Chapter 4

Apocalyptic Future and the End of Technology vis-à-vis Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*
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Environmentalism in the works of Atwood and the biologists becomes a concern with the urgent preservation of a human place in a natural world in which the term “human” does not imply “superior,” or “alone,” and in which what is fabricated or artificial is less satisfying than what has originally occurred. (Hengen 74)

Oryx and Crake (2003) is another dystopian fiction by Margaret Atwood, the previous one being The Handmaid’s Tale (1985). The dystopia in this novel has a darker future owing to the abuse and unlimited use of scientific technologies and genetic engineering. Nominated for Booker Prize in 2003, the novel is a kind of warning against the possibility of serious hazardous consequences of technology that is used as a power against nature. Juxtaposing the world of science and the world of arts, Atwood points towards a clear distinction between the attitudes regarding them. The intellectual and bright students are given admission in Science Academy and they play the deciding role of the future whereas the students getting lesser scores join Art Academy. The imbalance between the two worlds persists and the study of language, emotions, and feelings is given less preference than to the study of science and technology. The same technology becomes the cause of the catastrophe that strikes in the end of the novel.

The dystopian genre found its emergence in few stories written in 19th century. One of them was a novel written by Jules Verne entitled Paris in the Twentieth Century (1863). It tells the tale of a young man who has graduated college with a
degree in literature; however everything related to arts in Paris is government-controlled. Without being able to earn a living for himself he finds that he is running out of money and has got no place to live. He is freezing to death and walking on the streets of Paris at the end of the novel. He dies tragically while contemplating that how society's neglect towards arts ultimately led to the death of many innocent people. This dystopian epic paints the picture of a world without the beauty of art, moving towards a cold and mechanized future. The similar neglect of emotions and aesthetics is the central concern in *Oryx and Crake*.

The course of events in *Oryx and Crake* from the pre-apocalyptic situation to a post-apocalyptic one creates a terrifying effect, as a chaotic civilization comes to an end. Snowman, apparently the last man on this earth, relives his past, when he was not alone and the disaster had not occurred. His best friend Crake, a top-most scientist, was working as the master-mind behind the apocalypse. The vision of a completely changed civilization, with the help of scientific inventions and at the cost of nature's phenomena, resulted in the destruction of the whole mankind. Atwood has painted a dystopian and a utopian picture together, implying the need for the human beings to revert back to natural ways. Crake creates new type of human beings with the help of bio-technology who live ideally and peacefully. After the apocalypse, everything has been destroyed and these people live in a utopian kind of world. ‘Back to Nature’ seems to be the slogan of the newly created genetically engineered human beings. D. Thompson comments on literature involving apocalypse:

> Apocalyptic literature takes the form of a revelation of the end of history. Violent and grotesque images are juxtaposed with glimpses of
a world transformed; the underlying theme is usually a titanic struggle between good and evil … Apocalypticism has been described as a genre born out of crisis, designed to stiffen the resolve of an embattled community by dangling in front of it the vision of a sudden and permanent release from its captivity. (Thompson 13-14)

The novel is visionary in various aspects – the vision of the negative impact of scientific growth, the vision of chaos in the world, the vision of a better world and the vision of nature as a guiding factor. Snowman, who is the protagonist, becomes a part of all these visions, during different times. He seems to be the only person alive on this planet in the beginning of the novel as there are no signs and possibility of anyone else being alive. He is repenting over some action of the past, which could be avoided. He has taken shelter in a forest near the sea shore and his life is becoming more miserable with every passing day. He is short of food and he feels danger from forest animals. Besides planning his survival, he is fulfilling the responsibility of guiding the genetically engineered human beings who live near the forest. They were created under a special plan and are immune to diseases.

The gloomy and hopeless beginning of the novel points towards its theme. It is an indication that something is seriously wrong, which needs a deeper understanding. The zero hour connotes that the whole civilization has come to an end. The catastrophe that had struck has destroyed the whole planet. Atwood’s dystopias are actually a warning against the possibility of a disaster and are a yearning for a better world. Snowman, who was Jimmy before the apocalypse, is representing the whole mankind, left alive to analyze the causes of the failure of the whole system.
The devastated condition of human being in the novel points towards the fact that down the road he is heading towards a major destruction. Along with many new inventions mankind has also witnessed many disasters leading to mass destruction. The disasters have been the outcome of the abuse and unethical use of latest inventions. Atwood gives a prophetic warning that man needs to mend his ways if the future is to be saved. Timothy Clark, in his book *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (2011) writes, “The current state of the world erodes the very legitimacy of given institutions and laws, often instilling the grimmer conviction that the industrial market economy and the modern state are essentially and structurally committed to the process of an endless capital accumulation and that this will end only with their own demise – either in the form of their political overthrow or, more likely, through environmental catastrophe” (Clarke 2). This novel also justifies this remark on “endless capital accumulation” resulting in environmental catastrophe. Atwood focuses on the themes of exploitation of women, destruction of nature due to excessive use of advanced technology and domination of the weaker by the powerful.

Various complex situations in the novel indicate towards a dire need to reform the society. Due to the fast pace of advancement in technology, the basic human values are getting deteriorated, making the world a dead end. The large depletion of natural resources and their misuse, environmental pollution and destruction of the rhythm of nature are the factors responsible for the present crisis. The theory of ecofeminism finds its grassroots ideologies becoming an essential part of the critical thought process of the events in the novel. The events depict the erosion of women and nature running parallel and their mutually reinforcing causes of exploitation as having common ground.
Snowman, the protagonist of the novel, is living alone in a forest after the apocalypse. He is remembering his childhood days when he used to like watching DVDs of creatures like lion and hyena. He liked the animal behaviour programs. His name was Jimmy and his father was a genographer, one of the best in the profession. His father was the originator of the pigoon project, which was to grow an assortment of foolproof human-tissue organs in pig host-organs that would transplant smoothly and avoid rejection. Jimmy and his family lived in the OrganInc Compound, where the top people lived. Cities outside the Compound were called pleeblands, where common people lived.

The elite people in the Compound were completely separated from the common people in the cities. The top intellectuals lived in that Compound with ultra security and the others were strictly kept outside. “Long ago, in the days of nights and dragons, the kings and dukes had lived in castles, with high walls and drawbridges . . . said Jimmy's father, and the Compounds were the same idea. Castles were for keeping you and your buddies nice and safe inside, and for keeping everybody else outside” (32). The strict demarcation between elite and common people depicts the division created in society by science and technology, ultimately leading to violence.

Jimmy’s father wanted to make him practical and used to give him various tools. He measured his son’s intelligence with ‘math-and-chem-and-applied-bio yardstick’ and rated him as dull. The practical and rational world of the father led to dissatisfaction and lack of communication in the house. Little Jimmy found solace in talking to the pet animal only. Jimmy's mother felt herself like a prisoner in that
Compound. "She complained about the tight security at the HelhWyzer gates – the guards were ruder, they were suspicious of everyone, they liked to strip search people, women especially" (60).

The huge walls of the elite Compound were like the walls of a prison for Jimmy’s mother. As a wife, as a mother and as an individual she was feeling helpless and handicapped. She left the job for the sake of her child but her household chores were of no importance for her husband. Due to his cold and mechanized attitude towards her and his unethical job of extracting huge money from people with new inventions, there were frequent quarrels between them. She was also depressed because she was unable to shape her child’s personality. She felt that she was living a meaningless life confined to an artificial elite dwelling. Atwood indicates that women are more sensitive towards unethical scientific experiments that ultimately become the cause of exploitation of common people. They feel suffocated in the oppressive environment of a mechanized life.

The experiments were carried on in the Compound under tight security and secrecy, in the novel. Ecofeminists claim that the gaining of exclusive power by male elites is done on the pyramid of secrecy and exclusivity. Joni Seager comments, “All elites use secrecy to privatize access to knowledge. Men in power – male elites – have often used secrecy to exclude women, explicitly, from their preserve” (Seager 52). Jimmy’s father was leading a secret life, giving himself too much importance regarding his work as compared to his wife’s works. She was unimportant as compared to the serious work that her husband was doing and she was like an outsider kept away from the valuable work. She felt being marginalized in her own house and from her husband’s life.
The failed marriages most often shown in Atwood's novels metaphorically represent the imbalance of human relationships. This imbalance is indirectly an outcome of imbalance in ecology. Women are feeling more and more marginalized and isolated by the imprisoning effect of technology – the technology which is also an environmental hazard. Vandana Shiva writes:

The Western development model based on the neglect of nature’s work and women’s work has become a source of deprivation of basic needs. In practice this reductionist, dualist perspective gives rise to the violation of the integrity and harmony between men and women. It ruptures the cooperative unity of the masculine and feminine, and puts men, deprived of the feminine principle, above and thus separated from nature and women. (Shiva 193)

Analysing the pursuit of happiness, ecofeminists argue that happiness has less to do with material abundance and more to do with a rich social life and availability of leisure time. For structuring healthy communities, the foremost need is to eliminate hierarchies of dominance from our systems and to reduce our consumption. Jimmy’s house is a symbolic representation of a modern techno-minded house which is devoid of happiness, love, and respect. His father disregarded his son because he was an average student and not a genius. He always forgot his birthdays as he was always busy and the belated love which he showered on him seemed hollow. Jimmy's mother also could not understand the psychology of the child and Jimmy felt lonely even in their presence. It was only the pet animal to whom he could talk and feel better.
The effect of technological rationalism can be seen in family relationships where age-old values, love, and affection have been replaced by hollowness, artificiality, and hatred. Such hatred and violence are extended from home to society and deteriorate the cultural values. James P. Sterba in her article ‘Feminist Justice and the Pursuit of Peace’ comments that “…men in particular, first learn about violence and become skilled in its practice in their own families. They see violence and to a greater or lesser degree accept its legitimacy in the families in which they have been brought up …” (Sterba 220).

Revolting against domestic violence and fed up with her hollow life, Jimmy’s mother finally made up her mind to leave the house. Her escape from the depressing environment of the house and her taking away of the female pet animal to liberate her in forest make a profound co-incidence in the novel. "I have taken Killer with me to liberate her, as I know she will be happier living a wild, free life in the forest" (69). Symbolically, this is the moment of freedom of a woman and a being of nature, breaking away from the shackles of technology. Andrée Collard opines, “Women’s experience with oppression and abuse, as well as their experience of mothering, can make them more sensitive to the oppression and abuse of nature, as well as better situated to remedy it” (Collard 138).

Jimmy’s friend Glenn (Crake) entered his life few months before his mother left. She used to call Crake ‘intellectually honorable’ and ‘more like an adult’. Crake was a ‘numbers person’ and a genius and Jimmy sometimes felt jealous of him. The two friends played violent computer games together. ‘Blood and Roses’ was one of the violent games in which Blood stood for atrocities on a large scale with large
numbers of people wiped out. The Roses stood for human achievements. The Blood player usually won. Crake’s intellectual brain was bent towards violence and mass human destruction. Another game was EXTINCTATHON in which Crake was the master. It was about the extinct species and their complete wipe-out. They also watched computer sites that showed live coverage of executions in Asia, electrocutions, and lethal injections. The violence related to modern technology has been highlighted by Atwood in the interests of the two friends.

Crake and Jimmy used to watch porn sites also. “The locations were supposed to be countries where life was cheap and kids were plentiful, and where you could buy anything you wanted” (103). They first saw Oryx at a porno site of a poor country. She seemed to be around eight years old and had a very penetrating image. A symbol of female exploitation in the novel, she was small-boned and was wearing only a garland of flowers and a pink hair ribbon. The garland prop symbolizes the exploitation of planet Earth by the same lust and greed. Marti Kheel argues that “Today, the heroic battle against unruly nature is re-enacted as ritual drama in such masculine ventures as sport-hunting, bullfights and rodeos. A similar mentality can be seen in the ritual degradation of women in pornography and rape” (Kheel 5).

Oryx, with two other little girls, was going over a guy with tongue and fingers. The girls looked frightened and one of them was crying. “They were supposed to look like that, he thought; if they stopped the action, a walking stick would come in from offside and prod them” (104). Oryx was bound to act like that but her frustration was evident in her look. She had an intense look which said “I see you watching. I know you. I know what you want.” It was only Jimmy’s heart that could feel the intense guilt after looking in her eyes.
The extreme poverty, the exploitation of innocent villagers, the wide gap between the rich and the poor and the deteriorating effect on rural women are the major ecofeminist issues highlighted in the novel. All the children, like Oryx, had to abandon their childhood and make their way towards earning money through various sources. They were kept imprisoned, physically and mentally, in the city. “The city was a chaos, filled with people and cars and noise and bad smells and a language that was hard to understand. The four new children were shocked by it at first, as if they’d been plunged into a cauldron of hot water – as if the city was physically hurtful to them” (148). Ruthanne Kurth-Schai comments on the plight of children in her article “Ecofeminism and Children”:

Though the image of children as hope for the future is shared across cultures and continents, the experience of childhood as a time of innocence, security, self-worth, and contribution to family and community is a distant fantasy for most children…. Throughout the world millions of children die each year of starvation and water-related diseases, while millions more survive in societies torn by political unrest only to watch as their families and communities disintegrate in the face of unimaginable hardship, dislocation, and death. (Kurth-Schai 193)

Poor children are also categorized as disadvantaged by ecofeminists, like women, racial minorities, and nature. They are the victims of social oppression. The village to which Oryx belonged in Oryx and Crake, was very poor. Scarcity of food, poor yield of crops, and unpredictable weather had left people with no option other
than to sell their children. In order to sell more children, women gave birth to more children. Men smoked like maniacs whenever they could find cigarettes, which were usually supplied to them by a rich man who often came to buy children. Joni Seager comments on the high birth rate among poor people. She writes, “For poor families, without access to either good health care or economic security, large families are a necessary survival strategy – high rates of reproduction ensure that some children can live to the age when they can contribute to the family’s welfare. In the absence of adequate social services, children become the ‘social security’ of the parents” (Seager 215).

Women and children were the worst affected in Oryx’s village. Women had to bear the burden of running the house and of arranging the sources. Poor yield of crops had worsened their situation. A research on rural women shows that “… the impact of environmental degradation hits women, particularly the rural and urban poor, far more than it hits men” (Suresh 11). Ironically the people who exploit look attractive to the innocent, poor people who get exploited. Villagers waited for the rich man to come and take away their children. “He was the villager’s bank, their insurance policy, their kind rich uncle, their only charm against bad luck” (136). Ecofeminists claim that the majority of those who benefit from the exploitation of the planet and its people are men.

Mary Mellor argues that “Dominant groups do not ‘see’ subordinate people or the degradation of planet” (Mellor 193). The rich man in Oryx and Crake, called Uncle En, used to come to the village to buy children in exchange of a meager amount and always gave a little speech. He said that he wanted everyone to be happy and
didn’t want any hard feelings. He wasn’t regarded as a criminal in the village, but as an honorable businessman. He was treated with respect and shown hospitality. Ednie Kaeh Garrison comments on the innocence of common people that works in favour of powerful people:

Those who possess power are not usually aware of their positions of privilege in relation to the others over whom they have power, nor are they conscious of their protective strategies and manipulations. They already have the (implicit) consent of most of the population, and that population tends to do most of their work for them. They not only benefit absolutely from the system as it exists, but also believe the system, as it exists, works in their best interests. (Garrison 26)

The children bought by Uncle En in the novel, were made to sell flowers to the tourists on the streets or were sent away for other jobs. They were watched over all the time and punished physically by Uncle En for mischief. The next place where Oryx worked was a big house in which porn movies were made and everything cheap was enacted behind the big picture. “Being in a movie, said Oryx, was doing what you were told …. Whatever it was, you had to do it, and you did it because you were afraid not to” (163). Oryx was a poor girl and it was her poverty that deprived her from having any free will of her own. She was considered a soulless object that could be consumed. She was treated like an animal to serve the needs of superior and rational man. According to Andrea Dworkin, “Pornography is anti-woman propaganda which functions to perpetuate male supremacy and crimes of violence against women because it conditions, trains, educates and inspires men to despise women, to use women, to hurt women” (Dworkin 288).
Ecofeminist theorists probe all such issues that are connected to domination and result in violence. The patriarchal structure that legitimates domination is condemned and measures are found to eradicate it. Karen J. Warren suggests that there are five interrelated characteristics of a patriarchal oppressive conceptual framework - value-hierarchical thinking, value dualisms, power-over conceptions of power, logic of domination and conception of privilege (Warren 184). The agenda of ecofeminist peace politics demands repudiation of patriarchalism and a commitment to the development of anti-patriarchalist philosophies and practices. This politics aims at removing the prejudices of hierarchies and dualisms.

The power of technology that looks down upon nature’s phenomena becomes the cause of massive destruction in the novel. Crake had started finding faults in the natural systems while he was at Watson-Crick Institute. He said, “… how much needless despair has been caused by a series of biological mismatches, a misalignment of the hormones and pheromones” (195)? His vision of a better society was formed at the cost of nature. He had thought of the system of planned sex so that there would be no more prostitution, no sexual abuse of children, and no sex slaves. Atwood has called the attention towards violence and crimes that occur due to sexual abuse. According to Crake’s plan there was going to be “no more jealousy, no more wife-butcherers, no more husband-poisoners” (199).

Ecofeminists believe that one of the origins of ecological problems is the exploitation of common people as well as natural resources by the elite. In the novel, the elite scientists living in the Compound manufactured vitamin pills which made a person terminally ill, in the slow process, due to hostile bioforms added to them. Then
they treated the same person and extracted all his money, making his condition worse. The business was generating high profits in which people were first made ill through vitamin pills and then treated with high-costing medicines. When Crake’s father tried to oppose it, he was pushed off the bridge. The Compound consisted of the ruling power class including the governing bodies, police (CorpSeCorps), and top scientists. They together manipulated all the legal and illegal policies.

In critical theory, Marxist critique of liberal democracy focuses upon the inherent tension between democracy and capitalism. At a deeper level, political power reflects the distribution of unequal economic power and the unequal ownership of productive wealth. Power is ultimately concentrated in the hands of the few and the ruling class is bent on pursuing its own economic interests. Ecofeminists advocate pluralism, which is a belief in diversity or multiplicity, such as political pluralism, moral pluralism, and cultural pluralism (Heywood 82). The central assumptions of pluralist theory are that all groups and interests have the potential to gain access to government and the political power should be fragmented in such a way that no group or interest can achieve dominance for any period of time. Group politics is thus characterized by a rough balance of power, so that it doesn’t get concentrated in few hands.

Murray Bookchin, a social ecologist, is of the opinion that "The very notion of the domination of nature by man stems from the very real domination of human by human." In his book, The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy (1982), he formulates that the domination of nature came after the domination of human by human and is entirely secondary to it. He suggests that we
must first create a society in which all forms of human hierarchy are eliminated before we can hope to achieve a “truly ecological society” (Bookchin 44). Val Plumwood, an ecofeminist, also comments:

Many environmental critiques have shown how control over and exploitation of nature is linked to control over and exploitation of human beings. High technology agriculture and forestry in the third world which is ecologically destructive also strengthens the control of elites and social inequality, increasing for example men’s control over the economy at the expense of women, and it does these things in a way which reflect structure, not co-incidence. (Plumwood 64)

The clear and strict demarcation between the elite and the common people in *Oryx and Crake* and the exploitation of the latter indicate towards the dominating politics of the former. Elitism brings forward ‘Up’ and ‘Down’ relationship and ultimately results in domination and exploitation. Andrew Heywood quotes C. W. Mills in *Politics* (2007), “In contrast to the notion that power is widely and evenly distributed, elite theorists draw attention to the existence of a ‘power elite’, comprising the heads of business corporations, political leaders and military chiefs” (Heywood 298). According to Karen J. Warren, power is appropriate if it brings about desired change without creating any oppressive relationship (‘Power-with power’). But ‘Power-over power’ relationship involves the illegitimate use of power desired for oppression. Patriarchy creates, maintains, and sanctions power-over relationships.

The impact of new technology on the ‘small growers’ is shown to be destructive in *Oryx and Crake*. The HelthWyzer scientists develop new Happicuppa
bean and design Happicuppa coffee bush so that all the beans ripen simultaneously, instead of ripening at different times. Earlier the beans were handpicked and processed and shipped in small quantities, but now coffee could be grown on huge plantations and harvested with machines. The small growers were thrown out of business and reduced to extreme poverty. Riots broke out and the crops were burned. The weak were forced to become weaker and non-existent. They were being deprived of their traditional methods of livelihood:

The resistance movement was global. Riots broke out, crops were burned, Happicuppa cafés were looted …; and, on the other side, peasants were massacred by the army. (210)

J. Vellacott, in her article “Women, Peace, and Power”, characterizes violence in terms of resourcelessness (Vellacott 32). The oppressed people resort to violence when they do not have any resource needed to solve the situation. As Karen Warren opines, “The scenarios offered by Vellacott suggest that people in subordinate positions often turn to violence when they feel helpless, powerless, do not see, or genuinely do not have other viable options for gaining control in their lives” (Warren 180). The violence by the oppressed people in the novel, indirectly points to ecofeminists’ agenda for peace politics. The measures taken for the elimination of oppression automatically reduce violence and pave way for peace.

Violence is a sort of power game in which there is dominance, conquest, manipulation or other forms of social control exercised by individuals or institutions over other human beings or the non-human natural environment. People in dominant positions, turn to violence when they cannot make others do what they want them to
do. The growing intolerance among people can also be attributed to the fast pace of life in the present day scenario. The new world is becoming deficient in emotions and feelings, represented in the novel by the downfall in admissions in Art Academy. Jimmy got admission in Martha Graham Art Academy because he could not score well. "The system had filed him among the rejects and what he was studying was considered ...an archaic waste of time... who was it who'd said that all art was completely useless" (229).

Compared to Martha Graham, Watson-Crick (Science Academy) was far more equipped with facilities where Crake was studying the latest technology. Crake called it "Wave of the Future" and there was no place for nature and God in it. The future scientists created different types of animals and birds by making genetic changes and kept them locked. Crake said that ‘Nature is to zoos as God is to churches’. Nature and God had to be kept locked by the scientists so that they could exploit nature and become God themselves. Jimmy felt that those scientists were crossing the boundaries of being ‘human beings.’ They were trying to dominate all the phenomena of nature and to authorize their top position. To remain at the top level was their sole agenda. On the other hand, Martha Graham was in a deteriorating condition. “With this kind of attrition going on – this erosion of its former intellectual territory – Martha Graham had found itself without a very convincing package to offer” (220).

Crake always made fun of the artists and their art- and- creativity turf. He was a hard core rational man and reason was supreme for him. He could see his mother dying without any feelings, in the same manner as he could think of destroying the people of his motherland. He played games in which disasters occurred due to some
error in new inventions. He felt immense pleasure in watching mass murders. After becoming a scientist of the top rank the time was ripe to turn his imagination into reality and he planned to master-mind a catastrophe at the global level. He wanted to create a world where there would be “no more prostitution, no sexual abuse of children, no haggling over the price, no pimps, no sex slaves. No more rape” (194). In the society created by him, copulation would take place only at regular periodic intervals, in a very systematic way.

Atwood indicates that science and technology also contribute to the patriarchal structure if they are applied against nature and if the consequences after the application of their experiments are not taken into consideration. Vandana Shiva comments, “During the last few years feminist scholarship has begun to recognise that the dominant science system emerged as a liberating force not for humanity as a whole, but as a masculine and patriarchal project which necessarily entailed the subjugation of both nature and women” (Shiva 15). Crake, who becomes a top-most scientist, represents the patriarchal culture that rules the scientific and rational world. He was detached from her mother and emotional relationships. Catriona Sandilands comments on this kind of psychological behavior, “… the masculine separation from both human mother and Mother Earth, embodiments of dependency and the primal state that threaten masculine selfhood, results in men’s vengeance, their desire to subdue both women and nature in a quest for individual potency and transcendence and the production of things” (Sandilands 23). Crake’s experiments against nature were also a form of his vengeance against his mother.
Crake did not believe in nature and God. He wanted to create an ideal society with biotechnology as his tool. He also desired to eradicate the existing civilization because it had severely got affected by violence and corruption. Like an infected and diseased body, it was in a deteriorating condition. His logical brain found the solution of removing it completely as a diseased organ of the body is removed. The picture of the diseased world was full of “… more plagues, more famines, more floods, more insect or microbe or small-mammal outbreaks, more droughts, more chickenshit boy-soldier wars in distant countries” (298). The reformation of the planet was planned by him on a very cruel pathway.

Jimmy, on the other hand, was not rational and calculative. He was emotional and sensitive and could not become cold-blooded as Crake was. Jimmy can be associated with the ‘feminine principle’ that Vandana Shiva stresses upon as an ecofeminist peace issue. This principle involves the qualities of nurturing and caring needed to be present in every human being. Crake was lacking in the qualities of ‘feminine principle.’ As Shiva comments, “The violence to nature as symptomized by the current ecological crisis, and the violence to women as symptomized by women’s subjugation and exploitation arise from the subjugation of the feminine principle (Shiva 193). This principle is not exclusively embodied in women, but is present as activity and creativity in nature, women, and men. The recovery of the principle is thus associated with the recovery of non-violence and the creative forms of being. In men, this principle implies a “relocation of action and activity to create life-enhancing, not life-reducing and life-threatening societies” (Shiva 53).
In the present world, man needs to save nature, eradicate violence, and promote the ethics of love and care, if the planet is to be saved. The first step towards putting an end to violence and exploitation lies in moral ethics and human values. Ecofeminists are of the opinion that moral ethics should be valued and the same ethics should be extended to environmental ethics. As Lori Gruen opines, "The theorists use the notion of intrinsic value to ground their environmental ethics. Intrinsic values are the moral facts of the matter, they are actually part of the fabric of the universe" (Gruen 122).

The social inequalities and hierarchies are an obstruction to the realization of the importance of values and ethics. Creation of ‘Up’ and ‘Down’ positions is the strategic policy of the systems of oppression. In the capitalist system, the only focus is on the profit and ethical values are not observed. Gwyn Kirk quotes Shiva and Maria Mies, “The capitalist economic system turns sources of life –whether forests, seeds or women’s bodies-into resources that are objectified, controlled, and used” (Kirk 1). The theory of ecofeminism builds opposing and resisting strategies against such a dominating economic system. It is a politics of reconstruction and hope. Val Plumwood argues:

The problems of human inequality and hierarchy that the radical traditions addressed over the centuries have not gone away and are taking new and ever more sinister ‘environmental’ forms.” (Plumwood 81)

In *Oryx and Crake*, Jimmy searched for maternal bond throughout his life, just as a man needs to search his bond with earth. Earth needs the love and care, as
showered on a mother. If man will continuously deplete its resources, it will not be able to support us for long. It is a kind of warning that Atwood wants to give through the symbolic destruction in the novel. The hidden message implies that the power of resilience will no more be found in a mother as well as in earth. According to Catherine Roach, “… we are all closely tied to the environment, our very existence derives from and depends on a healthy environment, as our existence once depended on a mother …” (Roach 53). The earth is life-giving and life-sustaining as are our mothers and this concept has been taken up by ecofeminists to emphasize upon the need to preserve nature.

The intellectuals of the present generation fail to understand the bond that nature and human beings share, the ‘reason’ being their only guiding factor. Jimmy was intellectually weaker than Crake and that made him feel inferior. Crake knew that he was more intelligent and felt proud of his capabilities. The two friends had opposite qualities yet they liked each other. Whereas Crake lacked respect for nature, it was Jimmy who had inherent love for it. Crake was intellectually superior and Jimmy was superior in interpreting feelings, emotions, and creativity. Plumwood observes that “Reason supremacy, a rational hierarchy with the most rationalized and intellectualized human individuals and cultures at the top, is the logical outcome of a worldview …” (Plumwood 68). Giving highest importance to reason and intellect has become the norm of the modern culture. The difference created between the intellectuals and others not only results in cleavage between them but also between human and non-human world. Plumwood opines that “… it is precisely reason so construed that is usually taken to characterize the authentically human and to create
the supposedly sharp separation, cleavage, or discontinuity between all humans and
the nonhuman world, and the similar cleavage within the human self” (Plumwood
157).

Many philosophers have opposed human intellect as being the only judgment
tool for ideal human character. As ‘nature’, women have been distanced from reason
and considered as disorderly and emotional. Men have owned the dominion of reason,
logic and rationality as their own sphere and women have been deliberately kept out
of it. Similarly, western colonizers have projected themselves as being the prophets of
reason and civilization, carrying them to the remote lands. The indigenous people
have been enslaved and exploited on this basis. The control of “nature” by mastering
and ordering “reason” has been the dominating strategy of western culture.

Crake’s genius brain wanted to change the whole civilization. He believed that
there was no use of continuing the present civilization with continuous rise in
violence, diseases, and sexual abuse. He considered wars as the misplaced sexual
energy and overpopulation as the cause of environmental degradation. Crake created
Blyss-Pluss pill to overpower nature by producing artificial youth in aged people and
by making them feel super-energetic. He took the subjects for clinical trials from
poorer countries, sex clinics, whorehouses, and prisons.

Crake had also created genetically engineered people, existing in all possible
skin colors. Those people had all the qualities that Crake thought were rational and
practical. They were made to die at the age of thirty without getting sick. They had the
type of brain system that violence could not exist among them. Violence due to
racism, hierarchy, territoriality, or sexuality could not be a part of their lives. There
was no concept of marriages and divorces among them.
According to the plan made by Crake, the magical pill created havoc on the whole planet with its side effects. “It was a rogue hemorrhagic, said the commentators. The symptoms were high fever, bleeding from the eyes and skin, convulsions, then breakdown of the inner organs, followed by death” (380). Atwood indicates that the domination of nature and its abuse by advanced brains can breed violence and mass destruction on the planet. If nature is treated only as a tool for mere profit, without analyzing the consequences or without having respect for it, a day will come when it will no more be available for us. Pondering over the possibility of rise in violence, Roach asks, “How can we rethink or re-vision our understanding of nature and of the historical link between woman and nature in order for these understandings to be healthier, both for women and for the environment” (Roach 57)?

The mass destruction organized by Crake indicates that women can be more effective in planning the strategies for peace and forming the policies for a better environment. A research project by social scientist Dr. Edit Schlaffer on “Can Mothers Stop Terrorism?” confirms that mothers have the power to make this world a peaceful place. Schlaffer believes that mothers can stop conflicts and extremist ideas within her family. They can play a key role in reducing violent extremism. Crake’s mother in Oryx and Crake very rarely interacted with her son and kept herself busy in the scientific experiments. Crake turned out to be a violent extremist. Jimmy’s mother, on the other hand, wanted to teach her son about the ethical values. Jimmy, as a result, developed a soft corner in his heart for other living beings.

It is also evident from the incidents in the novel that the changes brought by ‘Globalization’ have added to the practices of exploitation. The poor countries are
viewed as vulnerable and a source of exploitation. The diversity of poor countries has been interfered with and the new technology has made them dependent on rich countries. “Recently, for example, former Harvard economist and World Bank official, now Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Lawrence Summers argued in a World Bank memo that the Third World may be “underpolluted” and that it would make sense to shift highly polluting industries from the First World to the Third World” (Curtin 59).

The roots of corruption, criminalization, and violence run deep in the political systems. Those who degrade the environment at a major level are in fact very few people belonging to powerful institutions. Large scale environmental pollution is the product of large patriarchal institutions like militaries and multinationals. Ecofeminists argue that “As nature comes to be viewed as nothing more than the material for human domination, we develop an anthropocentric view in which we see ourselves as the measure of all things” (Mills 211). We lose an awareness of ourselves as a part of nature that needs to be conserved. It becomes only a readily available source to supply the endless needs. “The rivers are so useful, for the garbage and the dead people and the babies that get thrown away, and the shit” (158). Joni Seager cautions:

… ours is a small and much-abused planet. We have so degraded our environment, so disrupted our biosphere, so stressed physical carrying capacities that the lives of millions of people on the planet are at risk…. Nature is clearly in trouble, and we with it. (Seager 1)
Crake could figure out the problems of the prevailing world and he wanted to change everything with the help of technology. He wanted to become the creator of the newly created world. He was even willing to take the chance of destroying the existing civilization so that it could never be rebuilt in the same manner. “Demand for resources has exceeded supply for decades in marginal geopolitical areas, hence the famines and droughts; but very soon, demand is going to exceed supply for everyone” (347). Atwood compels us to look at the grim situation of this planet and to analyze what went wrong downhill. The technology is advancing but the values that define human beings are disappearing. Man has started depleting the natural resources at a fast pace and this is a cause of major concern for ecofeminists. As Shiva writes:

The Age of Enlightenment, and the theory of progress to which it gave rise, was centered on the sacredness of two categories: modern scientific knowledge and economic development. Somewhere along the way, the unbridled pursuit of progress, guided by science and development, began to destroy life without any assessment of how fast and how much of the diversity of life on this planet is disappearing.

(Shiva xiv)

Crake wanted to put an end to the chaos in the world. His working unit called ‘Paradice’ was preparing the BlyssPluss pill for mass destruction on the planet. The advertisement of the pill featured that it could protect against sexually transmitted diseases, could provide an unlimited supply of libido, and could prolong youth. “The investors were very keen on it, it was going to be global” (347). The pill also acted as a birth-control pill, for male and female alike but Crake had decided not to advertise this feature.
The rapid sale of the pill in all the countries confirmed that people wanted to overcome their natural processes. They wanted to renew themselves with technology as their tool. The pill turned out to be the cause of a fatal viral infection wiping out the population on the whole planet. Crake had already planned of the alternative for the existing civilization. He said that the condition of the world was already so bad that it could not be saved. “I’ve seen the latest confidential Corps demographic reports. As a species we’re in deep trouble, worse than anyone’s saying. They’re afraid to release the stats because people might just give up, but take it from me, we’re running out of space-time” (347).

Crake had created genetically engineered human beings (called Crakers), to live on this planet after the apocalypse. They had ideal kind of qualities incorporated into them by special treatment of genes. Crakers had rapid growth factors. They were programmed to die at thirty years. They didn’t have to experience old age and its anxieties. They had enhanced immune-system functions in their bodies. The destructive features of the brain were altered in Crakers – the features responsible for the world’s current illnesses. Racism had been eliminated by switching the bond mechanism so that they did not register skin color. Hierarchy could not exist among them because they lacked those neural complexes. There could be no territoriality because they were neither hunters nor agriculturists hungry for land. They ate only leaves, grass and roots, thus their food was plentiful and always available. They didn’t need houses, tools, weapons or clothing. “They would have no need to invent any harmful symbolisms, such as kingdoms, icons, gods, or money” (359).
Atwood has portrayed a picture of a new civilization in the form of Crakers that is quite contrary to the present one. They do not have the facilities and luxuries but they are very satisfied and peaceful. They are not intellectual but their relationship with the environment and other animals is a very pleasant one. This is the kind of relationship between human and non-human world that has been proposed by ecofeminists. Carol Adams affirms that “. . . individuals can change, and in changing we reposition our relationship with the environment. This form of empowerment is precisely what is needed in approaching the issue of where animals stand in our lives” (Adams 129). The concept of vegetarianism has been highlighted by Atwood – a form of idealism as found in the habits of those human beings. They consider it monstrous to kill animals rather they have love and respect for them.

The new human beings were not going to exert any pressure on the planet. They were not going to exploit its valuable resources. With limited needs and positive feelings, they were going to lead an idealistic life. Crake’s dream of creating a utopian world had become possible with the help of advanced technology. "Crake allotted the special piss to men only; he said they'd need something important to do, something that didn't involve childbearing, so they couldn't feel left out. Woodworking, hunting, high finance, war and golf would no longer be options, he'd joked" (183). Crake was also against the power of leadership. He said that there were the leaders and the led, who ultimately germinated tyranny and slavery and massacres. Crake had genetically eliminated all the possible causes of violence among the new people.

The vision of utopia created by Atwood is a symbolic representation of the fact that life is blissful even without many unnecessary demands of human beings. Those demands not only put pressure on the planet, they also create a society rooted
in violence and oppression. Ecofeminist peace politics demands a revolutionary
movement to be more responsible towards the planet and to end the oppression of any
kind. In an interview, Elaine Showalter says about such a movement, “First, it takes a
specific and attainable goal, a goal that is clear so that everyone can see what it is and
everyone can agree on what it is. And people need to believe that it is possible to get
it by action, so they are willing to give up their divisions, their differences, their
competitions and their hierarchies, in the interest of obtaining this goal” (Gillis and
Munford).

Modern liberalists have also theorized upon the conditions needed to improve
the present state of human beings. They think that people should have freedom that is
linked to personal development and the flourishing of the individual. The state
intervention for the social welfare can safeguard individuals from the social evils.
“These evils were identified in the UK by the 1942 Beveridge Report as the ‘five
giants’: want, ignorance, idleness, squalor and disease” (Heywood 48). The major
concern of the social liberalism is for the upliftment of the weak and vulnerable. Their
goal is to raise the living standard of individuals so that they are able to make their
own choices.

The genetically engineered human beings in *Oryx and Crake* can be related to
the theory of ‘anarcho-naturism.’ This theory appeared in the late 19th century as the
union of anarchist and naturist philosophies. It advocates vegetarianism, nudism,
ecological life-style, and free love. It opposes the artificiality of the modern culture.
Crakers in the novel are also vegetarian and lead an ecologically based life.
Ecofeminism undertakes a critical analysis of eco-friendly way of life and it theorizes about the creation of a just and sustainable world.

In the novel, the scientific and rational solution that Crake could think for bringing the improvement in the world was the destruction of all the people on the planet except Jimmy and Crakers. He was of the view that overpopulation was the cause behind misery in the world and to reorganize the situation, the end of civilization was necessary. “Had he been a lunatic or an intellectually honourable man who’d thought things through to their logical conclusion” (401)? Crakers created by him were simple and innocent, and social evils were removed from their ways of thinking and life style. Crake had vaccinated Jimmy against the disease that had to spread in the future. He knew that only Jimmy had the patience and empathy to look after the Crakers. Oryx, who was working for Crake and was also his lover, had spread the pill in all the countries, being unaware of the fatal effect of the pill. As the pill was consumed, the fatal infection spread fast on the whole planet killing all the people within a few days. Jimmy wept after watching the destruction of everything on the planet. He remembered Crake’s words, “Don’t be so fucking sentimental” (401). The truth was that he was sentimental and emotional whereas Crake was rational and practical. Crake knew that reason would no more work after the apocalypse and only patience and empathy for other creatures would be needed to survive. He himself attempted suicide but kept Jimmy alive for the next civilization.

After the apocalypse, Jimmy is in a shocked state of mind. He could not dream of an apocalypse in his worst dreams, planned by his best friend. “He doesn’t know which is worse, a past he can’t regain or a present that will destroy him if he looks at
it too clearly. Then there’s the future. Sheer vertigo” (173). Jimmy is facing total confusion; he cannot go back to the infected city, he cannot live in the dangerous forest and he cannot be a part of Crakers. Suka Joshua comments, "With all the bleak pictures she skillfully paints in *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood cautions this crazy world about the possible catastrophic end of humanity in the near future if it is not willing to mend its ways” (Joshua 109).

Crake’s scientific solution of the worldwide problems raises fundamental questions. Is destroying the present chaotic civilization the only option left in order to bring back peace and ethics in this world? Can’t we as individuals take the important steps needed to erase the corrupted mind? Can’t we as human beings adopt the agenda of ecofeminism and bring an end to patriarchal practices? Ecofeminist Peace Politics demands strong commitment to nonviolence. Atwood has highlighted the violence that can be the outcome of intellect, science and latest technology. Following the path of ecofeminist peace politics, “the perspectives of local, native, and indigenous peoples be taken into account in the formation of any adequate environmental action; to overlook such perspectives is to engage in non-peacemaking” (Warren 188). It is an inclusive politics emphasizing the importance of appropriate emotions and feelings, views of the indigenous people, and basic instincts of women regarding nature.

Another underlying concern in the novel is that men acquire all the top positions, and the opinion of women does not count. Crake thinks that only reasoning is important and never takes women seriously. The instinct of Jimmy’s mother is devalued and ignored. Seager says, “If we are going to solve these environmental problems, we need to bring to bear on them all of our analytical and political skills
and resources, including feminist analysis” (Seager 1). The views of women and their analysis of nature and environment should form an integral part of any environmental policy, as according to ecofeminists women are closer to nature and are more suitable for making its policies. Nicole Ward Jouve comments:

The fact remains that the earth, as we use and manage it, has been further despoiled and polluted in the last 30 years. On the so-called ecological issues women today fight by the side of men of like conviction through NGOs or associations. Yet it is often women who head and champion particular causes ….” (Jouve 201)

The novel brings a new insight into the various aspects of latest technology and also raises few questions. Do the violent computer games becoming popular today increase the activities of violence among children in real life? Is the technology making people cold and indifferent towards feelings and ethics? Is technology pushing people away from nature and its beauty? Does technology have a role to play in promoting patriarchal structures? Is technology heading us towards an apocalypse? Certainly, the enslaving and alienating effect of technology can be observed and the deteriorating value of human life is the basic concern. Jodi Dean describes techno-culture as:

…an economic-political-cultural formation characterized by the rise of networked communication [such as] the Internet, satellite broadcasting, and the global production and dissemination of motion pictures; by the consolidation of wealth in the hands of transnational corporations and the migration and immigration of people, technologies, and capital;
[and] by the rise of a consumerist entertainment culture and the corresponding production of sites of impoverishment, violence, starvation, and death. (Dean 1)

At the end of the novel, the technology has been destroyed completely and Snowman is living a primitive kind of life on a tree. He has become a part of nature, living among animals, birds and other forest creatures. The cycle of growth and progress is back to its origin, from where it had started. There are no traces of pollution and noise, no traffic and no hustle-bustle. Was it Crake’s ultimate dream? He could see that the world was on the path of destruction and he only hastened the process.

Many questions related to the contemporary situation of the planet are raised from the ecofeminist standpoint, having their origin in the particular problematic situation presented in the novel. The first question relates to the issue of human population that why do women bear many children, even in communities where shortage of food and poor health already plague the living conditions. Ecofeminists argue that until women control their reproductive lives, it would be impossible to decrease population. Due to poverty, particularly among people of color, having many children creates a large familial work force. The issues of overpopulation and poverty cannot be treated as trivial by theorists and activists interested in promoting peace. The report prepared by the group DAWN in 1984 on “Development Crises and Alternative Visions” called for women to have the right to control their own fertility since the population problem was largely the result of poverty and ignorance.
Most of Atwood’s novels are ecological treatises and make a ground for the study of inter-connectedness between human and non-human world. She has been deeply concerned by the capital industrialism, exhaustion of natural resources and the deterioration in the basic living conditions of the people. In *Oryx and Crake*, the issues that have been highlighted are the widening inequality among human beings, growing hunger and poverty and the negative impact of high-tech world. The novel forces to engage in an argument regarding the domination of woman and nature by man in the modern society and the need for ecofeminist peace politics as a remedy for the growing intolerance and impatience in the world. It has been argued by ecofeminists that there is a close relation among science, patriarchy, violence and profits in the scientific research industry. It fails to realize the inter-connectedness of nature and women’s lives, and its role in the maintenance of balanced environment and production. The rationality of science is declared superior. Ecofeminist peace politics exposes and challenges the power of science and rationality for their active role in domination and oppression, and warns against a disastrous future owing to their unethical application.

In the 1990s campaigns concerning women and the environment focused on the development process, particularly related to biotechnology. In India the problem of using reproductive technology for sex determination has led to the increased rate of the killing of fetus in the womb. Vandana Shiva has long been concerned about the threat to biodiversity due to new technologies. She is of the opinion that biotechnology is a science that controls the natural processes and introduces a sort of colonizing effect on them. The scientific world not only devalues nature, it also
legitimizes the dependency of women and the domination of men. “Reductionist science is a source of violence against nature and women because it subjugates and dispossesses them of their full productivity, power, and potential” (Shiva 22).

The profit-driven companies are constantly introducing new and improved products which are not properly tested for environmental safety. The decision-making persons of major corporations are mostly male. It is important to understand the culture that promotes profit-maximizing mentality at the cost of health and safety of other people. The impersonality of the business cultivates emotional distancing in their behavior. They are the buffered elite who do not have to face the consequences of imbalance in the environment themselves. They are to be borne by the common people who are not responsible for it.

The corporate world runs according to the militarized model. It also relies on scientific rationality in its functioning. It is primarily a man’s world and tends to be masculinist. The industries that produce toxins in large quantity and are a serious threat to the health of workers, eliminate the women workers from jobs instead of reducing pollutants. They use force and violate human rights. International development strategies have put the local artisans out of business. Vast areas of fertile land in the Third World have been turned to cash crops. Industrialized mining, forestry and agribusiness schemes are the originating factor of the rise in prostitution. The women who can no longer support themselves through traditional occupations have no other option left other than prostitution.

Environmental groups need to develop new paradigms to address their concerns. As cities are growing in size, they are playing a huge role in shaping the
global environment. There is a need to focus on making them safe places to live. The racism faced by minorities is a major matter of concern. The African American employees in US and UK are disproportionately working in toxic environments. The dumping of toxic wastes from Europe and the US in Third World countries clearly exhibit their imperial attitude towards the latter. As environmentalists pave new ways, they need to be doing so with a feminist sensibility. By analyzing the web of dominating practices, they can work with a better and united agenda of peace.

The novel *Oryx and Crake* highlights such various types of domination that plague the world today. Highly intellectual technical brains are inventing new products at a fast pace. Globalization is playing the role of spreading the technical advancements. Their effect on nature is proving to be detrimental. The condition of women is further deteriorating, particularly the rural women in developing countries. The bad effect of the deteriorating environment is destroying the crops. Women who are responsible for the household chores have to bear the burden of the losses. Overpopulation makes the situation worse with the growing scarcity of food. The apocalypse in *Oryx and Crake* has been planned by a scientific mind that wants to erase the growing problems of violence and diseases. Crake is scientific and rational and his anger towards the actions of existing civilization makes him destroy the whole planet.

Peace has been restored in the end of the novel but at the cost of destruction of the human species. The species that was responsible for destroying other species had itself been wiped out. The warning implicit in the destruction is that man needs to change the current dominating practices, if the planet is to be saved from major
disaster. He needs to revert back to the world of nature where nature is revered and not exploited. Instead of patriarchy and its oppressive practices, an egalitarian approach is needed to transform the society. Violence, in the present world, has its connections with various modern practices. Karen J. Warren suggests that by following the guidelines of ecofeminist peace politics, the causes of violence can be uprooted. In the contemporary world, dominated by technology and genetic engineering and affected by violence and intolerance, there is a need to unite all the people to work towards anti-patriarchal practices. Only a nature-loving and an equality based paradigm can build a well-grounded structure for peace and harmony in the world.
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