

**THE FUTURE OF FOOD IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S *ORYX AND
CRAKE***

Bachelor's Thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Ympäristön ja kulttuurin välinen suhde on tullut yhä suosittumaksi tutkimuksen kohteeksi 1960-luvulla tapahtuneen ympäristöheräämisen jälkeen. Humanistisissa tieteissä tämä on tullut näkyväksi ekokriittisten teorioiden yleistymisessä.</p> <p>Tämä kandidaatintutkielma lukee Margaret Atwoodin romaania <i>Oryx and Crake</i> ekokriittisen kirjallisuudentutkimuksen teorian valossa. Tutkielman keskiössä on ruuan esittäminen romaanissa. Lisäksi tutkielmassa kiinnitetään huomiota ruuan esittämiseen kiinteästi liittyvään ilmiöön: ihmisen ja ei-inhimillisten eläinten välisen suhteen esittämiseen.</p> <p><i>Oryxiä ja Crakea</i> on aiemmin tutkittu lähinnä dystopiaromaanina, mutta myös näkökulmista, jotka ovat lähempänä ekokriittistä kirjallisuudentutkimusta. Romaania ei ole kirjoittajan tietojen mukaan kuitenkaan aikaisemmin tutkittu näkökulmasta, joka ottaisi ruuan esittämisen tutkimuksen pääkohteeksi.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen metodina toimii ekokriittisen kirjallisuudentutkimuksen teorian ohjailema romaanin lähiluenta.</p> <p>Tutkielman päätulokset ovat, että ruuan rooli romaanissa on toimia alueena, jossa ihmisen ja eläimen, kulttuurin ja luonnon, välisiä rajoja kyseenalaistetaan ja uudelleenmääritellään.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Since the environmental awakening in the 1960s, an increasing amount of attention in humanities has been paid towards researching the relationship between the human and nature. Lahtinen and Lehtimäki (2008: 7) point out that within the study of literature the interest towards researching this relation begun growing at the turn of the millennium. Humankind has slowly begun to realize the fact that to maintain its existence on the planet it will have to reformulate its relationship with nature. The environmental awakening's effect to literature has been that the relationship between the human and nature has become an explicit topic in a more self-conscious way than earlier. A well-known Canadian author whose work deals with the relationship between nature and the human is Margaret Atwood (1939–). Her novel from 2003, *Oryx and Crake*, deals with the topic in an interesting way.

This bachelor's thesis provides a reading of *Oryx and Crake* from the point of view of the ecocritical study of literature. The focus of the present study is on the representation of food in the novel. *Oryx and Crake* has been previously interpreted, for example, as a criticism of capitalism (Canavan 2012) and as a dystopia novel (Snyder 2011). The present study aims to fill a research gap in that the novel has not been previously studied by focusing on the role given to food in the novel. Via investigating the role given to food, and what is represented as food in the novel, the study also considers food's relation to the human and nature. This will be done by considering what definitions of the terms *human*, *non-human*, *nature*, and *animal* the novel is constructing.

The structure of the present study is the following: in Chapter 2, an overall introduction to the plot is provided so that one can better follow the analysis. In Chapter 3, the present study will move on to briefly discuss the previous study on *Oryx and Crake* and its relevance for the present study. In Chapter 4, theories about what ecocritical study of literature is will be introduced, and in Chapter 5, *Oryx and Crake* will be analyzed from the point of view of the role given to food in the novel.

2 THE PLOT OF *ORYX AND CRAKE*

The novel's protagonist is a man named *Snowman*. He lives in a post-apocalyptic world with human-like creatures called *the Crakers*. The narration of the novel is separated into two different levels of time: the time before and after the apocalypse. Flashbacks in the narration from the pre-apocalyptic era show the reader that Snowman was once a boy called *Jimmy*. The world shown to the reader via flashbacks reveals a world ruled by multinational corporations. The corporations' employees live with their families in compounds that have been separated from the rest of the population.

In the post-apocalyptic world, Snowman is near starvation and decides to go looking for equipment and food from a ruined compound named *RejoovenEsence*. The trip to RejoovenEsence is dangerous since the area around the Crakers' living place is inhabited by dangerous hybrid animals.

All the while he is making his journey towards RejoovenEsence the narration returns to the pre-apocalyptic world and memories from his past life. He remembers how he and his family moved into another compound as his father began to work as a geographer for a company called *HelthWyzer*. There Jimmy and an intelligent science student called Glenn become friends. Jimmy starts calling Glenn *Crake*. The two of them spend their time smoking drugs and watching underground videos from subject areas such as live executions and child pornography. Jimmy is mesmerized by an Asian girl he sees during one of their pornography-watching sessions.

After they graduate from high school they separate to study in different colleges. Crake goes to study advanced bioengineering in the highly respected *Watson-Crick Institute*, while Jimmy begins studying humanities in the not-so-highly-respected *Martha Graham Academy*. Crake becomes a bioengineer and creates the Crakers. The Crakers are peaceful human-like creatures. Crake's explanation for why he created the Crakers is that they would be a model from where families could choose how to genetically manipulate children, which is not, in the end, the actual reason why he created them. The Crakers differ from humans in that they have sexual intercourse only during their breeding seasons, which can be recognized by the females turning blue.

Crake tells Jimmy about another one of his projects, a *BlyssPluss* pill, which is said to function as a kind of a sexual stimulant also affecting positively on the general happiness of a person. Crake hires Jimmy to market BlyssPluss for the public, but he does not reveal to Jimmy that the real cause for creating the BlyssPluss pill is to create a worldwide pandemic.

Jimmy notices the Asian girl from the pornographic film in the Crakers' habitat. Crake tells Jimmy that her name is *Oryx* and he has hired her to be a prostitute for himself and a teacher for the Crakers. Jimmy and Oryx form a relationship. As their relationship progresses Jimmy becomes cautious that Crake has sensed his feelings for Oryx. Jimmy promises to both Crake and Oryx that he will protect the Crakers if anything happens to either one of them.

Once the BlyssPluss pill has been distributed to the markets it causes a global pandemic and destroys the human race. Chaos reigns everywhere except the enclosed RejoovenEsence compound where the Crakers and Jimmy are. Jimmy realizes that Crake is behind the pandemic. Crake returns from outside of the RejoovenEsence compound with Oryx, who is injured. Crake tells Jimmy that they are immune to the virus and says: "I'm counting on you" and kills Oryx. After this Jimmy immediately shoots Crake.

This is how Snowman ended up in the situation within which he is at the beginning of the novel: (seemingly) alone in the world with the Crakers as his only company. The beginning of the novel is situated in a time after pandemic and Crake's and Oryx's deaths. In the end of the novel, as Snowman is returning from his trip to find food and equipment from the ruined RejoovenEsence compound he comes across three humans. The other humans do not notice Snowman. The novel ends in the situation where Snowman is wondering whether he should kill the other humans or to try to form an alliance with them. What he decides to do with them is not revealed: the novel ends in Snowman saying "Time to go" as he approaches the three humans. He has made his decision, but it is not revealed to the reader.

3 PREVIOUS STUDY ON *ORYX AND CRAKE*

Since its publication in 2003 *Oryx and Crake* has been researched from various angles. This chapter provides a view on the previous study of *Oryx and Crake*.

As a novel set in the post-apocalyptic world, *Oryx and Crake* provides material to study it from the point of view of trauma, for what could be more ultimate traumatizer than the apocalypse. Snyder (2011) reads *Oryx and Crake* in the light of the concept of *trauma* in her article “Time to go”: *The Post-Apocalyptic and the Post-Traumatic in Margaret Atwood’s Oryx and Crake*. Snyder (2011: 470) suggests that the world of dystopian speculative fiction, such as the world in *Oryx and Crake*, should be both familiar and strange to its readers. The reason for this is that this kind of a world offers the reader a chance to speculate on different future scenarios. This is exactly why speculative fiction, and literature in general, is important for humankind: by writing and reading about the past, present, and the future, whether they are fictional or not, we can better try to understand our place and role in the world and in the time within which we live.

Snyder (2011: 472 – 473) further suggests that there is a similarity between trauma theory and dystopian speculative fiction. In trauma theory, the relation between the moment in the past where the trauma took place and the present moment is vexed. Analogically, in dystopian speculative fiction, the relation between the moment in the future and the present moment is vexed. Speculative fiction can thus be said to be an attempt to prevent a trauma from occurring. Often in the case of dystopian speculative fiction and in the case of *Oryx and Crake*, this trauma is the apocalypse. The troubling question that reading of the novel rises is, whether humankind has already gone beyond the crucial point where the grand trauma could have been avoided.

The chance to speculate with the future offered by the apocalypse in *Oryx and Crake* has also been studied from a societal point of view. While Snyder focuses on the apocalypse’s influence on the individual, Canavan (2012) takes into consideration the whole society. According to Canavan’s (2012: 139) deciphering, fiction that deals with the apocalypse can be interpreted as speculation of the possible end to the current capitalistic system in the “non-fictitious” world outside of literature. Canavan (2012: 139) draws attention to the opportunities that speculative fiction can offer in finding a solution to build a more sustainable system: the apocalypse in *Oryx and Crake* is seen as the end of history that offers humankind a chance for a new beginning.

Canavan's view is that the end of the world in *Oryx and Crake* is not meant only to cause anguish in its readers, rather its function can be seen to be to point out the need for a change. Canavan (2012: 155) puts it fittingly into the following words: "To say that the present has no future is not to say there *is* no future—it is only to say that things cannot continue to go as they have." There exists a connection between Canavan's idea and the present study, that is the idea that the novel provokes a need for a change. Canavan's interpretation is that the novel argues for a change on a societal level, the need to replace the capitalistic system, whereas the present study sees the relationship between the human and nature as the area where the change should take place.

The concept of ecological utopia, or ecotopianism (from *utopianism*), is closely related to the point of view of the present study. *Oryx and Crake* has been previously studied from this point of view by Dunlap (2013). Dunlap (2013: 2) defines ecotopianism as a way of thinking where human-over-nature -hierarchy is rejected with the aim to reach a better harmony between different animal species, of which *Homo sapiens* is one. Human-over-nature hierarchy is visible in the role given to food in the novel, as will be demonstrated in the analysis of the present study. However, the focus of Dunlap's text is not on food. Instead, the focus is on one of the main characters: Crake. Dunlap interprets Crake as an ecotopianistic thinker, whose aim is to replace the novel's pre-apocalyptic capitalistic-scientific system, which reproduces human-over-nature hierarchy, with a more ecotopianistic one (Dunlap 2013: 3). As the novel shows us, the results of Crake's actions are not positive. By drawing attention to this point, Dunlap reads *Oryx and Crake* not only as a critique of the capitalistic-scientific system but as a critique of ecotopianism as well. Dunlap sees *Oryx and Crake* as a critique on the practicality of ecotopianistic thinking and its ethicality (Dunlap 2013: 11).

One can characterize the angles from which the studies introduced above research *Oryx and Crake* in the following way: Snyder's focus is on the personal, or psychological, level of the novel, Canavan's focus is on the societal level, and Dunlap focuses on the representation of ideologies in the novel. None of these approaches takes the ecocritical theory of literature as their explicit theoretical framework, although one can argue that it has affected at least Dunlap's reading of the novel. The present study holds the view that the theory of the ecocritical study of literature can provide insight to the interpretation of the novel. The following chapter of the present study considers what the ecocritical study of literature is and what is its relation to the present study.

4 ECOCRITICAL STUDY OF LITERATURE

The present study understands the term *ecocritical study of literature* as a part of a larger whole, *ecocriticism*. It needs to be emphasized that there does not exist one universal definition that could characterize what ecocriticism or ecocritical study of literature is. Lahtinen and Lehtimäki (2008: 13) draw attention to the dynamic nature of defining ecocriticism: according to them, the struggle for the meaning and the significance of ecocriticism is ongoing. The following definitions and speculations about what ecocritical study of literature is, or could be, have been selected based on their ability to contribute to the needs of the present study.

According to Barry's (2009: 248) rather broad definition, ecocritical reading of a text is reading that involves a consideration of the human-caused problems, such as global warming and nuclear fallout. However, he points out that there is no one universally accepted definition or model of ecocritical reading that could be used. Zapf (2016: 1) comes to the same conclusion: he suggests that within two decades since ecocriticism's emergence in the academic field in the later twentieth century, it has become one of the most promising paradigms in cultural and literary studies. This has led to the spreading and differentiation of ecocriticism, which in turn has made it difficult to define the term precisely. Barry (2009: 243) suggests that the feature separating ecocriticism from other literary and cultural theories is that it does not regard the reality *a priori* socially or linguistically constructed. In other words, for ecocriticism, there exists a nature that is independent of humans and their experience of it.

A definition that is not as problem-oriented as Barry's definition, which took human-caused problems as defining elements of ecocritical reading, is Glotfelty's (1996: xviii) definition. Glotfelty defines ecocriticism in the following way: "ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment." The slight difference between Barry's and Glotfelty's definitions is not a problem for the present study's understanding of the term: by studying the relationship between the physical environment and literature one does not exclude the consideration of human-caused problems.

As has been demonstrated, ecocriticism is a broad term and its all-inclusive defining is hardly purposeful. However, Glotfelty (1996: xix) argues that a common view for all "ecological criticism" is a belief in the existence of a connection between human culture and the physical world, which affect each other and are affected by each other. Ecocriticism takes this connection

between human culture and the physical world under inspection by taking “the cultural artifacts of language and literature” as its subject of research.

As mentioned in connection to Barry’s (2009: 243) view of the separating factors between ecocriticism and other literary and cultural studies, a possibly fruitful way of trying to characterize ecocriticism is to draw attention to what is different in it compared to other areas of literary theory. Glotfelty (1996: xix) suggests that literary theory, in general, is concerned with examining “the relations between writers, texts, and the world.” Different understanding of what “the world” consists of is possibly what makes ecocriticism differ from literary theory in general. According to her, in most literary theories the world is understood as meaning the human’s social sphere of the reality. Ecocriticism broadens the meaning of “the world” to include not just the world seen from the anthropocentric point of view. Instead, ecocriticism includes everything living on this planet to the world, “the entire ecosphere”.

Looking at the study of literature from this point of view makes it interconnected to the whole of the ecosystem. Glotfelty puts it in these fitting words: “literature does not float above the material world in some aesthetic ether, but, rather, plays a part in an immensely complex global system, in which energy, matter, *and ideas* interact.” (Glotfelty et al. 1996: xix).

A crucial question for the researcher of literature from the ecocritical point of view is, then, to what extent can one make conclusions about the world outside of the world of literature by researching literature. Is the separation between “the world” and “the world of literature” valid? The present study takes the stance that these questions cannot be answered satisfyingly. Instead, it adopts the view that the speculation with, and the investigation of, the border between “the world” and literature, and how they interact to each other is precisely what makes the study of literature an area that can offer new insight and information.

The present study uses theory provided by the ecocritical study of literature as a guiding principle in considering the borders mentioned above: the border between the physical world and literature, and the border between humans and animals. The role given to food in *Oryx and Crake* is a fruitful area to investigate since food is intrinsically related to questions about the definitions of human and animal. After considering the theory of the ecocritical study of literature and the previous study on *Oryx and Crake*, the research question of the present study is formulated as follows: What is the role given to food in *Oryx and Crake*?

It is not the aim of the present study to draw conclusions from the role given to the food in the novel that would apply in the world outside of the novel. The way things are represented and dealt with in the world of literature can, however, give valuable information about the structures embedded in our culture and thinking that form the way we see the world around us, and what we think of it. These structures and ways of thinking, on the other hand, are certainly something that affects the world outside of literature. Howells (2006: 162) draws attention to the same idea in considering the genre of *Oryx and Crake*. Howells makes a note that according to Atwood herself, her fiction's genre is not science-fiction. Instead, it is speculative fiction. In science-fiction, the worlds of the literary works can be far from what could ever happen in the reality, but in the case of speculative fiction, the things that happen in the reality of the work could actually happen in the current world as well.

5 FUTURE AND FOOD IN *ORYX AND CRAKE*

This chapter demonstrates and analyzes the role given to food in the novel in the context of the ecocritical study of literature. Attention is focused on how the representation of food constructs the relationship between the human and nature.

In the following extract the main character of the novel, Snowman, is explaining his version of the Genesis story to Crakers. The scene takes place in the post-apocalyptic time. The Crakers have asked Snowman to tell them a story in exchange for providing him a fish to eat. Snowman begins his story about how the world was prior to the collapse caused by Crake's plan:

“In the beginning there was chaos,” he says. [--] “The people in the chaos were full of chaos themselves, and the chaos made them do bad things. They were killing other people all the time. And they were eating up all the Children of Oryx, against the wishes of Oryx and Crake. Every day they were eating them up. They were killing them and killing them, and eating them and eating them. They ate them even when they weren't hungry.”

Gasping here, widened eyes: it's always a dramatic moment. Such wickedness!

(*Oryx and Crake*: 102 – 103).

Although Snowman presents the story as fiction, it is what actually happened according to his view of the past events. At the same time, Snowman's story of the world before Crake's actions can be contextualized to the contemporary world's food production and consumption habits. This extract is an example of how the connection between literature and the physical environment is used to speculate with the future: as was mentioned in connection of discussing Snyder's article in Chapter 3, the world of the novel is both familiar and unfamiliar to its readers (Snyder 2011: 470). Although Snowman's story is in its style *naïve*, it is a useful starting point from which to start to analyze the roles and relations between food, humans and non-human animals in the novel.

Another point of view to the criticism towards the food production and consumption Snowman provides via his story is to interpret it as a criticism towards ecological utopianism, or ecotopianism as Dunlap (2013: 2) calls the phenomenon. The humans in Snowman's story are indeed eating and killing animals, or something similar, beyond the level of necessity but what are the possible solutions to getting such behavior to an end? In the novel, the means to get this unsustainable food production and consumption system to change is to destroy almost the entire human species that uses the food production system.

The food production efficiency has been sought to be maximized in the novel's world by creating animal-like forms of life by modifying animals genetically. The representation of such creatures in the novel comments the ongoing discussion about genetically modified organisms (GMO). In the following scene from the novel, Crake is taking Jimmy to a visit to Crake's elite university, Watson-Crick Institute. Watson-Crick Institute is specialized in modifying natural artifacts to make them more pragmatic for human needs. In this scene Crake is showing Jimmy one of the institute's projects which is a genetically modified chicken:

"This is the latest", said Crake.

What they were looking at was a large bulblike object that seemed to be covered with stippled whitish-yellow skin. Out of it came twenty thick fleshy tubes, and at the end of each tube another bulb was growing.

"What the hell is it?" said Jimmy.

"Those are chickens," said Crake. "Chicken parts. Just the breasts, on this one. They've got ones that specialize in drumsticks too, twelve to a growth unit."

"But there aren't any heads," said Jimmy. He grasped the concept – he'd grown up with *sus multiorganifer*, after all – but this thing was going too far. At least the pigeons of his childhood hadn't lacked heads.

"That's the head in the middle," said the woman. "There's a mouth opening at the top, they dump the nutrients in there. No eyes or beak or anything, they don't need those."

"This is horrible," said Jimmy. The thing was a nightmare. It was like an animal-protein tuber.

"Picture the sea-anemone body plan," said Crake. "That helps."

"But what's it thinking?" said Jimmy.

(*Oryx and Crake*: 202).

This scene, much as the whole of the novel, is a possible scenario about where the current development in science may lead. The scenario is further relevant to the analysis as it brings forward the question of what counts as a living creature and what the relationship between humans, food, and non-human animals is. The students and scientists in Watson-Crick Institute have created a life form that is something between an animal and a non-animal form of life. Crake's opinion is clearly that creating such a creature is acceptable in the name of the well-being of human race, whereas Jimmy regards such altering of life "horrible".

The question this extract arises is, whether it is ethically right to create a form of life which has no consciousness and thus can be taken advantage of without acting morally wrong. By portraying the food production as is done in this section of the novel can be interpreted as a critique towards the current industrial food production system. Jimmy's question, "But what's it thinking?" hints toward this kind of interpretation. The question suggests towards making an interpretation that for so long as a life form is not thinking it is ethically acceptable to use it without considering its rights. The same idea is made explicit by a Watson-Crick Institute staff member when she describes the benefits in such genetically modified chicken: "No need for

added growth hormones [--] And the animal-welfare freaks won't be able to say a word, because this thing feels no pain." (*Oryx and Crake*: 203).

A topic closely related to food and its production is the relationship between humans and non-human animals. The line separating humans from animals is made contingent in the novel even up to the point where the existence of such a line becomes questionable. The following extract demonstrates the questioning of the human-over-nature hierarchy and the clear distinction made between humans and animals. In this scene Snowman is being hunted by *pigoons*, an animal species created by genetic modification, while he is making his journey towards a mall to get equipment to survive in the demanding conditions:

The air is cool and fresh, the scent of crushed leaves luxurious after the dank, decaying smell of the gatehouse. He inhales with pleasure, then sets off in the direction of the mall. Three blocks along he stops: seven pigoons have materialized from nowhere. They're staring at him, ears forward. Are they the same as yesterday's? As he watches, they begin to amble in his direction.

They have something in mind, all right. He turns, heads back towards the gatehouse, quickens his pace. They're far enough away so he can run if he has to. He looks over his shoulder: they're trotting now. He speeds up, breaks into a jog. Then he spots another group through the gateway up ahead, eight or nine of them, coming towards him across No Man's Land. They're almost at the main gate, cutting him off in that direction. It's as if they've had it planned, between the two groups; as if they've known for some time that he was in the gatehouse and have been waiting for him to come out, far enough out so they can surround him. [--] More grunting: now they're all looking up at him. What they see is his head, attached to what they know is a delicious meat pie just waiting to be opened up.

(*Oryx and Crake*: 267 – 268).

In this scene, the roles have switched: animal has become the subject and human the object. By portraying pigoons seeing Snowman as "a delicious meat pie" anthropomorphizes them. The events unfold from Snowman's, the hunted subject's, point of view. The present study interprets this switch of roles as means to speculate with the negative effect that the revision of the human-over-nature hierarchy might have: on a more general level, this speculation in the novel is what Dunlap (2013: 1) interprets to be a criticism of ecotopianism. In this scene animals, or animal-like creatures, pigoons, are higher in the overall hierarchy than Snowman, a human. The novel does not explicate that such a revision of the human-over-nature hierarchy would lead to negative outcomes. Despite this, the present study claims that it is the novel's implicit message. This interpretation is made because a future scenario that would not include humans as a part of it is avoidable from an anthropocentric point of view.

Jimmy becomes connected to the human—nature -dichotomy already in his childhood through his father's profession. Jimmy's father is a genographer working for a firm called *OrganInc*

Farms that operates in genetic engineering. In the following extract Jimmy's father's work is first described and followed by Snowman's remembering of the situation and the ethical questions involved in his father's job:

Jimmy's father worked for OrganInc Farms. He was a genographer, one of the best in the field. [--] at OrganInc Farms, he'd been one of the foremost architects of the pigoon project, along with a team of transplant experts and the microbiologists who were splicing against infections. *Pigoon* was only a nickname: the official name was *sus multiorganifer*. But pigoon was what everyone said. Sometimes they said Organ-Oink Farms, but not as often. It wasn't really a farm anyway, not like the farms in the pictures.

The goal of the pigoon project was to grow an assortment of foolproof human tissue organs in a transgenic knockout pig host – organs that would transplant smoothly and avoid rejection [--] now they were perfecting a pigoon that could grow five or six kidneys at a time. Such a host animal could be reaped of its extra kidneys; then, rather than being destroyed, it could keep on living and grow more organs [--]. That would be less wasteful, as it took a lot of food and care to grow a pigoon. A great deal of investment money had gone into OrganInc Farms.

All of this was explained to Jimmy when he was old enough.

Old enough, Snowman thinks [--]. Such a dump concept. Old enough for what? To drink, to fuck, to know better? What fathead was in charge of making those decisions? For example, Snowman himself isn't old enough for this, this – what can it be called? This situation. He'll never be old enough, no sane human being could ever...

(*Oryx and Crake*: 22—23.)

In this scene, as well as in the whole of the novel, Jimmy's father represents hierarchizing human-over-nature -thinking. Pigoons are seen merely as products of genetic production rather than as living creatures with integrity. Economic efficiency is what dictates the value of pigoons: the sole purpose of developing them has been to benefit humans, to be used as a living template to grow organs for humans. Pigoons' value for humans is being bluntly described by referring to "A great deal of investment money". Snowman remembers his father's job and wonders if any human could ever be "old enough" to be told about such actions. The absurdity, or, rather, horror, of the situation is underlined via his inner monologue: "What fathead was in charge of making those decisions?" The end of Snowman's inner monologue "no sane human being could ever..." suggests the incomprehensibility of humans' abuse toward animals and nature. Even though people such as Jimmy's father are willing to do such a work, according to Snowman's opinion "no sane human being" is ever "old enough" to know about such exploitation of nature, let alone be part of it.

According to the interpretation of the present study, the main idea in this scene of the novel is to show that there will not be anyone else to make decisions for someone, no one will ever be "old enough", it is everyone's personal duty to find out about the exploitation of nature by themselves. For Jimmy's father, the way to humanity's survival is to exploit nature and to maintain the human-over-nature -hierarchy, whereas for Crake the solution is to create a new,

enhanced, humanity. Neither of these options is represented as positive and Jimmy/Snowman is the link between these two extremes. What is his solution as one of the last surviving humans? This is the question the ending of the novel leaves the reader wondering. As a species, humans will need to find the answers to these questions. The choice is humans' in the sense that they can either take an active role in finding the solution or be passive and let someone or something else decide for them. This suggestion towards the urgency of making decisions is demonstrated by the end of the novel, where Snowman meets other humans in the wilderness, although for a long time he thought himself to be the only human alive:

Here's a human footprint, in the sand. Then another one. They aren't sharp-edged, because the sand here is dry, but there's no mistaking them. And now here's a whole trail of them, leading down to the sea. Several different sizes. Where the sand turns damp he can see them better. What were these people doing? Swimming, fishing? Washing themselves? [--]

He can smell the smoke, he can hear the voices now. [--] What if they should see him? A hairy naked maniac wearing nothing but a baseball cap and carrying a spraygun. What would they do? Scream and run? Attack? Open their arms to him with joy and brotherly love? [--]

They're roasting something – meat of some kind. A rakunk? Yes, there's the tail, over there on the ground. They must have shot it. The poor creature.

Snowman hasn't smelled roast meat for so long. Is that why his eyes are watering? [--]

What next? Advance with a strip of bedsheet tied to a stick, waving a white flag? *I come in peace.* [--] Or, *I can show you my treasure.* [--]

He could finish it now, before they see him, while he still has the strength. [--] But they haven't done anything bad, not to him. Should he kill them in cold blood? Is he able to? And if he starts killing them and then stops, one of them will kill him first. Naturally. [--]

From habit he lifts his watch; it shows him its blank face.

Zero hour, Snowman thinks. Time to go.

(*Oryx and Crake*: 372—374.)

In this scene, Snowman sees other humans for the first time after the pandemic. The way how this scene is depicted is noteworthy from the point of view of analysis. Snowman notices the presence of humans by finding their footprints in the sand, which resembles the ancient method of hunting animals by tracing them. The way Snowman describes himself as “A hairy naked maniac wearing nothing but a baseball cap” is not far from what a monkey looks like, he is “hairy” and “naked” – almost an animal. The decision that Snowman has to make in this scene is whether to treat other humans as animals or as creatures capable of cooperation – as humans. It is notable that while Snowman's attitude towards other humans is skeptical at the beginning (he even thinks about killing them), he sympathizes the rakunk, “The poor creature” which has become “meat of some kind.” Here, in the moment where Snowman is on the verge of losing the last remaining bits of his humanity, he shows signs of being capable to feel empathy for the animal that was innocent. Innocent in two senses: rakunks are an animal(-like) race

manufactured by genetical engineering, therefore without any say about their existence. Secondly, the rakunk most likely had not done anything to humans to deserve to be eaten.

Snowman could have ignored the rakunk roasting in the campfire, but some part of his humanity makes him pity the animal. The present study makes an interpretation that there is an analogy between Snowman's attitude towards animals and his attitude towards humans. In the case of animals, Snowman feels pity for some reason: he thinks ChickieNobs are "horrible" and thinks that a roasted rakunk is a "poor creature". The ultimate question he will have to answer is whether humans deserve the same empathy or not. The novel does not provide the reader with an answer, but one thing is certain: something must be done. It is "Time to go."

6 CONCLUSION

The role given to food in the novel's world reflects the ideas the novel is constructing about the human and nature. The present study makes the interpretation that the capitalistic-scientific view towards food and animals represented by Crake in the pre-apocalyptic world of the novel shifts to include humans as well. In the pre-apocalyptic world of the novel, animals are seen merely as products, almost synonymous to food. The revealing of Crake's plan shows that this line of thinking has also been adopted to include humans by him. Neither humans nor animals any longer have value as themselves, both are considered from the point of view of their utility for the system, which in the pre-apocalyptic world of the novel is the capitalistic-scientific system, and towards the outbreak of the pandemic the system becomes to be realized as the ecosystem. The answer to the research question of the present study is in short that the role given to food in the novel is to function as a platform via which the implicit definitions of *human* and *animal* are communicated.

The angle from which the present study approaches the novel has not been used in previous readings of the novel. However, the role given to food in the novel is intertwined with some of the topics researched previously: one can see the representation of food as a part of a larger whole, ecological utopianism, which Dunlap (2013) discusses in her text. The results of the present study agree with Dunlap's speculation, although the area of focus from the novel is not exactly same. One can see the role given to food also as a part of another larger whole, capitalistic system. Canavan (2012) takes the critique of capitalism as the starting point of his reading of the novel. The present study is not against this interpretation, instead, Canavan's reading supports the interpretation made in the present study. The role given to food in the novel cannot be separated from the system where the events unfold. Drawing attention to the critique of the system in the novel's world includes drawing attention to the critique towards the role given to food in the novel.

By taking food as its point of focus the present study offers a reading of the novel that focuses on a detailed level area of the novel. Previously the point of focus has been on a more general level: trauma, capitalism, and ecological utopianism. All of these are abstract entities worth studying, but by focusing on an area of the novel that is explicitly visible, the present study offers a reading of the novel made from a new angle.

Considering what could have been done differently, the present study would have profited from considering the theory of *representation* more explicitly, and philosophical and biological considerations about the difference between *Homo sapiens* and other animals. As is shown in Chapter 4, in the discussion about the definition of the ecocritical study of literature, definitions are hardly ever complete, especially when one is discussing abstract phenomena. The present study would also have benefitted from considering previous study about the role given to food, and the human—animal -relation in literature. Studying the subject from a perspective that would take a more comparative approach by focusing on the similarities and differences in the areas mentioned above in multiple works of literature is therefore left open for future research.

One cannot give an exhaustive answer to the question, what does it mean to be a human-being, and exactly because of this, we are intrigued by this question. Fiction, fantastic and speculative, offers researchers a rich area to gain insight about what the answer to that question might be. However, as the study of literature is often highly individualistic, the nature of the study of literature bases heavily on the interpretations of individual researchers, which means that researchers will have to adopt high standards on how they justify their interpretations. Contrary to the natural sciences, in most cases a researcher of literature cannot test the reliability of their hypothesis by conducting an experiment in action. No individual lives in complete isolation, and this applies to the present study as well. As was mentioned in the introduction, ecocriticism has become one of the most promising paradigms in the cultural and literary studies in the recent decades. It is therefore not a coincidence that this method was chosen to be applied for this study. Every research is conducted in its own time, and to be able to see the biases our time is leading us towards is a challenge to be pursued by every curious mind.

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