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Clash and Cooperation of Ecofeminism and Postmodern Feminism:
the Intersection of Two Theories in Dystopic Literature

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Abstract

Ecofeminism and postmodern feminism are regarded as opposite theories in their attempts to solve for ecological and patriarchal oppression. This thesis argues that these two theories are not mutually exclusive, and must work together to effectively combat oppression faced by the environment and by women. It uses two works of literature, *Our Life in the Forest* by Marie Darrieussecq and *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood to argue for the combination of ecofeminist and postmodern feminist strategies. Both works are dystopic in nature, portraying the destruction of the environment and patriarchal discourse against women. Ultimately, this thesis analyzes the strategies employed by the main characters of the aforementioned novels in their retreat from the societies which they inhabit. It also relies on the theory of the cyborg in combination with ecofeminist rebellion against oppressive systems to present a combination of ecofeminist and postmodern feminist discourse as demonstrated through the chosen novels.

Key Words: ecofeminism, postmodern, feminism, binaries, technoscience

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Introduction

Within the third wave of feminism, two predominant philosophies are ecofeminism and postmodern feminism. While these two frameworks of feminist thought exist simultaneously, the current framing of the two makes it difficult to see how they intersect. Ecofeminist and postmodern literature are currently read from distinctly different theoretical angles, with little crossover between the two.

Ecofeminists argue that the structures which oppress, exploit, dominate, and destroy the environment are the same structures that oppress, exploit, dominate, and destroy the feminine body and subject it to patriarchal oppression—thereby creating a link between the environment and the feminine body. The concept of binaries, gendered or otherwise, is one which ecofeminists seek to equalize. These binaries exist in terms of man/woman, sun/moon, or society/nature. Binaries are ordered to put the first in the pair in a position of domination and control over the second, while the second is viewed as lesser and easily dominated (Hay 73). For ecofeminists, it is not necessary to eliminate these binaries but rather to remove the capacity for the first in the pair to hold power over the second. From an ecofeminist perspective, the only way to eliminate structures of power and exploitation is through a revolution that combines women's issues with environmental issues completed through a reassertion of the closeness humanity has with nature.

Postmodern feminists run on the same assertion that the main power a patriarchal system has is its reliance on binaries, similar to the ones that ecofeminists cite. However, postmodern feminists critique the idea of embracing binary identities and advocate for a type of blurring

binary lines. Much of this concept of erasure of binaries comes from Donna Haraway's cyborg and queer assemblage theory (Haraway 154). The central premise is that to eliminate binaries, we must continually change definitions and widen them until the definition in and of itself is called into question, thereby eliminating the basis for a binary relationship to exist between definitions. Haraway's theories also rely on a technoscientific landscape—one which involves the development and advancement of technology—which ecofeminists argue is created from a perspective of masculine-patriarchal exploitation and production.

As previously stated, these two theories of feminism often clash. Ecofeminism argues for a retreat and revolt against the system, specifically that which is dominated by technoscientific advancement. In contrast, postmodern feminism argues for the system's destruction while simultaneously working within and against it. This thesis posits that these two ideologies can and must work together to combat patriarchal oppression effectively. To support my theories, I draw on two novels. *Our Life in the Forest* by Marie Darrieussecq takes place in a technoscientific, postmodern landscape. The main character, Viviane, explores the boundaries created by the technoscientific society and the environment in which it has been destroyed. *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood follows the main character, Snowman, as he navigates a post-apocalyptic world destroyed by genetic mutation experiments and technoscientific development. These novels include an intersection between a technoscientific society and the obvious environmental concerns of their authors and are thus ideal for a combined ecofeminist and postmodern feminist critique.

In the first section of this paper, I lay the foundation of the feminist theories I seek to understand, starting with ecofeminist theoretical history and subsequently moving to postmodern feminism. I then develop my argument concerning which parts of these two theories can work

together and how they should work together. In the second section, I analyze *Our Life in the Forest*, beginning with a summary of the novel and following with an ecofeminist approach and then a postmodern feminist approach. The third section will follow a similar format for *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood. Finally, after employing both ecofeminist and postmodern feminist critiques to these two novels individually, I examine the salient points between the two novels to show how they can both be read through an ecofeminist and a postmodern feminist perspective.

Theory

Ecofeminist Theory

Ecofeminist emerged as a prominent feminist theory in the United States in the 1990s; however, the term was coined in the 1970s by Françoise d'Eaubonne, whose work examined the two most significant problems to survival in that time: overpopulation and depletion of the earth's resources (Gates 7-8). In d'Eaubonne's original theories, both problems of overpopulation and resource depletion were understood as a result of a masculine system and ideology, thus providing the first basis for a link between the feminine body and the earth. D'Eaubonne focused on how women and the environment were directly linked through reproduction. This specific strain of ecofeminism is referred to as *biological essentialism* (Hay 76). Biological essentialism focuses on the fact that there *is* a specific and unique relationship between women's role in childbearing. The premise then is that as the environment, more often referred to as simply nature in this theory, gives and creates life—so too does the feminine body, and thus the two are linked in this capacity. In d'Eaubonne's theories, men exploit this biological connection to assume a position of power through "their ability to plant the seed in the earth as in women, and their participation in the act of reproduction" (Gates 8).

In some capacities, a biological essentialist ecofeminist viewpoint goes beyond simply a masculine-controlled reproductive system. For example, in some fields of psychology, there is a belief that a deep-seated, gender-focused resentment occurs when male children come into consciousness about the fact that they are different from their mothers, which then turns into identifying himself as "not female" and leads to a desire for domination of women (Hay 86). While biological essentialism started as a profound basis for gender domination and division, it has manifested as a strong foothold for resistance in ecofeminist movements. Women who protest environmental disasters, such as nuclear war, take their assigned closeness with nature as a means to bolster protests against environmental harm (Gates 10). This is then the foundation for biological essentialist ecofeminist movements; the motivator is to retaliate against a system that forced women and nature to be tied, resulting in domination and exploitation, and to turn it into a movement that seeks to eradicate that very system by relying on the same closeness. It can be viewed as women embracing a closeness to nature and, in some capacity, reclaiming that closeness to nature that was once assigned as a means of control from a patriarchal system.

Ecofeminists in the 1980s, however, moved away from the standpoint of biological essentialism (Hay 78) and moved towards what is considered the *feminist standpoint* (Hay 77); this ideology relies predominantly on the historical experiences of women as it relates to masculine power structures and systems, rather than a biological function. Ariel Salleh is a prominent thinker in the feminist standpoint branch of ecofeminism. She argues that there is a connection between women and nature regarding a masculine system's historical abuse and exploitation. In a historical context, dominant European culture has viewed masculine identities and thoughts as something that belongs to spheres of culture and society, whereas feminine ideas and thoughts exist in the sphere of nature; this has caused men to create established institutions

that secure their spot in a hierarchy over women, natives, animals, nature, etc. (Hanson and Salleh 208).

Salleh also differs in thought from biological essentialist feminists regarding what the image of 'mother nature' means. To biological essentialists, it is an image that draws on women's mutual relationship with nature. For Salleh, the image of mother nature "conveyed less an absolute truth about ourselves than it revealed an underlying compulsion within men to dissociate themselves from women and from nature" (Salleh, "Second" 100). While this can follow a similar line of thought as with biological essentialism, the view of a feminine connection to nature under the feminist standpoint comes from a more historical and identity-based politics than physical similarities as with biological essentialism.

Another thinker who deviates from biological essentialism is Val Plumwood. Plumwood argues that while is it essential to look at the link that biological essentialism provides, it is also necessary to look at a wider net of experiences such as "the way that men and women derive their social roles, their access to power, and their personal identities." (cited in Hay 78). She further argues that "these things are real, and although not necessarily inherent in biology are not just conventional either. Women have historically been assigned roles that have permitted the development of insights and empathies denied to men" (cited in Hay 78). Through this line of thought, then, the feminist standpoint joins ecology and women. At the core of the feminist standpoint as part of ecofeminist thought, is the belief that "the same patriarchal attitudes which degrade nature are responsible for the exploitation and abuse of women" (Salleh, "Second" 98). Ultimately this is to say that women and the environment have the same historical experiences of being exploited and abused by a masculine system of development and technological advances.

Rather than looking at a biological link between the feminine body and nature, the feminist standpoint uses these shared experiences of exploitation to create a bond.

Another way patriarchal systems retain power is through dualisms, and dualistic language is central to ecofeminist theories. In terms of how dualisms work in an ecofeminist context, multiple sets of words run on a masculine/feminine binary, such as mind/body, abstraction/embodiment, competition/cooperation, and culture/nature (Hay 74). The key to these dualisms is that each pair consists of two opposites, and the first word in these pairs is socially defined as masculine, whether this is a trait that men are expected to have or things that have been coded as masculine through a patriarchal definition. The latter in the pair is defined as feminine. It is also important to note that the former is always seen as more desirable within society in these dualisms, as it is a component of a highly masculinized system or society. Even in pairs such competition/cooperation, not only is competition more desirable, but the latter—a trait inherently defined as feminine—is mutually exclusive from competition. These dualisms set up social guidelines for what masculine bodies *are* and what feminine bodies *cannot* be—it is the cannot be that makes the essence of the feminine body undesirable when it comes to society-building and advancement. In the context of dualisms, traits that have evolved in the creation of society to be specifically feminine have been inherently otherized because they are not masculine.

When it comes to the goals of ecofeminist theory, regardless of which brand of ecofeminist thought we consider, there are generally two: abolish domination and exploitation of the environment, and abolish domination and exploitation of women. Ecofeminists employ multiple strategies to achieve these goals, and under an ecofeminist philosophy, it is inherently necessary that these two goals be worked towards in tandem. If we look at this in terms of steps,

the first would be to engage in "a profoundly democratic project ... [which] enlists men to join women in reaffirming their place as part of nature and in formulating new social institutions in line with that position" (Hay 77). This looks like taking a step back within masculine-dominated systems and understanding *where* the link between feminine bodies and nature came from and *how* it has been sustained for so long. Many ecofeminists argue that this starting point is through institutions that have been made from the male-centered mind. For example, Salleh argues that even in our universities, women face difficulties which are entrenched in this kind of systemic male-centered ideology, which runs deep in our institutions (Hanson and Salleh 208). This deep, insightful process is necessary to garner a starting point, as will all revolutions.

The second step is to engage in a political shift that lets go of the culture versus nature polarity altogether (Salleh, "Second" 98). Above I discussed dualisms; it is with this second step that combatting dualisms becomes an inherent step of an ecofeminist revolution. This political shift that Salleh discusses entails removing the binary dualisms. This also has two steps that must co-occur. The first is to remove the masculine/feminine binary and create a narrative in which "human beings [will] finally be regarded as persons and not first and foremost as males or females" (Gates 10). The second is to retreat from a Western-industrial society's view of the environment as simply a resource and restore a healthy relationship with nature.

It is essential to understand that the above two steps must happen simultaneously and work in tandem. There is room for the misconception that any 'green' steps made today and in the future would advance these goals or that any advancement of feminist agendas would also advance these goals because of the inherent link between women and nature. However, for any attempts at changing policy or culture concerning the environment to be effective, "a deep-felt acknowledgment of how women have been historically oppressed needs to be granted ... a

perception of how women's voices have been historically suppressed, and how this has deformed the Western political legacy, needs to be arrived at" (Salleh, "Second" 96). The same acknowledgments need to be made for the environment during feminist movements. Because there is an inherent tie between women and nature in institutional structures and culture, any structural change that favors only the environment or only advances the status of women will be circumvented by the system while it continues to uphold the oppressive link between women and nature. The only way these changes are not circumvented is if there is a process of *un-otherizing* women and nature in tandem because of these two entities' similar cultural and historical experiences.

Postmodern Feminist Theory

Postmodernism as a thought base emerged in the late 20th century as a movement of skepticism. It holds a general suspicion of reason, precisely reason of modernism. A crucial part of postmodern thought is that identity is subjective, which is prominent in postmodern feminism. Postmodernist feminism has a large base, with multiple different splinters of how gender identity and gendered relations are created and how to solve problems created by a gendered society. Teresa L. Ebert argues: "the 'self-hood' of women is the same as, that is, 'identical' with, their immanent human nature, specifically, their rational consciousness (which is the same as men's). Any differences between men and women are thus thought the be the result of the violence of an unjust society that prevents women from fully developing their innate human reason" (889). The understanding is that nothing distinguishes different gender identities, simply that our society refuses to allow for an intellectual equalization. We have created different identities in our society, each of which has roles within society, and each has a different value. This is where patriarchal control can devalue women on account of their assumed differences from men and an

assumed lesser value on account of these assumed differences. In general, the postmodern strategy is to disrupt these identities. Elbert states: "[p]ostmodern difference overturns identity and displaces the ground of decidability … the question for feminism is how can it build a transformative politics on a postmodern difference that throws out certainty and destabilizes identity" (892).

Similar to ecofeminists, Ebert looks at how binary oppositions play a part in patriarchal domination. In a similar style, she cites multiple examples, such as man/woman, activity/passivity, sun/moon, culture/nature, head/heart. She explains that the first part of these binary oppositions is "privileged and given priority over the second term … and is always associated with the privileged position of the male" (Ebert 893). However, she also recognizes that there is no way to change this hierarchy; it is already too deeply engrained. Instead, the solution is to blur the lines between these binaries so that there is no recognizable line:

> As a result, disrupting the clarity and certainty of meaning, deheirarchizing binary oppositions, inscribing the *difference within*, celebrating undecidability, and speaking woman's unrepresentable excess (her *jouissance*) through such textual strategies of deconstruction, mimicry, parody, pastiche, free association, and so on, are all subversive acts: they denaturalize and expose the illusion of identity and certainty on which the regime of patriarchal representation rests and they depose the male/phallus from its privileged seat as the primary term, as the same. They are, in short, ludic interventions in the dominant patriarchal culture policy. (Ebert 896)

Our society runs on the assumption that these binaries are permanent, and identities are how they are. One is defined in our society as their identity and assigned value based on this. In attempts to combat oppressive patriarchal logic, it is necessary to look at "how to understand and

(re)constitute the self, gender, knowledge, social relations, and culture without resorting to linear teleological, hierarchical, holistic, or binary ways of thinking and being" (Flax 622). The solution is to find ways to devalue the concept of identity, so much so to the point where identities are a nonstarter and no longer able to be used as a tool of oppressive structures such as the patriarchy.

There are, of course, different theories that play a part in this process, and one which I rely on heavily later in my argument is that of the cyborg. The cyborg is a theoretical creation of Donna Haraway. According to Haraway, "[a] cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction … [t]he cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experiences in the late twentieth century. This is a struggle over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" (149). Furthermore,

> So my cyborg myth is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous
> possibilities which progressive people might explore as part of needed political work.
> One of my premises is that most American socialists and feminists see deepened
> dualisms of mind and body, animal and machine, idealism and materialism in the social
> practices, symbolic formulations, and physical artifacts associated with. 'high
> technology' and scientific culture. (Haraway 154)

In the same theme of binary oppositions and dualisms, Haraway proposes the cyborg to solve for the problems that binaries create. In the typical definition of the cyborg, one would picture a human-machine hybrid, that which is depicted in sci-fi films and writings. The cyborg defies our understanding of human nature, in which human/machine is a binary opposition. Something within this binary is *either* human *or* machine. Our instinct in a society dominated by binary

oppositions is to look at the cyborg and say, 'are you human or a machine? What are you?' and of course, there is no answer to this question. The cyborg is simultaneously neither human nor machine *and* human and machine. Granted, Haraway's theory does not rest on us focusing on the stereotypical definition of what a cyborg is—this is a theoretical landscape.

The concept of the cyborg is ultimately to say that we do not need to rely on binaries to define individuals. In the case of the aforementioned culture/nature binary, which is subject to the same man/woman divide, the cyborg theory would be that there is not a distinction between these two things. This solves for ecological and gender discrimination problems based on binaries because if there is not a line between these things for us to distinguish them, there is also not the ability for one to be given higher preference over the other. This applies to all dualisms and binaries; the answer to 'which one' is simply always neither and both simultaneously.

Argument

In literature, there is a clash between ecofeminist and postmodern feminist thinkers. Each theoretical camp views the other's strategy as flawed compared to their own. For example, Salleh writes: "Haraway's 'cyborg philosophy' eschews ecofeminist re-identification with nature, preferring instead, the 're-invention' of nature blended with man-made machine" (Salleh, "The dystopia" 202). She argues that the only thing that Haraway's cyborg philosophy accomplishes is giving more power to capitalist patriarchal logic through the "postmodern feminist deletion of 'woman' and her replacement by a cyborg" (Salleh, "The dystopia" 205). Salleh also takes serious issue with including technoscience into Haraway's theory, rather than the welcoming attitude Haraway has toward technoscience, as Salleh believes that Western technoscientific advancement is at the forefront in terms of harm against women and the environment.

While Salleh frames her argument against postmodern feminism, specifically the cyborg, in a way that posits Haraway as ceding the environment and nature to technoscientific advancement, Haraway recognizes that there is still a place for the environment to exist among technoscience:

> The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence. No longer structures by the polarity of the public and private, the cyborg defies a technological polis based partly on a revolution of social relations in the oikos, the household. Nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other. (151)

Haraway's understanding is that the logic of the cyborg removes the line we see as a society between nature and culture (technoscience). Her theory does not favor technoscience over culture. It simply argues that the two can coexist without destruction in a post-gender/post-binary world. It is not necessarily the combination of the two but rather the removal of the distinction between them which resolves oppression.

An issue that postmodern feminists have with ecofeminist thought is its understanding of identities. Postmodern feminists believe that identities are not stable, continually unstable through time, and have no fixed essence (Flax 624; Sandilands 19). Ecofeminists are then seen as upholding patriarchal logic by creating solid identities (seeing as ecofeminist thought relies on an identity of 'woman' to equalize, and as postmodern feminists understand, solid identities allow patriarchy to assign value and exploit based on those assignments. Sandilands argues that "the solidarity of the identity 'women' functions politically by concealing the mode of its construction. Given that the construction in patriarchal discourse is a site of the problem, that

solidarity must be rejected" (Sandilands 20).. In contrast, Salleh argues that "ecofeminists regard the daily dose of sexual violence and economic exploitation put upon women to be major catalysts in the formation of a resistant political subjectivity" (Salleh, "The dystopia" 206), postmodern feminists understand the issues that Salleh cites. However, they understand that the concept of identity is the root cause for these issues. In addition, postmodern feminists take issue with the biological essentialism root of ecofeminism (Sandilands 25) in that it created a highly exclusive definition of woman.

Despite the disagreement between ecofeminists and postmodern feminists, I argue that the two theories are not mutually exclusive. I argue there are strategies of ecofeminism that, when employed, provide the best chance to dismantle environmental destruction and patriarchal domination. However, at the same time, there are also parts of postmodern feminism that would solve these issues better—ultimately that the best parts of each theory can be combined.

To start, I agree with the ecofeminist view that technoscience is harmful in its current state. It is a vehicle of destruction to both the environment and women, as Salleh states that there are women "whose farmlands has been enclosed by agribusiness" and those "whose neighborhoods are toxic industrial wastelands" (Salleh, "The dystopia" 207). The way that technoscience and development has advanced thus far has been done in a way that does not consider environmental consequences. However, this is not to say that Haraway's vision of technoscience is necessarily evil. Haraway's argument assumes that technoscience is in a post-binary and post-gender world, and this is not the same technoscience that ecofeminists see. My argument is that there is a capacity for technoscience to be useful to both the environment and women. Falx argues that "it is not unreasonable for persons who have been defined as incapable of self-emancipation to insist that concepts such as the autonomy of reason, objective truth, and

beneficial progress through scientific discovery ought to include and apply to the capacities and experiences of women as well as me" (625). While women have been the subject of oppression through scientific reason and advancement, they have also played a part in this system. They do not have access to this system in the same manner men do because of their ranking in society. Thus, if we move to a post-gender and post-binary world, as Haraway suggests, there is no reason why we cannot rebuild technoscience in a way that allows for the inclusion of women in the same way that men are included.

My argument understands that, as ecofeminists suggest, the current system of technoscience reliance and development is bad and that we also need a revolt against technoscience in its current state. However, this cannot be the end goal. Ecofeminists want to equalize the two parties in a given binary. However, the issue is that the binary still exists. Because patriarchal logic is so deeply engrained, any attempts to only equalize binaries will inevitably be circumvented, simply equalizing the binaries does not eliminate patriarchal logic. Patriarchal and ecological oppression are too deeply ingrained in all of our systems, and I think the best way to combat the power these oppressive systems hold through binaries is to erase the binaries. In short, to truly resolve the issues that ecofeminists and postmodern feminists want to resolve, we need to leave behind our current oppressive structures by becoming the cyborg and rebuilding technoscience with the image of the cyborg in mind.

Our Life in the Forest by Marie Darrieussecq

Summary

Our Life in the Forest reads like the journal of Viviane, who lives in a technoscientific society. The journal is written after Viviane has fled the technoscientific society. While we know the main character as Viviane while writing the journal, her name is Marie while she lives in the

society. She changes it once she escapes into the forest. The story's premise follows Viviane and her relationship with her "half," whom Viviane names Marie. The halves are clones, kept for the purpose of replacing organs as needed, that only certain people in this society are allowed to have. They are seen as a sign of high social status. Halves stay in a state of permanent sleep, monitored by medical staff and nursing robots. The halves are entirely identical to their living counterparts.

During her life within the society, Viviane works as what she calls a shrink. She creates a strong connection with one of her patients, patient zero—also known as "the clicker." Patient zero's job was to help train robots in the society to associate words and their meanings. Eventually, patient zero disappears from the society without Viviane knowing where he had gone. Viviane also went through multiple organ "transplants" while living in the society. She had a lung removed, a kidney removed, and eventually one of her eyes as well. Viviane at one point is granted access to see her half, but not allowed to touch or speak with her half.

As Viviane waits for her eye to be removed, she receives communication from someone, presumably, patient zero, who tells her that she needs to disappear. So, Viviane removes the two tracking devices placed in her and leaves the society to live in the nearby forest. After arriving in the forest, those who have 'disappeared' create a plan to free the halves. In short, the halves are freed, and Viviane is reunited with Marie in the forest. However, Viviane's health starts to decline, particularly her breathing. As her health is declining, she realizes that Marie does not have the same scars that she has—as she should have if Marie's organs were harvested to replace Viviane's "failing" organs. The realization sets in that Viviane only has one lung and one kidney and that they were not removed because of her own illness. In response to this realization, patient zero shows her a video. The video shows an older woman estimated to be 160 years old who *is*

Viviane *and* Marie. They learn that Viviane does not have a half; instead, she *is* a half and that her organs—her eye, her lung, and her kidney—were all taken and given to the woman in the video.

Viviane as a Metaphor for the Environment

As previously stated, ecofeminist theory begs for us to understand that there is an inherent tie between the experiences of women and then experiences of nature at the destructive hands of a masculine-dominated, technoscientific society. Viviane confirms this part of ecofeminist theory as a metaphor connecting the destruction of women and the destruction of the environment in the novel. We can see how Viviane shows this connection between women and the environment in two ways: through masculine control of the feminine/environment and masculine destruction of the feminine/environment.

We know that this is a society controlled by the masculine technoscientific complex in the sense of control. Viviane's personhood and identity as a woman is under complete control of this society, both in terms of her physical self and her identity. Regarding her physical self, we are given the impression that Viviane is not involved in the decisions to remove and "replace" her organs. Of course, we know that this is because there is nothing wrong with her organs; in fact, they are perfectly healthy as they are harvested for the older woman to whom Viviane is a half. In terms of her eye surgery, she says: "[t] hey're considering a new transplant in the not-too-distant future" and continues to state that she "put off the surgery for as long as possible. Anyway, I could still see well enough. They weren't about to teach me how to see. I'm the one who does the seeing, not them, I told myself" (Darrieussecq 73). Later, when Viviane visits Marie after her eye surgery and realizes that Marie does not have a similar scar as she should have if her eye was to be taken and given to Viviane, she states: "[t]hey treat us like cattle, I told

myself. They infantilise us to the point of not informing us about our procedures, even when it's *our* bodies! *My* body!" (Darrieussecq 108). From these passages, we can discern two things. First, Viviane is not in control of whether she is receiving surgery. Those in control of the society in which she lives make these decisions. Second, Viviane resisted the surgery by putting it off as long as possible and telling us that she can see just fine. Ultimately, Viviane has no physical control of her body, nor does she have information pertaining to decisions regarding her body in this society.

In addition to having no control of her physical body, Viviane also has no control of her identity as a woman. Part of Viviane's time in this society is spent visiting with shrinks. At these visits, she creates a timeline to show the most important events, defined by her, for each year of her life. The process of part of Viviane's timeline is as follows:

> "[f]or year thirteen, I drew a sanitary pad with blood on it, because getting my period was a big deal for me, whether you like it or not. … For year three, I drew a lung. The one I took from Marie. Bright red. Like cat-food animal lungs. The shrinks were not pleased. In their opinion, it means a lot of blood on my timeline. For them blood = danger = fear = disgust = wound = attack = death" (Darrieussecq 48).

For Viviane, her period is an integral part of how she views her identity as a woman. The way that the shrinks want to force her to pick between these two events on the timeline because it does not fit into what they think her timeline should look like frustrated her" "[i]n short, they were asking me to pick between my breathing and my period. Between my uterus and my lungs" (Darrieussecq 48). By forcing Viviane to change her timeline, which is meant for her to represent herself, the shrinks are feeding into masculine-technoscientific control in multiple ways. Viviane chose to depict her period as it is essential to her and represents part of her identity, one of the

events that makes her who she is. The shrinks refuse to allow her to represent herself in this way and thus control her identity. Even worse, they are attempting to control how she is *allowed* to see her own identity. In addition, this can be seen as the shrinks rewriting Viviane's identity. If Viviane were in complete control of her own identity, she would have the capacity to create her timeline in whichever way she sees fit.

Instead of one of those two boxes, the shrinks suggest that Viviane include a drawing of a dandelion in her timeline: "[t]hey suggested I draw something more positive, like a dandelion whose seeds you blow away. A dandelion? To represent reproduction? No, for breath, air, wind" (Darrieussecq 48). I argue this is a direct example of a masculine system connecting women and the environment. The shrinks want Viviane to identify herself with an element of nature, the dandelion; thus, as Salleh says, "men have established institutions which secure their status over and above … women … and the rest of 'nature'" (Hanson and Salleh 208). The shrinks, a product of the technoscientific society, force Viviane to equate herself with nature.

While Viviane has to have no physical control of her body or control of her identity as a woman in this society, the way that the environment factors into the system of control must also be examined. The society in the novel does not attempt to incorporate the environment: "it was a wooded landscape. There are, of course, a few trees in the city, mostly plane trees and pines, but no forest, obviously, not even a grove of trees" (Darrieussecq 77). In addition, Viviane talks much about museums and zoos. She finds animals such as mammoths and whales in the zoos and calls these zoos "museums of extinction" (Darrieussecq 54). In the museums, she sees cedar, ebony, and mahogany—trees known to be common but now extinct in this society (Darrieussecq 79). From this, we can gather that two things occurred: first, the governing bodies in this society have obtained control over the environment through the elimination of unrestricted growth of

trees in the city; second, there has been a large amount of environmental destruction in the city that Viviane inhabits—given the numbers of "common" animals which have now gone extinct. Viviane also states: "it wasn't our fault if we were afflicted with nasty illnesses. It was due to air pollution, the coal we were sent by retrograde countries that still used it for heating, chemicals in food, genetically modified organisms everywhere. We got sick. There was nothing we could do about it" (Darrieussecq 73). Not only are there currently detrimental effects to the environment in this society, but the continuation of its habits will completely wipe out the environment, as Viviane tells us: "the last forest will have disappeared before the first robot is up to speed. We're nearly there. Fifty years. I won't be around for it. I'll have fallen to bits by then" (Darrieussecq 8). Through this, not only does Viviane tell us that her society will soon destroy the environment in its entirety, but she also directly ties herself to the destruction of the environment. Just as the environment is destroyed for the sake of advancing this society, so is Viviane. Parts of the environment are destroyed and taken for advancement, as in the trees and animals, and as is Viviane through her organ removal. In this way, we see the ecofeminist argument that there is an oppressive link between women and the environment come to fruition through the environment in which Viviane lives. Neither of these entities has autonomy and find themselves at the behest of a masculine power structure: a technoscientific society.

The Forest

The concept of the forest plays a central role in this novel. I argue that the forest serves as a protector for Viviane and that its role as such also deepens a connection between the feminine body and nature. Throughout the novel, Viviane speaks of the forest before she has chronologically escaped to it, and this commentary gives us great insight into how the forest and the environment are viewed in this society.

In one of Viviane's meetings with the clicker, Viviane asks him to describe to her his safe

place: "he came up with the most clichéd places possible. Because of his clicking, he was an

expert in clichés: island = paradise = coconut palms = white sand = heat= turquoise sea. … these

days this type of safe place was engulfed by tsunamis, et cetera" (Darrieussecq 31-32). And later,

Viviane describes to us her safe place:

> I mean, when I grasped even just a fraction of what had been done to me, I often used the
>
> safe-place technique myself. Why my suspicions became unbearable. I'm not even
>
> talking about the chronic pain, the breathlessness, the dizziness, my eye…no, I'm talking
>
> about the idea itself of what was done to us. Of the *concept*. … That's when I imagined
>
> myself in my safe place. My safe place was already a forest. … I think it defined us as
>
> human animals. The forest. The trees. (Darrieussecq 35)

This discussion of safe spaces gives us two insights into the relations between gender identity

and the environment in this society. First, Viviane points out that the clicker's understanding of

the environment is rather unrealistic when he chooses the beach as his safe place. This gives us

an understanding of how masculine and feminine characters understand the environment

differently. Through the clicker (as one of our only sources of male insight in the novel), we see

that the masculine view is detached. He deals in clichés and ideals, envisioning the environment

in a way that is not grounded in reality and is rather exotic. For example, while the coast has

been engulfed by tsunamis (likely caused by environmental destruction from this society), the

clicker still pictures them pristinely. I would suggest that this is "the masculine" attempting to

force the environment to fit into a definition that it *wants* it to be rather than recognizing what it

is. This detachment shows a distant relationship between "the masculine" and nature.

In contrast, Viviane *understands* nature because she knows that the clicker is unrealistic. She understands that the environment is in shambles and that places like white sandy beaches do not exist anymore. Viviane's understanding of the reality of the environment indicates that she has a sort of closeness to nature that is grounded in reality. In addition, Viviane chooses the forest as her safe place. When she is harmed by the thoughts of what this society has done to her, taking her organs, controlling her, etc., she drifts away to the forest for comfort and protection. The forest surrounding her society is one of the parts of the environment that has not yet been destroyed or severely impacted by the development of the society. Moreover, while she physically escapes to the forest, her mental escape also shows a closeness with nature as she desires to heal the destruction that this society has done to her mentally by escaping to it.

In addition to using the forest as a mental escape, a large part of her story uses the forest as a physical escape for her. She tells us: "ever since we dived into the ocean depths, and onto the Moon and Mars, and Jupiter's satellites, and then the habitable planets, we no longer really have anywhere to hide on Earth … you'll manage to stay hidden. To disappear. As long as there are forests" (Darrieussecq 5). Viviane relies on the environment, the forest, to protect her from the harm her technoscientific society has done and would have continued to do if she had not left. She observes: "[a]round me I see an encampment in the forest. … The canopy that protects us from the drones" (Darrieussecq 2). Through this, we understand the crucial role that is played through Viviane reuniting with the forest. Charis Thompson argues that "reclaiming by ecofeminists of the pairing of women and nature expressed a refusal to base society and community on the power of hierarchies of a capitalist patriarchy whose 'invisible hand' operated as if it owned not just the same means of production but those of destruction and reproduction as well" (506). I argue that Viviane reuniting with the forest is her reclaiming a closeness with

nature, as Thompson asserts necessary under an ecofeminist pedagogy, that she had already established to combat the society that has destroyed her mentally and physically.

Thompson calls for an ecofeminist escape from the modes of production, reproduction, and destruction employed by a capitalistic-patriarchal society. *Our Life in the Forest's* technoscientific society can be considered a capitalistic-patriarchal society, as Viviane is an object of production. She works within this system as a shrink and is physically used as a means of production as she is cultivated as a source of organs and is thus destroyed by this process. She immediately halts this system through her reconnection with nature by leaving the society and entering the forest (and taking Marie with her). She and Marie can no longer be harvested from to benefit the woman who is presumably part of the elite of this society (and the one to whom her organs go). Viviane states: "[t]o stop producing in space—like windmills—these never-ending repetitive actions of ignition and guidance of our devices, our headsets, our vehicles, for those who have them, our dogs, et cetera, is nothing less than a radical detoxification of our world. You exit the world. You end up in the forest, digging with shovels and picks" (Darrieussecq 93). Part of Viviane's decision to exit the society in favor of the forest must be grounded in an understanding of what the two share: they are used and co-opted for the benefit of this society. She refuses to be part of it and leaves for the only bit of the environment that also refuses to be part of it to partake in a 'radical detoxification of the world.'

Salleh, in line with Thompson, also argues for a retreat: "the path to *utopian* politics may be found by leaving aside the cognitive double binds of capitalist patriarchal logic, and moving for a moment into the modality of doing and feeling" (Salleh, "The dystopian" 203). This is precisely what Viviane accomplishes through leaving the society. Ecofeminism requires us to understand that much of our society and its foundations are radically entrenched in patriarchal

logic and that in order to solve problems of ecological and female exploitation truly, we must break away from a technoscientific advancement that perpetuates these exploitations: "a wholistic conceptualization embracing other species and 'nature' at large is important. This ecocentric break with anthropocentrism is what distinguishes ecofeminist thinking" (Salleh, "The dystopian" 204). Thus, by leaving the technoscientific society and recognizing that nature makes humanity human, Viviane employs an ecofeminist strategy to seek liberation.

Viviane as a Cyborg

While Viviane can be viewed through the lens of ecofeminism, she also fits into Haraway's definition of a cyborg. There are multiple ways in which Viviane is a cyborg under my interpretation, and in these ways, she becomes hybridized with elements of the technoscientific society in which she lives.

To begin, the first facet in which Viviane is a cyborg is her role as a half in the society. While we know that Viviane was not receiving replacement organs from Marie, Viviane is under the impression that she is receiving these organs for much of the novel. Even though Viviane's perception of the organ transplant arrangement was not in line with reality, her understanding is essential in our understanding part of her identity as a cyborg. Because the halves are a product of the technoscientific society, I argue that they are a new kind of machine. They were created for the advancement of society, and rather than technical machines created for aiding the extension of life—like pacemakers and artificial hips—the halves just serve as living versions of these machines.

Viviane recognizes herself as a cyborg while believing that she receives Marie's organs. Viviane tells us: "[t]he doctors never failed to remind me that I was breathing with one of her lungs. And, later, that I was filtering what I drank with one of her kidneys. And then there was

talk of my taking on of her eyes … this type of physical relationship is bound to create a bond" (Darrieussecq 68). She recognizes this connection with Marie at another point, as she states that *her* lung was removed from Marie (Darrieussecq 50). This recognition of a link between her and Marie because of their connection through surgery is the base point for Viviane as a blend between her humanity and the evolution of technoscience. Although the reader later understands that the organ transplants were not real, Viviane's perception of this situation is far more important. She understands that she is part of the system because she is part of Marie or that Marie is part of her.

Just as Marie is a new type of machinery created by this society, in the same manner, Viviane is also a machine:

> I don't even know if it's the multimillionaire old biddy who is directly responsible for my fate. For my birth—let's say it like it is. Especially since it's via a legal deed, signed by her parents at the moment of her birth, stipulating the clones will be harvested for her and that, automatically, as soon as one of her organs breaks down, they will remove it from me, as they must have removed organs from my predecessors, and they would form the fresh young Marie if I hadn't taken action. (Darrieussecq 142-143)

In this situation, Viviane is part of the same system that Marie is: she is part of the creation of the technoscientific society and is thus a machine. However, after Marie escapes to the forest, this is when she truly becomes a cyborg.

While existing in the society, she is nothing more than a cog in the machine; even if she does not realize it, she does not have any personal autonomy as her existence was set up and created to play a specific role—that of a half. However, the society allows her to believe that she

has autonomy, as they convince her that she has a half and by staging Marie in a state of permanent sleep to sell the act further. Nevertheless, she is just another object of advancement.

In addition to her physical existence as a human/machine hybrid, Viviane also displays multiple instances of a mental association with the habits of the technoscientific society. In this analysis, it is essential to recognize that this novel is written as a journal that Viviane is writing after escaping the forest. Throughout the novel, there are multiple instances where Viviane writes what I call word associations. For example, as part of her job as a shrink, she meets with the clicker, who is tasked with "performing a task the mind can do but which discombobulates a robot. The only solution is the multiple the links, *click, click, click,* until the robot has been supplied with everything we could possibly have thought up until now … Blue = sky = melancholy = music = bruising = blue blood = nobility = beheading" (Darrieussecq 8). Through this, we understand that robots in this society are programmed to associate concepts or objects with other concepts and objects, forming an infinite link of associations in order to emulate what humanity has learned, thought, and understood about the world. While Viviane defines this as a robot habit, she also does the same thing as she writes her journal in the forest. For example, in a portion of the journal when she describes an interaction with Marie before the escape into the forest, she says, "Half = incompleteness = likeness = emotional attachment pathology = nostalgia = compassion = depression" (Darrieussecq 70). This shows the habit that Viviane has incorporated into her thought process stemming from the technoscientific society. Her thought process has been permeated by the logic of the technoscientific society, thus making her a cyborg as she simultaneously employs the logic of technoscience and her thoughts rebelling against it. As Viviane rebels against technoscience, so too do the characters of *Oryx and Crake*.

***Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood**

Summary

In *Oryx and Crake*, Margaret Atwood gives us a terrifying tale in a dystopic/post-apocalyptic society focused on genetic mutation and futuristic development. Throughout the novel, Snowman, the main character, believes himself to be the last human left following a revolution against a highly technological society. When Snowman was a child, at this point called Jimmy, his father worked at OrganInc Farms where multiple genetic experiments were executed, including Rakunks (a combination of rats and skunks, one of which eventually becomes Jimmy's pet). Jimmy's mother and father have a somewhat rocky relationship as Jimmy is growing up; this conflict stems from Jimmy's mother's distaste for the ethics of OrganInc Farms (where she also works), and after Jimmy's father is promoted, she leaves him and Jimmy without a word.

In high school at HealthWyzer High, Jimmy befriends Crake. The two become close throughout high school but are separated when Crake goes to the Watson-Crick institution, a highly funded STEM college, and Jimmy goes to a lowly regarded liberal arts school. After graduation, Jimmy takes on a job at AnooYoo as a marketing employee, and Crake works at RejoovenEsense. After Jimmy worked at AnooYoo for five years, Crake invited him to come work for him at RejoovenEsense, where Jimmy works on a campaign for a pill called BlyssPluss. BlyssPluss is marked as improving libido but in actuality renders people unable to reproduce. At RejoovenEsense, Jimmy meets Oryx. Oryx used to be a sex worker whom Crake employed in college but then hired to work at RejoovenEsense with the Crakers. Crakers are a genetically modified group of people entirely constructed by Crake—they are quite literally genetically perfect. Oryx's job is to go into the country's poorer areas to distribute the BlyssPluss pills and work to socialize the Crakers.

Eventually, chaos ensues as a plague breakout occurs. The BlyssPluss pills were engineered to have a delayed-release contagion. The plague spread very quickly and killed nearly everyone on the planet except for Oryx, Crake, Jimmy, and the Crakers, who were at the RejoovenEsense compound in a sort of bubble, sealed off from the rest of the world. However, Crake killed Oryx, and in response, Jimmy killed Crake (Jimmy and Oryx had an affair, which caused tension within this triangle). At this point, Jimmy takes the Crakers and leads them to the sea. They can be sustained on all things found in the wilderness and are modified to be practically indestructible. They also do not come preprogrammed with knowledge of the world, or Jimmy, who at this point has become Snowman, is now charged with taking care of them as well as teaching them about the world. Snowman begins to run out of resources and travels back to the RejoovenEsense compound to try and find resources. When he returns to the Crakers, they tell him that they saw a group of people like him. At the end of the novel, he finds the group of people, and we are left with his internal battle as to whether he should treat them as friends or foes. *Oryx and Crake* is the first novel in a trilogy, and this group will be the focus in the second part of the trilogy.

Gender Divisions and Stereotypes

Aside from being a highly technoscientific society, the society in *Oryx and Crake* is also highly gendered. As both ecofeminist and postmodern feminists write, binaries and dualisms are an exceptional tool of patriarchal logic, and the concepts of binary oppositions are present in *Oryx and Crake*.

First, in the second chapter, young Jimmy witnesses his parents get into an argument, after which Jimmy's mom leaves the scene angry and in a rush. In response, Jimmy's father says: "'Never mind, old buddy, … [w]omen always get hot under the collar. She'll cool down"

(Atwood 16). One of the sets of words that follows along the masculine/feminine binary is analytical/emotional, and in this scene, Jimmy's father has played into this binary by brushing his wife's reaction off as just feminine emotion. Jimmy's reaction is as follows:

> Women, and what went on under their collars. Hotness and coldness, coming and going in the strange musky flowery variable weather country inside their clothes—mysterious, important, uncontrollable. That was his father's take on things. But men's body temperatures were never dealt with; they were never even mentioned. Why weren't they? Why nothing about the hot collars of men? Those smooth, sharp-edged collars with their dark, sulfurous, bristling undersides. (Atwood 17)

Here, Jimmy makes it apparent that there is no discussion of men's emotions in this society, nor is there analysis of these emotions.

Not only does he tie emotions solely to the feminine body by distinguishing that masculine emotions are not discussed, but in attempting to describe his father's perspective, Jimmy uses the words 'mysterious' and 'uncontrollable,' indicating that his father views them in a negative way. It is not necessarily that feminine emotions are, in a vacuum, are uncontrollable, but instead, they are not something that can be dominated by the masculine which is what makes them a negative in society and something that is looked down upon. This does not necessarily mean to suggest that Jimmy is perpetuating patriarchal logic, as later I will argue that he is coded as feminine in this society.

The second important part of Jimmy's analysis of the difference between women's and men's collars is how the two are described. I have already discussed that women's emotions are described as uncontrollable, similar to the weather; men's emotions, on the other hand, are described as dark, sharp, and smooth. In this image, Jimmy depicts a business suit—that of the

likes which falls into the male-dominated part of society with businessmen, politicians, and scientists. This defines masculinity as not only not having emotions but also as being more valuable in society as it belongs to the sophisticated "culture" part of the binary.

In terms of the culture/nature binary, Crake is a prime example of what ecofeminists criticize as a masculine technoscientific system. Throughout the novel, Crake is on a quest to advance society forward in its age of technological and genetic engineering. Taking a step back, Jimmy's father was part of the start of the genetic engineering—he worked on the pigoon projects in which the goal was "to grow an assortment of fool proof human-tissue organs in a transgenic knockout pig host—organs that would transplant smoothly and avoid rejection, but would also be able to fend off attacks by opportunistic microbes and viruses" (Atwood 22). While there was a starting point before Crake in the expansion of genetic mutation and research in the novel, the perpetuation of this research is what ecofeminists like Salleh find problematic:

> [y]es, the exploitation of indigenous people, women's bodies, and other 'nature' which is the basis of contemporary economics is assisted by Western science and engineering—mechanical and genetic. … men who are our politicians, corporate decision makers, scientific researchers, have a huger personal stake in keeping the system running along the way it is. If it is hard to shift the gender complacency of radical comrades, it's even more of a challenge to get under the skin of the brotherhood in suits. (Hanson and Salleh 210)

Crake takes the existing genetic research and furthers it, quite literally, to society's collapse. He created a new species of human-like creatures, Crakers, a far cry from the original pigoon project. Ecofeminists argue that systems of advancement such as the one Crake partakes in are detrimental to the environment. We see this reflected in the novel: "as time went on and the

coastal aquifers turned salty and the northern permafrost melted and the vast tundra bubbled with methane, and the drought in the midcontinental plains regions went on and on, and the Asian steppes turned to sand dunes" (Atwood 24).

Javier Martín argues that Crake does not necessarily serve as the symbol of toxic masculine development as he destroys humanity: "[Crake] will not do so [in reference to the apocalypse] to get revenge on humans but to make sure homo sapiens cannot slay the new species and/or the planet" (178) and further argues that Crake is "a man [who], cannot tolerate all the harm men cause women and the planet. … At the same time, he believes in reason and technology alone and rejects ideas such as compassion or love" (178). I disagree with these assertions, and rather argue the opposite.

As referenced above, Salleh argues that part of the masculine-technoscientific system is an aspect of control over women and control over the environment, and Crake exhibits this perfectly. His actions cannot be chalked up to an ethic of caring as Martín argues. Rather, Crake is further showing the way that a patriarchal-technoscientific system takes away autonomy from individuals as he destroys humanity with no outside input. This is a metaphor for the way the entire masculine system functions: there is no personal autonomy or even room for decision making debate when patriarchal logic is allowed to continually make decisions affecting the autonomy of others. It is also necessary to factor in the way that, as previously established, the system which Crake partakes in has destroyed a large amount of the environment. I do not think one can argue that Crake is acting within the technoscientific system which destroys the environment out of the motivation to try and save it.

Martín further states, "in *Oryx and Crake*, men are only capable of destruction even, when, as in the case with Crake, they are trying to find a solution to the planet's sufferings

(which have been produced by mankind's intelligence, ego and brutality)" (178). There is room to see some of Crake's good intentions as he says,

> the logic behind [the BlyssPluss Pill] was prophylactic in nature, and the logic behind it was simple: eliminate the external causes of death and you were halfway there. … War which is to say misplace sexual energy, which we consider to be a larger factor than the economic, racial, and religious causes often cited. Contagious diseases, especially sexually transmitted ones. Overpopulation, leading—as we've seen in spades—to environmental degradation and poor nutrition (Atwood 293)

However, in trials of the BlyssPluss Pill, Crake exploits low-income citizens from impoverished areas by bribing them and not telling them about the medication they will be taking (Atwood 294). Regardless of what Crake claims his intentions are with the BlyssPluss Pill (which also noted is what causes mass casualties of the human species), he still incorporates toxicity from a capitalist-patriarchal system through his exploitation.

Another vital facet to look at when understanding how gender divisions have permeated this technoscientific society is Jimmy/Snowman himself. While Jimmy is identified as a male character in this novel, I argue that he is coded as feminine by the society he inhabits. As previously mentioned, Jimmy's dad perpetuates the gender binary/gender roles in this society— as he enforces them in his commentary about Jimmy's mother. He also does the same with Jimmy. There are multiple instances where Jimmy's dad will make comments to young Jimmy, encouraging him to be more masculine. For example, he makes comments such as "'Eat up, old buddy, eat the crusts, put some hair on your chest'" (Atwood 25), or about a new haircut, Jimmy is referred to as 'tough guy' (Atwood 17). Through these situations, it is clear what kind of definition Jimmy is expected to fall under—ultimately, he is expected to be involved in the same

system of technoscientific advancement that his father is involved in and that Crake later becomes involved in.

Another area where we can see this is through where Jimmy and Crake end up in life. With Crake attending the Watson-Crick institute, he is set up to contribute to the technoscientific society. Jimmy, however, attends the Martha Graham Academy, which is a crumbling institution, and its status as such serves as a metaphor for the quality of education that Jimmy can access. Jimmy describes Martha Graham as such:

> Martha Graham was falling apart. It was surrounded … by the tackiest kinds of pleeblands [impoverished areas]: vacant warehouses, burnt-out tenements, empty parking lots. Here and there were sheds and huts put together from scavenged materials … the walls—scrawled all over with faded graffiti … Inside them, the Bilbao-ripoff case-concrete buildings leaked, the lawns were mud, either baked or liquid depending on the season, and there were no recreation facilities. (Atwood 185-186)

Jimmy is not able to provide enough intellectually to further the advancement of the technoscientific society, and this is reflected by the state of the higher education that he can attend.

In addition to the underfunding of the school that Jimmy attends, it is also ridiculed for its association with feminism and women: "[t]he Martha Graham Academy was named after some gory old dance goddess of the twentieth century who'd apparently mowed quite a swath in her day … Retro feminist shit, was the general student opinion … Parents were always objecting to this statue – poor role model, they'd say, too aggressive, too blood-thirsty" (Atwood 186). This description shows us two things. Firstly, it gives us another glimpse into how this society values feminist resistance of systems. It has already been established that the society in *Oryx and Crake*

values hyper-masculinized technoscientific development and severely undervalues feminism and things deemed 'feminine' (the liberal arts school in this instance). Not only are they separated and allowed to decay with no development, but they receive heavy criticism from society. The second thing this shows us is specific to Jimmy and his role in society. He, too, belongs in this part of society that is devalued, and this furthers my argument that Jimmy is coded as feminine in this society.

The only way that Jimmy can escape a rather tumultuous fate is by being rescued by Crake, whom I have already established is a beacon of technoscientific development loathed by ecofeminists. He is invited by the epitome of technoscience, Crake, to be part of the development, and I view this as a final attempt to force Jimmy to assimilate into the technoscientific system of domination after Jimmy's father's attempts to 'masculinize' him failed in his youth.

Jimmy and the environment

Following the collapse of the society in which Jimmy lives after Crake causes an apocalypse, Jimmy retreats into the wilderness. Similar to Viviane's retreat in *Our Life in the Forest*, the wilderness becomes a safe space for Jimmy to escape the destruction of society. Jimmy leaves and takes the Crakers with him, but this is a struggle for Jimmy as "[he] could leave them behind … Just leave them. Let them fend for themselves. They aren't [his] business" (Atwood 350). However, ultimately, he realizes "he couldn't do that, because although the Crakers weren't his business, they were now his responsibility. Who else did they have?" (Atwood 350). Thus, he plans to retreat from society with the Crakers.

In advance of his departure, Jimmy looks fondly at the prospect of reuniting with nature: "[t]he Crakers could live in the park near the arboretum, coloured green on the map and marked

with a tree symbol. They'd feel at home there, and certainly there would be lots of edible foliage.

… On the way to their new, better place, he would walk ahead" (Atwood 350). In reality, Jimmy

did not have to leave the compound with the Crakers. It can be argued that Jimmy must leave in

the wake of the apocalypse and its chaos ensued, but while everything was largely destroyed in

the society following the apocalypse, the compound in which Jimmy worked with Crake was

well stocked and sealed off from the rest of the world and largely safe. Leaving means a world of

uncertainty, but I argue that Jimmy essentially decides to leave because of the necessity to

reconnect with nature. As established, ecofeminists argue that we have to leave our

technoscientific society behind to reconnect with nature, and this is what Jimmy does.

Snowman as a cyborg

When Jimmy leaves behind the technoscientific society to pursue a reconnection with

nature, he becomes Snowman. I argue that at the same time, he fully becomes a cyborg and that

he simultaneously creates a cyborg between technoscience and the environment. I say fully

because, in part, I believe that Jimmy was already a type of cyborg while existing in the society.

Above I established that Jimmy was coded as feminine by the society he lived in, and this is

where I draw the beginning to Jimmy/Snowman's status as a cyborg. He was already

unintelligible to the system. There were multiple attempts by Jimmy's father to 'masculinize'

Jimmy, and Crake attempted to complete this masculinization by incorporating him into his

masculine-technoscientific system. So, in some capacity, the society recognizes that Jimmy was

supposed to fall into one category, but he still acted in too feminine a manner in his values for

the society. He does not align with the values that the society demands he fall in line with. Thus,

he is a cyborg because he exists in part of one identity and part of another: the identity of the

man who perpetuates the technoscientific system and the identity of the woman who rebels

against it (this identity can also be seen from Jimmy's mother, who left the society because she disagreed with its "advancements"). Granted, Jimmy does not actively protest the system; rather, he defies it by not actively trying to participate in it or give in to its attempts to make him conform.

Once Jimmy has left and become Snowman, he furthers his identity as a cyborg—and interestingly enough, he recognizes that he is a cyborg in part. While Snowman does not explicitly call himself a cyborg, he does say about his chosen name, "the Abominable Snowman—existing and not existing, flickering at the edges of blizzards, apelike man or manlike ape, stealthy, elusive, known only through rumors" (Atwood 7-8). Snowman's exit from the society puts a blip in his identity, and I argue that choosing the name Snowman (in reference to the Abominable Snowman) is incredibly symbolic of his identity as a cyborg. Jimmy is inherently a part of the technoscientific society; it created him just as it is what created the Crakers with whom he travels. However, when he leaves the society, he does not necessarily have a strong concept of identity anymore. He leaves the world that assigned him meaning and thus loses meaning. Is he part of the society still? Is he part of the environment that he now inhabits? Simultaneously he is both and neither, similar to Haraway's definition of the cyborg. Later on, Snowman refers to himself as "[h] e's humanoid, he's hominid, he's an aberration, he's abominable" (Atwood 307). He recognizes that he exists in a space somewhere in the middle of identities, but he also accepts this and does not attempt to define himself with any certain identity; instead, he accepts his status of having no concrete identity. Thus, Snowman builds upon Jimmy's existing identity as a cyborg.

Synthesis

Viviane and Snowman have much in common. Both come from destructive and oppressive technoscientific societies, both find a way to leave those societies, and both can be considered cyborgs. The culmination of their journeys shows how ecofeminist and postmodern strategies can work together. However, their journeys do differ as Viviane is the direct object of the oppression of her society, while Snowman is not necessarily (he does experience bias being coded as feminine). Viviane leaves entirely because of her reluctance to continue participating in the system, and Snowman leaves after the society has collapsed but still makes a conscious choice to leave the remnants of the society.

Ultimately, both pursue an ecofeminist strategy by leaving the societies in which they previously lived. Salleh states that "ecofeminist[s] … suggest that if there is no exit from 'the spoken word' and 'social fact', the path to *utopia* may be found by leaving aside the cognitive double bind of capitalist patriarchal logic, and moving for a moment into the modality of doing and feeling" (Salleh, "The dystopia" 203). By voluntarily leaving their respective societies I argue that Viviane and Snowman participate in what Salleh calls the modality of doing and feeling. As Viviane leaves the society, she says: "my rational thoughts remained back there, in the city, disintegrating as the journey continued. The rhythm of my walking allowed me to concentrate simultaneously on Marie and on the trees, as if the two things went well together. … I let myself be carried along, my head in the trees and my heart with Marie" (Darrieussecq 77). Here, Viviane directly shows the dissolution of meaning in her pursuit to exist in a space where she is not governed by the oppressive logic of her technoscientific society. In terms of Snowman, he states at one point after he has left: "Mesozoic. He can see the word, he can hear the word, but he can't reach the word. He can't attach anything to it. This is happening too much lately, the dissolution of meaning, the entries on his cherished wordlists drifting off into space" (Atwood

39). Snowman experiences a situation similar to Viviane's, where logic and meaning escape him. The two experiencing this after leaving the technoscientific society is because the only logic and meaning they had previously was instilled into them by the technoscientific society and was the logic and meaning of oppression and exploitation. This phenomenon they share shows the success of their exit in terms of freeing themselves from this logic of oppression.

Martín argues that in Snowman's debacle over the word 'Mesozoic' one can see that "Snowman is not really reliable since, in the world of *Oryx and Crake*, language starts to become meaningless once homo sapiens are no longer on Earth to employ it and load it with explicit, implicit and pragmatic meaning" (176). However, this dissolution of meaning is not a bad thing nor does it discredit Snowman's success as a cyborg. Snowman's dissolution of meaning is exactly what, in part, shows success in ridding himself of a toxic society. 'Pragmatic meaning' becomes a thing of the past once exiting a toxic society and entering a modality of doing and feeling; whether or not something has 'pragmatic meaning' is irrelevant in this context as the 'pragmatic meaning' was bestowed by an oppressive technoscientific-patriarchal society.

At this point, it seems largely that all Viviane and Snowman did was explore the ecofeminist solution of leaving behind the oppressive technoscientific society; however, they did incorporate postmodern strategy in the process of their escape. As previously established, Viviane's half, Marie, is a product of the technoscientific society in the same way that the Crakers are a product of the technoscientific society. Moreover, both Viviane and Snowman are cyborgs. The only way their leaving the society proves to be successful is because of their exit as cyborgs. By leaving as cyborgs, they can no longer be subjected to oppression from patriarchal logic because they do not have identities that can be co-opted. In addition, they both bring parts of their technoscientific societies with them into nature. Logically, an ecofeminist would look at

this and say that was a mistake because there is no part of technoscience that is redeemable. However, they experience success in liberation because of their identities as cyborgs. There is no way for technoscience to be oppressive if there is not a binary foothold for it to hang onto. I recognize that both of these novels are dystopic, and are not meant to have happy endings (and as postmodern pieces, they do not have traditional endings either). While Viviane dies at the end of the novel, she has still put a halt into an oppressive system. Without herself or Marie still in the society, there is no longer a chain of lineage to take organs from for this woman. She has disrupted the cycle through her ecofeminist and postmodern feminist strategies. Additionally, her death is not the result of her own actions, rather it is the result of the oppressive society.

Their incorporation of the halves and the Crakers into nature also upholds Haraway's theory of reconstituting nature to incorporate technoscience into it in a healthy manner. Amanda Vrendenburgh argues: "[a]lthough the forest is favored as the place that allows [Viviane] to live a more enriching, liberated life, it is by exploring technology and the forest together that Darrieussecq allows us to break down barriers that limit our thinking of humanity to traditional dualisms" (657). It is truly the retreat from society melded with incorporation of technoscience and the environment which allows for liberation. Ultimately, as I argued previously, the best parts of ecofeminism and the best parts of postmodern feminism can be combined to rebel against patriarchal oppression and environmental oppression. Darrieussecq and Atwood demonstrate this possibility through the characters of Viviane and Snowman, who leave behind their oppressive societies, as per ecofeminist prescription, and by incorporating technoscience through the figure of the cyborg.

Conclusion

Ecofeminism and postmodern feminism appear in current theory as opposing forces. Ecofeminists hold that there is a link between women and the environment and attempt to equalize different binaries such as masculine/feminine and culture/nature to expel the oppression and exploitation brought upon women and nature technoscientific advancement. Postmodern feminists argue that the concept of identity is what allows for oppression and that binaries should not exist. Instead, there should be a blur between these lines so patriarchal logic cannot assign value to different identities. Haraway specifically proposes becoming the cyborg to accomplish this. These two groups, ecofeminists and postmodern feminists, interact in current literature by criticizing each other when ultimately they have similar goals.

My goal in this paper was to show that there is room for these two theories to work together through literary creation. By combining an ecofeminist retreat from a corrupt technoscientific society with the theory of the cyborg and the recreation of technoscience that can coexist with the environment without oppressing it, ecofeminists and postmodern feminists can cooperatively combat oppressive structures. This combination of strategies can be seen in *Our Life in the Forest* by Marie Darrieussecq and *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood. Viviane and Snowman both leave their oppressive technoscientific societies in a retreat to reconnect with nature, which serves as a safe haven for them both. However, when they leave, they both leave as cyborgs and continue by bringing elements of their previous societies with them, the halves and the Crakers. Their success is shown when their logic changes and they experience a dissolution of meaning while they exist in nature. Ultimately, these novels suggest that to truly combat the ecological and patriarchal oppression resulting from a corrupt masculine-technoscientific society, one must leave it and enter nature as the cyborg to rebuild.

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