



Oryx and Crake a novel by Margaret Atwood

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“The sea is hot metal, the sky a bleached blue, except for the hole burnt in it by the sun. Everything is so empty. Water, sand, sky, trees, fragments of past time” (11).

Oryx and Crake

Copyright © 2003 by ~~A.W. Toad~~, Ltd. All rights reserved.

The Year of the Flood

Copyright © 2009 by ~~A.W. Toad~~, Ltd. All rights reserved.

MaddAddam

Copyright © 2013 by ~~A.W. Toad~~, Ltd. All rights reserved.

Oryx and Crake Folio Society Edition

Copyright © 2019 by The Folio Society, Ltd. All rights reserved.

Illustrations © Harriet Lee-Merrion 2019.

Skylarking Album by XTC

Copyright © 1986 by Geffen Records. All rights reserved.

Songs written and performed by XTC (Andy Partridge, Colin Moulding, and Dave Gregory)
and produced by Todd Rundgren.

Margaret Atwood: A Word after a Word after a Word is Power

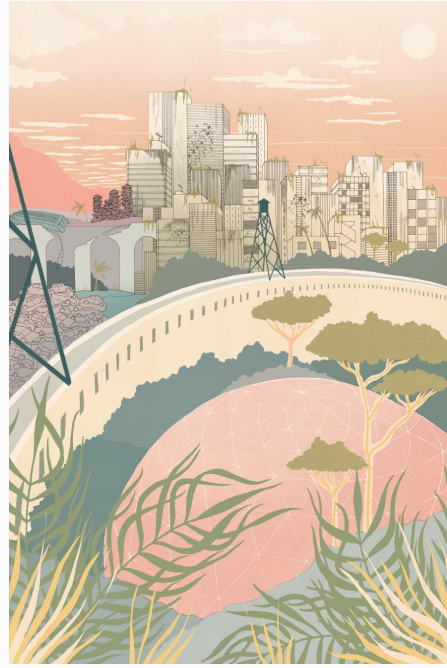
Copyright © 2019 by White Pine Pictures. All rights reserved.

Written and Directed by Nancy Lang.

Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould

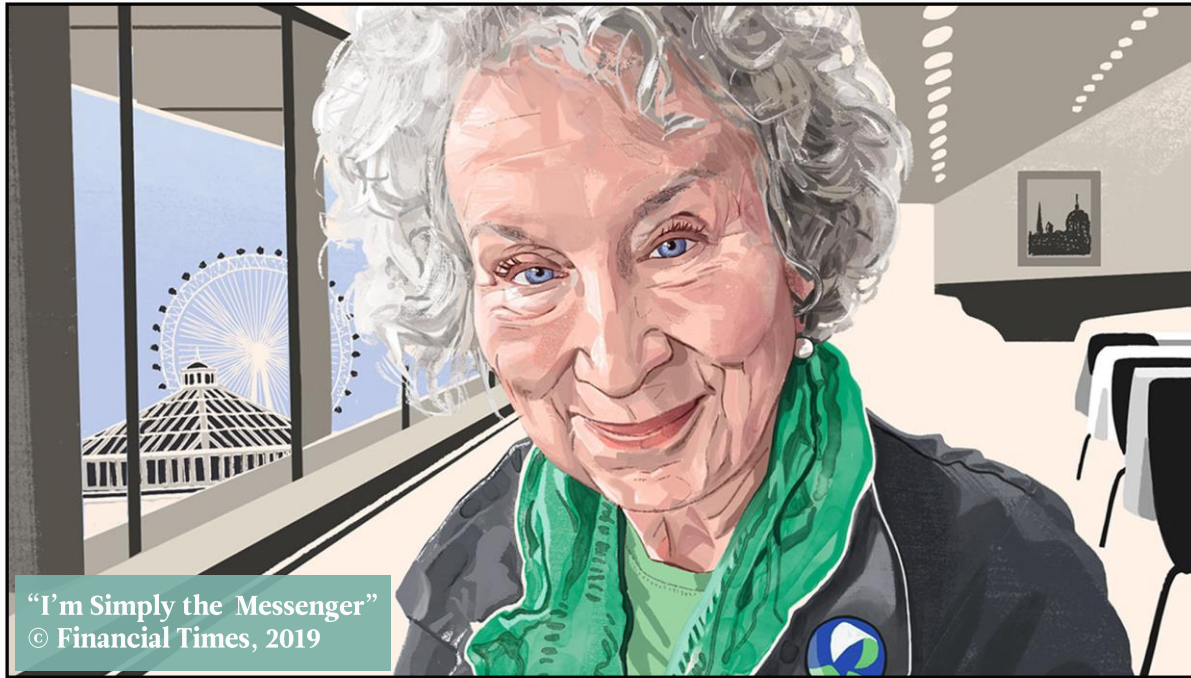
Copyright © 2011 by White Pine Pictures. All rights reserved.

Directed by Michèle Hozer & Peter Raymont. Music performed by Glenn Gould.



Harriet Lee-Merrion's Beautiful Dystopia

Harriet Lee-Merrion (b. 1991) is an award-winning, English illustrator whose work has been published worldwide and exhibited in New York, London, and Berlin. A reoccurring theme in her work is the complexity of the human condition, interpreted through a visual style that combines oriental features and English heritage. Stories of love, hate, betrayal, and madness interweave throughout her illustrations. She prefers to draw and paint on paper with an off-white tone, providing a consistent backdrop for most of her work (and this presentation). She has also created ad campaigns for the British Library's Discovering Literature Series, looking at works by Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf, and Angela Carter. The following quote from Susan Sontag was used as a caption for one of Lee-Merrion's pieces but can be seen in much of her other work as well: "Most people in this society who aren't actively mad are, at best, reformed or potential lunatics."



“I’m Simply the Messenger”
© Financial Times, 2019

Margaret Atwood’s Speculative Fiction

Margaret Atwood (b. 1939) is the author of more than fifty books of fiction, poetry, graphic novels, and critical essays.

Recent novels include the MaddAddam trilogy: *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013). Her most recent novel, *The Testaments*, the long-awaited sequel to *The Handmaid’s Tale*, was published in 2019. Many of her novels, including *Oryx and Crake*, are what Atwood refers to as speculative fiction. Texts in this genre take their inspiration from

things that have happened or are currently happening, and then allow them to play out in often disturbing ways. In doing so, they ask readers to think about the implications of contemporary technologies, political philosophies, and social mores. To differentiate this genre from conventional science fiction works, Atwood explains in the Afterword to *MaddAddam* that “although *MaddAddam* is a work of fiction, it does not include any technologies or biobeings that do not already exist, are not under construction, or are not possible in theory” (393).

Oryx and Crake is a novel that lends itself to study by many disciplines. Because Atwood is meticulous in her effort to base details of her story on scientific processes currently being researched or produced in labs around the world, her work is also of value in the sciences and social sciences. So while English instructors will find Atwood’s work interesting from a literary perspective, instructors in the sciences will find the novel valuable to help students focus on the potential consequences of genetic experimentation and allow them the opportunity to discuss ethics and research. Instructors in the social sciences will be interested in the ways her work addresses questions of class and social strata, as well as raises fundamental themes of human nature and society.



MaddAddam's Intertextuality

When we got to the room, the guy was lying on the green satin bedspread as if he'd been thrown from a plane, but happy about it, because he had a whole-body grin.

It was Jimmy. Sweet, ruinous Jimmy. Jimmy, who'd trashed my life.

My heart flipped over. Oh shit, I thought. I'm not up to this. I'm going to lose it and start crying. I knew he wouldn't know it was me: I was covered in glitz, and he was flying so high he was almost blind. So I just slid into the usual act and started in on his buttons and Velcro. We Scalies used to call it 'peeling the shrimp.' 'Oh, nice abs,' I whispered. 'Honey, just lie back.' [...]

Now he was trying to pull the scales off my face, so I had to keep taking his hands and putting them elsewhere. 'Are you a fish?' he was saying. He didn't seem to know.

Oh Jimmy, I thought. What's left of you? (YOF 305-306)

Oh, nice abs! comes the whisper, interrupting him. *Honey, just lie back.* Who is it? Some tart he once bought. Revision, professional sex-skills expert. A trapeze artist, rubber spine, spangles glued onto her like the scales of a fish. He hates these echoes. Saints used to hear them, crazed lice-infested hermits in their caves and deserts. Pretty soon he'll be seeing beautiful demons, beckoning to him, licking their lips, with red-hot nipples and flickering pink tongues. Mermaids will rise from the waves, out there beyond the crumbling towers, and he'll hear their lovely singing and swim out to them and be eaten by sharks. Creatures with the heads and breasts of women and the talons of eagles will swoop down on him, and he'll open his arms to them, and that will be the end. Brainfrizz. (OC 11)

Glenn Gould Recording of the 1981 Goldberg-Variations: April 22 & 23, 1981 – "Aria, Variation 6." © Sony Music Entertainment, 2022.

Key Literary Terms

Satire – *noun* satire can be described as the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation. It differs from the comic in that comedy evokes laughter mainly as an end in itself, while satire derides; that is, it uses laughter as a weapon, and against a butt that exists outside the work itself. That butt may be an individual, a type of person, a class, an institution, a nation, or even (as in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*) the entire human race. The distinction between the comic and the satiric, however, is sharp only at its extremes. Satire has usually been justified, by those who practice it, as a corrective of human vice and folly.

Glenn Gould Recording of the 1981
Goldberg-Variations: April 22 & 23, 1981
– "Aria, Variation 6." © Sony Music
Entertainment, 2022.

Stream of consciousness – *noun* a phrase used to describe the unbroken flow of perceptions, memories, thoughts, and feelings in the waking mind; it has since been adopted to describe a narrative method in modern fiction. Long passages of introspection, in which the narrator records in detail what passes through a character's awareness, are found throughout the works of Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) and Margaret Atwood. As it has been refined through the years, stream of consciousness is the name applied specifically to a mode of narration that undertakes to reproduce the full spectrum and continuous flow of a character's mental process, in which sense perceptions mingle with conscious and half-conscious thoughts, memories, expectations, feelings, and random associations. Like Woolf before her, Atwood challenges her readers by using this technique on both the focus of narration and the focus of character (that is, of perception) in a single story.

“He slides off into half-sleep and dreams of Oryx, floating on her back in a swimming pool, wearing an outfit that appears to be made of delicate white tissue-paper petals” (43).

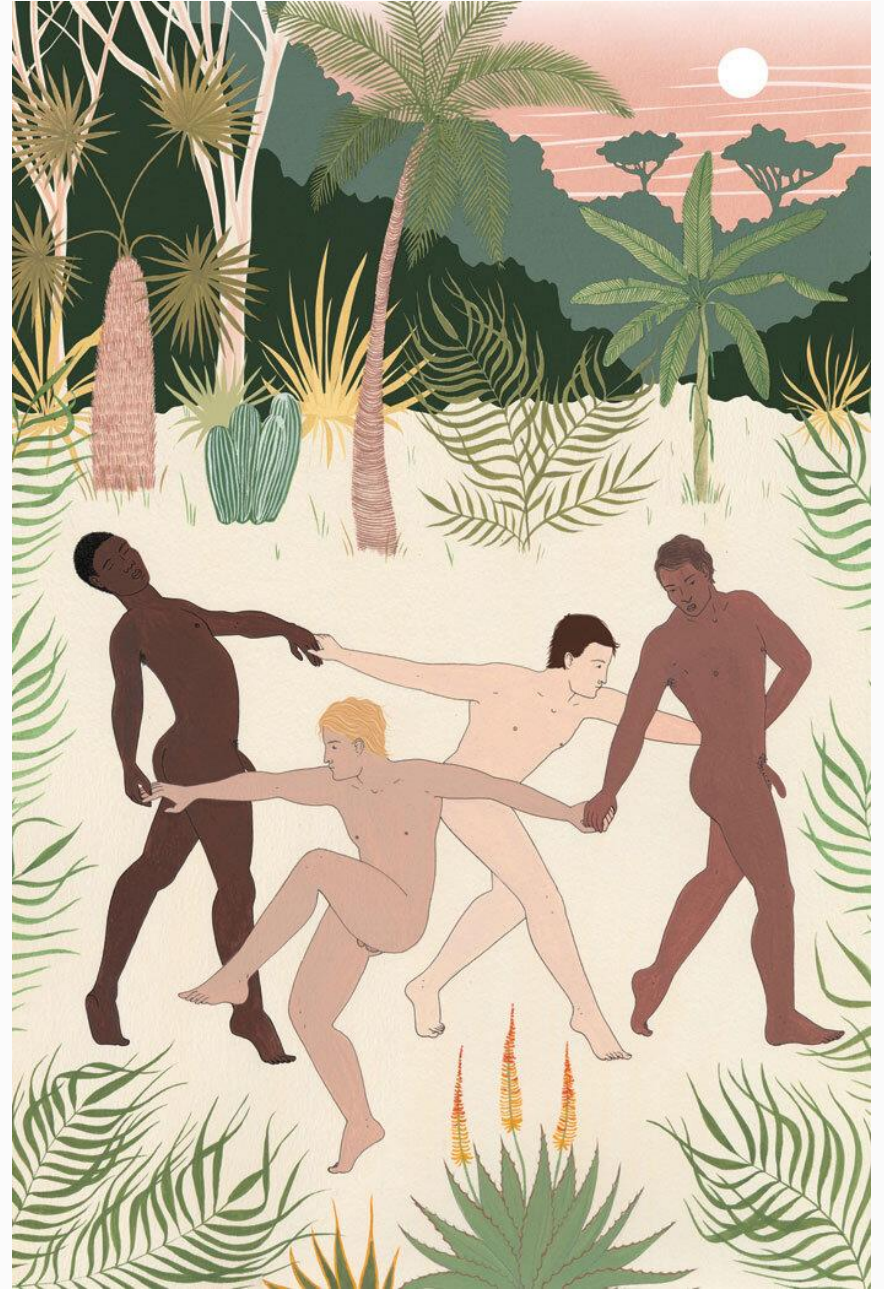
Reading Check

Sections 1-3 (pages 3-46)



“At the same time they indulge in musical outbursts, like songbirds. Their penises turn bright blue to match the blue abdomens of the females, and they do a sort of [...]” (165).

Reading Check sections 5-7 (pages 95-169)



Glenn Gould Slide

“Of course Crake wasn’t Crake yet, at that time: his name was Glenn. Why did it have two n’s instead of the usual spelling? ‘My dad liked music,’ was Crake’s explanation, once Jimmy got around to asking him about it, which had taken a while. ‘He named me after a dead pianist, some boy genius with two n’s.’” (70).

“Jimmy was better at chess by now; it was easier without Crake’s distracting presence, and the way he had of drumming his fingers and humming to himself, as if he already saw thirty moves ahead and was patiently waiting for Jimmy’s tortoiselike mind to trundle up to the next rook sacrifice” (193).



Glenn Gould, oil on canvas,
by Valeria Lakrisenko, 2016.

Genius Within: The Life of Glenn Gould

Glenn Gould (1932–1982) was a Canadian classical pianist. He was one of the most famous and celebrated pianists of the 20th century and was renowned as an interpreter of the keyboard works of Johann Sebastian Bach. Gould’s playing was distinguished by remarkable technical proficiency and a capacity to articulate the contrapuntal

texture of Bach’s music. Gould was known for his eccentricities, from his unorthodox musical interpretations and mannerisms at the keyboard to aspects of his lifestyle and behavior. His interest in music and his talent as a pianist were evident very early. At age 10, he began attending the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. Gould was a child prodigy and in adulthood became a musical phenomenon.

He was widely known for his unusual habits. He often hummed or sang while he played, and his audio engineers were not always able to exclude his voice from recordings. Gould was averse to cold and wore heavy clothing, including gloves, even in warm places. He also disliked social functions. He hated being touched, and in later life limited personal contact, relying on the telephone and letters for communication.

In the MaddAddam books, Atwood’s character Glenn (Crake) shares many of Gould’s eccentricities—and his genius. In *Oryx and Crake*, for example, Atwood writes, “Jimmy was better at chess by now; it was easier without Crake’s distracting presence, and the way he had of drumming his fingers and humming to himself, as if he already saw thirty moves ahead and was patiently waiting for Jimmy’s tortoiselike mind to trundle up to the next rook sacrifice” (193).

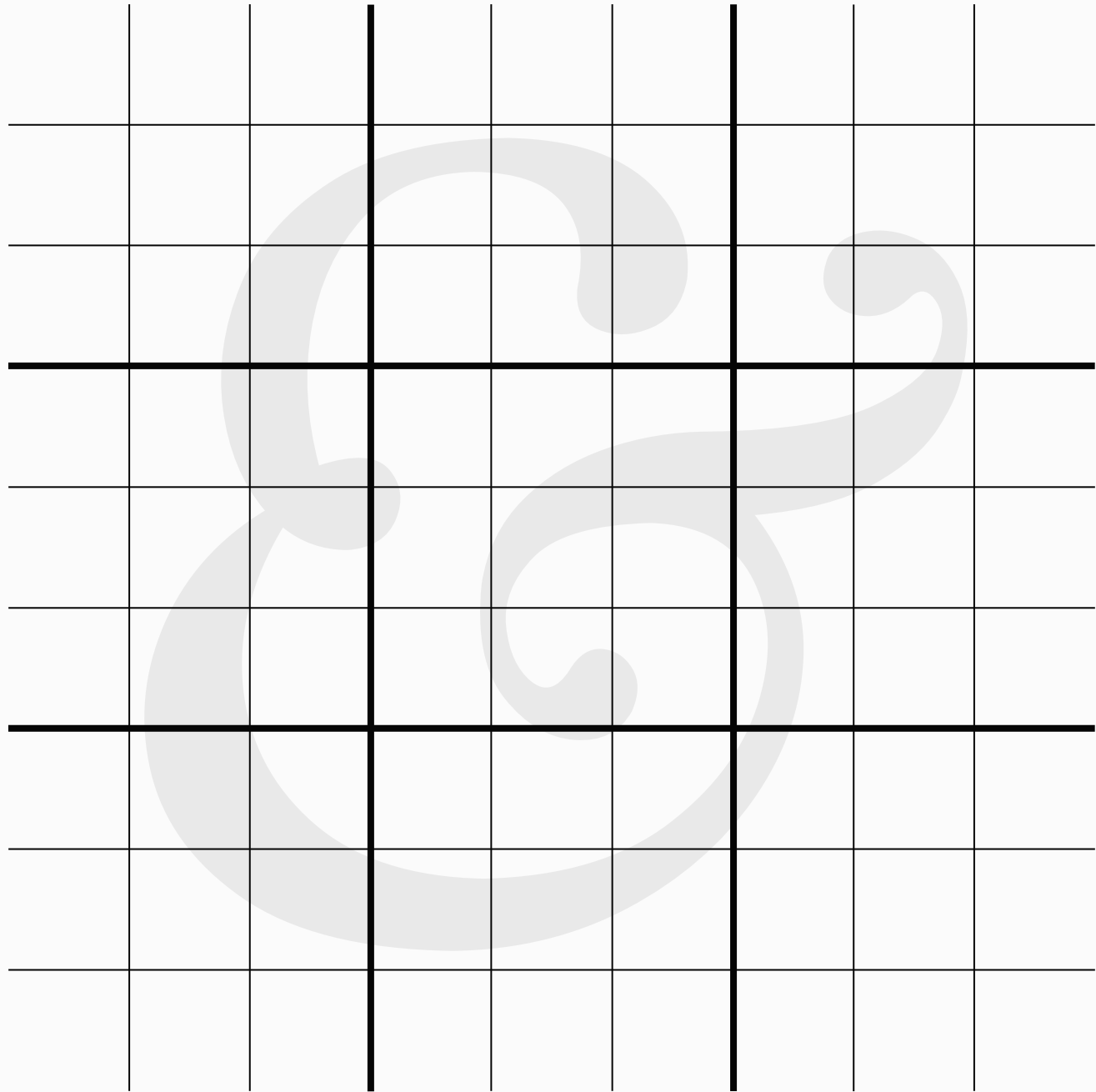


STUDIO

COLUMBIA
RECORDS
INC.

BLOOD

X



O
ROSES





Extinctathon

*Welcome Grandmaster Rednecked Crane. Do
you want to play a general game or do you
want to play another Grandmaster?*

“Still, they’re amazingly attractive, these children—each one naked, each one perfect, each one a different skin colour—chocolate, rose, tea, butter, cream, honey—but each with green eyes. Crake’s aesthetic” (OC 8).

“Across the clearing to the south comes a rabbit, hopping, listening, pausing to nibble at the grass with its gigantic teeth. It glows in the dusk, a greenish glow filched from the iridocytes of a deep-sea jellyfish in some long-ago experiment. In the half-light the rabbit looks soft and almost translucent, like a piece of Turkish delight; as if you could suck off its fur like sugar” (OC 95-96).

“The people move closer, men and women both, gathering around, their green eyes luminescent in the semi-darkness, just like the rabbit: same jellyfish gene” (OC 102).



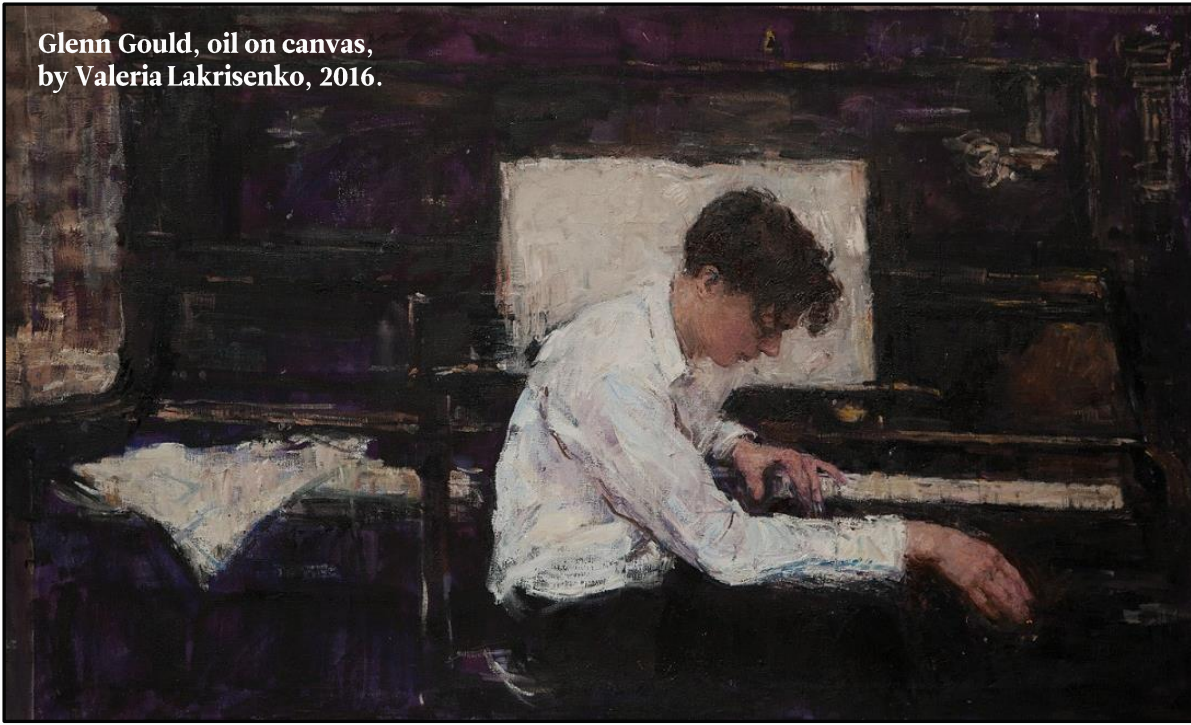
Oryx Mixed Media Collage



There are so many reasons to love the art of collage, from the freedom it allows to the powerful stories that can be told through it. For this homework assignment, you will be piecing together an image of Oryx from the fragments Jimmy left behind in his narrative. Although Jimmy's infatuation with Oryx should be the main theme, or focus, of the collage, feel free to include other aspects of the novel, like global consumerism and advancements in the fields of science and technology.

Creating a collage means assembling different colors, textures, shapes, and materials to create a new concept—a visual arts equivalent to writing a postmodern pastiche, like Margaret Atwood has done in *Oryx and Crake*. Some of the items you can combine to make your collage include: magazine clippings, transparencies, tape transfers, manipulated paper scraps, drawings/sketches, pieces of cardboard, fabrics, photographs, and stamps. You are required to use at least one direct quotation from the novel on your collage, but other than that, just have fun and be creative.

Glenn Gould, oil on canvas,
by Valeria Lakrisenko, 2016.



Glenn Gould's The Goldberg Variations

Margaret Atwood's writing has a profound staying power, expanding meanings, interpretations, and possibilities in the minds of her readers. If you haven't experienced this yet, I'm sure you will by the end of *Oryx and Crake*. Glenn (Crake) is unquestionably the most enigmatic character in her MaddAddam trilogy. He is also the central figure in the disaster which occurred shortly before the start of the first novel in the series. Atwood, possibly, reveals the most

about Crake's motivations in what seems at first glance to be a rather general reference to his namesake. Like Glenn Gould, Crake was a child prodigy. Crake also shares many of Gould's eccentricities, and ironically Gould was a hypochondriac. Gould was also Canadian, so that Atwood would want to shine a light on her home country is not surprising. Atwood, however, demands more of readers than just connecting the surficial dots.

Bach: The Goldberg Variations is the debut album of Glenn Gould. An interpretation of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, the 1956 record launched Gould's career as a renowned international pianist, and became one of the most well-known piano recordings of all time. Sales were astonishing for a classical album. In 1981, a year before his death, Gould made a new recording of the *Goldberg Variations*, sales of which exceeded two million by the year 2000. *The Goldberg Variations* were first published in 1741, when Bach was 56 years old. The variations are named after a legendary keyboardist named Johann Goldberg (1727-1756) who is believed to be the original composer.

What might Gould's most well-known work reveal about Crake? Consider the mindsets of the young pianist and young scientist as well as the meaning of variations.

MaddAddam's Intertextuality

'His dad was a friend of Pilar's—she used to be Botanic Splices, at HelthWyzer. I knew them both, at that time. But he got unhappy when he found out they were seeding folks with illnesses via those souped-up supplement pills of theirs—using them as free lab animals, then collecting on the treatments for those very same illnesses. Nifty scam, charging top dollar for stuff they caused themselves. Troubled his conscience. So the dad fed us some interesting data. Then he had an accident.'

'Accident?' said Toby.

'Went off an overpass at rush hour. Blood gumbo.'

'That's a bit graphic,' said Toby. 'For a vegetarian.'

'Sorry about that,' said Zeb. 'Suicide, was the rumour.'

'It wasn't, I take it,' said Toby.

'We call it Corpicide. If you're Corp and you do something they don't like, you're dead. It's like you shot yourself.' (YOF 244)

She opened with a standard queen's pawn, and Zeb decided to opt for a queen's Indian defence. 'Where's Glenn?' he asked.

'Things are not good,' she answered. 'Concentrate on the game. Glenn's father is dead. Glenn is naturally upset. The CorpSeCorps officers told him it was a suicide.'

'No shit,' said Zeb. 'When did that happen?'

'Two days ago,' said Pilar [...] 'It's not when, however, it's how. He was pushed off an overpass.' [...]

'What about Glenn?' said Zeb.

'Check and mate,' said Pilar, toppling his king. She stood up, smiling. 'Glenn will make his way,' she said. 'He doesn't know they killed his father. He doesn't know yet. Or not directly. But he's very bright.'

'You mean he'll figure it out,' said Zeb.

'Not too soon, I hope,' said Pilar. 'He's too young for that kind of bad news. He might not be able to pretend ignorance, unlike you.' (MA 245-247)

MaddAddam's Intertextuality

The main gateway was a biogeek challenge game called Extinctathon. Monitored by MaddAddam, it said: *Adam named the living animals, MaddAddam names the dead ones. Do you want to play?* Zeb entered the codename supplied to him by Adam—Spirit Bear—and the password, which was *shoelaces*, and found himself inside the game.

It seemed to be a variant of Animal, Vegetable, Mineral. Using obscure clues provided by your opponent, you had to guess the identities of various extirpated beetles, fish, plants, skinks, and so forth. A roll call of the already erased. It was a certified yawner: even the CorpSeCorps would be put to sleep by this one, plus they'd have no clue as to most of the answers. [...]

Could it be that Adam had designed this game himself? A game with his own name embedded as the Monitor? But he'd never shown much interest in animals, as such. [...]

Zeb continued along the pathway. He chose *Yes* to show readiness and was redirected. *Welcome, Spirit Bear. Do you want to play a general game, or do you want to play a Grandmaster?* The second was the choice to make, said Adam's instructions, so Zeb clicked on it.

Good. Find your playroom. MaddAddam will meet you there.

The path to the playroom was complicated, zigzagging from one coordinate to another through pixels located here and there on innocuous sites: ads, for the most part, though some were lists: TOP TEN SCARY EASTER BUNNY PICS, TEN SCARIEST MOVIES OF ALL TIME, TEN SCARIEST SEA MONSTERS. Zeb found a portal through the buck teeth of a deranged purple plush rabbit with a terrorized infant perched on its knee, from there to a tombstone in a still from *Night of the Living Dead*, the original, and finally to the eye of a coelacanth. Then he was in the chatroom. (MA 194–95)



Reading Check

Sections 8-9 (pp. 173-238)

“After an hour of walking, Snowman comes out from the former park. He picks his way farther inland, heading along the trashed pleebland boulevards” (221).

Key Literary Terms

Rhetoric – *noun* Aristotle defined rhetorical discourse as the art of “discovering all the available means of persuasion in any given case” and focused his discussion on the means and devices that an orator uses in order to achieve the intellectual and emotional effects on an audience that will persuade them to accede to the orator’s point of view. In a broad sense, then, rhetoric can be described as the study of language in its practical uses, focusing on the persuasive and other effects of language, and on the means by which one can achieve those effects on auditors or readers. In *Oryx and Crake*, Jimmy combines his strong writing with the rhetorical skills he learned at Martha Graham Academy to advance quickly in the field of marketing. “It was his task to describe and extol, to present the vision of what—oh, so easily!—could come to be. Hope and fear, desire and revulsion, these were his stocks-in-trade, on these he rang his changes” (248).

Unreliable Narrator – *noun* We ordinarily accept what a narrator tells us as authoritative. The fallible or unreliable narrator, on the other hand, is one whose perception, interpretation, and evaluation of the matters he or she narrates do not coincide with the opinions and norms implied by the author, which the author expects the alert reader to share. Drastic experimentation in postmodern prose fiction, like Margaret Atwood’s writing in the MaddAddam trilogy, complicates in many ways traditional renderings of point of view, not only in second-person but also in first- and third-person narratives. How is Atwood’s use of unreliable narration in *Oryx and Crake* different from other works you may have read which feature an unreliable narrator?

Glenn Gould Recording of the 1981
Goldberg-Variations: April 22 & 23, 1981
– “Aria, Variation 9” © Sony Music
Entertainment, 2022.



***Oryx and Crake's* Postmodern Concerns**

The term postmodernism is often applied to the literature and art after World War II (1939–45), when the effects on Western morale of the First World War were greatly exacerbated by the experience of Nazi totalitarianism and mass extermination, the threat of total destruction by the atomic bomb, the progressive devastation of the natural

environment, and the ominous fact of overpopulation. Postmodernism involves not only a continuation, sometimes carried to an extreme, of the countertraditional experiments of modernism but also diverse attempts to break away from modernist forms which had, inevitably, become in their turn conventional, as well as to overthrow the elitism of modernist “high art” by recourse for models to the “mass culture” of film, television, newspaper cartoons, and popular music.

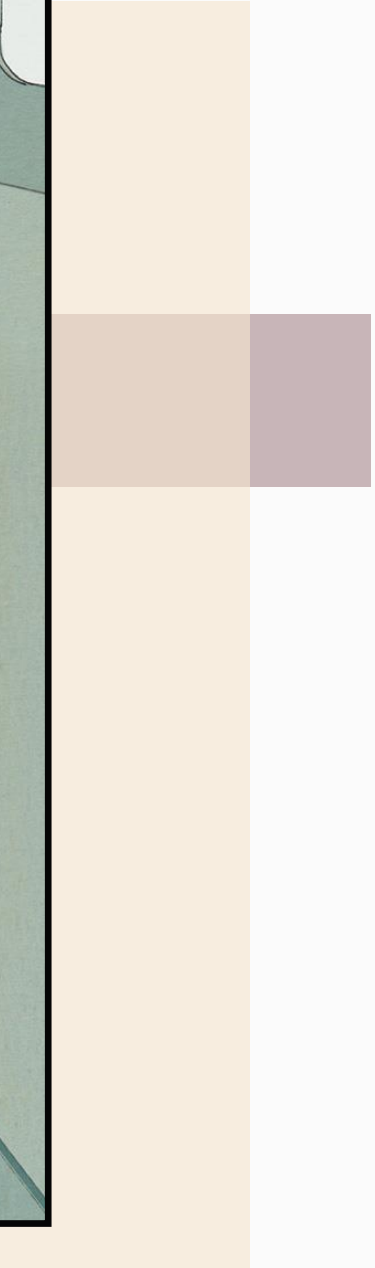
Many of the works of postmodern literature so blend literary genres, cultural and stylistic levels, the serious and the playful, that they resist classification according to traditional literary rubrics. An undertaking in some postmodernist writings is to subvert the foundations of our accepted modes of thought and experience so as to reveal the meaninglessness of existence and the underlying abyss, or void, or nothingness on which any supposed security is conceived to be precariously suspended.

From Atwood’s experimental writing style to the dystopian landscape of the *MaddAddam* books, there really couldn’t be a much better representation of a postmodern work than *Oryx and Crake*. What specific examples can you find of this kind of writing in the novel? Write down some examples, with the page numbers, to share with us.

oryx & crake

A work of speculative fiction
by MARGARET ATWOOD.
Spring 2003/2023







Reading Check sections 10-12 (241-329)

“Crake’s beige tropicals were splattered with redbrown. In his right hand was an ordinary storeroom jackknife, the kind with the two blades and the [...]” (221).

MaddAddam's Intertextuality

He reaches the bubble-dome, circles around the white, hot, icy swell of it to the front. The airlock door is open, as he remembers it. A deep breath, and in he goes.

Here are Crake and Oryx, what's left of them. They've been vulturized, they're scattered here and there, small and large bones mingled and in disarray, like a giant jigsaw puzzle.

Here's Snowman, thick as a brick, dunderhead, frivol, and dupe, water running down his face, giant fist clenching his heart, staring down at his one true love and his best friend in all the world. Crake's empty eye sockets look up at Snowman, as his empty eyes, once before. He's grinning with all the teeth in his head. As for Oryx, she's face down, she's turned her head away from him as if in mourning. The ribbon in her hair is as pink as ever.

Oh, how to lament? He's a failure even at that. (OC 335).

There are two destroyed skeletons on the floor of the airlock. The bones have been gnawed and jumbled, no doubt by animals. Rags of mouldering cloth, a small pink and red sandal.

Jimmy falls to his knees; his hands are over his face. Toby touches his shoulder. 'We need to go now,' she says, but he says, 'Leave me alone!'

There's a dirty pink ribbon tied in the long black hair of one of the skulls: hair decays very slowly, the Gardeners always said. Jimmy unties the bow, twists the ribbon in his fingers. 'Oryx. Oh God,' he says. 'You fucker, Crake!' You didn't have to kill her!'

Zeb is standing beside Toby now. 'Maybe she was already sick,' he says to Jimmy. 'Maybe he couldn't live without her. Come on, we need to get in there.'

'Oh fuck, spare me the fucking clichés!' says Jimmy.

'We can just leave him here for now, he'll be safe; let's go in,' says Toby. 'We need to be sure they didn't get into the storage room.' (MA 356).

Thirteen Reasons Why...

Parts 12 and 13 are the Climax

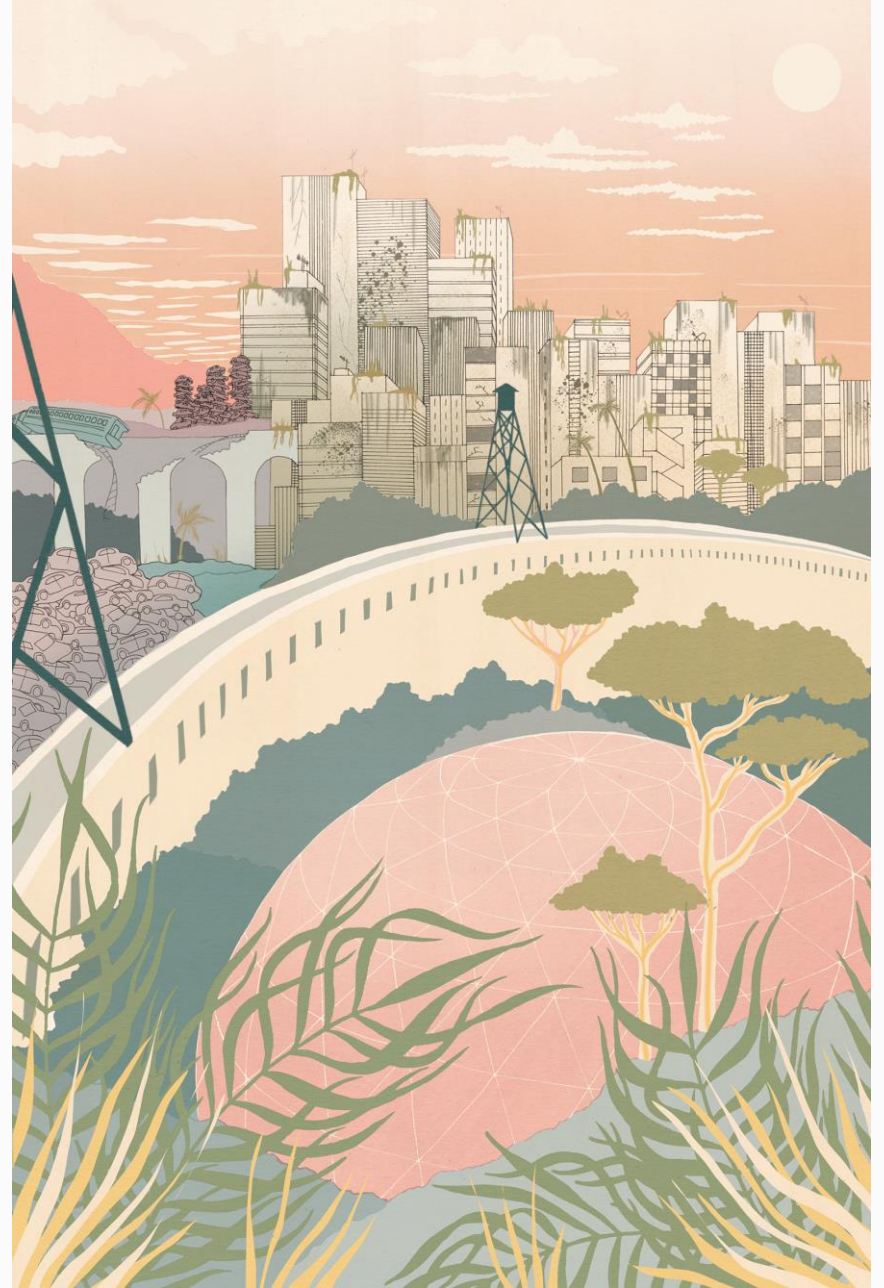
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Part 13 Highlights Jimmy's Curse

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“The trees surrounding the dome were lush and green, everything seemed pristine, but when they reached the RejoovenEsense Compound proper, the evidence of [...]” (351).

Reading Check sections 13-15 (pp. 333-74)

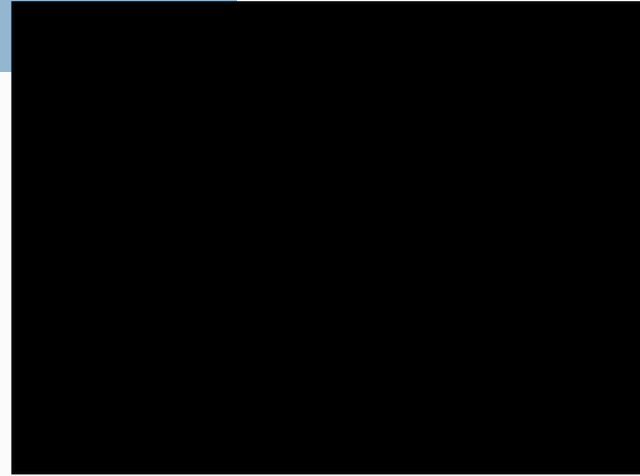


The Zagreb School of Animated Films

In four decades, Zagreb Film of Yugoslavia produced 600 animated films, winning more than 400 international awards. The studio quickly became famous for a unique, highly stylized animation process that became known as “the Zagreb School.” One of the studio’s pioneering distinctions was that its filmmakers wrote, designed, and directed their own films, resulting in boldly entertaining cartoons unified in design, tone, and message.

The Golden Age of Zagreb School spanned between 1957 and 1980, in three waves, each dominated by a different group of animators. The key feature of the Zagreb School was a commitment to stylization, in contrast with the Disney-style canon of realistic animation. Its worldview created a genre of animated films for adults, films highlighting the divisions between people and bursting with cynicism and irony.

Mask of the Red Death is a 1969 animated short film by Pavao Štalter. In keeping with the Zagreb School’s method, Štalter was also the main animator and artist. It is an adaptation of the Edgar Allan Poe short story and quite possibly the best adaptation of any of Poe’s works. The



Butterflies (1988) directed by Krešimir Zimonić is about a young woman who imagines the different lives she can lead with some very different men. This film uses strong, angular 1980s designs and colors by co-writer Magda Dulčić, and has a rather stream-of-consciousness-like structure, with a series of metamorphoses and designs that verge on the abstract. The animation ranges from very limited to full, and from serious to cartoony.



Fish Eye (1980) directed by Joško Marušić depicts a natural reverse in which fish-like monsters invade a bleak coastal village, capturing and killing all of the inhabitants (women and children) through clubbing or maiming, after the fishermen leave for their daily catch. The visuals are executed with a woodcut-like quality, with a score by Ivica Simović utilizing a twelve-tone technique consisting of seven cellos. Stanislav Maticic describes it as a horror film using a unique art style and a Hitchcock-like soundtrack.

short, which was in development for two years, is notable for its use of texturized animation, which is difficult to execute convincingly. The filmmakers describe the process as a mix of collage technique and animated paintings.

MaddAddam's Intertextuality

'His dad was a friend of Pilar's—she used to be Botanic Splices, at HelthWyzer. I knew them both, at that time. But he got unhappy when he found out they were

MA p330,

Glenn Gould Recording of the 1981
Goldberg-Variations: *April 22 & 23, 1981*
– “Aria, Variation 6.” © Sony Music
Entertainment, 2022.

