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Rewriting the End: Narrative Reclamation and Posthuman Hope in *MaddAddam*

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Abstract

This article explores how Margaret Atwood's MaddAddam (2013), the concluding volume of her speculative fiction trilogy, reconfigures post-apocalyptic narrative through storytelling, posthuman ethics, and interspecies kinship. Departing from the dystopian tone of Oryx and Crake and The Year of the Flood, MaddAddam turns toward cultural reconstruction and narrative continuity in the wake of ecological and societal collapse. The study adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology rooted in close textual analysis, guided by posthumanist theory, feminist ecocriticism, and narrative theory. Particular attention is given to Toby's reluctant but evolving role as storyteller, the Crakers' reinterpretation of human memory into myth, and the novel's depiction of interspecies alliances. The findings demonstrate that Atwood reframes survival not as individual endurance or technological mastery, but as a collective process of narrative reclamation. Storytelling emerges as an adaptive cultural practice that allows trauma to be processed, memory to be shared, and new ethical frameworks to be negotiated across human and nonhuman communities. The novel challenges anthropocentric hierarchies and patriarchal models of resilience, foregrounding instead relationality, care, and interdependence. It also illustrates how myth-making, far from being regressive, becomes a generative mode of continuity that sustains both human survivors and posthuman beings like the Crakers. Ultimately, MaddAddam refuses narrative closure, offering instead a vision of speculative regeneration in which memory, myth, and storytelling constitute the most enduring legacies of humanity. In doing so, Atwood positions narrative itself as a vital resource for imagining livable futures in the aftermath of catastrophe.

Keywords: Margaret atwood; MaddAddam; Storytelling and Survival; Posthumanism; Feminist ecocriticism

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INTRODUCTION

Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* (2013), the concluding volume of her speculative fiction trilogy, shifts the tone and narrative register established in *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*. While the earlier novels map the causes and immediate aftermath of a human-made pandemic that decimates civilization, *MaddAddam* turns toward reconstruction—not merely of physical survival, but of cultural and ethical continuity. The novel foregrounds storytelling as a central mechanism for reassembling meaning in a broken world. Through the layered narration of Toby, the persistent presence of the Crakers, and the retelling of Zeb's mythic past, Atwood constructs a space where narrative becomes a living practice of memory, identity, and ethical guidance. This emphasis marks *MaddAddam* as distinct within the trilogy and within the broader field of climate and pandemic fiction. Rather than immersing the reader in dystopian despair, the novel

gestures toward a posthuman hope rooted in new forms of kinship, narrative inheritance, and interspecies cohabitation.

What distinguishes this study from existing scholarship is its dual focus on posthumanism and narrative theory as mutually reinforcing lenses. While critics have often examined Atwood's trilogy in terms of ecological crisis or genetic engineering, less attention has been given to how *MaddAddam* uniquely mobilizes storytelling as a posthuman survival strategy that challenges anthropocentrism and patriarchal models of resilience. By analyzing how stories circulate between humans and Crakers, and how memory transforms into myth, this article contributes to the broader field of posthuman studies by foregrounding narrative as a site of ethical negotiation and cultural regeneration. At the same time, it extends narrative theory by illustrating how storytelling functions not only to represent trauma but also to perform survival and relational world-making in a post-apocalyptic setting.

Accordingly, this article addresses the following research questions:

1. How does *MaddAddam* reframe post-apocalyptic survival through narrative practices rather than material endurance?
2. In what ways does the novel challenge anthropocentric and patriarchal frameworks by foregrounding posthuman ethics and interspecies kinship?
3. How does storytelling, particularly through Toby and the Crakers, function as both cultural inheritance and speculative world-making?

Theoretical Framework

To examine how *MaddAddam* constructs post-apocalyptic narrative hope through storytelling and interspecies ethics, this article draws on an interdisciplinary framework that intersects posthumanist theory, feminist ecocriticism, and narrative theory. These critical lenses enable a reading of Atwood's novel that moves beyond traditional humanist assumptions and dystopian fatalism, instead attending to the novel's generative possibilities for ethical coexistence, memory, and mythmaking in a damaged world.

At the core of *MaddAddam* lies a challenge to anthropocentrism—a worldview that positions the human as the measure of all value. In response, posthumanist theory offers tools for interrogating how Atwood reconfigures the boundaries of the human, the animal, and the technological. Drawing on the work of theorists such as Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway, and Cary Wolfe, posthumanism critiques the Enlightenment model of the rational, autonomous human subject and instead emphasizes relationality, hybridity, and embeddedness in ecological and technological systems. Atwood's depiction of the Crakers—lab-created beings designed to replace humanity—serves as a literal and symbolic disruption of human exceptionalism. Yet, *MaddAddam* does not wholly discard human legacy; rather, it interrogates which aspects of human culture, especially narrative, might endure or evolve in a posthuman context.

This posthuman lens is complemented by insights from feminist ecocriticism, particularly the work of scholars such as Stacy Alaimo and Val Plumwood, who emphasize the interconnection between environmental degradation and the marginalization of vulnerable bodies—human and non-human alike. *MaddAddam* highlights the gendered dimensions of survival through characters like Toby, Ren, and Amanda whose bodies carry the traces of trauma but also become sites of care, memory, and resistance. Atwood critiques the patriarchal violence of the pre-apocalyptic world—embodied by the Painballers and the exploitative CorpSeCorps—but she also imagines new feminist modes of community grounded in empathy, storytelling, and ecological entanglement. The inclusion of intelligent pigoons and the Crakers as narrative subjects

underscores the need to expand ethical concern beyond the human, aligning with what Alaimo calls "trans-corporeality"—a recognition of the shared substance and vulnerability of all beings (Alaimo, 2010).

Narrative theory further enables a nuanced understanding of how storytelling functions not merely as a representational practice but as a performative and ethical act. Drawing on theorists such as Paul Ricoeur, Mieke Bal, and Hayden White, this article views narrative as a tool for making sense of temporal disjunction, trauma, and ethical choice. Toby's evolving role as the primary narrator of *MaddAddam* reflects this process: she begins reluctantly, unsure of the value of narrating the past to the Crakers, but gradually assumes the role of cultural memory-keeper. Her storytelling becomes a means of transmitting knowledge, negotiating grief, and imagining continuity. The Crakers' reinterpretation of these stories into mythic form—complete with ritual questions and communal retellings—illustrates how narrative becomes embedded in a new posthuman culture, simultaneously preserving and transforming human legacies.

Together, these theoretical perspectives illuminate how *MaddAddam* resists the finality and despair often associated with apocalyptic narratives. Posthumanism helps uncover the novel's challenge to anthropocentrism; feminist ecocriticism reveals the entangled dynamics of gender, care, and ecological ethics; and narrative theory highlights the central role of storytelling as both cultural inheritance and future-making.

Literature Review

Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* (2013), as the final volume in her MaddAddam Trilogy, has received considerable scholarly attention for its speculative portrayal of environmental collapse, biotechnology, and post-apocalyptic life. However, much of the critical literature has focused on the trilogy as a whole, with *MaddAddam* often read as an epilogue or conclusion rather than a novel with its own formal and thematic innovations. This article contributes to a growing body of scholarship that treats *MaddAddam* not merely as a continuation of *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and *The Year of the Flood* (2009), but as a text that reimagines post-apocalyptic fiction by foregrounding narrative reconstruction, interspecies ethics, and posthuman modes of survival.

A number of critics have addressed the trilogy through the lens of ecocriticism and environmental degradation. For instance, Shannon Hengen (2007) and Ursula Heise (2016) highlight Atwood's exploration of corporate greed, genetic engineering, and ecological collapse, framing the trilogy as a cautionary tale rooted in present-day environmental anxieties. These readings often emphasize the speculative realism of Atwood's world-building, situating her work within the broader genre of climate fiction—or "cli-fi." However, while environmental crisis forms the backdrop to *MaddAddam*, the novel diverges from the catastrophic tone of the earlier books, turning instead to questions of cultural memory, community, and continuity. Other scholars, such as Gerry Canavan (2012) and Timothy Morton (2016), have brought posthumanist theory to bear on the trilogy, particularly through the figure of the Crakers and the genetic manipulation that blurs distinctions between human, animal, and machine. Morton's notion of "dark ecology" resonates with Atwood's ambiguous representation of nature as both victim and agent of change.

More recent work has begun to acknowledge the central role of storytelling and myth in *MaddAddam*. Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey (2019) identifies the importance of narrative as a site of resistance and renewal in postcolonial and climate contexts, noting how Atwood mobilizes storytelling to imagine alternative futures.

From a feminist perspective, critics such as Coral Ann Howells (2006) has long noted Atwood's commitment to depicting gendered bodies and systems of care, especially in dystopian contexts. In *MaddAddam*, this is exemplified through characters like Toby, Ren, and Amanda whose experiences of trauma, healing, and community-building challenge patriarchal modes of survival. Stacy Alaimo's concept of "trans-corporeality"—the intermeshing of human and non-human bodies—further enriches readings of the novel's ethics of care and relationality, particularly in the Craker-human-pigoon triad (Alaimo, 2010). These feminist insights complement posthuman critiques and emphasize that survival in *MaddAddam* is grounded not in domination or isolation, but in vulnerability and interdependence.

In addition to these earlier contributions, current scholarship continues to expand the dialogue between posthumanism, ecocriticism, and narrative theory. Francesca Ferrando's *The Art of Being Posthuman: Who Are We in the 21st Century?* (2024) advances the notion of existential posthumanism, foregrounding ethical praxis, multispecies relationality, and spiritual continuity as crucial dimensions of posthuman identity. This expansion provides a framework for reading Atwood's *MaddAddam* not only as ecological speculation but as a meditation on cultural and ethical survival through narrative. Similarly, Baelo-Allué and Calvo-Pascual's edited volume *Transhumanism and Posthumanism in Twenty-First Century Narrative* (2021) situates Atwood among contemporary writers who reimagine narrative form in response to posthuman conditions. The volume highlights how fiction negotiates post-anthropocentric identities and how storytelling becomes a medium of cultural adaptation and ethical reflection—concerns central to this article. More broadly, *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Posthumanism* (Thomsen & Wamberg, 2020) consolidates current directions in posthumanist scholarship, underscoring the importance of integrating ecological ethics, feminist insights, and narrative innovation. Together, these works underscore the novelty of examining *MaddAddam* through storytelling as a posthuman survival strategy, strengthening the argument that Atwood's narrative interventions contribute to broader theoretical debates in both posthumanism and narrative theory.

METHOD

This article adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology rooted in close textual analysis, guided by interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks drawn from posthumanism, feminist ecocriticism, and narrative theory. The purpose of this approach is not to generalize across Margaret Atwood's oeuvre or speculative fiction as a whole, but to provide a detailed, contextually grounded reading of *MaddAddam* that attends to its formal strategies, ethical implications, and narrative innovations.

The primary source for this study is Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* (2013), chosen as the focus because it concludes the trilogy and most explicitly reorients the post-apocalyptic narrative toward reconstruction and posthuman hope. Within the novel, passages were selected for analysis based on their relevance to storytelling practices, interspecies relationships, and ethical negotiations. Key narrative moments—such as Toby's role as reluctant storyteller, the Crakers' reception and reinterpretation of tales, and the formation of interspecies alliances—were purposively identified as sites of meaning-making most pertinent to the research questions. Secondary sources include critical works on posthumanism, feminist ecocriticism, and narrative theory, which provide the interpretive context for textual analysis.

The "instruments" in this research are theoretical and analytical rather than physical. Posthumanist theory (Braidotti, Haraway, Wolfe) offers tools for interrogating

anthropocentric assumptions and rethinking interspecies kinship. Feminist ecocriticism (Alaimo, Plumwood) provides a lens for reading gendered embodiment, vulnerability, and care. Narrative theory (Ricoeur, Bal, White) supplies the conceptual apparatus for analyzing storytelling, temporality, and myth-making. These frameworks serve as the primary instruments that shape the reading and interpretation of the text.

Data collection consisted of iterative close reading of the novel, accompanied by systematic annotation and thematic coding of passages that engaged with storytelling, trauma, interspecies ethics, and narrative reconstruction. Analytical attention was directed to narrative form, character interactions, and thematic motifs, with particular focus on the dynamic between human survivors and the Crakers. The process was interpretive and recursive: passages were revisited in light of emerging themes, and theoretical concepts were applied to elucidate how narrative functions as a mode of survival, cultural transmission, and ethical world-building.

Through this combination of purposive source selection, theoretical instrumentation, and interpretive textual analysis, the methodology seeks to illuminate how *MaddAddam* reframes the end of the world as a narrative threshold, where storytelling becomes central to posthuman ethics and speculative continuity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Storytelling as Survival and Reconstruction

In *MaddAddam*, Margaret Atwood reconfigures the traditional post-apocalyptic narrative by foregrounding storytelling not as a nostalgic act of memorialization, but as a dynamic strategy of survival and cultural reconstruction. This shift is embodied most explicitly in the character of Toby, whose reluctant yet evolving role as narrator to the Crakers positions her as a mediator between the remnants of the human world and the emerging posthuman culture. Storytelling, in this context, becomes a performative and ethical act—one that binds together disparate communities, processes trauma, and lays the groundwork for a new, hybrid mythology that incorporates both human memory and nonhuman perspectives.

Toby's storytelling is initially hesitant, marked by a distrust of the very narrative forms she is being asked to perform. She is not a natural myth-maker, nor does she claim any spiritual authority. Her reluctance reflects a broader thematic concern in *MaddAddam*: the fear that storytelling may repeat the errors of human exceptionalism or romanticize a broken past. Yet over time, Toby begins to recognize that narrative is not only a burden, but a means of survival—not in the biological sense, but in the sense of cultural continuity, ethical instruction, and communal meaning-making. When she begins to tell the Crakers the story of Zeb and Adam One, she draws from lived experience, inherited memory, and partial truths—crafting a narrative that is neither authoritative nor complete, but provisional, evolving, and open to reinterpretation.

This process of narrative reconstruction resonates with Paul Ricoeur's notion of "narrative identity," wherein the self and the community are constituted through the stories they tell about themselves and others (Ricoeur, 1984). In *MaddAddam*, the survivors of the pandemic are faced with the challenge of rebuilding not just shelter or agriculture, but a shared narrative horizon. The Crakers, as genetically modified beings designed to exist without myth, ritual, or abstract thought, paradoxically reveal a deep hunger for narrative structure. They ask questions, demand repetition, and reinterpret the stories they are told, transforming human memory into myth and embedding it in ritual. In doing so, they illustrate how narrative is a fundamental human—and posthuman—need, linked not only to knowledge but to belonging.

Moreover, Atwood's novel presents storytelling as an act that blurs the boundaries between species. The Crakers' engagement with Toby's tales is not passive consumption; they are co-creators of meaning. They retell stories with embellishments, incorporate new details, and assign divine attributes to characters such as Zeb and Toby herself. This participatory narrative model challenges hierarchical structures of authorship and knowledge transmission. Instead of preserving a single, "true" version of history, the stories in *MaddAddam* become living texts, shaped by memory, imagination, and communal interaction. This resonates with Haraway's idea of "staying with the trouble"—dwelling in complexity, ambiguity, and interdependence rather than seeking purity or closure (Haraway, 2016).

Atwood thus offers storytelling not as a return to primitive myth or as a retreat from rationality, but as an adaptive strategy for a world that has lost its ontological certainties. In place of a singular, authoritative worldview, *MaddAddam* constructs a patchwork of narratives—partial, situated, and interwoven across species—that serve as scaffolding for a fragile, emerging society. Storytelling is survival not because it preserves the past intact, but because it allows for transformation, adaptation, and shared meaning in the face of radical loss.

In *MaddAddam*, then, survival is not merely a matter of endurance, but of imaginative world-building. The stories that Toby tells, and that the Crakers retell, become the foundation for a new culture—one in which the boundaries between species, memories, and myths are porous and generative. In this way, Atwood reclaims the post-apocalyptic narrative from despair and offers, in its place, a vision of continuity through narrative improvisation.

Posthuman Ethics and Interspecies Kinship

In *MaddAddam*, Margaret Atwood challenges the foundational assumptions of human exceptionalism by imagining a world where the survival of life depends not on the dominance of the human species, but on the formation of interspecies alliances, mutual recognition, and shared vulnerability. The novel presents a profound ethical shift: one in which the post-apocalyptic condition necessitates not just material adaptation, but a rethinking of what it means to live ethically in a multispecies world. Atwood constructs a posthuman ethics that privileges kinship over hierarchy, interdependence over autonomy, and coexistence over control.

This ethical reorientation is most clearly illustrated through the novel's depiction of the Crakers and the pigoons—two nonhuman groups created through genetic engineering, initially as experiments or tools, but ultimately revealed as agents of culture, emotion, and ethical life. The Crakers, designed by Crake to be peaceful, rational, and free from the perceived "flaws" of humanity (such as aggression, religion, and sexual jealousy), begin to exhibit precisely those capacities—curiosity, storytelling, ritual, and affect—that Crake sought to eliminate. Their growing capacity for myth-making and empathy challenges the notion that they are "post-human" in a reductive, emotionless sense. Instead, they emerge as beings capable of forming community, mourning, questioning morality, and forging bonds across species lines.

Initially skeptical of the Crakers' innocence and narrative hunger, Toby gradually comes to recognize them as thinking, feeling subjects whose needs are not only biological but cultural and emotional. Her willingness to teach them, answer their questions, and share stories reflects a feminist and posthuman ethic of care. Importantly, this care is not grounded in a hierarchical model of the human as caretaker of lesser beings, but in a relational model that acknowledges difference without asserting superiority. Toby learns

as much from the Crakers—especially in their reinterpretations of her stories and their intuitive sense of justice—as they do from her.

The novel also dramatizes this shift in the relationship between humans and the pigoons, formerly considered dangerous or disposable animals. Engineered to grow human organs for transplantation, the pigoons have developed their own social intelligence, communication system, and codes of conduct. In *MaddAddam*, the surviving humans must negotiate a fragile truce with the pigoons in order to defeat the remaining Painballers, a pair of hyperviolent, psychopathic men who symbolize the destructive legacy of unrestrained human dominance. This alliance is not merely pragmatic; it signifies a new ethical order in which former categories of "animal" and "enemy" are undone. The mutual respect between the humans and the pigoons marks a radical departure from the exploitative logic of the pre-apocalyptic world and gestures toward an ethics of interspecies solidarity.

Atwood's portrayal of these relationships resonates with Donna Haraway's call to think "with" rather than "about" other species (Haraway, 2016). In *Staying with the Trouble* (2016), Haraway advocates for "making kin" across species boundaries—forming relationships that are not based on shared genetics or domestication, but on ongoing practices of care, communication, and responsibility. This idea is vividly dramatized in *MaddAddam* through scenes where humans and nonhumans share food, protect one another, and grieve together.

Furthermore, Atwood complicates the idea of utopia by resisting any simplistic portrayal of the Crakers or the new interspecies community as ideal. There are misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and moments of violence that suggest ethical life in the post-apocalypse remains fraught and imperfect. But rather than offering closure or moral certainty, the novel insists on the processual nature of ethics—an ongoing negotiation of boundaries, identities, and responsibilities. This insistence on fluidity and openness aligns with Rosi Braidotti's vision of posthuman subjectivity as "nomadic"—marked by flux, multiplicity, and the capacity to engage ethically with difference (Braidotti, 2013).

In foregrounding interspecies kinship as the basis for ethical renewal, *MaddAddam* undermines the anthropocentric narratives of mastery and survival that dominate much of the post-apocalyptic genre. It proposes, instead, that hope lies not in a return to human civilization, but in the creation of fragile, experimental communities that recognize the value of all life forms—not in spite of their differences, but because of them. These posthuman relationships do not erase loss or grief, but they offer new forms of continuity, care, and ethical life that are capable of enduring in a damaged world.

Gender, Trauma, and Healing

While *MaddAddam* expands its focus to posthuman ethics and interspecies relationships, it remains deeply invested in the embodied realities of gender, violence, and trauma. Atwood continues the feminist critique that permeates the trilogy by foregrounding the experiences of women. The novel does not offer simplistic resolutions or utopian gender relations in its post-apocalyptic setting; rather, it examines how trauma is carried forward, how it shapes identity, and how healing becomes possible through acts of care, narrative, and community.

Toby, as the novel's central narrator and moral compass, is perhaps Atwood's most complex representation of female survival. Her character arc embodies the tension between self-protection and vulnerability, between silence and speech. Having endured violence and loss in the pre-pandemic world, Toby enters the post-pandemic space with a wary detachment. Her initial reluctance to tell stories to the Crakers reflects not only a

narrative anxiety, but a deeply ingrained skepticism about power, trust, and representation—a skepticism rooted in her experience as a woman in a system that commodified bodies and enforced silence. Yet Toby's journey in *MaddAddam* is one of cautious reengagement: she allows herself to speak, to teach, to care. Her relationship with Blackbeard, a young Craker who becomes her narrative apprentice, symbolizes a transformative kind of mentorship—one built not on authority, but on affection, trust, and mutual curiosity.

Through Toby, Atwood interrogates the nature of healing—not as a return to wholeness, but as a slow, often painful process of relational repair. Her physical and emotional scars remain, and yet she begins to imagine a future not just for herself but for a new generation. Her act of storytelling is a feminist gesture of reclamation: she seizes authorship in a world where female voices were long silenced or distorted. In doing so, she offers an alternative to the dominant masculinist logic of survival—one rooted not in control or conquest, but in memory, nurture, and narrative co-creation.

The characters of Ren and Amanda add another layer to Atwood's exploration of gendered trauma. As survivors of sexual violence and institutional exploitation, their narrative underscores the lingering effects of bodily violation even after the collapse of the systems that perpetuated it. In *MaddAddam*, they do not miraculously transcend their past, but they participate in a form of communal healing through labor, friendship, and mutual support. Their presence in the rebuilding process affirms that survival involves more than physical endurance—it demands the reconstruction of selfhood and social bonds. The new communities forming in *MaddAddam*—however fragile—create space for this healing, emphasizing shared vulnerability and interdependence as sources of strength rather than weakness.

The novel also contrasts these feminist modes of survival with the persistent specter of patriarchal violence, most vividly embodied by the Painballers. These genetically altered men, bred for spectacle and brutality, represent the apex of toxic masculinity and the commodification of suffering. Their presence reminds readers that the forces of domination, exploitation, and cruelty are not erased by the pandemic—they persist in mutated forms. Yet the collective defeat of the Painballers by a coalition of humans, Crakers, and pigoons signifies a symbolic and material rejection of that violent legacy. Importantly, this resistance is communal and cross-species, rooted in cooperation rather than revenge.

This feminist-inflected framework aligns with Stacy Alaimo's concept of *trans-corporeality*—the idea that human bodies are not discrete, bounded entities, but porous and interconnected with the material world (Alaimo, 2010). Atwood dramatizes this porousness not only through the literal interspecies interactions (e.g., human-pigoon collaboration) but also through the ways bodies carry trauma, care, and memory across time and species.

By emphasizing care, storytelling, and emotional labor as survival strategies, *MaddAddam* critiques masculinist models of resilience and replaces them with a feminist ethics that foregrounds healing over heroism. In Atwood's post-pandemic world, it is not those who dominate who endure, but those who remember, mourn, and rebuild—slowly, collectively, and imaginatively.

Myth, Memory, and Narrative Closure

In *MaddAddam*, Margaret Atwood deliberately unsettles the idea of closure, both narratively and culturally. While the novel functions as the final installment of a trilogy and concludes many of the plot threads initiated in *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*, it resists the traditional logic of narrative finality. Instead of offering definitive resolutions,

Atwood foregrounds myth and memory as dynamic, open-ended processes through which meaning is continually generated and regenerated. The emergence of a new mythopoetic tradition—shaped by human survivors, Crakers, and other species—forms the novel's most enduring legacy: not a return to order, but the creative retelling of disorder.

Central to this process is the evolution of Toby's storytelling and its reception by the Crakers. As the novel progresses, Toby's narrative becomes increasingly layered: it is both personal memoir and communal myth, informed by facts but shaped by her subjective interpretation. Her stories about Zeb, Adam One, and even Crake blend the real and the symbolic, the historical and the fantastical. The Crakers' ritualistic engagement with these tales—marked by reverence, repetition, and reinterpretation—transforms them from remembered events into sacred myth. In this way, *MaddAddam* literalizes the narrative process described by Paul Ricoeur, wherein memory becomes narrative, and narrative becomes the foundation of identity and ethical orientation (Ricoeur, 1984).

The Crakers' incorporation of Toby into their emerging mythology—referring to her as a semi-divine figure and custodian of sacred knowledge—further underscores the transformation of memory into symbolic form. While Toby resists this deification, Atwood allows the reader to witness the birth of myth in real time: a myth that is neither wholly fabricated nor strictly factual, but shaped through collective engagement and interpretive practice. This recursive relationship between teller and listener destabilizes notions of narrative authority and linear temporality. The stories do not end with Toby; they are taken up by others, particularly Blackbeard, who becomes the next generation's storyteller.

This passing of the narrative torch suggests a nonhuman future for human memory—a future in which stories, values, and ethical lessons are preserved and transformed by posthuman beings. Atwood reframes memory not as static preservation but as narrative adaptation, capable of surviving through mutation, translation, and retelling. In doing so, she counters the apocalyptic logic of erasure with a speculative vision of continuity. Even as civilizations fall and species vanish, the narrative impulse persists.

The tension between closure and continuation is also visible in the novel's ending. Toby's death is not framed as a final act of narrative closure, but as a transition—both symbolic and practical. Her body is mourned, but her stories live on, taken up by Blackbeard and the Crakers. This final gesture encapsulates Atwood's refusal to offer a traditional ending. The world of *MaddAddam* is not fully rebuilt, nor is it clearly utopian or dystopian. Rather, it is ongoing—marked by the rhythms of storytelling, the persistence of memory, and the openness of myth.

From a narrative theory perspective, Atwood's conclusion is best understood as metanarrative: the novel is not only telling a story, but reflecting on what stories are, how they endure, and why they matter. The embedded storytelling—where Toby tells stories, then reflects on telling them, and then sees them retold by others—illustrates a recursive narrative structure. This formal choice emphasizes that *MaddAddam* is not presenting a finished account of post-apocalyptic life, but staging the beginnings of a new cultural order in which narrative is central to identity, ethics, and survival.

Atwood's mythopoetic gesture also resonates with Northrop Frye's theory of literary archetypes and the cyclical nature of narrative. The transformation of real people into larger-than-life characters—Zeb the trickster, Crake the fallen god, Toby the wise ancestor—illustrates how myth functions as a cultural framework for understanding experience. Yet Atwood complicates this by refusing to present these figures as flawless. Her myths are not static, idealized blueprints, but messy, contingent, and deeply human—even when told by nonhuman beings.

Ultimately, *MaddAddam* proposes that the most durable legacy of humanity is not its technology, its cities, or even its genes, but its stories. In a world where biological survival is uncertain, narrative survival becomes a form of resistance and hope. The myth-making at the heart of *MaddAddam* offers no grand teleology, but rather a fragile, flexible scaffolding for ethical life in the aftermath of catastrophe. Through memory, myth, and open-ended storytelling, Atwood offers a radically different kind of closure—one that is defined not by endings, but by the invitation to continue.

CONCLUSION

Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* reimagines post-apocalyptic fiction not as a space of finality or desolation, but as a narrative threshold—a site where storytelling becomes the primary medium of survival, ethical reflection, and future-building. While the novel concludes a trilogy that has chronicled environmental collapse, genetic experimentation, and societal failure, its final gesture is not toward closure but toward narrative regeneration. In doing so, *MaddAddam* departs from dominant dystopian conventions that often valorize survival through violence or withdrawal. Instead, it envisions survival as an act of collective meaning-making—embodied in shared stories, hybrid communities, and posthuman kinship.

More broadly, the novel illustrates how storytelling functions as a crucial imaginative resource for thinking about posthuman futures. By foregrounding the entanglement of narrative with ecological vulnerability, interspecies kinship, and feminist care, *MaddAddam* suggests that what endures after catastrophe is not merely biological life but the capacity to create and sustain meaning. Storytelling becomes an adaptive strategy that allows for continuity across ruptures, the negotiation of ethical relationships across species, and the shaping of new cultural horizons.

The implications extend beyond Atwood's fictional world. In a time of ecological crisis and technological transformation, narratives help societies grapple with uncertainty and imagine alternative ways of coexisting. Atwood's speculative reconstruction demonstrates that posthuman survival is inseparable from narrative survival: the stories we tell about ourselves, our relationships with other beings, and our responsibilities to the planet will shape the futures we are able to envision and inhabit.

Ultimately, *MaddAddam* challenges us to see storytelling not only as a literary device but as a form of world-making. Its posthuman hope lies in the recognition that continuity and care can be sustained through narrative improvisation, that cultural memory can persist in hybrid and unexpected forms, and that futures worth living are built as much in language and imagination as in biology or technology. In this sense, Atwood does not write the end—she rewrites it as an opening, inviting readers to participate in the fragile, collective work of narrating futures beyond the human.

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