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CRAKERS ARE THE BETTER VERSION OF HOMO SAPIENS IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S ORYX AND CRAKE

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ABSTRACT

Crake envisioned the Crakers, created in Paradise to be ideal, immortal predecessors to humans after the dispersal of his killer BlyssPlus Pill. The Crakers, with their restricted reproductive capacities, certainly appear to pose an ideal solution to the problems associated with overpopulation and the lack of pair-bonding amongst them. It no longer matters who is the father of the inevitable child since there's no more property to inherit and no father-son loyalty required for war. It means there is no more prostitution, no sexual abuse of children, no racial disharmony, no haggling over the price, no pimps, and no sex slaves. The Crakers form an ideal community: they are peace-loving vegetarians, designed to live in harmony with both each other and their environment. In short, the Crakers appear to fulfil the requirements of a kind of ecotopia. The results revealed that the Crakers became as human as they could be without being born human through teaching and acquiring traits that are known to be human. The Crakers were created to maximize quality of life and minimize impact on the Earth.

Keywords: Human nature, Traits, Ecology, Science and Perfect World

INTRODUCTION

The novel *Oryx and Crake* was written by Margaret Atwood. In *Oryx and Crake*, the lead scientist Crake has made his own people from scratch, called The Crakers, which he sees as an improved human species. Crake sees the human being as a 'faulty' model and so creates the Crakers as his version of the perfect human to survive in place of *Homo sapiens*. He and his team of scientists have decided what the Crakers should look like, what kind of biological features they should have and how they should act.

The Crakers are a genetically engineered species designed by Crake to take the humans place in the world after Crake destroyed human kind with

a special disease called Blyssplus Pill. Besides, Crake created them as humans but removed everything he disliked as his goal was to make a species which wouldn't destroy our earth or destroy themselves, something he thinks the humans do. In addition to these basic factors, Crake redesigned the human mating ritual by removing monogamy to go into heat at a certain time and that the males would court the women in hope that she would choose him to reproduce with. To eliminate any emotional attachment, a female's genitalia turned a dark shade of blue once every three years which attracted the males of the community, whose penises acclimated to the same color to show their interest in mating. The female then chose three males in which to

fornicate with, in order to abolish any sense of parenting in the child-to-be (Oryx and Crake 164-165).

In this way, the community could continue by remaining unemotional and undesirable with planned reproductive stages much like Crake himself to fit his utopian world. By inflicting a lethal disease on the world's population, Crake hoped to remove hunger, war, jealousy, crime, and rape. By eliminating the concept of fear of death, Crake believed that he had achieved his ultimate dream of human immortality. They

“drop dead at age thirty—suddenly, without getting sick. No old age, none of those anxieties. They'll just keel over. Not that they know it; none of them has died yet” (303).

The Crakers act like children and they live together in a small “village”. They do what they have been told and they don't understand that another human being or species would hurt them, as they don't understand the concept of violence. Crake has removed the useless trait of humans such as like god, emotions and art. Crake has programmed them not to have any identity as individuals but only work as a group to avoid discrimination. This would remove an aspect of status and decrease the chance of the creation of hierarchy in their society. Crake does not want the Crakers to become an average human such as you and I, but rather a human with the features and criteria he wants them to have.

The Crakers are biologically created to perfection: Beautiful, with no feelings of shame, guilt or jealousy and, most importantly unaware of the world that existed before. They do not have houses, tools, weapons nor clothing which are all traits of humanity. Crake explains that traits such as clothes would confuse the Crakers and therefore he tries to devoid them from clothed human beings. They have even possessed a “citrus-oil insect repellent”. To meet the shortage of food, the Crakers ate grass, leaves, and other forms of vegetation. Crake also designed these beings to recycle their own feces as animals do. Crake wants to construct the perfect human being without the troubles of humanity by programming them to survive in this ravaged environment. With the

depletion of the ozone layer in Atwood's setting, Crake designed the skin of his “offspring” to resist harmful UV rays.

They are every known colour from deepest black to whitest white, they are various heights, but each one of them is admirably proportioned. Each is sound of tooth, smooth of skin. No ripples of fat around their waists, no bulges, no dimpled orange-skin cellulite on their thighs. No body hair, no bushiness. They look like retouched fashion photos, or ads for a high-priced workout program (Oryx and Crake 100).

It is not the biological aspect of life and death that makes humanity special, since it occurs to every animal. Humans have the ability to think, contemplate and argue. Hence, Humans try to prevent ourselves from dying by going to the doctor when we have a cold, change our eating habits and exercise regularly unlike other animals which do not have the notion of past or future. Humans try to keep their body in shape and it needs maintenance to function properly including diets and exercise, but still the body is prone to destroy.

Crakers are in the mid between an animal and a human. Crake has programmed the Crakers to purr which is a self-healing mechanism which he got from cats. This is another way for Crake to make the Crakers less human and more perfect in a sense that they can heal themselves and therefore they need no medical help. They neither have human traits like race or hierarchy nor family-trees, marriages and divorces. Their young children mature much faster than human children do. They do not cook their food, nor do they hunt or eat meat like most humans do. Instead of cooking their meals, the Crakers eat berries, roots and they are caecotrophs which means that the Crakers eat and digest the food several times over again, just as a sort of hare. In addition to this, the female Crakers can make fire. Work helps us to get the dream house we want, the clothes we need and the tools to build things through our salary. The Crakers, on the other hand do not know how to work and basically live like animals as Crake intended to fit his perfect world.

Crake eliminated the possibility of arts, humanities and racism in his model group which are

considered to be the destructive features responsible for the world's current illnesses. Due to this removal, they could not read, play or have fun. They obtain their historical knowledge of their origins by Snowman. Before Snowman's influence, they did not draw or paint or have any knowledge of art; they did not know any religion or concept of language, other than what they spoke.

Snowman on the other hand sees the traits of leadership in Crakers when Crake is gone. Even though no family ties are made, the fathers or men in their "society" help their children when they are in need instead of neglecting them and leaving the responsibility to the mothers. The Crakers are unaware of fights, misunderstanding and violence which are human spoilers. Snowman, the Crakers' caretaker, disallows their contact with anything that might harm or confuse them. The Crakers were expelled from a handmade Paradise like Adam and Eve, since they acquired knowledge. The Crakers first step to knowledge was to ask where they came from and use human language learnt through cultural experience but not through their "programmed" genes. Knowing is "one of the most essential human desire to situate ourselves in the social universe" (221).

Crake's main idea was to base his new world on science with Crakers having no emotional attachments to fellow Crakers. In this process, Crake also destroyed all institutions such as religion, art, politics, and so on. Yet the Crakers begin to worship Crake and Oryx as metaphysical idols, whom they are understood to commune with. It seems that Crake failed to genetically eliminate the so-called God gene in Crakers. Crake's attempt at eliminating every destructive human feature like religion, art, dreams, music, violence and sexual possessiveness has failed. The Crakers begin to develop a sense for art, symbolic thinking and origin-myth/religion: they circle around a "scare- crow-like effigy" (418). In an effort to bring Snowman safely home from his forages, they made a picture of him, an effigy. Subversively, Jimmy has told the Crakers creation myths comments:

"Symbolic thinking of any kind would signal downfall, in Crake's view. Next they'd be inventing idols, and funerals, and grave

goods, and the afterlife, and sin [...] and kings, and then slavery and war" (419.).

CONCLUSION

The Crakers were created to stay on this world forever and to be the perfect human beings, but no matter how much Crake changed them they are still human. Human in the way they think, human in the way they take care of each other, human in their curiosity and logic; the Crakers are still human and will have the same destiny as our species. The human destiny will be the same no matter how many times we try. We aren't perfect and what one individual thinks is perfection won't change that, we can't change our future no matter how perfect we try to be; we are still human. Crake had many ideas and concepts that would lead him to creating the "perfect" world. Crake pushed the scientific aspect as far as he could, but he failed in eliminating all the humanities. By forcing Jimmy to stay alive to take care of the Crakers, Crake did not realize that he may have allowed the arts and humanities to conquer over all through Jimmy. Crake himself has unperfected his perfect world by leaving the Crakers under Jimmy's care.

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