bioengineer.

Later, using the prominent position at the biotechnology corporation, Crake



creates Crakers, his stated goal to create “floor models”. These “floor models” are actually Crake’s attempt at creating perfect post human race.

Crake eventually finds a girl from the child pornography website and hires her(Oryx), as both a prostitute for himself, and a teacher for the Crakers. Crake tells Jimmy about another project, a prophylactic agent, and hires him to help market it. Also then Jimmy comes in contact with Oryx. When Oryx finds Jimmy more caring and loving, she starts enjoying a relation with him.

Meanwhile, when Crake’s drug is widely distributed, a global pandemic breaks out and begins wiping out the human race. Jimmy then recognizes this breakout a planned action of Crake, and in anger points out a gun towards Crake. Crake offers himself to Jimmy with his arm around Oryx, saying that they are the only three people immune to the virus and slits Oryx’s throat before being shot.

Time moves on with Jimmy and the Crakers. During his journey to scavenge supplies, he cuts his foot and becomes infected by some descendant of transgenic experiments. Hoping that the uniquely adopted Crakers can heal him, he returns to their camp and learns that three ragged true humans are camping nearby. Snowman follows the smoke to their fire and sees two men and a woman. Unsure of whether to befriend them or shoot them, Snowman checks his broken watch, thinks “Time to go” and makes up his mind.

This project now doesn’t offers a comprehensive analysis of the novel, rather, the major objective of this research is to demonstrate the false binaries of femininity and masculinity, and also puts light on the importance of femininity as much like masculinity is. This study makes a significant contribution mainly in two areas of concern. First, this study brings the major characters within the purview of critical analysis. Second, this research makes a significant theoretical connection between

feminism, and dystopian world vision in order to unmask the importance of female or feminine traits. In short, this study shows the intricate relationship between the stereotyping of “feminine” attributes to females and “dystopian” vision of dehumanized state to expose the logic of masculinity. As the method adopted of this research is feminist dystopia, this research moves on through making a feminist analysis. It explores the significance of female character, often overlooked as intelligent, strong and valuable beings. Females and those associated with feminine attributes are seemed to be dominated as weak, unintelligent and valueless. Masculinity is seemed to only contribute in the society in an effective way. Hence, the study offers a critical view to overcome the masculine attitude to look upon the feminine traits as well as highlights on the importance of femininity.

For the most of this long history women were not only deprived of education and financial independence, they also had to struggle against a male ideology condemning them to virtual silence and obedience. Oryx, an important female character of the novel, is taught to be a passive listener, who is treated as an object. She is sold to a rich man named Uncle En by her mother because of her poor class status, is used by Uncle En as a flower seller and then as a sex bait to trap sexual tourists for money. She is seen subjected to the reality of the use of women as a female body since her very childhood. She presents herself as docile and obedient to the commands of her masters and “did as she was told” (153).

In our society, women have to depend upon men for their identity i.e. the social definition of who they are. As a feminist writer AlkaSaxena observes women’s position:

Women are indeed living at the mercy of men at present, a woman’s identity depends on the man who comes in her life lies in the hands of

her father, husband, or son, depending upon whether she is unmarried, married, widowed. The men determine her fate, make decisions on her behalf and decide what is good or bad for her. (23-24)

Women's identity is constructed by the patriarchal society. It is this patriarchal society and patriarchal discourse which fashions the psychology of men and women. Indeed, the depiction of women in male literature was an integral means of perpetuating the ideologies of gender. In the second chapter "Bonfire", Jimmy's parents argue on a 'lighter' and finally Jimmy's mother leaves room slamming the door. It's then when his father says, "Women always get hot under collar" (19). This is what men think about women. Well the resistance against this male ideology is also cleared in the novel through the statement:

Women, and what went under their collars. Hotness and coldness, coming and going in the strange musky flowery variable-weather country inside their clothes-mysterious, important, uncontrollable. That was his father's take on things. But men's body temperatures were never dealt with; they were never even mentioned, not when he was little, except when his dad said, "Chill out." Why weren't they? Why nothing about the hot collars of men? Those smooth, sharp-edged collars with their dark, sulphurous, bristling undersides. He could have used a few theories on that.(19)

Women are stereotyped as mysterious and whimsical whereas men are believed to be firm and stable. Male ideology is clear through Jimmy's father, who stereotypes about women, whereas the resistance against such ideology is also shown in the novel. The difference between masculine and feminine, gender is enforced though when Jimmy's father expresses his opinion giving allusions to women's temperament as similar to

unstable weather condition.

Female identity has always been the construction of patriarchal ideology since the very time of long history. Considering gender critic Kate Millet's compliment in *Sexual Politics*

. . . the gender identity development which takes place through childhood is the sum total of the parents', peers' and the culture's notion of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character interests, status, worth, gesture and expression. Every moment of the child's life is a clue to how he or she must think and behave to attain or satisfy the demands which gender places upon one.

(31)

It is this society which provides our parents the very responsibility of psychology building of a child from his/her very early age. After birth, we are given our names and what to do and what not to do are categorized out, and we live our whole life defending something we did not actually choose.

In *Oryx and Crake*, Jimmy's father teaches his son to be a man, the very patriarchal concept of what a man is; a strong being having less emotions and feelings, living in a more practical way. Jimmy, while displaying of emotions and tears, is exclusively demarcated as being female. Here tears and emotion comes to be feminine quality that endows within female. Example is at the departure of Jimmy's mother. Despite the pain he suffers, he refrains from crying, "He could have burst into tears" only "If he'd been a girl"(73). His psychological assumption of tears being associated with girls is nothing but the outcome of patriarchal society. The sole responsible person of Jimmy's psychological construction about boys and girls is no one other than his father, who stands for patriarchal norms and values in the novel.

Now, the point is that females and those associated with feminine attributes are seen as weak, unintelligent, and valueless in the novel. Femininity and masculinity are supposed to be the attributes similar to femaleness and maleness respectively in the novel. At this point, this dissertation deconstructs this false assumption of “femininity” as “femaleness” and “masculinity” as “maleness”, as well as it projects that the importance of femininity equals to that of masculinity.

According to *The New International Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*:

Femininity is a set of attributes, behavior, and roles generally associated with girls and women. Femininity is socially constructed, but made up of both socially-defined and biologically-created factors. This makes it distinct from the definition of the biological female, as both men and women can exhibit feminine traits. Traits traditionally known to be feminine include gentleness, empathy, and sensitivity. Others are caring, sweetness, compassion, tolerance, nurturance, deference, succorance, etc.(158)

The novel offers various, mediums, practices, patterns and norms of society and culture that lead to the conditioning of psyche of both men and women that result in the shaping and becoming of Feminine and masculine gender identities. This research however, attempts to deconstruct the binary of gender/sex in the novel, and proves that the traits known to be masculine can be displayed by women and vice-versa and same is with femininity. Jimmy, being a male, exhibits many feminine traits like being emotional, sentimental, interested in arts and aesthetics. On contrary Oryx despite being a woman is more practical and reasonable in her approach.

Snowman/Jimmy is presented as an empathetic character from his childhood.

An empathetic child, he was discouraged from being emotionally connected to animals by his father:

At bonfire Jimmy was anxious about the animals, because they were being burned and surely that would hurt them. No, his father told him. The animals were dead. They were like sausages, only they still had their skins on.

And their heads, thought Jimmy. Steaks didn't have heads. The heads make a difference: he thought he could see the animals looking at him reproachfully out of their burning eyes. In some way all of this- the bonfire, the charred smell, but most of all the lit-up, suffering animals- was his fault, because he'd done nothing to rescue them.(20)

Despite, his father's strictly scientific approach to animals, Jimmy feels a connection to them. When he goes to visit his father at work, he feels bad for the pigeons that have nothing to do other than grow replacement organs for humans. Jimmy discomfort with the way animals are treated presents him as an empathetic creature.

Art, hope and imagination are also presented as feminine quality in the novel. But, it is this quality which gives Snowman in his problematic situation a glimpse of joy for living. In the third chapter of the novel:

A caterpillar is letting itself down on a thread, twirling slowly like a rope artist, spiraling towards his chest. It's a luscious, unreal green, like a gumdrop, and covered with tiny bright hairs. Watching it, he feels a sudden, inexplicable surge of tenderness and joy. Unique, he thinks. There will never be another caterpillar just like this one. There will never be another such moment of time, another such conjunction. These tiny sneak up on him for no reason, these flashes of

irrational happiness. It's probably a vitamin deficiency. (46)

A glimmer of hope is presented in this chapter. Snowman's inexplicable feeling of elation at seeing the caterpillar hovering over his chest demonstrates his enduring spirit of art. In spite of all of the adversity he faces, the extreme loneliness, and physical discomfort, he is able to see beauty in the ugly, dilapidated world around him. Though, it sounds unpractical that how a view of caterpillar can make Snowman forget his pain and troubles, but it is his this art of seeing beauty in a common scene which works as a vitamin tonic for him in healing his pain and sufferings.

Jimmy's femininity is also lightened up when he worries about Oryx, long for her, and the times she was away were hard for him. When he hears of Oryx's story of childhood, Jimmy wants to get angry, he wants to seek revenge for what he feels was done wrong to her. He, in fact cares for her, and is empathetic enough toward her. He wants to express love for her, and also wants to be loved by her. His exhibiting sentimental and emotional approach towards Oryx can be exclusively linked up with femininity. In the chapter entitled "Pixieland Jazz", Snowman's recollection of Oryx's childhood offers him a way to pass the time. In his flashback, we are presented with a dramatic tension between Jimmy and Oryx. Jimmy's anger is noticed when he is in a conversation with Oryx:

'I cried when I heard about it,' said Oryx.

'Poor Uncle En.'

'Why are you defending him?' Jimmy asked.

'He was vermin, he was a cockroach!'

'He liked me.'

'He liked the money!'

'Ofcourse Jimmy,' said Oryx. 'Everyone likes that. But he could have

done much worse things to me, and he didn't do them. I cried when I heard he was dead. I cried and cried.'

'What worse things? What much worse?'

'Jimmy, you worry too much.' (159)

Here, Jimmy wants to be angry, he wants to seek revenge for what he feels was done wrong to Oryx.

Whenever Jimmy feels dissatisfied in his life, he comes out from the situation with the help of "hope" (299). Hope symbolizes optimism, not far from art and imagination. Yes in the chapter entitled "Garage", Jimmy finds himself restless when the CorpSeCorps show Jimmy a video of his mother's execution, his world comes to a crashing halt. He sinks into a depression so deep that not even alcohol and sex can comfort him. In the midst of this period of discontent, Oryx enters his life. While watching a television broadcast about a girl that was trapped in a man's garage, Jimmy sees Oryx. She was the girl that was trapped. At this time she remains a beacon of light, a symbol of hope for Jimmy:

. . . But the look was the same: the same blend of innocence and contempt and understanding. It made him feel light headed, precariously balanced, as if he were standing on a cliff-edge above a rock filled gorge, and it would be dangerous for him to look down.  
(299,300)

For a moment, her face makes him forget all of his troubles and sufferings. Oryx comes as a ray of light in his life. Here, every time hope hits Jimmy's life, the very feminine is he served as in the novel.

Not only in this particular chapter, in most of the parts of the novel, whenever Snowman feels alone, a whispering tone is present there, though in Snowman's



imagination, to company and comfort him. Whose whispering sound it is, is not directly mentioned to the readers but sometime we are provided with hints that the voice is that of Oryx. It is also this whispering sound which companies Snowman, when he is alone in the crowd of the Crakers. It sometime gives him a feeling of having a friend to talk with. It infact eases his loneliness. Though it is nothing more than his hallucination, it is one of the focused feminine quality of Jimmy, his essence of being artistic.

Atwood also highlights on another female character Oryx, differently than that of Jimmy/Snowman. Oryx, despite a woman is shown to be more practical and reasonable in her approach. She is also presented as a perfect business woman in the novel. She is described as an, “expert businesswoman” and Crake too trusted her “more perhaps than he trusted Jimmy” (368). Oryx, being a woman is shown to be practical and reasonable in her approach as opposed to Jimmy who is displayed as emotional and sentimental. Despite being a subordinated and oppressed, Oryx tries to gain power over her oppressors by refusing to identify herself as victim and oppressed. She refuses the fact of her suffering and exploitation by denying to reveal the details of her past life sufferings to Jimmy:

“That’s all, said Oryx.”

“What do you mean, that’s all?”

“That’s all there was, she said. That’s all there was to it.”

“What about, did they ever...”

“Did they ever what?”

“They didn’t. Not when you were that that young. They couldn’t have.”

“Please, Jimmy tell me what you are asking.” Oh, very cool. He

wanted to shake her.

“Did they rape you?” He could barely squeeze it out. What answer he was expecting, what did he want?

“Why do you want to talk about ugly things?” She said. Her voice was silvery, like a music box. She waved one hand in the air to dry nails.

“We should think only beautiful things, as much as we can. There is so much beautiful in the world if you look around. You are looking only at dirt under your feet, Jimmy. It’s not good for you.”(167,168)

Oryx thinks that perhaps Uncle En had fallen victim to the cruelty of his own people—other criminals. She tells Jimmy that she cried when heard of his death. Jimmy cannot understand why she would have sympathy for a man who used her. But Oryx points out that Uncle En could have treated her much worse. She thinks that her oppressors are victim indeed.

Moreover, Oryx wants to think practically to all the things happened to her. She takes a positive viewpoint. Although she has gone through a harrowing ordeal in being sold as young child, she manages to see good things that resulted from her life trajectory. For one, she is surrounded by people she cares deeply about, has a job she believes in, and is able to speak English. None of these would have been likely to happen if she had not been sold as a child. In this situation Jimmy, on the other hand, is outraged at her ordeals. But Oryx’s calmness reflects her ability to cope with different situations.

Not only for her past, but she don’t want to think negatively about anything. She believes that thinking negatively means inviting worries n sufferings. She thinks that positive thoughts build positive energy to life. When Jimmy is shown opposing Crake for his scientific endeavors, Oryx, on the other, encouraged Crake’s scientific

and practical efforts for the well-being of humanity.

The gendered society segregates women from all the major spheres, subordinating and marginalizing them to the areas which are pre-labeled as feminine, as beautifully expressed by the gender critic Kate Millet in her *Sexual Politics*:

As patriarchy enforces a temperamental imbalance of personality traits between the sexes, its educational institutions, segregated or co-educational, accepts a cultural programming towards the generally operative division between, 'masculine' and 'feminine' subject matter assigning the humanities and certain social sciences to the female- and science and technology, the professions, business and engineering to the male... The humanities, because not only exclusive male, suffer in prestige: the science, technologies and business, because they are nearly exclusively male reflect the deformation of the 'masculine' personality. Eg a certain predatory or aggressive character.(435)

Therefore, we see in the novel that science is associated and believed to represent masculine domain and intelligence, whereas art along with femininity. The patriarchal gender categories of masculinity and femininity comes to an end and comes as unstable and constructed culturally in discourse, shown exquisitely through the characters: Jimmy, who despite being a male displays interest in arts, and Oryx, being a female is described as an expert businesswoman. Art and aesthetics, often coined as feminine are represented through a male character Jimmy much more rather than through a female character Oryx.

Masculinity is a set of traits or attributes, behaviors and roles generally associated with boys or men. Generally, the traits included are: courage, independence and assertiveness. Masculine norms that are socially and culturally constructed is

assumed to be avoidance of femininity, restricted emotions, sex disconnected from intimacy, pursuit of achievement and status, strength and aggression. Viewing the concept of what masculinity is, we find it beside the traditional description, in the novel, through the character analysis of Oryx.

Courage, one of the masculine traits endows within Oryx, which gives her power to deal in difficult situations. From her childhood, she hides her feelings and is presented as a courageous girl. In her difficult situations, she gains strength through positive thought. Thinking in a different way, a way of finding good in everyone and everything gives her strength against her oppressors. Yes, also she avoids feminine attributes. May be it's her way of resisting against her oppressors, she never felt dominated, or 'been used'. She never yelled for what was happened to her. She moreover, feels pity on her oppressors. She was used as an object. She was sold in her childhood. But, she neither regrets the fact, nor weeps or feels emotionally hurt. She avoids femininity therefore. Also she is disconnected from intimacy in her sexual relationship with both Crake and Jimmy. For her, relation with Crake was just a biological one, and with Jimmy was of fun. She never admitted herself longing for either of them. When Jimmy frequently terms the relation as "love", Oryx never does so. She most often would tell Jimmy that it was fun for her being with him. In this case, if masculinity traits are biological one than how can a female possess the qualities. Through Oryx, Atwood deconstructs the traditional belief of 'masculinity is something related only to men'. It is not manhood, but a trait which either of the sexes can endow.

Another male character Crake, is one of the major focus in the novel too. In the novel he is often depicted as a primarily logic- driven person, serving the quality encoded as 'masculinity'. He is arrogant in his masculinity. He is a genius scientist

whose ultimate goal had been to create a state of immortality. His persona of beginning as a mad scientist begins to shine in chapter 12. He wants only the biological necessities of relationships, whereas Jimmy shows his femininity through his desire of love. He thinks that much suffering is caused by “the misalignment of harmonesand pheromones” (193). Love and lust are often unrequited, and develops idea of creating a system that makes mating a reciprocal cycle. Sex is also a problem that Crake seems to think women have caused. He denies love and affection. He feels that emotions and feelings towards others are just chemical imbalances:

There must be a mating going on, rare- enough occasion among the people: Crake had worked out the numbers, and had decreed that once every three years per female was more than enough.

There’ll be the standard quintuplet, four men and the women in heat.

Her condition will be obvious the bright blue color of her buttocks and abdomen- a truck of variable pigmentation filched from the baboons, with a contribution from the expandable chromosphores of the Octopus. (193, 194)

Crake labors to use those humanoids for building a world of materiality just, denying love and affection. His ‘floor-models’ were created without the emotional sentiments and sex among them was just a mating occasion before and after that occasion there’s no feeling of love among them. In fact, he wanted to create a world thriving of only masculinity and no existence of femininity.

Crakers were constructed as genderless and sexless in order to remove the ground which results in the inequality and exploitation. Crake felt that a man’s need of sex is just a biological want, but a woman needs and wants more. That’s why, Crake’s feelings toward Oryx is purely sexual; there is no real loving emotion in

them:

Crake's sexual needs were direct and simple, according to Oryx: not intriguing like sex with Jimmy. Not fun, just work- although she respected Crake, she really did, because he was a brilliant genius. But if Crake wanted her to stay no longer on any given night, do it again maybe, she'd make some excuse- jet lag, a headache, something plausible. (369)

Crake hoped to help heal the world from the problems. War and hunger were two of the sources of suffering that he aimed to eliminate through his BlyssPluss Pill. He thinks to solve human deficiencies through Crakers and BlyssPluss Pills. He attempt to alter the ancient primate brain to get rid of what he thinks are "destructive features" in order to create an ideal society:

Gone were its destructive features, the features responsible for the world's current illness. For instance, racism [...]. The Paradise people simply did not register skin color. Hierarchy could not exist among them [...]. Their sexuality was not a constant torment to them, not a cloud of turbulent hormones: they came into heat at regular intervals, as did most mammals other than man. In fact, as there would never be anything for these people to inherit, there would be no family trees, no marriages, and no divorces. [...] They would not need to invent any harmful symbolisms, such as kingdoms, icons, gods, or money. Best of all, they recycled their own excrement. (358)

Crake was obsessed with the idea of a world without famine, sexual, racial and religious wars and tensions. In fact , 'the greater good', a world without famine, wars, racial and sexual tensions, is also the utopian vision of Crake, but far from his

expectation the world dissolve in a horrible apocalypse caused by his own invention, the BlyssPluss Pills, comes to be a dystopian world at its end.

The tension between femininity and masculinity is portrayed in the conversation held between Jimmy and Crake:

‘When any civilization is dust and ashes,’ [Jimmy] said, ‘art is all that is left over. Images, words, music. Imaginative structures. Meaning-human meaning, that 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.’

Jimmy would like to have said why are you always putting me down? But he was afraid of the possible answers, because it’s so easy being one of them. So instead he said ‘What have you got against it?’

‘Against what? Ossified shit?’

‘Art.’

‘Nothing,’ said Crake lazily. ‘People can amuse themselves any way they like. If they want to play with themselves in public, whack off over doodling, scribbling, and fiddling, it’s fine with me.’ (167)

For Crake the only purpose of art serves a biological one. Art’s only purpose is to satisfy scientific need. The feminine characters’ only purpose is to serve masculine Crake. He takes feminine and arts as the problems of the world. He creates Crakers, who were meant to live without the arts, science, love or god. He felt that the only reason human’s created art was because they were sexually frustrated. The only reason behind people worshipped or created god figures, was because of a certain part

of the brain. So, he thought to solve these human deficiencies through the Crakers. He tried to remove all desire to worship and create. But, ironically, the Crakers have grown to understand Crake as a kind of deity and Snowman as Craker's prophet. Crake thought he removed the desire to worship a higher being. Ironically, it appears that Crake has unwittingly taken the role of a deity in the Craker's world. The Crakers long to have a history, which ultimately proves many of Crake's hypothesis wrong. Crake has attempted to remove all capacity of art and creativity in the Craker gene pool. As Snowman continuously documents, we find Crake unsuccessful in his quest.

The first time Crakers broke through Crake's assumption was when they learned questioning, when they wanted to know about their existence as shown in chapter 12:

'Do they ever ask where they came from?' said Jimmy.

'What they're doing here?' At that moment he couldn't have cared less, but he wanted to join the conversation so he could look at Oryx without being obvious.

'You don't get it,' said Crake, in his you-are-a-moron voice. 'That stuffs been edited out.'

'Well, actually, they did ask,' said Oryx. 'Today they asked who made them.' (366)

However, no matter how much the nature of a being is tweaked through genetic modification, because of the inquisitive nature, or perhaps the ultimate power of the Arts, the Crakers begin to worship Crake and Oryx. They also learn through storytelling; often they ask Snowman a question and he provides answers with a full story. Myths and stories becomes a source of a history creation in the Crakers society. Similarly, these stories of Snowman would more likely pass on from generation to



generation creating the 'arts' again in the world of the Crakers. Jimmy, in many ways an artist, has restored the power of femininity and the expression of feelings through art and stories.

Not only worshipping but also the feeling of care is alive within Crakers; 'care' and 'nurturance' are often pre-coded as feminine. Craker women are also shown to be emotional and sensitive which Crake supposed to destroy wholly among these post-human models. When the Crakers tell Snowman that they that they saw three others like him came by the Craker encampment, Snowman wants to find them. Then he gets up to leave but a Craker women object. They subject him to another round of purring in an attempt to heal his wounded foot:

'But you are not well enough yet,' says the Empress Josephine. 'You need more purring.' She looks worried: a small frown has appeared between her eyes. Unusual to see such an expression on one of their perfect wrinkle-free faces.(424)

Every time Snowman tells the Crakers that Oryx loves them. Here, love, one of the feminine trait for the living of the Crakers. It works as a divine power for them to live even in the absence of the Snowman. He frequently says to them that oryx loves them so that they can stay calm when there is not Snowman around them. Also in the final chapter, before departing in the direction of the three humans, Snowman decides that he should leave the Crakers with some words of wisdom. After much pondering, he realizes that there is not much that he can say that will not result in confusion or further questions. He ultimately keeps it simple, choosing to reaffirm the mythology that he has created by telling the Crakers that Crake would always be watching over them and Oryx loved them.

Crake considers arts and femininity as the world's problems. However, Jimmy

because of his passivity and interest in arts is chosen by Crake along with Oryx to look after the Crakers. Crake felt that only Jimmy had the empathy required to deal directly with the Crakers:

Then, one lunchtime, he[Crake] said, 'If anything happens to me, I'm depending on you to look after the Paradise Project. Anytime I'm away from here, I want you to take charge I've made it a strong order.'

'What do you mean, anything?' said Jimmy. 'What could happen?'

'You know.'

Jimmy thought he meant kidnapping, or being whacked by the opposition: that was a constant hazard, for the Compound brainiacs.

'Sure,' he said, 'but one, your security's the best, and two, there's people in here much better equipped than I am. I couldn't head up a thing like this, I don't have the science.'

'These people are specialists, said Crake. They wouldn't have the empathy to deal with the Paradise models, they wouldn't be any good at it, they'd get impatient. Even I couldn't begin get onto their wavelength. But you're more than a generalist.' (375,376)

Here, there is a clear projection even from the masculine Crake's tongue that empathy is important though there are number of specialist to look after the Crakers. However, masculinity here itself announces femininity important.

Both Jimmy and Oryx are entrusted with the task of looking after the Crakers because Crake finds both of them similar in one or the other. His reason for choosing Jimmy as caretaker of Crakers is similar to his motives of appointing Oryx as their teacher. Crake, being a scientist, and displaying hegemonic masculinity undermines art and femininity, whereas assigns Jimmy and Oryx for supporting hands in his plan

because of the same quality they both possessed. Physically a male, Jimmy is confined with 'femininity'. If so, then how can we say femininity is only the trait confined within females. Atwood, hence suggests that femininity doesn't mean 'being' female rather it's just a trait opposite to masculinity, a trait which either of the sex can possess.

Next, if femininity is of no importance or is actually the reason behind the world's problem, then why the masculine Crake would need it the most in carrying out his research. It means he only can trust Oryx and Jimmy because they hold femininity in their nature. Masculinity alone seems weak here at this point in the absence of femininity. Femininity exists therefore masculinity too stands. In fact, masculinity alone is not the whole.

Atwood not only deconstructs the belief of masculinity as biologically superior and femininity as biologically inferior, but also presents femininity as a unique identity in contrast to masculinity. Femininity in the text is not only presented as a trait related to females only but also related to males. This dissertation however shows the idea of femininity stands in its own ground of unique identity. It's unique in its identity. It is not just an identity opposite of masculinity, but has its own values and stand. It is a set of attributes not similar to masculinity but it doesn't mean that it is a weak or less valuable thing. Rather femininity and masculinity are two sides of a coin.

As Susan Bordo claims in her essay "Normalisation and Resistance in the Era of the Image":

Identity is perceptible only through a relation to another- which is to say, it is a form of both resisting and claiming the other, declaring the boundary where the self diverges from and merges with the other. In

that declaration of identity and identification, there is always loss, the loss of not- being the other and yet remaining dependent on the other for being self- seeing, self-being.(58)

Similar to the statement, this dissertation's foremost idea is, femininity is not like masculinity and masculinity not same as femininity. A person is feminine if he or she is not equal to masculine and same is with a masculine person. Masculinity differentiates itself from femininity and stands therefore in contrast to femininity. But it doesn't mean that femininity is inferior. Rather masculinity has its identity because femininity stands. So, if Crake supposes to create a world prevailing no femininity, he has been failed in his attempt. It is his meaningless effort to create a world without femininity. In short, this dissertation overcomes the rigid definition of femininity and offers a broad vision of femininity and masculinity. It presents how femininity and masculinity are of same importance. One is neither superior nor inferior than the other. One is different than other but both are equally important to the society.

Centering the analysis on the gender and femininity, Atwood in her novel *Oryx and Crake* challenges the social myths and assumptions. Here, feminism is not that to be discovered in feminist textbooks. It is something different in the sense that Atwood along with presenting femininity as a social construction of identity, also argues that it is not only related to females only, the role is displayed by males too. She presents three major characters Crake, Jimmy/Snowman and Oryx with different viewpoints and different nature: hegemonic masculine character Crake, female character Oryx with masculine attributes, and male character Jimmy with feminine trait. Atwood's dystopia envisages a future where feminine characters are used and then pushed aside. The only valid lifestyle contributes to the society in a malleable way. However, the research asserts that the feminine characters are noteworthy,

important, and influential characters as they offer a critical view to overcome the masculine attitude to look upon the feminine traits as well as highlights on the importance of femininity.

In the novel, there is a strong preference for those who are scientifically or mathematically capable. The world has little to do with those who are verbally inclined. After the apocalypse Jimmy becomes the androgynous Snowman. Snowman is not dominated by science because science has been destroyed; ironically, Crake, the masculine scientific genius, is the person responsible for the destruction of science. While Snowman remains a word person. Even after the destruction he continues to care, care for the Crakers. Femininity thus survives within Snowman. The Snowman being alive is the symbol of the existence of femininity.

In *Oryx and Crake*, disease plays a multitude of roles. It is the cause of mass destruction. Crake's widespread distribution of his masked virus results in the death of almost the entire human population. By inflicting a lethal disease on the world's population, Crake hoped to remove hunger, jealousy, crime and a host of other undesirable conditions of the human experience which comes because of femininity. Here, disease, in its literary ground, symbolizes masculine domination over femininity. But, at the end we find that three human beings except the Snowman are found to be alive. It shows that disease fails to destroy the whole human world. Living of humans ironically, indicates for the existence of femininity.

In *Oryx and Crake*, it is seen that both sex or gender is influenced by society culture. The believed biological ordained is in fact the product of socio- cultural influences. It shows how conditions and cumulative influences of society, culture and family are responsible in moulding and fashioning of both masculinity and femininity. Atwood, through her both men and women characters deftly brings out masculinities

is not necessarily fixed to their sexed bodies. Femininity is not only associated with women but men too display feminine traits quite dexterously. The removal of gendered characteristics from the sexed bodies brings out the display of both masculinity and femininity by the people of either or both sexes.

### **III. Femininity in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*: Conclusion**

After analyzing the novel in detail, this dissertation comes to the conclusion that Margaret Atwood deals with the new concept of 'femininity' in *Oryx and Crake*. It basically focuses on three major characters; Jimmy/Snowman, Oryx and Crake, who represent different perspective and stand for different attitudes in the contemporary society. This dissertation, however, elaborates the new concept of 'femininity' in *Oryx and Crake*, through individual analysis of the characters of the novel. Crake stands for extreme masculinity, Jimmy/Snowman for femininity, and Oryx for a blend of femaleness and masculinity. It's a way, a technique of choosing these characters for redefining the term 'femininity'.

Femininity is shown to a social construct in patriarchal hands in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, and then is also redefined as a trait that can be endowed by either of the sex, not being particularly femaleness. This dissertation presents an idea that femaleness to the point of biological appearance can be distinguished from the maleness, but when it comes to an essence of 'femininity', it is not distinguishable whether all females have it or should have it, and all males have or should not have it.

Gender identity is all about performance learned through discourse, male and female characters exhibit both masculine and feminine quality irrespective of their sex. This is more prominently brought up in the novel through the characters; Oryx and Jimmy/Snowman. Jimmy being a male, is shown to be an emotional, sentimental, empathetic person as well as interested in arts and literature, whereas, Oryx being a female is more practical and reasonable in her approach. She is presented as a perfect businesswoman. Challenging the traditional identity of women, being of female, Oryx is presented as a strong and courageous character. She is a troublesome and debatable figure for the patriarchy norms and values. She avoids femininity, and is

disconnected from intimacy, thinks practically, as well as is a strong character to deal with difficult situations. Thus, she is an answer to the question, “Does being female means being feminine?”

With *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood has painted a vision of a far destructive world where femininity is shown weak and overlooked as important, but where ultimately the solution to the world’s problem the answer comes to be the same femininity. Crake, arrogant in his masculinity attempts to remove religion, femininity, art and literature in the post-human era. But, his own creation Crakers, who were supposed to be without these essence, come to be inquisitive being with the very qualities; praying, creating stories, caring, empathetic, wanting a history of their existence, etc. likely serving to their future generations.

Science and technology, often carried as masculine thing, in its extremity destructs the human world, but arts, religion, God and femininity give hope to the future living. Crakers unknowingly live with a hope that Oryx loves them and Crake is watching over them. They start worship them and think Snowman/Jimmy as a prophet of them. Moreover, empathy lies in their world too. They start to live in verbal world.

Atwood uses *Oryx and Crake* to show a society that does not value the feminine, but also in the end shows that feminine qualities in the world are just as important as the masculine. Atwood also shows at the end that no society can function without empathy. Throughout, *Oryx and Crake*, femininity is supposed to serve the purpose of masculinity. It is used and then pushed aside. However, it is the very feminine traits and feminine world prevailed in the end.

This dissertation highlights on the artificiality and instability of both masculinity and femininity that leads to porous gender and sexual boundaries, and



brings a new insight for looking upon femininity and masculinity. It celebrates 'femininity' and 'masculinity' as a unique identity, not confined within females only.

The study, bringing the idea of feminist dystopia, has focused on the inequality of society, and demands for the change in the vision. Deconstructing the binary of gender/sex, the study shows the importance of femininity in *Oryx and Crake*. *Oryx and Crake* highlights on the problem of the contemporary society, as well as answers the questions itself to those problems.

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