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(RE)PRODUCING THE SUBJECT: Biopolitical Analysis of *The Children of Men*, *Children of Men* and *Oryx & Crake*

Elif MANTHEI

Danışman
Dr. Trevor Hope

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I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.



Asst. Prof. Dr. Trevor HOPE (Supervisor)

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.



Asst. Prof. Dr. Funda CİVELEKOĞLU

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.



Asst. Prof. Dr. Tuba GEYİKLER



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Çağrı BULUT

Director of the Graduate School

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Elif MANTHEI

İmza

ABSTRACT

Master Thesis

(RE)PRODUCING THE SUBJECT

Elif MANTHEI

Yasar University

Institute of Social Sciences

Master of English Language and Literature

Fredric Jameson has famously noted that individual narratives have the power to provide imaginary resolutions to the shared, lived contradictions of the material and social world. This thesis addresses the imaginary encoding of biopolitics as it operates within the contemporary English-language novel. I argue that narrative fictions imagine, expose and critique biopolitical controls over life through the workings of sovereignty and the mechanisms of power that I read through the critical and theoretical perspectives of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben. A biopolitical reading of P.D. James's novel *The Children of Men*, its adaptation to the film *Children of Men* by Alfonso Cuarón, and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* offers a means of exposing the way in which power penetrates and manages life, especially under the extreme eventualities of global infertility or radical global bio-engineering. These fictions articulate the mechanics of power regarding the regulation and functioning of bodies under late capital and global instability.

Key words: imaginary resolution, biopolitics, infertility, Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben

ÖZET

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

(RE)PRODUCING THE SUBJECT

Elif MANTHEI

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Fredric Jameson her bir anlatının, maddesel ve sosyal dünyanın ortak, yaşanmış çelişkilerine imgesel çözümler sağlayacak güce sahip olduğuna işaret eder. Bu tez, biyopolitikanın imgesel kodlamalarının çağdaş İngiliz romanına olan etkisini konu almaktadır.

Tezimde Michel Foucault ve Giorgio Agamben'nin eleştirel ve kuramsal bakış açılarıyla ilgili okumalarımın ışığında, kurgu anlatıların, gücün egemenliği ve mekanizmaları bakımından biyopolitikanın yaşam üzerindeki kontrolünü imgelediğini, açığa çıkardığını ve eleştiriye tabi tuttuğunu ileri sürmekteyim. P.D. James'in *The Children of Men* adlı romanı, Alfonso Cuarón'un aynı romandan uyarladığı *The Children of Men* adlı filmi ve Margaret Atwood'un kaleme aldığı *Oryx and Crake* adlı romanı biyopolitik bakış açısı ile incelendiğinde, özellikle de küresel kısırlığın ya da radikal küresel biyomühendisliğin yol açtığı olağanüstü olasılıklar söz konusu olduğunda, gücün yaşama nasıl nüfuz edip onu yönettiğini, çeşitli biçimleriyle ortaya koymaktadır.

Bu kurgu anlatılar, ge kapitalizmin byk ve kresel istikrarsızlık atmosferinde rol alan bedenlerin dzenine ve iřleyiřine etki eden g mekanizmalarını aıka ifřa etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: imgesel zmler, biyopolitika, kısırlık, Michel Foucault, Giorigo Agamben



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1 Introduction

“When life itself becomes an object of politics, this has consequences for the foundations, tools, and goals of political action. No one saw this shift in the nature of politics more clearly than Michel Foucault.” (Thomas Lemke, *Bio-Politics* 32)

At times of crisis, the idea of life itself as a narrative and political project creates a sense of public urgency and develops new modes of thinking and strategizing the present and future of the corporeal. A politics of the body and its point of contact with life and politics emerge in the late twentieth-century as the discourse of biopolitics. Although the term has been used by a variety of disciplines and leveraged by prominent philosophers and political theoreticians, the notion of biopolitics suggests both power over the body through management, surveillance, power, and discipline as well as the creation of new subjectivities and radical possibilities for alternative changes in the field of life. There is a lot written about biopolitics in interdisciplinary terms, and there are a number of theoretical considerations in relation to human bodies and lives that can be called “biopolitical” which will be the general topic and grounding of this thesis. By “biopolitics” here, I will mean not any general terrain of biopolitics, or process of political power, but particularly those mechanisms of biopolitics (primarily: discipline, racism and eugenics, medical and biotechnological applications, and the hypertechnological organization of life via the Internet) through which the very definability of life and

the body become radically maintained, hierarchized, shaped, controlled, and administered.

There is, as Timothy Campbell and Adam Sitze recently argue, an obscure dimension of biopolitics whose particular nature can be best understood through “attentive re-reading of the texts” that mapped out the initial concept of biopolitics as not only a field of thought but a practice of analysis (Campbell and Sitze 6). This paper will use the philosophical analysis of power and the body as expressed by Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben as a point of departure to investigate the inescapable role of biopolitics in organizing social spaces and ordering everyday life. To do so, I will provide an analysis of novels by P.D. James and Margaret Atwood to demonstrate how State or sovereign powers create and discipline the bodies over which they exercise power. These novels dramatize aspects of biopolitical regulation of the body and the species, and it is my general argument in this thesis that James’ *Children of Men* and Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* are best and most fruitfully read through the critical lens of biopolitical analysis. More specifically, I intend to show through my analysis of these two novels, that the management and regulation of bodies reveals the means through which life is not ontological, but results instead from the complex workings of linguistic and power mechanisms. In other words, perhaps paradoxically, life is not primary. Life is an invention of the systems that have the power to define it, create it, name it, sanction it *as* life.

This analysis will also include a film version of *Children of Men* by Alfonso Cuarón who earned much acclaim and criticism by adapting James’ novel to the wide-screen. Literary analysis and biopolitical analysis may connect when we consider biopolitics as the political strategy for organizing life itself and narrative

fiction as a discourse that critiques nonfictional social and political life. This thesis is founded on the belief that fictions pose possible and imaginary means through which cultural and political symbolic structures are dramatized and investigated. Understanding biopolitics as a foundation or underpinning, especially as it may ground the study of narrative, legitimates my claim that the management and maintenance of life and the symbolic manifestations of this management are constituted dialectically. This is a reading particularly associated with the literary critic Fredric Jameson who argues that at the level of political history, narratives provide “imaginary resolutions [to] our real contradictions” (Jameson 62). Taking the perspective that a text offers an imaginary resolution to a real social contradiction, I want to rethink how these contradictions orbit around the body in its political state to address the biopolitical theorization of the human body with its representations of scientifically plausible, and at times realistic worlds.

Throughout this thesis, my primary emphasis will be on the ways in which the philosopher Michel Foucault analyzes the processes and categorizations of power relations through which our conceptions and experiences of the world are established. I will look also at the significance of questioning practices of power for Foucault: the successful reproduction of forms of knowledge, norms and subjectivities by social and scientific practices that make it possible to generate and regulate populations. In speaking of how Foucault thinks social realities are produced, I intend to demystify the term “biopolitics” by relating it directly to life as expressed by the leading social theorist on biopolitics, Thomas Lemke, whose readings in Foucauldian thought between racial ideas and, so-called, “inherited

biological quality” make room for new connections between power and life, and life to power.

1.1 Foucault : An overview of Biopolitics

We cannot analyze the topic of biopolitics without reading Michel Foucault’s groundbreaking and definitive conceptualization of bio-power and biopolitics. There are other roots than Foucault for the study of biopolitics, of course; however, it is Foucault’s social and political theories that shine the brightest and most direct lights on the relations of power, knowledge and subjectivities. Biopolitics, then, for Foucault is not merely about conventional mechanisms of oppression, but about the way we engage in relations of power and knowledge that discipline the human body and regulate populations (*The History of Sexuality* 141). Instead of dwelling on authoritarian forms of power, Foucault puts emphasis on the generative, replicative, productive and reproductive capacities of life and the processes of its creation as the subject of power. It is Foucault who first conceived the term “bio-power” to refer to the political applications of power to life and living beings. Foucault’s method for developing the term bio-power starts from his 1975-1976 lectures at the Collège de France. Between the categorizations from which he organizes his method of reading power as “genealogies” and “subjugated knowledges,” Foucault stresses the foundational importance of power-apparatuses that operate not in grand and overt ways, but in the most mundane habits and practices of our lives (*Society Must be Defended* 243).

Foucault's criticism of power as the politics of repression is, as he himself suggests, a starting point in understanding bio-power, which is the kind of power that is protective of life. In fact, his accounts of power when he argues at his lectures of 1976 in *Society Must be Defended* take the following positions:

1. Power produces truth-effects, which are implements to produce discourses of truth (24).
2. Power traverses, characterizes, and constitutes the social body (24).
3. Power functions. Power is exercised through networks...passes through individuals (30).
4. Power is not distributed throughout the body in democratic or anarchic fashion (30).

Through these several fundamental claims about power, Foucault argues that power has a function of control and regulation, that is not necessarily centralized, and that it is the cornerstone of the production of knowledge. In the latter phase of his thoughts on power Foucault claims it to be ubiquitous: it is a "self-reproducing" phenomenon that works outwards and which influences all organization of life (*The History of Sexuality* 93).

In defining power, Foucault helps readers to grasp contemporary relationships between the entire system of the State and its subjects. To Foucault any simple notion of "power" intersects a variety of fields, which in turn, circulates to manage populations: in his own words, "the family, parents, doctors, the lowest levels of the police" (Foucault 1976: 32). Power intertwines with "disciplinary normalizations" (39), that is, prisons, hospitals, schools, asylums and military grounds which formalize the human body as an object to be grasped, managed, and

prescribed to be socially productive, which gives rise to the term bio-power (251). There is, as Foucault suggests, a period of history in which bio-power is formed—around the 18th century and onwards—when “the human body essentially [becomes] a productive force” (31) and is naturalized by everyday practices of discipline, normalization and knowledge providing us more complex models of subjugation (34). Foucault’s critique of the relations of power, knowledge, and techniques of government, admittedly, addresses the role of bio-power in ordering every level of the social body which fleshed out the power concentrations he rethinks in applications of biopolitics. This time, as Foucault argues, political power changes its focus from a disinterest in issues of the conditions of life to an obsession with all citizens’ lives and health more than previous periods had done, and puts them under permanent scrutiny for checking and sustaining their health. The historical and ideological shift foregrounds bio-power’s newly inaugurated concern, particularly, with the management and administration of the births, deaths, reproductive capabilities and life expectancy of a population.

Following Thomas Lemke’s reorientation into the topic in looking closely at the conceptual grids of biopolitics in his book *Bio-Politics: An Advanced Introduction* (2011), one could easily imagine how biopower and biopolitics can operate within the field of narrative fiction. Why should we read a novel biopolitically? Will it yield new results about the historical applications of biopower? Why should Foucault’s account of the production of bodies and human subjects be of any interest to us today? Lemke’s insight, although projected back to us, provides a satisfactory response to these questions in turning his attention to modern power

relations and their contemporary operation. Lemke sets out to explain the term biopolitics in the following manner:

Biopolitics cannot simply be labeled a specific political activity or a subfield of politics that deals with the regulation and governance of life processes. Rather, the meaning of biopolitics lies in its ability to make visible the always contingent, always precarious difference between politics and life, culture and nature, between the realm of the intangible and unquestioned, on the one hand, and the sphere of moral and legal action, on the other. (*Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction* 31)

It is important for Lemke to be clear on the definition of biopolitics, not least because of the difficulty of understanding it abstractly, but in order to identify the fundamental contingency of the term that generates the possibilities of interventions that allow politics to take life as its object. With this in mind, in his work on biopolitics, Lemke emphasizes the forms in which life is appropriated into an object of politics when he discusses the applications of biopolitics in the German National Socialist conception of the state and society. Lemke argues that National Socialism included an interest in the idea of “common genetic heritage” or “inherited biological quality” which formalized racist activity and legitimized its biopolitical interventions through hereditary mythical origins (11). Its alleged sciences were intended to legitimate its mythologies; they propped up the racially hierarchized idea of a homogenous society by investing in it the ideas of social Darwinism as well as Pan-Germanic, national ideologies involving anthropological, biological or medical science (11). The politics of the Third Reich Health Department, in this way, organized human capacities and differences by distinctively expressing “hereditary

biology (*Erbbiologie*),” which called for the purity of race, away from the “penetration of foreign blood” (12). This political eugenics, Lemke writes, drawing on anthropological theory, claimed to enhance the “efficiency in living (*Lebenstüchtigkeit*)” of the German people whose “genetic materials” and “racial character” is maintained and regulated by “quantitative” and “qualitative” parameters of existence (12-13).

Why should Lemke’s account of the Third Reich be of any interest to us today, either generally, or in an analysis of literary works through biopolitical theory? Lemke’s insight directs an urgent question to biopolitics: how does a biopolitical perspective assess, critique and diagnose that system which attempts to transform life into an object of politics? I propose to argue throughout this thesis that fictions operate in such a way to provide a critique of the systems from which they are created, with or without their conscious intentions. The two novels, I will investigate are works in which power, knowledge, and all life collide in spectacularly illuminating ways, even as they investigate non-fictional contemporary problems through the medium of narrative fiction. Biopolitics may be a subject that cannot be apprehended directly, and if this is so, then the medium of fiction may be the best way of apprehending a topic whose reach is so thorough and complete, that its effects pervade all forms of life and discourse. And if biopolitics can be best read through what it does (rather than what it is), then narrative fiction can provide the necessary symbolic and imaginative space for a critique of the ways in which life is created and organized. Likewise, the configuration of sovereignty—the power to create or regulate the conditions of living—is tied to the systems that enable life to come to life.

1.2 Sovereignty and The Uses of Power

For Foucault, biopolitics is neither expressly political nor ideological criticism, but rather a profound and particular preparation of *bios* for a specifically organized, oriented kind of life. In an important essay, “Right of Death and Power over Life,” from his book 1978 *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, Foucault offers a radical revision of historical power relations to discuss how the welfare of populations, the health and security of the people are part of the larger product of the production of human bodies, subjects, and subjectivities. He argues that the old sovereign right was formalized as “the power of life and death” and is, in actuality, the right “to take life or let live” exercised by kings or monarchs, which functions essentially through “deduction (prélèvement)” (136). The ancient right operated through prohibitions and punishments. The sovereign inherited the power to make decisions on the conditions of life. It was who saw Foucault saw a fundamental change in the role of the sovereign in the 18th century, especially in regard to the institutionalization of life and the living being:

Western man was gradually learning what it meant to be a living species in a living world, to have a body, [...] an individual and collective welfare, forces that could be modified, and a space in which they could be distributed in an optimal manner. For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence [...]. But what might be called a society’s “threshold of modernity” has been reached when the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies. For millennia, man remained what he

was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question. (*The History of Sexuality Volume 1* 142-143)

From this perspective, what Foucault suggests is a new definition of power which no longer works its way through deduction and negation but as “a power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations” (137). The sovereign’s will is transferred from the “right of death” to a direct and discursive power that seeks to protect, improve and prolong life. The central principle of this power, locally and globally, naturalizes the processes of life at the level of populations through governmental mechanisms that instrumentalize power. As Foucault puts the point more exactly: power functions “to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize and organize the forces under it” (136). Understanding power’s inseparability from living beings who are, at the same time, legal subjects could hardly be clearer when Foucault captures the relation and its implications, that is, “the biological existence of a population” (137). Power over life, Foucault argues, is charged with “positive influence” that promises to sustain life and promote better life by micro-managing it (137). Positive evaluations of the technologies of power, according to Foucault, are effectively equipped “to qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendor” (144). Indeed, practices of these “micro-powers” that monitor, correct and discipline the body and produce domains of knowledge that reemerge as a hybrid kind of mechanism that Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* refers to as “power-knowledge relations” (27).

Along with norms distributed around the formal body, power-knowledge relations aim to redefine the correct performances of the living being.

The investment of power in the body also creates knowledge of the body. This hybrid power over life, Foucault suggests, based solely on disciplines, interventions and regulatory controls “invest[s] in life through and through” and validates the “anatomy-politics of the human body” (*The History of Sexuality* 139) in more or less coherent systems of knowledge power. Of course, knowledge is never politically or ethically neutral in Foucault’s view: it is complicit in the mechanisms of power and is developed through the rigorous scrutiny of bodies and subjects over whom it is exercised.

Foucault’s analysis of biopower and biopolitical mechanisms of production and regulation addresses the institutions that normalize or discipline the human body and govern its uses from the 18th century on. He historicizes the rise of the many apparatuses through which biopower operates—the military, schools, prisons and hospitals—which, Foucault claims, capture and treat the body like a machine. As a governmental administration seeks to normalize and optimize the reproductive capacities of the body they create more, not fewer, precarious zones in which the population consensually become “a biological entity” (Lemke 37). Foucault’s 1978-79 views on neo-liberalism in *The Birth of Biopolitics* clarify why he traces the biotechnologies of governance. He argues that “the generalization of the economic form of the market beyond monetary exchanges functions in [...] neo-liberalism as a principle of intelligibility and a principle of decipherment of social relationships and individual behavior” (*The Birth of Biopolitics* 243). What Foucault means is that the way people act, according to this view, values economic relationships and makes us

what he calls: “*homo œconomicus*,” whose rational conduct is directed to invest in his/herself, thus, constitutes conception of “human capital” (244). The idea of being one’s own human capital, then, expressly defines the condition of increasing one’s own economic value, which appears to be both necessary and open to political control of biopower that rationalizes its grasp on us through promising “the “right” to life, to one’s body, to health, to happiness, to the satisfaction of needs, and beyond all the oppressions or “alienations,” the “right” to rediscover what one is and all that one can be” (*The History of Sexuality* 145). Foucault makes several provocative assertions about the legitimacy of governance and the “art of government” which appears as the exercise of sovereignty but strictly foreshadows “the study of the rationalization of governmental practice in the exercise of political sovereignty” (*The Birth of Biopolitics* 2). This “art” of governance, as Foucault favors the term to refer to governing, can account for the intertwinement of sovereign power— “the right of the sword” and bio-power (*Society Must Be Defended* 240). To circle back to the borderline nature of biopolitical power, through historical transformations these two powers intersect and morph into a politics that seeks to “make” live and, “let” die (*Society Must Be Defended* 241). As Foucault puts it, “Power no longer recognizes death. Power literally ignores death” (248). This biopolitics, more briefly, even in the most unfavorable case such as the Holocaust, organizes its effects for the sole purpose of making live. The art of biopolitical governance, then, as an exercise of power, oscillates between bodies to identify and individualize and, necessarily, massif. Power aims not at “man-as-body but at man-as-species” (243). What does this process say about the production of not a body, but of all bodies—not at the individual level, but at the industrial, species level? What is the agency of this

power's method that directs its truth discourses at spaces of social life within which race, reproduction, medicine, health and science make us to think of ourselves as biological subjects to be made fit to live? Answering this question will take us from Foucault's analysis of the conditions which give rise to the exercise of biopower and the creation of the biopolitical, and to the work of Giorgio Agamben, who reappraises the role of the body within biopolitical mechanisms. When the bodies are massified, they can be produced in specific ways for specific purposes. The contribution of Agamben to the problem of biopolitics is specifically the way in which life as basic existence is reintegrated into regulated, designed, and organized life.

1.3 Homo Sacer and the Politics of Bare Life

Giorgio Agamben's inquiry into the discourse of biopolitics attends to the theoretical and practical levels at which the body is reconstructed as a newly graspable object by power, and following this, how its uses can be manipulated through its new reconstruction. Agamben's work responds to Foucault's theory of biopolitics that, loosely but engagingly, complements and leverages the theory of sovereign power with the biopolitical organization of human life. At the foundation of Agamben's theory lays the belief that biopolitics is a phenomenon inseparable from the sovereign practice of power. To explain this connection, much like Foucault who traces sovereign power from Roman law, Agamben looks back to Greek antiquity to redefine "life" for contemporary Western political traditions. In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Agamben distinguishes the meanings of the

two fundamental terms Greeks used to define life, namely: *zoē* and *bíos*. In his reading of Aristotle, Agamben argues that *zoē* stands for “the simple fact of living common to all beings” while *bíos* represents “the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group” (1). The short route to explaining *zoē* theoretically refers to the kind of life ostensibly given by God: more specifically, it suggests the idea of an animal life as a living being, that is, bare life. *Bíos*, on the other hand, refers to a legitimized or qualified social life which, for the Greeks, meant a politically recognized life stating an individual’s role, purpose, or reason for living in society.

Agamben’s initial treatment of the concept of “bare life” is therefore derived from the Greek concept that “simple natural life” (which is, in itself was “a good thing,” but, with new forms of meaning,) is an unqualified physical life “excluded from the polis in the strict sense” (1-2). In other words, it is a condition of living, but it is not a form of life that can be grasped in or of itself. By positing Aristotle’s comparison that lays the dramatic opposition between “the simple fact of living (*to zēn*) to politically qualified life (*to eu zēn*)” Agamben turns his attention to the condition of being, “born with regard to life, but existing essentially with regard to the good life” (2). In Agamben’s view, “the entry of *zoē* into the sphere of the polis—the politicization of the bare life as such—constitutes the decisive moment of [modern politics]” (*Homo Sacer* 4). This means that the *qualified life* changes because *bare life* is reintroduced into it, in a complex manner that does not invert the relationship between qualified and bare life, but exposes *bare life* through its reinclusion into *qualified life*. It is only through this inclusion that life can be grasped by power.

Although Foucault's and Agamben's methods share important key elements, Agamben interrogates the relationship between bare life in regards to the general understanding of what we call "life"; a difference Lemke refers as "the distinction between natural being and the legal existence of a person" (Lemke 54). The foundational term that explains this condition is embodied in the figure of *homo sacer*: a term that Agamben borrows from Roman law to define someone who is punished and thus exiled from the political life, *bíos*. Agamben defines *homo sacer*'s form of life as "life of [a] (sacred man), who may be killed but yet not sacrificed" (*Homo Sacer* 8). As someone who is reduced to (or returned to) bare life, the individual, Agamben argues, becomes "[t]he fundamental activity of sovereign power, [an object of] the production of bare life as originary political element and as threshold of articulation between nature and culture, *zoē* and *bíos*" (181). The *homo sacer* through its very condition of exclusion from political existence, is incarcerated in a prison of simple physical existence standing at the "intersection between the juridico-institutional and the biopolitical models of power" (6). In Agamben's account, this (the very fact that there is a power that qualifies or does not qualify life) proves the existence of a sovereign power who applies the rule of exception as its modern form of the right to kill. From this perspective, Agamben's claim that takes "biopolitics [...] as old as the sovereign exception" supposes "the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of the sovereign power" (6). For Agamben, biopolitics isn't a new phenomenon, though modernity is the highest achievement of biopolitical organization of human life.

Biological life, Agamben argues, marks the emergence of modern State power. The ways in which biological life measures the individual by means of

supporting his or her life through health screening reduces people to their animal qualities: to bare life that is statistical, clinical and objective. Agamben then challenges the paradoxical nature of Western politics by elucidating the grounding of the system itself, which points at the individual or the subject whose life is at once *bíos*, political, and at the same time the object whose life is *zoē*, bare life. This biological existence, which is both the subject and the object of the nation state “presents itself as what is included by means of an exclusion” (7). Though this appears paradoxical, it is, in fact, a matter of necessity for the configuration of sovereignty, since *zoē* cannot be grasped in itself. Bare life is brought back into qualified life, but its inclusion is not complete because then it would replace qualified life. Instead, it is included as something that is excluded from qualified life. This deconstructivist move allows Agamben to show how bare life becomes articulated within the regimes of power which otherwise could not approach bare life unless it were to be reintroduced as something present yet absent, included, yet excluded, within, yet also without. Bare life is neither inside qualified life nor outside it, but inside it as something to be missed.

The inclusion of bare life at the level of the population has far reaching effects. For Agamben, Foucault’s significant pronouncement according to which man is, for Aristotle, a living animal with the additional capacity for political existence lays bare the problematic nature of the position of man: *zoē* with the rights of *bíos* who inhabits in what Foucault calls the “State of population” (3). Because this new power conceives of itself as made of the bodies of its citizens, it abandons the “juridical existence of sovereignty; [instead what is now] at stake is the biological existence of a population” (*The History of Sexuality* 137). This new

biopower is thus preoccupied with the physical life of its constituents. In other words, the state's very identity becomes grounded on the bare life of its citizens: the health of those who may or may not be included within its system of privileges, which are also its restrictions. Given the right of producing and controlling the body of the living, a state's political control over bare life foreshadows the same state's power of right to death. As Agamben states clearly, "[a]t once excluding bare life from and capturing it within the political order, the state of exception (my emphasis) actually constitute[s], in its very separateness, the hidden foundation on which the entire political system rest[s]" (*Homo Sacer* 9). The state of exception, then, far from being exceptional, is part of the condition by which the modern body enters the political wager on which its life, health, longevity, and reproduction are the consequences.

Our bodies and their reconfigurations, according to Agamben, provide Western politics the opportunity to produce the new *homo sacer* within its system. The *homo sacer*, in this view, can be—contingently and precariously—selected by the kind of sovereignty who will suspend the law and remove legal guarantees and protections of bodies it sees as dispensable through norms or moral panics. Agamben thus cautions us against the repositioning of the biopolitical stratagem of the state, which can arguably be referred as the state of exception: a condition Carl Schmitt uses to define the sovereign as "he who decides on the state of exception" (*State of Exception* 1). By mockingly portraying the paradoxical condition of the sovereignty being both "outside and inside the juridical order" (*Homo Sacer* 15), Agamben points at the extra-legal practices of forms of punishment, domination and state violence. The state of exception, for Agamben, is "the dominant paradigm of

government in contemporary politics” (*State of Exception* 2). This position of deciding the state of exception, Agamben believes, constitutes the sovereign’s acts beyond the law, no longer beholden to the law, but both in and out. The “exceptional measures” (2) taken for the Syrian refugees, North Korean asylum seekers and detainees of Guantánamo in our day exemplify the conditions when the state of exception is employed by the sovereign power. Nazi Germany’s concentration and death camps illustrate, according to Agamben, the implementation of the state of exception as the “ban” which constitutes an exclusion from the *bíos*; an enforced expulsion “set outside the law and made indifferent to it but [which also and for worse entails] abandon[ment] by it, that is, [one is] exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable” (*Homo Sacer* 28). This means an individual’s political life does not protect him or her from being killed or exploited in a situation when the sovereign exercises the state of exception. The state seeing itself and its citizens as one entity of bare life, any threat it perceives to itself from inside or outside necessitates “a suspension of the juridical order itself, [regardless of] law’s threshold or limit concept” (*State of Exception* 4).

For Agamben and Foucault, the reading of power over the body suggests ways to bring conceptual order to the theories of sovereignty and bio-power which capture, through reconsidering bare human life, the more ordinary and exceptional dimensions of existence. Foucault’s analysis of biopower identifies protective deployments of power over life that “distribut[e] the living in the domain of value and utility” (*The History of Sexuality* 144): healthy individual bodies and population in which birth, mortality, propagation and longevity is qualified, appraised and

regularized. Agamben's position challenges Foucault on the view that he sees biopower as an extension of the power of sovereignty who assigns the agents of bare life in a way that formalizes and reproduces their bodies worthy of a qualified life. The basis of their biopolitical reading of the body discloses processes of power superimposed upon one another: bio-power/sovereign power and law that define bare life of *homo sacer* whose being is arbitrarily constituted by sovereign exception. This imbrication of political manufacturing and regulation of life is now situated at the center of daily life in the twenty-first century. There is no contemporary analysis of biopower that does not conceptualize and point at forms of detachment and disembodiment of the body, which attests to the modes of power that organize the subjectivities of the present.

The configuration of the body under the modern sovereign as a graspable entity that is both empowered to live a qualified life, yet also disturbingly disempowered by the conditions of its qualifications is the real subject of my project. The narrativization of the body and its capacity *for* life (rather than its ontological precondition as already-living) are preoccupations of the two novels under analysis in this thesis. It is my argument that these novels present bodies as objects that are graspable, useable, manageable by sovereign entities (either governmental or corporate) and that these novels dramatize the production and regulation of life in a manner most effectively read through a biopolitical framework. More specifically, *Children of Men* presents a world in which reproductive capability becomes the preoccupation of state power. *Oryx and Crake* dramatizes the corporate reconfiguration of the body as a saleable and alterable commodity. These may seem self-evident in a reading of these texts; however, I argue that these novels present

bodies in ways that are consistently co-opted, disciplined, managed and controlled. I am also arguing against a position that would allow for the “free will” of a radical protagonist to undo the effects of a thorough deployment of biopolitical organization. These are bleak novels, indeed. But through their conclusions, they posit different possible reconfigurations of social and political being, even if they do not necessarily stake a future for survival on their own conclusions.

1.4 Fictions of Biopolitics

This study’s main interest is in demonstrating how the theories of Foucault and Agamben are useful in reading the two novels that I have chosen to analyze through the concept of biopolitics. The novels I will be looking at are *The Children of Men* (1993) by P.D. James and *Oryx and Crake* (2003) written by Margaret Atwood. I will also look at Alfonso Cuarón’s adaptation of James’s novel *Children of Men* (2006) to think about the contemporary organization of human life, sometimes founded solely on bare life, at other times, imbued with political *bíos*. In chapters 2 and 3, I aim to present close readings of the two novels and film which may supplement some of the work in Foucault’s and Agamben’s critical passages in which they capture technologies of bio- and sovereign power focusing on the human body.

My position, by reading these texts in this way, is to show the historical position of these novels and film, especially as works that could only be produced at the historical moment in which they are. In other words, these are post-modern novels in the sense that they do not aim to dissolve false forms of consciousness and

replace them with new ones. They evade, in significant ways, any contact with “timeless truths” about the power of life to overcome all obstacles. They instead dramatize the contact between life and its definitive conditions. What is common to these novels’ is their identifiable arguments regarding life and its subjectivation processes, the conditions of existence that are controlled and modified by totalitarian forms of governance or capitalistic welfare technologies of power. Both novels, it seems to me, put biopolitical concerns in the forefront of plot, character, setting, dialogue, and all other forms of narrative fictional discourse. Central to both novels is the preoccupation with the biological production of life: propagation. The concept of infertility, although taken in its literal form in the novels, attests to a symbolic power that critiques the body and its ability and potential to generate the target of biopolitics, that is: the population. They both entail demographic and biological interventions of the kinds of sovereign power which extends its “positive” protective influence on the collective to put restraints on issues of reproduction, race, health and science. For both novels, infertility is both a central plot device and the operating metaphor for the condition of life at this moment in history, which is, itself, projected and displaced onto a fictional future.

An advantage of reading these texts in the light of Foucault’s and Agamben’s ideas, given the texts’ central themes’ relevance to their philosophical deployments on power relations, derives from the analytical utility their arguments encompass. In fact, Foucault and Agamben’s critique of the contemporary historical period in which these texts are born, naturally, allows us to apply their theoretical terms to literary criticism. Rethinking fictions through biopolitics enables us to make sense of the effects of social and political distributions of power in our everyday life. The use of

fiction in this way, I argue, is foremost applicable to theoretical criticism because it reveals the historical and epistemic conditions of people and cites, as well as why and how power works, by offering different ways of thinking about these conditions. What would it be like to think about fictional accounts of bodies and how they are produced, but without the descriptive insights of Foucault and Agamben's arguments that study and resituate the parameters of our existence? I will explore this possibility in the following chapters in which fictional events and characters incarnate produced bodies and wager their bare lives in terminal worlds where sovereigns and biotechnological corporations decide who to "make" live and "let" die.

2 (Re)Producing the Subject in P.D. James's *The Children of Men*

Alfonso Cuarón's camera swings toward a bus full of stranded people who look out in despair through a window toward the entrance to a camp. Jasper, Michael Caine's character in *Children of Men* (2006), drives past this caged human carriage saying "Poor fugees, after escaping the worst atrocities and finally making it to England, our government hunts them down like cockroaches." Directed by Cuarón, this scene rewrites old boundaries of the nation and the body and relocates the borderless situation of the refugee figure in a newly reconfigured form of incarceration. The filming of P. D. James's dystopian novel *The Children of Men* (1993) seeks to explain how or why the human body is a testing site of a new practice of politics. At a time when international society is alarmed with immigration crises and terrorist attacks, or bombarded with epidemic virus alerts, as health ministers caution women in the Americas from becoming pregnant for the next few years, a novel such as *The Children of Men* and its cinematic adaptation appear at first as works of fiction, but quickly become less about a distant dystopian setting but a plausible and possible living present.

In this chapter I intend to show how *The Children of Men* and Cuarón's film based on James's novel, complement each other and take different rhetorical positions to communicate the applications and effects of biopolitical power and biopower throughout the texts. While the novel takes its central conceit from biopower through which all life is produced, regulated and managed, the film not only presents the biopolitical management of civil society, but also the human body as a potential site of a newly emerging power to resist the thorough mechanisms of

authority. The novel dramatizes the disciplinary regimes and practices of biopower, which I have outlined in the introduction to this project (i.e., the systematic, bureaucratic, managerial and epistemological control over the body). It does this by its direct portrayal of state-controlled racism and health policies that determine and regulate the qualifications and quantity of human bodies according to the needs and wishes of the state. The power in the novel shifts from a centralized tyrannical figure to the decentralized and systemic workings of a modern scientific biopower. In the novel, human infertility—the major crisis in the text—is the vehicle that brings forward the issue of reproductive crises whereby the body is reduced to the biological machine doomed to failed attempts to reproduce sexually, economically and politically. The film's take on James's story, on the other hand, illustrates the biopolitical resistance of the human body, the way in which bodies respond to power, either fecklessly or efficaciously. The refugee figure, the image of the camp, and resurgence of the civilians dramatize how the society engages in a contest with its own constituents. The film does this by showing the physical, racial and symbolic realities within a fictional biopolitical structure.

In the following chapter, I plan to argue that these texts present the body as the site of a politics designed not merely to create life (which is the state's biopolitical and existential goal), but to control that life that is or is not capable of creation. If we consider these texts addressing a problem directly, it is the inability of one generation to create another, which, in these texts takes on its most physical (yet allegorical) form. It is my argument that the modes and methods of power over the body that are applied in these texts can best be understood through the frame of a biopolitical analysis, especially one that attends to the practices of control over the

body executed by the state for its own maintenance. The irony of the techniques of power in these texts, suggest that control over the body merely adds to collective infertility rather than curing it. These texts make no explicit arguments or conditions for the future of the children of men; instead, they demonstrate the limits of the biopolitical field and the potential for resistance to absolute control over the body and its material, national, and existential boundaries. In both the novel and the film, the bodies of characters who are exempted from eugenic testing because they are deemed damaged or undesirable are the ones that give birth. In the novel, a child is born from a couple with physical disabilities. In the film, the child is born to an African refugee. Only those deemed unworthy by the system are capable of reproduction at all. This does not signal a life outside of biopolitical organization (since this system is total in its reach), but that bodies that are unworthy of biopolitical regulation may be the grounds of a post-biopolitical social configuration.

2.1: The Machines of Social and Bodily Control

The novel depicts a compartmental society in the year 2021. It is an entropic world in which every man and woman becomes mysteriously and inexplicably sterile. The year 1995 becomes known as “Omega,” the date when the last generation of humanity—the Omegas—are born. James’s version of this terminal society dramatizes a state undergoing an ideological and political impasse, because of the reproductive crisis. The novel also explicitly dramatizes the various ways through which the state implements power over bodies. The biopolitical management carried out on the micro- and macro-level inevitably leads the reader to consider both the

biopolitical consequences of the text and its resonance with contemporary political history. The mechanisms of imprisonment, security and surveillance, as well as the systems for the control of populations specifically regarding sex and reproductive health open up a discursive space within the novel to examine the reproductive regulation of the body and the reproduction of systems created to define and manage the concept of “normal” and “acceptable” bodily conduct for the purpose of sustaining the ongoing social order.

England, as James portrays it in the novel, is a chaotic remnant of a once-civilized country that is supervised by the protagonist Theodore Faron’s cousin Xan Lyppiat, the dictator and Warden of England. The title “Warden” already evokes an absolutism that governs the population as subjects of surveillance and recreates the national space as a prison where citizens become inmates. Xan and his advisory council hold absolute control over Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Xan’s massive security network consists of a private army, the “Grenadiers,” and the state security police, called the “SSP,” who spy on and execute citizens who fail to comply with the social or biological conditions of his leadership. Any offenders convicted of a crime against Xan’s state are sent to the “Isle of Man Penal Colony” where gangs of criminals already inhabiting the island rule over a lawless microstate. The immigrant guest workers, called the “Sojourners,” are either put into the labor force in the service of the privileged minority until they are no longer fit for work or sent to prison camps. All healthy males are obliged have their semen tested regularly just as all healthy young women must undertake an invasive fertility examination by the state health officials every six months. State-provided massages are given in spaces that once represented the intellectual prowess of England. A standardized sanitary

and anesthetic model of control orients the society to the state-sponsored pornography shops to stimulate and encourage sex. Since infertility becomes the novel's lens through which it questions the exercise and limits of state power, the novel itself forms a critical reaction to contemporary biopolitical and historical power relations. The elderly, who are excluded from the fertility incitement programme by nature, are relegated and killed by a governmental process called the "Quietus"; this systematic slaughter is advertised as a volitional act of group suicide. Physical bodies which do not behave in certain ways or cannot be subjugated thus are repressed or exterminated. The physical and political intervention on an individual's body as a means to control the population at large transcends the biopolitical and exemplifies what Foucault calls biopower.

A key point about both texts of *The Children of Men* is that the texts perform a kind of cultural critique of contemporary biopower and biopolitics by showing the possibilities of resistance to it. In cultural and literary critic Fredric Jameson's words it presents "imaginary resolutions [to] our real contradictions" (Jameson 401). They elicit an appraisal of philosophical ideas by their display of social and political corruption and application of power in the modern age. They do this in their expository passages or scenes that attend to hierarchical and unequal relations of a society that resorts to violence and genocide to preserve comfort and security. The absence of hope for an optimistic future coupled with the fear of overpopulation and lack of resources justifies public and state-inflicted cruelty in the name of protecting one's own territory. Though the principle object of this study is James's novel, the analysis of this paper will end the discussion of this novel with some of the changes Cuarón's film has made to the body and conclusion of the text. Unlike James' novel,

Cuarón's film presents an ambiguous resolution in which the survival of the first child is not protected by a new and benevolent state, but is brought aboard a ship called "Tomorrow." In this way, we can see James' resolution and Cuarón's resolution differ significantly. While James reads the reinstatement of a good king as the answer to a political contradiction, Cuarón presents a postnational, free-floating and unanchored boat as its answer. It is possible to read these differences historically, since James's novel cannot conceive, historically, of the refugee crises of the twenty-first century. Cuarón's treatment of the James's text alters her textual resolution to encompass new crises related to national civil wars, migration, the status of refugees, and the changing conditions of the nation-state and its nationals.

2.2: The Sexualization of the Population

The central metaphor of the novel is infertility and the inability of England to create a future for itself. This metaphor exemplifies the ways in which the state regulates, arranges, cares for and manages its population. The body is mechanized by the state and is treated as a product. As Theo notes, "Our ageing bodies are pummeled, stretched, stroked, caressed, anointed, scented. We are manicured and pedicured, measured and weighed...I am so anxious to stay alive as anyone else, just as obsessed with the functioning of my body" (7). The state-provided massage and care exemplifies one of the ways the state claims the bodies of its population.

The bodies are important as long as they are potentially viable for production and they are oversupplied with services by vestiges of a now defunct fertility

industry. Pornography shops and sexual violence are normalized and detached completely from sensuality and love. As Theo explains:

Sex has become the least important of man's sensory pleasures. One might have imagined that with the fear of pregnancy permanently removed, and the unerotic paraphernalia of pills, rubber and ovulation arithmetic no longer necessary, sex would be freed for new and imaginative delights. The opposite has happened. Even those men and women who would normally have no wish to breed apparently need the assurance that they could have a child if they wished. Sex totally divorced from procreation has become almost meaninglessly acrobatic [...]. Sex can still be a mutual comfort; it is seldom a mutual ecstasy. The government-sponsored porn shops, the increasingly explicit literature, all the devices to stimulate desire – none has worked. Men and women still marry, although less frequently, with less ceremony and often with the same sex. People still fall in love, or say that they are in love. There is an almost desperate searching for the one person, preferably younger but at least one's own age, with whom to face the inevitable decline and decay. We need the comfort of responsive flesh, of hand on hand, lip on lip. But we read the love poems of previous ages with a kind of wonder. (*The Children of Men* 116)

The compelling detail in this passage demonstrates the collective despair and melancholy when sex loses its connection to bodily pleasure and instead becomes a mechanized act completed in the name of science and survival, encouraged and maintained by the bureaucratic apparatus. Yet in a curious reversal, sex without procreative possibilities only provides, as Theo writes: “painful orgasms [or] spasms

[without] pleasure” (116). But this is less contradictory when one considers that sex is considered purely as a procreative act that has become impossible. A world in which sex is liberated not only from conception, but from contraception and abortion creates, perhaps ironically, a lack of interiority and control over the individual’s relationship to the pleasure of the body. On the other hand, the body employed only for pleasure exposes an unrestrained mechanization of the flesh. The reason that this experience is unpleasurable, according to Theo, is because it has rendered the sex act as only an experience of pleasure, and in its newly limited dimension, this pleasure has ceased to be pleasurable.

In either case when the potential for reproduction is either organically or artificially contravened, sexual relationships reemerge as practices removed from the autonomy of the subjects in pursuit of pleasure. The “assurance” to know that one is enacting his or her own agency by nature is the assurance to perceive that one is his or her own willful production but not coerced by any power center or social order. When societal norms such as love, marriage, or sexuality, which are associated not only with bodily pleasure but more directly to the reproduction of the species, the majority of the novel’s characters become apathetic. This not only gives rise to state-centered control over the body, but to struggles and revolutions against the systematic discipline practices. It is not the bodily pleasure of sex but the bodily autonomy of sex that is ultimately lost.

2.3: Omegas: The Egocentric Biopolitical Objects of Desire

The Omegas, the children born during the last year of human fertility,

exemplify the stultifying malaise of the reproductive crisis. These young people are the only hope for humankind and so are “more studied, more examined, more agonized over, more valued [and] more indulged” (10). While the male Omegas are defined as “strong,” “individualistic,” “intelligent,” and “handsome as young gods,” the female Omegas cast a “different beauty, classical, remote, listless, without animation or energy” (10). Either as gods or as statues, neither are defined in human terms. They are inimitable both in their appearance and anti-social behavior. The Omegas’ quasi-perfect bodies are reified as they are defined as “exceptionally beautiful” which for the aging population stand for “a race apart, indulged, propitiated, feared, regarded with a half-superstitious awe” (10). These superior bodies only remain social within their own network and therefore, manifest a complete detachment from the reality of the population. They lack “human sympathy” and have no need nor desire for the existence of a community, the purpose of which—social continuance—has become outmoded. As Theo notes:

Perhaps we have made our Omegas what they are by our own folly; a regime which combines perpetual surveillance with total indulgence is hardly conducive to healthy development. If from infancy you treat children as gods they are liable in adulthood to act as devils...Omegas I taught were intelligent but disruptive, ill-disciplined and bored. Their unspoken question, ‘What is the point of all this?’ was one I was glad I wasn’t required to answer. (*The Children of Men* 11)

Here Theo articulates the nihilism, indifference and self-absorption that the Omegas come to represent. They are the products of a “regime which combines perpetual

surveillance with total indulgence” and thus are absent from the intellectual or political public sphere unless they can effectually produce babies. Their perfect corporeality exemplifies subjectivities that are “observed, studied, cosseted, indulged [and] preserved” for the sole purpose of reproduction (54). Otherwise, they remain socially and psychologically barren.

The sterile Omegas isolate themselves and form gangs to terrorize and kill people unless they are caught by the State Security Police. In that case, they are either offered immunity with the condition of joining the SSP or deported to other countries to labor and therefore are reintegrated into the mechanization of the state apparatuses. They are either bound to the nurturing and constant intervention of the state or they are made to enforce its nurturing and constant intervention.

The Omegas for the non-Omega majority are the egocentric and eugenic race that generates neuroses in the wider population. While the imperfect are prevented from the regulatory apparatuses of conception, the Omegas are incited to procreate. They are, according to Jasper, “the most ignorant, the most criminal and the most selfish section of society” (*The Children of Men* 45). In his dialogue with Theo, Jasper contends that the universal infertility might be the best catastrophe that ever befell on the humanity. As he says,

Now, for the rest of our lives, we’re going to be spared the intrusive barbarism of the young, their noise, their pounding, repetitive, computer produced so-called music, their violence, their egotism disguised as idealism. My God, we might even succeed in getting rid of Christmas, that annual celebration of parental guilt and juvenile greed. (*The Children of Men* 45)

There appears, from the perspective of Jasper, an overflowing sentiment of disgust for the apolitical nihilism and lethargy of the Omegas. The acknowledgement of being the sole extant fertile humans makes the Omegas, according to this passage; an egocentric generation whose self-important contentment within the new social order is inclined to a more feral, asinine and eerily crude existence. At the same time, Jasper's sentiments reflect a collective pessimism on the part of the middle-aged and elderly generation which now wants to divorce itself from the role of the provider and caregiver. His outburst of emotions also echoes his wish to break loose from the biopolitical circle that demands he recognize and comply with the reproduction of the people and system against their own will.

And yet, children and the idea of being a parent are reified and fetishized in the novel. Although the children's playgrounds are dismantled, they are turned into spaces of memory. People watch films and television shows only to see children and listen to records of children voices as if they provide an anesthetic pleasure. Women seek to satisfy their maternal desire with life-size porcelain dolls much like the "reborn dolls" of our contemporary culture. They treat dolls as their artificial children and wheel them about in prams. Theo defines these dolls as "a parody of childhood" and finds them expressly horrifying in their realistic looks as he thinks they suggest "a dormant intelligence, alien and monstrous" (*The Children of Men* 34). In a tragic and perverse ceremony, some women give "pseudo-birth" to these substitute babies. If a mishap befalls them, the dolls can be buried in consecrated grounds with church ceremony. Other women treat their pets as objects of motherhood, as substitute satisfactions to be christened in birth celebrations. This

begs the question, at the risk of extrapolating too much from a desire that places the dolls in place of real babies to appease an ontological challenge, whether biopower and biopolitics could only operate through the functionings of a State: or if men and women bring that power into being when they demand substitute satisfactions. Certainly, there is a historical tradition of motherhood, whether or not this is contingent upon culture. The desire of many women to have children has not evaporated even as the potential to bear children has. The baby's body that is newly absent from the sphere of life is turned into (or possibly revealed to be) a commodity in this society, where biopolitical organization renders the individual mechanically adept at engineering life. As long as the machinery generates life or mimics it, state biopower continues to operate successfully. In this way, motherhood is complicit with state systems. The regeneration can be that of artificial, robotic or non-human life. Thus the missing body of the infant figure is reproduced as dolls, kittens or puppies in order to appease the collective anxiety of a society experiencing a reproductive crisis.

What is also introduced is a feature common to this type of intervention to imitate life: the reproduction of the best genes. The Warden, his council and even those who resist state policies demonstrate a perverse logic of eugenics in the process of engineering new human life. The mentally or physically imperfect are systematically exempted from the state's semen and fertility examinations and therefore excluded from the gene pool. As Theo tersely describes the situation, "No one who was in any way physically deformed, or mentally unhealthy, [is] in the list of women from whom the new race would be bred if ever a fertile male was discovered" (39). Mentally or physically weak, unhealthy or sexually "non-

normative” people do not fall into the category of life that biopower seeks to sustain. Instead the state apparatuses search for the desired life among the perfect Omegas who are young, healthy and beautiful. The tests are secured solely for the “physically and morally fit” (102) and aim to “bree[d] out the psychopathy” (103) as a member of the council affirms. The ultimate goal of state biopower is to generate life from those with no criminal or family record of offense against the state. This eugenic state policy and post-interventionist mechanism is internalized by the subjects in the novel, which maintains the perpetuation of the system that favors certain life forms over others. The selective screenings exclude Julian and Luke who, ironically, conceive a baby. They had been considered unviable candidates for fertility testing since both have undesirable qualities that eugenic principle of the state marginalizes. Luke is exempt from sperm counts due to childhood epilepsy while Julian escapes the fertility-testing programme owing to a minor deformity of her hand. Both Luke and Julian are, as Theo defines the term, “a reject” (188) that Xan’s regime of surveillance neglects to care for and maintain. Their lives are devalued and obliterated in the newly reconstructed biopolitical organization of the regime.

2.4: The Old *Homo Sacer* and The Sea

Another undesirable group in the novel is the elderly. Although Xan and his council import labour power to provide care for the old, they institute a mass execution process called Quietus as an immediate solution to eliminate inconvenient bodies. For the elderly, Quietus is allegedly a private, voluntary and legitimate act of

euthanasia. It is, however, an officially sponsored drowning accompanied by “proper safeguards,” namely, the SSP (59). The state security police gather the sedated elderly into a boat and then sink them by attaching weights to their feet while making sure nobody gets a chance to escape. Nevertheless, the state apparatuses present the horrifying practice as a patriotic act and offers incentives to the relations of those elderly who choose to die. Those who accept the Quietus sign a form in triplicate: a single copy of which is distributed among the Local Council, the family—so that the blood money can be claimed—and the old person partaking the infamous process. Once the boat sets off, the signed copies are collected from the elderly to be sent to the “Office of Census and Population” (95). It is a legalized and documented form of state murder.

The lexical meaning of “quietus” is “death” or “the end of something.” The word refers to a kind of death especially when it is seen as a relief. Renaming death by a word more delicate and poetic possibly in reference to Shakespeare’s use of the word in Hamlet’s “to be or not to be” soliloquy, the government produces an idea that turns suicide into a form of release from an existential crisis. Much like a holiday cruise package, all the steps of the Quietus are organized and dramatized to produce this belief. The atrocious practice is even turned into a television advertisement to elicit empathy. As Theo recounts:

I remembered one picture, I think the only one ever shown on television: white-clad elderly being wheeled or helped on to the low barge-like ship, the high, reedy singing voices, the boat slowly pulling away into the twilight, a seductively peaceful scene, cunningly shot and lit. (*The Children of Men* 47)

Rather than concealing the act, the state exposes it for the public to affirm that Quietus is only practiced when the individual decides to take control over his or her death. Later in the novel, Theo witnesses a quietus much like the state advertisement promotes to the audience. Accompanied by a band that plays patriotic songs, old men and women march to their death. The government eases the old bodies out of the life world through an illusion that promises a heroic end. When a woman among the crowd changes her mind, the SSP intervenes and lets her die. Theo, when trying to help the drowning woman, gets beaten by the police and loses consciousness. As the narrator describes the scene:

A crashing wave tore the nightdress from her shoulder and he saw the breast swaying obscenely like a giant jellyfish. She was still screaming, a high, piercing whistle like a tortured animal. And almost at once he recognized her. It was Hilda Palmer-Smith. (*The Children of Men* 74)

Hilda Palmer-Smith, the wife of Theo's friend Jasper, has clearly not elected to be euthanized, yet her euthanasia is enforced by the state police on the demand that her unproductive body be terminated. The prose of this passage, with the image of the breast as a jellyfish and the cry of an animal, suggests the complete dehumanization of his friend. She is no longer a human body, but a beast.

Others who sign up for this illusory nobility, in the terms used by Giorgio Agamben, lose their access to a qualified life and turn into a *homo sacer*; they can be killed but not sacrificed (*Homo Sacer* 8). Theo's attempt to save the woman fails since, once she signs away her right to live, assured by the state, she voluntarily allows herself to be excluded from the life-world. The language these people use is

no longer language as we use it but a wailing that of an animal. This scene, as Theo experiences it, tells the tale of the biopolitical apparatuses' ambivalent nature. The elderly, as *homines sacri*, are sacred but, at the same time, are impure as their "incapacitated" (*The Children of Men* 8) bodies disrupt the mechanisms of biopower. The medical interventions to provide longevity and health in the old age, according to Xan, are a waste of economic power since senility in a terminal society becomes a condition that only exacerbates entropy. Xan sets a limit in his political system's regimentation and lets the elderly choose to become the "sacred men" (*Homo Sacer* 139) by making their bodies unfit for use by the state and throws them into the sea. The body that floats until engulfed by the water seems like a metaphor to undergird the advancement of biopolitical scheme that cuts the roots of the bare life it once claimed.

2.5: Transcending the Politics of Discipline and *Habeas Corpus*

The violence in the novel is almost always used as a means to prop up the political apparatus of disciplining. The Warden and his council isolate all convicted criminals to the Man Penal Colony in the name of fighting the social evil: so-called race riots, sexual and violent crimes and criminal uprising of the 1990s justify the fascist policies of Xan's regime. Lifelong sentences are legitimized for any given offender regardless of the gravity of their crimes. Notably, a minor misdemeanor results in permanent deportation to the penal colony where prisoners convicted of serious crimes have the absolute authority. Assassinations, hunger and lawlessness await those who are exiled to the island. When Theo asks why the council overlooks

the disorder at the Colony, a council member explains the logic of the penal system saying:

If people choose to assault, rob, terrify, abuse and exploit others, let them live with people of the same mind. If that's the kind of society they want, then give it to them. If there is any virtue in them, they will organize themselves sensibly and live at peace with each other. If not, their society will degenerate into the chaos they're so ready to impose on others. The choice is entirely theirs. (*The Children of Men* 97)

Having been left to their own devices, the prisoners are expected to rehabilitate themselves. However, the reality of the novel proves that the convicts are left to die at the hands of their own worst fellow inmates. The council's policy of the penal colony performs a kind of mass catharsis for the citizens favored by the council, through which the nuclei of crime and violence will be eliminated. On the Isle of Man, the prisoners become wardens and governors of each other. Xan and the council's rule lets the convicts die while policing and judging themselves. In this sense, the penal colony serves as a space of non-interference that helps the state to administer population control. It is designed as a legalized form of selective extermination to breed out the psychopathy from the society. The same council member justifies this constitution as she continues by reminding Theo of the historical preconditions of the present-day sanctioning:

You must remember the 1990s, women afraid to walk the streets of their own cities, the rise in sexual and violent crime, old people self-imprisoned in their flats—some burned to death behind their bars—drunken hooligans

ruining the peace of country towns, children as dangerous as their elders, no property safe if it wasn't protected with expensive burglar alarms and grilles. Everything has been tried to cure man's criminality, every type of so-called treatment, every regime in prisons. Cruelty and severity didn't work, but neither did kindness and leniency. Now, since Omega, people have said to us: 'Enough is enough.' The priests, the psychiatrists, the psychologists, the criminologists—none has found the answer. What we guarantee is freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom from boredom. The other freedoms are pointless without the freedom from fear. (*The Children of Men* 96)

The retroactive assessment of criminality and violence produces a repressive order where law enforces its power through physical violence. The council infers that if the institutions of the state are incapable of curing or putting an end to criminality, then the state can also use coercive means and radical measures to provide security to its law-abiding citizens. The fundamental allusion in the council's speech also hints that the sanctions are enforced in the name of the will of the people: the voice of the people says, "Enough is enough." In a state of scarcity, this seems to beg the question "enough of what?" The central question becomes whether society should have a say in the enforcement of penalties. It appears as if the state, whose power and law mechanisms fail to annihilate criminality, puts society in charge to legitimate legal punishment. Although the idea seems theoretically possible, the implication of the method produces a culture of holocaust that fosters a dangerous form of biopolitical management to dispose of people's lives.

Undeniably, the penal colony also uncovers the once-subtle politics of social class and racial segregation in the society. A man convicted of a petty crime in the novel refers to a kind of distorted social dimension upon which inequality is based. In this way, the novel comments on the unequal discipline based on racial difference in the passages telling the story of a black man's conviction for burglary. The man, Henry, robs an Omega and pushes her over before he escapes. At the court the Omega accuses Henry of kicking her in the ribs while she is on the ground, which is factually untrue. Henry's lawyer too misrepresents him and agrees with the prosecution that Henry "ought to be sent to the island" and, as Henry's sister says; "After all, it was an Omega he robbed. That counted against him. And then, he's black" (61). Here, the incident reflects not only the pent-up anger in the society, but also makes a parallel with the idea of the purge. Henry "ought to be sent" to the island because he is poor, black and has a criminal record. While Henry is a sojourner, his target is an Omega, who is not held to the same standards or same laws as others. When an Omega is caught committing a crime, he or she can get relative immunity. They are offered the choice to join the SSP and can beat, maim or kill others under the name of serving the regime.

People further internalize this kind of inequality by rationalizing the lawlessness of Xan's state, such as when Theo does when talking to a revolutionary group who demands that the penal colony be shut down. He says, "Obviously there are social evils, but they are nothing to what's happening in other parts of the world. It's a question of what the country is prepared to tolerate as the price of sound government" (64). Theo's sense of Xan's government is that it does not "act in advance of the moral will of people" which keeps Xan and his council unaccountable

for their decisions. Indeed, the council's intentional fear mongering through consolidating crime and war ensures the effective influence of its public pledge for "freedom from fear" (64). Xan's political strategy claims not to act in advance of the moral will of people. The convicts in the novel are, in the view of the committee, parasitic and unscrupulous and therefore pose a threat in the form of a societal disease. The Isle of Man Penal Colony is the space where violence supposedly cures this societal disease, leaving the rest of the population secure and uncontaminated.

2.6: The Refugees as the Post-Modern *Homo Sacer*

In a similar vein, the immigrant guest workers, the Sojourners, exemplify the same nativist fear of invasion. In Xan's regime the immigrants are meticulously selected so as to allow only resourceful immigrants to serve as manual labourers in public works. The Sojourners supply the "comfort" the state promises to provide its citizens with: they do the "dirty work, clean the sewers, clean away the rubbish, look after the incontinent, [and] the aged" (58). However, these workers are deported at once when they turn sixty years old. So, the country needs immigrant labour but only allows it within a certain system that imports and exports them like industrial machines. The Sojourners are the extra-legal "helots" or "slaves" who are subjected to a quota under Xan's demographic chart. A council member in charge of the Industry and Production rationalizes the state's immigration policy to Theo:

You're not suggesting we should have unrestricted immigration? Remember what happened in Europe in 1990s? People become tired of invading hordes, from countries with just as many natural advantages as this, who had allowed

themselves to be misgoverned for decades through their own cowardice, indolence and stupidity and who expected to take over and exploit the benefits which had been won over centuries by intelligence, industry and courage, while incidentally perverting and destroying the civilization of which they were so anxious to become part. (*The Children of Men* 97)

This paragraph articulates the political and social preconditioning of the immigration policy. The Sojourners, despite their economic use, are perceived as a threat to the country's stability—their very existence is a contradiction that the state cannot apprehend or contain except by means of force. In fact, the xenophobic speech of the council member points at the anti-immigrant sentiments directed at the Sojourners. Their existence is reduced to a mere biological condition and in that sense the sojourner is stripped of a politically qualified life and remains legal within the borders of the mainland only as long as the council's extra-legal policies allow them to work. In this context, the rule of Xan's law legitimizes its illegitimate means of intervention by promising to eradicate fear. It preserves the comfort of culture to those whose lives are politically and socially qualified, supposing that the sojourners' health condition of existence sustains the state's policy. Clearly, the state's handling of the Sojourners is built upon the same biopolitical power and management of life as are the practices of Quietus or the Penal Colony.

As immigrant workers, Sojourners are subjected to normative and discriminative practices of administration and live up to a quota. The words that define the immigrant figure such as “cowardice,” “indolence,” or “stupidity” reflect the perceptions of the non-native and underline the feeling of prejudice towards the

immigrants. Their exploitable bodies are of use to the regime for replacing the declining number of bodies in the labour force but are also considered symptoms of an invasion or a discomfiting threat to the civilization, which, as the member rants; “had been won over centuries by intelligence, industry and courage.” They are perpetual outsiders and enemies of the regime that they are supposed to integrate. Xan’s Britain takes up the burden of being “the multiracial boarding house” for the sole purpose of providing and preserving “food, necessary medicines, light, water and power” for a chosen community who is expected to sustain the population in the future (98). The rest of the people who are enslaved or left to die, then, are conditioned to believe in the necessity of death and labor for the maintenance of a sound government. They are included in the system to maintain it until their maintenance is no longer required. These immigrant workers or Sojourners are produced by the system because of their linguistic and cultural otherness and evoke an image of a post-modern *homo sacer*. They are not only produced by the state, but they are produced by the state to have their labour extracted from them before they are eliminated.

The novel provides far less attention to the state of the Sojourners compared with Cuaròn’s revision of them as fugees. In the film, the figure of the fugee better exemplifies the otherness of *homo sacer* within the biopolitical models of power. Even though the film differs from the original story in a number of ways, it maintains the notion of life under the authority of a biopolitical system which, as Agamben notes, “constitutes itself through an exclusion (which is simultaneously an inclusion) of bare life” (*Homo Sacer* 7). In both the novel and the film, the state of the immigrant/refugee figure is nevertheless examined as the status of an unworthy,

unwelcome yet systematically necessary component to a system crippled by its own lack of population. They are members of a system that excludes them only insofar as it can include them within its own mechanisms of power.

2.7: The Living Dead Wo/Men in *Children of Men*

Alfonso Cuarón's take on the novel extends the thrust of the original text by resituating the post-apocalypticism of infertility in the visual sphere of the contemporary world. Even though the trope of infertility is removed from a distant and unlikely future, it is grafted onto present-day imagery in order to demonstrate the infertility of the systems of biopower and the biopolitical practices which have been designed to maintain them. Only this time, the visual language of the text displays the alertness of fugees and revolutionaries to the practices of biopower—a kind of biopolitical class consciousness of the individual and collective in an infertile society. Cuarón literally and symbolically maps post 9/11 images of world history into the film by putting emphasis on the managerial and disciplinary strategies of the state apparatuses that are at work in our globalized world. This is nowhere more evident in the films' axial tenet, which suggests that bodies are no longer capable of reproduction. It does this by replicating a totalitarian regime that produces and regulates life politically, ideologically and socially. Despite its major differences, Cuarón's vision complements the novel in many ways. The characters and their involvement in the story line are altered in the film as we see Theo (Clive Owen) as a bureaucrat, who escorts and protects a pregnant girl, an African immigrant named Kee (Claire- Hope Ashitey), to get to the coast of London where she will get on a

rescue ship called “Tomorrow.” The ship belongs to “The Human Project”: a secretive group of scientists who aim to end the infertility pandemic and about whom the film gives little information but whom it deploys symbolically to hint at the resurgence of a humanist reform.

Theo and Kee’s journey witnesses discourses of power that are preoccupied with the body: the immigrant/refugee body, the body of the dissident, and the body of the other. Borders, cages and iron gates are the agents of control in defining the societal parameters the film chooses to foreground. In this symbolic order of the physical space, “fugees” appear in the film expressly to dramatize the status of refugees who have no rights because they reside outside the discourse of “citizenship.” The status of the “fugee” and human lives as demonstrated by other characters reflect different symbolic statuses to examine the arbitrary fiction of the figure who can be specifically *included* under the law. Giorgio Agamben’s central conceit, *homo sacer*, with his theory of sovereignty provides the visual grammar of the film that comments on the human condition under a totalitarian authority. Drawing on Foucault’s philosophy on biopolitics, Agamben’s work especially in reference to the state of sovereign power as a producer of the biopolitical body can help us understand why the film as a text needs to include refugees. The refugees represent a type of life that transitions from what Agamben calls *homo sacer* as someone “who may be killed but not sacrificed” (*Homo Sacer* 83) into “bare life,” which in his words becomes “the one place for both the organization of the State power and emancipation from it” (9). The refugees are the *homines sacri* whose lives are concentrated into bare life once their labour power is extinguished. When retired, they are excluded from the political order and are arrested, caged, and transported to

the refugee camp called “Bexhill Refugee Camp” as a non-human object of exceptional measures of biopolitics. Borrowing from Agamben’s work on the status of exception, “The exception is what cannot be included in the whole of which it is a member and cannot be a member of the whole in which is always already included” (25). From this claim, the refugees in the film can be seen as included in the legal order only through their exclusion from it: they return folded into the legal system only once their exclusion has been made manifest. Their life is unvalued when they fall outside a biopolitically-recognized terrain. In fact, they can only enter into a system of “valued life” once they are included, and their lack of value is caused by their exclusion. The old bodies of the British citizens and the aging bodies of the “Sojourners” or “Fugees” are disposed of in a similar manner. The old British nationals who resign their right of citizenry in the novel and the refugees whose labour use is over become the new living dead men/women. These symbolic figures expose the tenuous and arbitrary yet fundamental definition of citizen and its distinction from non-citizen which again makes us ask whether or not they can actually be made “alien” or if they supersede the national law especially at that point in human history when certain groups of people declared non-human or partially human. In other words, a non-human cannot be made either exempt from or subject to human law. Thus, power folds the excluded back into its domain even as it refuses its laws attachment to them.

The fugees become to be identified with the system that Agamben terms: the “hidden point of intersection between the juridico-institutional and the biopolitical models of power” (6). This category exists in the novel when subjects who have a qualified life live in a state of biopolitical management such as routine medical

examinations, controlled executions or incitement to sex to produce the ideal type of citizen for the system. Instead of showing these subjections that take place in the novel, the film exposes how the refugee publicly embodies the bare life that is included temporarily to bios. In the film, we see the kind of incarnations of sovereign power when Theo travels to the outskirts of the city to meet Jasper. The camera pans over herds of caged refugees who represent different races and talk in various languages as Theo walks by them. Then the camera slows down to focus on an elderly woman incarcerated with African men. She seems to complain to a policeman in German and says “schvartzes”: (a derogatory term in Yiddish to refer to a black person, a word that comes from German “schwarz,” black). The old Jewish woman’s reaction in this context insinuates the racial division and social statuses even in the carcel environment in the pen. All fugees are excluded, but they do not recognize their exclusion as common, as this scene suggests. This woman exemplifies a body that is subject to a sovereign, as someone who once had but no longer has any specific human rights attached to her and who, as a result of the repressive apparatuses, replicates the ideological otherness that imprisons her by saying “schvartzes!”

Moving from this example, the cages, buses, train stations and the camp all of which seem to be located in and outside the city simultaneously seem like a physical allusion to communicate the statelessness of refugee figures. Statelessness, I argue, is the condition of inhabiting a body that is in possession of rights but whose rights rest on an ontologically untransferable set of rights that remain outside the juridical institutions. A stateless person is the figure for whom human rights are most essential, but for whom there is no guarantor. The scenes at “Homeland Security

Bexhill Refugee Camp” visually replicate scenes from contemporary history such as the internments, tortures, and exterminations of Guantánamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, and Auschwitz concentration camp. These are sites the film reproduces to demonstrate the point of contact between citizenry or bare life, and the site where bare life is ultimately broken, exterminated, and destroyed. The focus shifts here, in Foucault’s terms from *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, from the production of life to the state’s mandate to let die (Foucault 136). As I explained in the introduction to this thesis, Foucault argues that what was previously the right of the state to let live and make die, becomes reversed, and in the film, the sovereign of England now exercises the right to make life and let die (Foucault 136-37).

Cuaròn’s visual language communicates a physical space in which the camp is ubiquitous and conjures the idea Agamben provocatively asserts when he notes, “the camp is the very paradigm of political space at the point at which politics becomes biopolitics and *homo sacer* is virtually confused with citizen” (171). The prison of the refugee is the repressive apparatus of the camp, which seems to impose the organization of a detainee or concentration camp. The violent repressive mechanisms of the sovereign produce fascism and xenophobia within the society such as the public advertisements in the film that reads: “To hire, feed or shelter illegal immigrants is a crime. Protect Britain. Report all illegal immigrants.” Here the refugee is not only criminalized, but also is diminished to his/her bare life to be, as Jasper says earlier, hunted down like cockroaches.

The body of the dissident in the film gives us further insight about the repressive apparatus of the State. Jasper’s wife and Luke, who embody apolitical characters in the novel, are political activists in the film. The former is shown as a

photojournalist who becomes catatonic from the trauma and the latter is leader of a militant underground rebellion group called the “Fishes.” Jasper’s wife is neither alive nor dead but almost in a comatose state that gives little clue about the cause of her condition. However, when the camera pans over personal belongings of Jasper and his wife, it shows an article that reads, “MI6 denies involvement in torture of photojournalist” which shows that her condition is likely a result of state violence. In the process of torture, her bare life is exposed, all its qualifications are stripped away, and her body becomes the site of state repression. In this way, she embodies the new living dead woman: a sacred woman much like *homo sacer* whose qualified life is not subject to torture but life that is stripped of its qualities. Jasper protects her bare life until the time it is threatened by the Fishes. He administers to her the “Quietus”, which is introduced here as a suicide kit, and in doing so saves her from torture and assassination through the tools of the state’s own murder kit. Though the contradiction is apparent, the right to die here is taken by Jasper and not by the state, and soon after, Jasper is murdered by the revolutionaries for not disclosing the location of Theo and Kee.

The Fishes as opposed to the novel’s premise are militarized and violent revolutionaries in the film. While Luke is a pacifist priest and the father of the baby in the novel, in Cuarón’s version he works as a member of a political vanguard who wants to instrumentalize a baby as a way of creating and aligning sympathy with his political agenda. He wants to use Kee’s baby as the ideological marker of the uprising in order to mobilize the refugees as a revolutionary military force. Luke tries to use the momentum of the class-consciousness of the fugees in order to overthrow the State. Even though the intention of the uprising claims to change the repressive

system, the movement turns out to be an affectation; as a kind of corrupted activity of frivolous revolutionaries. Much like the Fishes whose leftist programme in the novel is rather insignificant and self-indulgent, the militant Fishes' uprising on screen is superfluous to the more substantial rebellion; which is the birth of Kee's baby and eventual future of Kee's baby and potential future of that baby to repopulate the species. In fact, the character of Kee, who possesses the body that hosts the symbolic other is a significant deviation from the novel to the film regarding the subject of pregnancy.

2.8: Kee's Baby: *Bare Life* Returned from Death

The character Kee is an invented figure in the film. She is a Third World illegal immigrant and is pregnant with a baby girl. As opposed to the baby in the novel who is a boy, Cuarón assigns a female life to question how life can be protected in state of exception. Kee's pregnancy and baby girl suggests reproductivity, which becomes emblematic of the potential change in the relationship between citizens and refugees. According to Agamben, "The concept of the refugee (and the figure of life that this concept represents) must be resolutely separated from the concept of the rights of man" (*Homo Sacer* 134). In his work, he argues that human rights are the products of the nation State. What Agamben seeks to answer is parallel to the film's questioning whether or not a body is in possession of rights, and whether or not those rights are transferrable or if they exist outside the juridical institution which again conjures up a new conception of rights; biopolitical rights. Citizenry constitutes the State; therefore the production of children constitutes the

sovereign. The scene in which Kee reveals her pregnancy to Theo in a barn surrounded by cows, much like an image of fecundity, undergirds the heteronormativity of the State and the film. The baby girl inside Kee ensures that her mother's excluded bare life to be included back into political life. However, in Kee's condition, bare life is included as an exception either in the State order or in the figure of human rights. Even though she is categorized as an illegal "fugee" whose life is separated and accepted as an exclusion, owing to the life she incubates, her life is protected by a kind of vanguard in a world that is otherwise structured as a camp. This deconstructive aspect of Kee's sacredness designates the contact point *between* the indeterminate refugee status and the blatant *homo sacer*.

2.9: The Coronation of Refuse and Carnage

The film ends with the failure of the uprising. Theo, Kee and the baby get on a boat amid bombs and gunfire and make it to the sea. Theo dies and the Human Project's rescue boat "Tomorrow" arrives. What happens next to Kee and her baby remains a mystery, although the ending metaphorically complements the title of the film as it is accompanied by laughter of children. This rhetorical ending, much like a nineteenth-century way of directing the audience to address a polemical, argumentative and communicative function, implies that, in the context of the sovereign, men die but there is a return from the dead as well. Kee's baby represents a kind of cyclical renewal of death and birth conquering all. This is, in Jameson's terms, the imaginary resolution to the contradictions of bare life, citizenship, and the status of the refugee. Cuarón's version of the text, in this sense, shatters the novel's

conclusion by showing the diffusion of power at the end. Even though there is and was no central authority figure in the film, the power mechanisms of democratic totalitarianism continuously point at the refugees as the scapegoats. The sacred body of the “fugees” as the refuse of the system is co-created by and co-dependent on the security apparatuses of the State that not only seeks to create its subjects but perversely creates them by their engineering and elimination.

The end of the novel can be read as more reactionary than the film because it sees an unofficial coronation of Theo after killing Xan when Theo places the Warden’s ring on his own finger. Immediately following this gesture, Theo improvises an air of authority. Although his intention seems to be to pursue a noble cause as he claims to protect Julian and her baby under the protection of a symbol of power, after the symbolic coronation he starts addressing the Council and the Grenadiers in a peremptory manner. In the context of the novel, the scene strikingly describes the convergence of democratic and totalitarian form of power that overcomes Theo as he seems to infer:

Theo thought: It begins again, with jealousy, with treachery, with violence, with murder, with this ring on my finger...Placing it on his hand had been instinctive and yet deliberate, a gesture to assert authority and ensure protection...Did he need to wear it now? He had all Xan’s power within his grasp, that and more...For a time at least he must take Xan’s place. There were evils to be remedied; but they must take their turn. He couldn’t do everything at once, there had to be priorities. Was that what Xan had found? And was this sudden intoxication of power what Xan had known every day of his life? The sense that everything was possible to him, that what he

wanted would be done, that what he hated would be abolished, that the world could be fashioned according to his will. He drew the ring from his finger, then paused and pushed it back. (*The Children of Men* 241)

In this scene, Theo experiences an epiphany through which he questions his subjectivation. He here demonstrates that the object of the symbol of power; the ring, evokes a personal crisis. Theo's previous qualified indifference to Xan's position of power leaves its place to a tacit recognition of what he calls the "intoxication of power." Though Theo is conscious of the corrupting attraction of power, his inner thoughts reflect an intriguing moral and emotional puzzle. When Julian says, "That [ring] wasn't made for your finger," Theo feels anger despite himself and defends his position saying "It's useful for the present. I shall take it off in time" (241). Julian's interference with to Theo's resurgence of authority disrupts his emotional reasoning that claims to act in behalf of the interest of the people: Julian, the baby, and the collective. It is from the location of Theo's transformation as a subject of the king to king as subject that I assessed the role of biopower and biopolitical organizations within James's novel. Immediately after putting on the ring, Theo appoints himself to remedy "the evils" of the state and society and, strikingly, he concludes that there will be "priorities." This statement which points at certain priorities replicates the conditions of tyranny and draws on the ways in which his sense of individual responsibility becomes transformed into a rationalization of his governance of the population. What is obvious to Julian and to the reader remains unknown to Theo. His hesitation to put on or pull the ring off his finger diagnoses how the power shifts from one central authority to another.

Theo's act of keeping the ring in order to establish a new order embodies the individual experience of how the subject is taught to govern the body of the populace. Sovereignty dies only to be reborn within the body of resistance to it. It is my argument that the death of the central authority figure and the subsequent symbolic transference of power communicate the connective tissue between all the biopolitical contexts in the novel. The protecting, disciplining, maintenance, care and arrangement of the body of the population in this novel manifest the ways in which the populace reproduces and sustains the legacy of a system that produces them.



3 Out with the Old: The New Life of Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*

Margaret Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003) follows a narrative and ideological path similar to P. D. James' *The Children of Men* in that it uses the novel as a discursive space to reimagine current historical forms of social and political production of the subject and subjectivities. The novel's dystopian and post-apocalyptic setting furnishes a location for the production and reconfiguration of bodies, as well as a reimagining of life. When discussing the differences between *The Children of Men* and *Oryx and Crake*, the reading of power and control mechanisms points to two different models of governance: the former is centralized and represented by a single authority, while the other power is decentralized and takes its force from ideology without a central figure or entity. While James introduces a squarely biopolitical trope into her text through the fiction of universal infertility that cannot be remedied despite strict regulation, Atwood's narrative explores the radical possibilities and consequences of growing transformed and useable bodies in a world seemingly without a central governing body of any kind. Infertility is not a given condition in Atwood's novel; instead, mass extinction results from a man-made plague caused by one character's desire to repopulate the world with his newly-created ideal species. The two texts interconnect in such a way that they form a grid on which narrative fiction presents possible worlds in which life itself, its forms, structures, potential values, its management and regulation become the points of connection. In framing life and body this way the novel depicts forms of modern classism and racism in a hyper-technological society.

In this chapter I intend to show how Atwood's sense of body politics presents us a body that is hierarchized and fragmented in a way that exposes the terror of a technocratic, engineered, commodified and commodifiable, nearly eugenic construction of the human body. In doing so *Oryx and Crake* exposes contemporary devices of power in our present-day even as they are imagined as part of a dystopian future. The novel makes frequent allusions to global and supra-national modes of capitalism, techniques of surveillance, the disciplining of bodies, and the reproduction of new subjects in a society where science and technology determine the fitness of the organism and engineer the production of the living. The critical commentary I will present in this chapter includes the commodification of bodies, venereal pleasures and I will show how scientific discourse and "power-knowledge," as philosopher Michel Foucault uses the term, maintain the production of the subject. In my view, the novel exposes the commodification of bodies, the ways in which this commodification is simultaneously desired even as it is repudiated, and the ways in which programs designed to create better, fitter, more attractive subjects are ultimately designed to create subjects of power who are merely fit for extermination as they are replaced by superiorly designed post-human creatures. Atwood's novel, in my view, presents a world in which biopolitics are not merely the exercise of power in the form of the state, but internalized, enjoyed, and encouraged as a program of late capitalism.

Oryx and Crake alternates its narration between the time leading up to global catastrophe and the world after the outbreak of a deadly disease that has destroyed the majority of the population on earth. The narrative unfolds through the perspective of Snowman, the protagonist whose name before the apocalypse was simply Jimmy.

On one level, the story focuses on Snowman's struggle to survive while taking care of the bio-engineered superhumans he calls the "Children of Crake" or "Crakers" (9). On another level it describes the complex relations of friendship and betrayal between the three main characters: Jimmy, Crake and Oryx. The biopolitically discursive thrust of the novel is grounded in the organization of all levels of society—from schooling, neighborhoods, employment, and ecology—by technology corporations. Transnational companies retheorize and recompose the human body by categorizing the population culturally and economically into camps. These private corporations replace the prior concept of nation-states and create spaces called "compounds" where subjectivities are historically reconfigured. The compounds that are for the elite include subjects with distinct abilities in mathematics, science and biology. They lead a protected life detached from other communities that are isolated and referred as the "pleeblands." The pleeblands are lawless grounds where the population is socially or economically disadvantaged and politically deemed degenerate by dwellers of the compounds. Geographically and architecturally these gated communities almost already frame the inhabitants to unequal opportunities and spatially reflect the machinery of a late capitalist mode of production. While one group bioengineers transgenetic species and act as pioneers, the underprivileged live in poor conditions excluded from the advantages and privileges of the compounds.

Despite the division in training, established physical boundaries and lack of private/physical space, both the compound and pleebland people are subject to specific biopolitical regimes and mechanisms. Ultimately the novel reveals the corporate proprietorship over genetic materials, sequences and codes as the precursor to the unregulated creation of new unethical, dangerous and uncontrollable forms of

life. The novel creates two fictional temporalities: one in a near future in which corporations have replaced the nation state, and a further future in which human life has become a historical remnant. More importantly, it connects the corporate engineering of life and the body to the production of death. In what follows, I argue that Atwood's novel, unlike *The Children of Men*, does not present a central state-sponsored biopolitical program but instead presents one that is post-national and corporate, but still bound to the same conditions of biopolitical regulation. And that this form of biopolitics is marked not by its control over life for the purpose of its own continuation, but for its own profit. And the novel's conclusion in which a renegade engineer destroys nearly all human life on the planet and replaces it with his own is the consequence of a corporate-sponsored biopolitical project rather than a government's investment in the rigorous production of its own subjects.

3.1: Compounds: Enclaves of Produced Subjects

“Compounds” and “Pleeblands” designate two distinct worlds in which living conditions, security, wealth and academic life are disparate. The “compound” area predetermines life as it connotes an enclosed space that has borders formed by means of fences, walls or some sort of barrier. The residents in the compounds are the wealthy social class whose lives are controlled by strict security measures. They travel through sterile transport corridors and are followed by an advanced surveillance system provided by a private security army. Jimmy's father who works for a corporation likens the compounds' space to that of the castles saying: “Castles were for keeping you and your buddies nice and safe inside, and for keeping

everybody else outside” (28). In the light of this comparison, Jimmy’s father underlines the territorial and social segregation the compounds exert in the novel. The compound produces the delusion of safety and liberalism in society. In this way, the setting offers itself as a cultural critique since compounds produce and domesticate types of subjects and subjectivities to sustain their power. The corporations do this by establishing urban dimensions of the environment that create a thorough fiction that can easily replicate a sense of neighborhood, town, and even sense of belonging to a federal government. The houses duplicate a historicity through Georgian center-plans or Italian Renaissance arched porticos surrounded by furniture called “*reproduction*” (26). Already, the household item itself is a replica of a form of living that has fallen out of use. Authenticity inside the borders of the corporation becomes a product and functions as an additional cover that communicates larger discourses of the novel regarding the reproducibility and mastery over antiquated forms of aesthetics and biology.

The corporations not only divide the territory in a geographical manner but also select the type of people in whom they will invest and whom they will train in these grounds. They impose arbitrary statuses by classifying and attributing symbolic definitions to the subjects they adopt: “numbers people” and “word people” (188). The numbers people are scientists whose work creating saleable foods or aesthetic treatments undergirds the system of the corporations. The word people are the group that props up this system by creating a language for the desire for the bioengineered products. Both groups are educated according to their individualistic talents at “EduCompounds” and thus are symbolically ordered into a system that co-creates the desired labor force (173). The peremptory educational separation of the corporations

seems to establish a co-dependent infrastructure where the “brilliant genes” (174) and “mid-range” students (173) complement one another to prop up a system that aims to instigate the public demand to purchase new parameters of existence. Jimmy and Crake’s friendship exemplifies this interdependent servitude.

Although scarce detail is given about Jimmy and Crake’s education in the corporately owned high school, the text conveys that students early at this stage are surveyed and streamlined according to their abilities in social or mathematical fields. Their success at “word scores” and “number columns” isolate the students into their future professions. Those who are apt at math and sciences, like Crake, are placed into the “Watson-Crick Institute” where they are educated and sponsored by the corporations to become the creative bioengineers while the students who are seen as “word people” such as Jimmy draw a lower profile in life. The former institution breeds and invests in subjects with profitable talents, the latter—“Martha Graham Academy”—functions as an Arts and Humanities college where the graduates are pre-destined to work in advertising the number people’s products in exchange for little income. Thus, the “institution” supplies the professional bio-managers of the population whereas the “academy” exploits the literary and artistic skills of a group by comforting them with aphorisms in Latin such as “*Ars Longa Vita Brevis*” (“Art is long, life is short”) (188). Contrary to what Martha Graham Academy’s motto imposes on its poorly provided students, the Watson-Crick Institute provides its students with extravagant social and economic conditions to research longevity. For them, art is short and life is long as it can be produced.

This capitalistic venture works by sustaining the existence of the dangerous other: pleeblands. The pleeblands are the spaces of non-corporate estates in which

“the addicts, the muggers, the paupers, the crazies” dwell and enjoy every vice possible according to the compound people (27). Etymologically the word “pleebland,” when divided into two parts: “pleeb” and “land” connotes the word “plebeian,” which is defined as “an insulting word for someone who is from a low social class” or used to refer to, “an ordinary person who had no special rank in ancient Rome” (Dictionary of Contemporary English 1080). Accordingly, the compound people label the inhabitants of the pleeblands as low class commoners or criminals who harbor lawlessness and crime. The distinction then, in this sense, not only derives from a spatial difference but also is embedded the symbolic order as the word “pleebland” institutionalizes the social inequality and political existence of a group of people. Jimmy’s first visit to these communities described in the passage below demonstrates his befuddlement when he enters into the authentic world that is reconstructed by the corporate compounds back in the modules:

The pleebland inhabitants didn’t look like the mental deficient the Compounders were fond of depicting, or most of them didn’t. After a while Jimmy began to relax, enjoy the experience. There was so much to see – so much being hawked, so much being offered. Neon slogans, billboards, ads everywhere. And there were real tramps, real beggar women, just as in old DVD musicals: Jimmy kept expecting them to kick up their battered bootsoles, break into song. Real musicians on the street corners, real bands of street urchins. Asymmetries, deformities: the faces here were far cry from the regularity of the Compounds. There were even bad teeth. He was gawking. (*Oryx and Crake* 288)

This excerpt reveals the constructed world of the pleeblands inside the compounds. Jimmy not only realizes that pleeblands are very different from what he thought they were, but also sees that it is the place where real life is contingent, “Everything in the pleeblands seemed so boundless, so porous, so penetrable, so wide-open. So subject to chance. Accepted wisdom in the Compounds said that nothing of interest went on in the pleeblands, apart from buying and selling: there was no life of the mind” (196). Even though the pleeblands are isolated from the safety of the compounds, they are free from surveillance, visibility and limits as Jimmy experiences. He understands that this excluded space has much more to offer in terms of the experience of the authentic than the agreeably replicated illusions in the corporate modules. Whereas he also recognizes the “asymmetries” and “deformities” of the marginalized pleeblanders and compares it to the regular and stylized images the “body oriented” compounds produce (288). Pleeblands harbor the opposite extremes in terms of social status and physical appearance. The rich pleeblanders in luxury cars coexist with poor ones on solarbikes but more importantly, as Jimmy is informed by Crake, the pleeblands represent the displacement of the symbolic order that can be produced and reproduced in exchange for goods: “Gender, sexual orientation, height, colour of skin and eyes – [is] all in order, it can be all done or redone” (289). The corporate compounds produce and market pharmaceutical, medical, cosmetic or agricultural commodities to pleeblanders. These products are promoted at the “Street of Dreams” where Jimmy sees the shop signs at his first visit to the other side which reads: “Blue Genes Day?...Try SnipNFix! Here diseases removed. Why Be Short? Go Goliath! Dreamkitlets. Heal Your Helix. Cribfillers Ltd. Weenie Weenie? Longfellow’s the Felllow?” (288). These signs promise to

reconstruct disease-free fictional bodies for which sex, beauty and youth can become purchasable features. Both Crake and the text expressly refer to a type of multinational corporate market that exploits a capitalist system free from regulation and intervention by any government or a non-corporate organization.

3.2 Organs without Bodies

The operations of bio-production in the novel treat the organic and natural as any other commodity that can be produced and marketed. Corporations such as “OrganInc Farms,” “HelthWyzer,” “NooSkins,” “RejoovenEsence,” or “AnooYoo” mainly conduct genetic research to improve human health through reproducing bioforms. The OrganInc Farms shelter genographers who engineer animals such as the “Methuselah Mouse” for a longevity project called “Operation Immortality” (*Oryx and Crake* 22). This compound is primarily designed for rearing “*sus multiorganifers*” known as the “*pigoons*” which are pigs raised “to grow an assortment of foolproof human-tissue organs”: kidneys, livers and hearts (22). The pigoons host five to six kidneys and their organs can be personalized:

The pigoon organs could be customized, using cells from individual human donors...It was much cheaper than getting yourself cloned for spare parts—a few wrinkles left to be ironed out there, as Jimmy’s dad used to say – or keeping a for-harvest child or two stashed away in some illegal baby orchard. In the OrganInc brochures and promotional materials, glossy and discreetly worded, stress was laid on the efficacy and comparative health benefits of the pigoon procedure. (*Oryx and Crake* 23)

The way in which customization is presented in this passage as taking a living creature and making it one's own, presents a world without bio-ethics. OrganInc Farms manufacture the pigeons to provide spare organs for the wealthy humans who already, as the text infers, have an option to keep a "for-harvest child" to supply their biological needs. The pigeons as incubators of body parts are also part of other projects which aim to grow human neo-cortex tissue to treat diseases or forestall ageing. While the people of the Compounds deem these animals as mere proteins that can be altered and put into greater use, there are also those who defend that their genetic manipulation entails an immoral biopolitical intervention in life. The pigeons thus hint at the general notions of creation schemes that take place in *Oryx and Crake*. The transgenic commodification of the body starts out with a pig host but soon spreads to reformation of other animals mostly with no scientific or sensible purpose. The spliced-gene animals include the "wolvogs," "bobkittens," "rakunks," "snats" who are bioengineered crosses between wolves/dogs, bobcats/kittens, raccoons/skunks and snakes/rats indirectly refers to a kind of textual investigation of the motifs behind the desire to create life. Either designed for security purposes or merely as pets inside the OrganInc biolabs, these bioforms manifest humans' playfulness relating to the idea of divine creation. As Jimmy recounts, "There'd been a lot of fooling around in those days: create-an-animal was so much fun, said the guys doing it; it made you feel like God" (*Oryx and Crake* 51). Human beings use these creatures, on the one hand, for the purposes of their bio-utility; on the other, their creation becomes a simple matter of experiment for the sake of fun much in the line of a venereal pleasure (by which I mean, the act of creation for the sport rather

than the need, but one whose overtones of sexual excess and dis-ease should remain). The act of imitating the creator at OrganInc farms, furthermore, not only draws on eliminating the drawbacks of species by eliminating the uneconomic, but also opts to produce the marketable.

The commodification of human creativity goes so far in the novel as a group of scientists called “NeoAgriculturals” who rear “ChickieNobs”: bioengineered chickens that are simply brainless meat likened to “a chicken hookworm” which are designed for producing the maximum number of chicken wings (*Oryx and Crake* 203). Produced from splicing the genes of worms and chickens, the bio-engineers of the corporation engage in an act of biological piracy. ChickieNobs, as a bio project, is divorced from any human interaction with a live animal. Instead it props up a system that regulates itself through a bio-production now relying merely on the parts: large bulblike objects attached to numerous thick flesh tubes that are connected to micro bulbs growing to become fresh chicken parts. Reduced to its parts, the chicken becomes no longer a chicken but a fragmented commodity developed mainly to meet the needs of the capitalist economy. It becomes a future trend defined now as “an animal-protein tuber” (*Oryx and Crake* 202) that allows “a three-week improvement on the most efficient low-light, high-density chicken farming operation so far devised” (*Oryx and Crake* 203). Such a product, which mimics the corpus of the once live animal whose unity is decomposed into pieces of consumable parts, foreshadows the workings of global capitalist machinery whose demands negotiate the types of subjects that are to be reproduced in the future. OrganInc, in this sense, exemplifies the exploitation of nature’s generative power for the sake of sustaining a global market that grows to depend on artificial animals. The organ-harvestable

pigeons and the artificial self-replicating ChickieNobs constitute the preliminary projects that lead us to advanced forms of biological piracy as later in the novel the reader is introduced to replicable human body parts.

The “NooSkins,” a subsidiary of the “HelthWyzer” compound, also represents the kinds of biological and political interferences carried out on the human body. NooSkins offers to replace the older epidermis with a fresh one by animal-farming the human skin on smaller pigeons. This implantable skin cells ensure “a genuine start-over skin that would be wrinkle- and blemish- free” (*Oryx and Crake* 55). The regenerated skin, when transplanted on to the human skin, rasps off the old skin. The idea behind skin reproduction and implantation seems to reflect the consumerist desire with which the population is saturated, as well as the constructed desire of the masses to attain permanent youth and beauty. The commodification of the epidermis to aestheticize the individual body, in this sense, alludes to the predictable evolutionary steps of the kinds of bio-projects that are being performed later in the novel. The pharmaceutical bio-engineering companies’ compounds such as “AnooYoo” or “HelthWyzer” aim at aesthetically standardizing their society through corporeal perfection or by providing the appropriate cures for diseases that are biopolitically enforced upon the population for sustaining beauty and health. AnooYoo products accentuate the desire Jimmy describes by saying, “*What we want is more...is less...that’s not quite it*” which refers to the “*it*” that encompasses “[c]osmetic creams, workout equipment, Joltbars to build [one’s] muscle-scape into a breathtaking marvel of sculpted granite. Pills to make [one] fatter, thinner, hairier, balder, whiter, browner, blacker, yellower, sexier and happier...Hope and fear, desire and revulsion...” (*Oryx and Crake* 248). The genetic material on sale promises self-

images that are more like the simulations of ideal human body parts. The dangerous mimicking of the generative powers of the nature and human reproduction empowers the compounds with a twisted politics of proprietorship over life; it promises to lease the DNA, manipulate the integrity of the animal and human body, and thus redistribute the workings of bio-power. The proprietary technologies of these transnational corporations ultimately claim ownership of all forms of life that they produce at the expense of transmogrifying the existence of a life form or by violating the unity of the flesh.

3.3: BioVenereal Pleasures

The genetic violation of the bodies of animals either for bio utility or merely for ventry discloses the tip of the encompassing impact of, what Lorrie Moore called in a review of the novel in *The New Yorker* (2003) the “bioperversity”¹ that those in power seek to experience. Jimmy and Crake pass time gorging themselves playing various online games, watching porn shows, snuff videos, live suicides, the killing of animals, videos of rape and torture. The passages that exuberantly dwell on the logic of excess Jimmy and Crake indulge themselves in offer a cultural critique of the precarious zone of sexual violence and spectacle and how these relate to a form of biopolitical control through playing with pain and pleasure principles. The emotional response of the boys is entirely apathetic as they watch live surgeries, animal snuff sites, live executions or stonings with the same kind of emotional indifference. Both

¹ Moore, Lorrie. “Bioperversity”. *The New Yorker*. 2003 Issue. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/05/19/bioperversity> . Online. (03.11.2016)

Jimmy and Crake are desensitized to the violence through its ubiquity and technologization. What they view and perceive destabilizes their interpretation of “real” life and life as shown on TV and Internet, as illustrated by the following dialogue:

“Do you think they’re really being executed? [Jimmy] said. “A lot of them look like simulations.”

“You never know,” said Crake.

“You never know what?”

“What is *reality*?” (*Oryx and Crake* 83).

This dialogue displays the point of view of the consciousness of the characters for whom the physicality of the body becomes secondary to the image of the body. The body of others is seen through voyeuristic mediating function of a social, commercial biopolitical network of excess and dismemberment. Websites such as “heddsoff.com” that plays live executions, “alibooboo.com” which shows lynchings or stonings, “shortcircuit.com”, “brainfizz”, “deathrowlive.com” (82-83) airing electrocutions and lethal injections, sex-trotting sites such as “HottTotts.com” all perform decompositions of the body (89). The characters also play games whose purpose and function is to pit different groups of armies against one another anachronistically and without regard to the historical conditions of their emergence. In “Barbarian Stomp” the players choose civilizations such as Romans, Egyptians or Aztecs and put them into war with other real societies and tribes. The ultimate outcome of the play is to slaughter the population or come up with the most unusual match that would change the course of history. Another online game called “Blood

and Roses” also endorses violence on a large scale: one player commits mass killings and genocides, while the other side finds human achievements such as artworks or scientific inventions. Exchanging a human achievement for a mass killing will stop the genocide, but will also erase the human achievement from happening in history:

“The exchange rates—one *Mona Lisa* equaled Bergen- Belsen, one Armenian genocide equaled the *Ninth Symphony* plus three Great Pyramids—were suggested, but there was room for haggling. To do this you needed to know the numbers – the total number of corpses for the atrocities, the latest open- market price for the artworks; or, if the artworks had been stolen, the amount paid out by the insurance policy.” (*Oryx and Crake* 79)

In this way, they rewrite the events of world history through swapping artwork, which is itself fetishized as the crowning achievement of human endeavor. The game “Extinctathon” also attests to another kind of need that seems closely attached to perversity. In this game the players are asked to name the animals and plants that have become extinct in the last fifty years. Crake is fascinated by the game: the thrill of naming extinct animals presents him with a celebration of death tied to libidinal or sexualized energy. In a similar vein, websites where Jimmy and Crake find the child Oryx performing in child pornography point to at the same kind of perverse sexual excitement that reveals the absolute catastrophe of deregulated and unfettered corporate biopower in the novel. Oryx, a child sex slave, becomes Jimmy and Crake’s shared object of desire and the subject over whom they exercise power.

Oryx, as a disembodied virtual image, is central for understanding Jimmy and Crake's misplaced sexual energy and kernel contradictions about themselves in their self-contained monadological universe. Oryx's early life as a child sex worker and later as Jimmy and Crake's lover—as well as mother of Crakers—possesses a body serviceable to a corporate structure. Both Jimmy and Crake monitor Oryx's child body in pornography videos and repressively control her adult body for sex and non-biological, pseudo-parenthood of a non-organic species. Before she becomes the mother figure of Crake's "Paradise Project" Oryx works at RejoovenEsence and sells Crake's product called "BlyssPluss". BlyssPluss is a pill which offers its users prolonged youth and protection from all sexually transmitted diseases while providing an "unlimited supply of libido" (294). Unlike the ineffective libidinal supplements in *The Children of Men*, Crake's products encourage heightened narcissism and widespread sex. It is a symptom of the public demand that believes in the primacy of the body's materiality which, ironically, Crake does not share because he can only view the body as a spectral image or an incomplete, insufficient organism. The utopian idea in the novel whereby an individual can rejuvenate or transform his or her body biologically calls for Fredric Jameson's commentary, which refers to this kind of constitutive material model of the human body. As Jameson argues:

Materialism is already omnipresent in attention to the body which seeks to correct any idealism or spiritualism lingering in this system. Utopian corporeality is however also a haunting, which invests even the most subordinate and shamefaced products of everyday life, such as aspirins,

laxatives and deodorants, organ transplants and plastic surgery all harboring muted promises of a transfigured body. (*Archaeologies of the Future* 6)

Using Jameson's lens, we can see Crake in the process of trying to dematerialize the materiality of the body. The bodies under the Compounds' constant scrutiny are not ontological but discursive and are changed according to the discourses to which they are subjected. Crake's intervention in the corporeality of the body then moves from this belief, which he asserts when he says, "I don't believe in Nature ... Or not with a capital N." (*Oryx and Crake* 206). He is a biopolitical engineer who seems to embody the evil scientist but in fact is the only character who suspects the formation of subjectivity is a kind of virus that inhabits him and the society constituting them as subjects. Therefore, Crake builds into the BlyssPluss Pill a feature that will secretly sterilize its users: the pill is in actuality a deadly virus "a sure-fine one-time-does-it-all birth-control pill, for male and female alike" (*Oryx and Crake* 294). Through Crake's invention of BlyssPluss, Atwood allegorizes a post-humanist view of corporate/sovereign power in which an oligarchy of bioengineers, and not an autocratic king decides whose lives may be produced and whose lives may be exterminated.

3.4: Producing the Children of Crake

Crake's species of bioengineered posthumans, the Crakers, are born out of this tendentious biopolitical reasoning; that is, Crake moves from his familial history at the Compounds to a project which he then reworks to create new humanoids to

take over the planet. The bio-production of life occurs before the Paradise Project as Crake tells Jimmy about a secret project that allows people to customize their babies.

RejoovenEsence hoped to hit the market with various blends on offer.

They'd be able to create totally chosen babies that would incorporate any feature, physical or mental or spiritual, that the buyer might wish to select.

(Oryx and Crake 304)

The intervention of bioengineering into organic life begins before birth here, where the capitalist form of management treats the organic like any other commodity. The way in which customization is presented lays out the transitioning moment for Crake to come up with the BlyssPluss Pill to realize his radical dream: to recreate life through setting off a deadly disease that will eliminate the entire population. Even though Crake works to satisfy the market demands that call for more bodily parts to archetectorialized bodies, he desires to produce a body that can be politically and ideologically liberated. However, Crake's idea of liberation can only be made possible through the entire destruction of human life.

Crakers are produced to be human replicas without preconceptions about themselves or the life world. The bio-productive apparatus of the corporation eliminates the aleatory dimensions of politics and social life. There is no racism, hierarchy, territorialism, symbolism, families, marriages or divorces for Crakers (305). They are blue, they do not register skin color, nor do they have the neural complexes to form hierarchies among themselves. They are exempt from familial institutions owing to their polygamous nature, but they have mating cycles. They are, as a matter of fact, cultivated children of "the art of the possible" as Crake refers to

them (305). From their appearance to their biological characteristics Crakers are created for ultimate bio use: their skin is UV resistant and automatically kills insects. They feed on unrefined plants and their own feces. They are, as Crake calls them, the “*sui generis*” who reach maturity at the age of seven and die at the age of thirty (303-304). Atwood presents the first response to the Crakers through Crake’s dialogue with Jimmy:

At first [Jimmy] couldn’t believe them, they were so beautiful. Black, yellow, white, brown, all available skin colors. Each individual was exquisite. “Are they robots, or what?” [Jimmy] said.

“You know they’ve got floor models, in furniture stores?” said Crake.

“Yeah?”

“These are the floor models.” (*Oryx and Crake* 302)

The “floor model” description of this new breed of human species dramatizes the corporate model’s power to recognize Crakers as post-human, neither robot nor human, but commodities. In this sense, Crakers are the result of the ideally fetishized discourse of corporate/sovereign power regarding the human body. They are tested and assessed on trial and error bases (306). Beauty and docility are the primary qualities that bring Crakers to completion. They are deindividualized in appearance as they all “look like retouched fashion photos, or ads for a high-priced workout program” (100). The lack of bodily imperfection frames the Crakers into established physical boundaries. To Jimmy, the Crakers are eerily “placid, like animated statues” whose “naïve optimism,” “open friendliness,” “calmness,” and “limited vocabulary”

makes them a study subject of knowledge and power produced and maintained under biopolitical scrutiny and institutionalization (100).

3.5: Language and Biopower in the Quest for Origins

The Crakers' development in terms of language and social behavior recapitulates the very effects that Crake eschews when he decided to create them. Although Crake wanted to eliminate some of the qualifying aspects of *bíos*, the Crakers themselves exceed Crake's own pessimistic sense of biopolitics. The annihilation of the population that is measured and regulated does not do away with the types of biopolitical interventions the Crakers are exposed to. After Crake entrusts his Crakers to Oryx and Jimmy, the two take on the task of guidance and instruction of Crakers as a new biological project. While Oryx acts as the nurturing mother who teaches them how to survive through the understanding of botany and zoology (309), Jimmy turns into a kind of biopolitical prophet who leads the Crakers to form inferences about themselves and the world. Despite their limited ability to deduce the causes of certain actions, the Crakers worship Oryx and Crake. Oryx comes to embody the mother goddess as she orients the Crakers into the reconstructed world where their subjecthood comes into existence. Contrary to Crake's intention, which positions itself somewhere between what Giorgio Agamben defines as bare life—*zoē*— and qualified life—*bíos*, Oryx suspends the utopian non-human ideal sought by the Crakers merely by introducing herself to them as an instructor. Even though Oryx infiltrates the Crakers by looking like them, she functions as a body of authority.

Oryx becomes a biopolitical apparatus who performs the role of a teacher by answering the Crakers' demands to know who created them. She tells the Crakers it is Crake who made them (311), and in doing so introduces the Crakers to an ontological argument. When Jimmy tells the Crakers how they were made, the Crakers begin to see Crake as a kind of religious deity. They slowly grow to revere Oryx and Crake as their god and goddess. Jimmy's position as the holder of knowledge makes Jimmy function both as the teacher and a reluctant prophet who begins to choose what to tell and what not to tell to the children of Crake. In a way, Jimmy becomes Crake's mechanism of power who provides the formation of the subject and subjectivity. He tells the Crakers who they are and how they became the people they think they are. The fact that Jimmy names them after historical figures penetrates them with a history that is not their own and to which Crake objected. He mythologizes the Crakers through telling the story of their birth (original in italics):

Crake made the bones of the Children of Crake out of the coral on the beach, and then he made their flesh out of a mango. But the Children of Oryx hatched out of an egg, a giant egg laid by Oryx herself. Actually she laid two eggs: one full of animals and birds and fish, and the other one full of words. But the egg full of words hatched first, and the Children of Crake had already been created by then, and they'd eaten up all the words because they were hungry, and so there were no words left over when the second egg hatched out. And that is why the animals can't talk. (Oryx and Crake 96)

The "coral," "egg," "animals and birds and fish" are the primary bios Oryx introduces to them. The "words" however become problematic as every definition

Jimmy uses to explain an unknown word to the Crakers brings up another concept or object that leaves them puzzled until Jimmy clarifies it for them. For this reason, Jimmy mythologizes their being in a self-censuring, grammatically selective manner since everything he says engenders a behavior on the part of the Crakers.

Jimmy's storytelling triggers a kind of cultural practice: much like an oral tradition in that the Crakers ask Jimmy to tell "the deeds of Crake" every night and prompt him by saying "In the beginning," (102). He then teaches them art when again he tries to explain the word "chaos" and asks them to bring tools to illustrate and dramatize what chaos is.

In the chaos, everything was mixed together," [Jimmy] says. "There were too many people, and so the people were all mixed up with the dirt." The pail comes back, sloshing, and is set down in the circle of light. He adds a handful of earth, stirs it with a stick. "There," [Jimmy] says. "Chaos. You can't drink it..." (*Oryx and Crake* 103).

In a way, this enactment of chaos triggers associates a signified content with a signifier and he teaches them what they can and cannot do with the newly acquired information. The Crakers imitate the same skill when Jimmy leaves to find provisions. They make an idol of Jimmy out of a jar lid and a mop (157). They perform a genuine experience in life and create their own effigy that not only helps them to ease their frustration in losing Jimmy but also provides them the historicity they seek to give a meaning to their existence. The repetition of stories or vivification of what the Crakers think as creators through art or drama prepares the preliminary steps of a kind of cultural memory which generates the concept of

civilization that Jimmy ardently defends by saying, “When any civilization is dust and ashes,” Jimmy said, “art is all that’s left over. Images, words, music. Imaginative structures. Meaning – human meaning, that is – is defined by them” (167).

Even though Crake cautions Jimmy to not instigate art, symbolism or religion Jimmy fails to not act as a repository of knowledge and culture.

Watch out for art, Crake used to say. As soon as they start doing art, we’re in trouble. 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 Linear B, and kings, and then slavery and war. (*Oryx and Crake* 361).

Crake disregards the potential of the Crakers to encounter the world and the preconditions of the present. From Foucault’s perspective human social organization has always been political, but life itself was not an object of politics until the survival of the species becomes an object of political strategy. Even though Crake aims to organize a non-biopolitical life for non-human Crakers, their self-actualization materially and ideologically evolves in the same direction that lead human politics to organize life. They learn how to use objects to make an idol and practice an oral tradition by repeating the story of their creation. They converse with their invisible creators, Oryx and Crake, to whom they also develop an increasing reverence. Despite Crake’s prudence in getting rid of the idea of God or what he calls the “G-spot” to the Crakers, they develop a sense of empathy for and belief in those they learn made them live (157).

The symbolic aspects of the artwork that the Crakers learn to make leads them to deduce symbolic statuses and order. The Crakers know that Jimmy is “a separate order of being” (101) who provides valuable knowledge. In that respect, they too assign leadership to one of their members, which recalls to Jimmy Crake’s warning about symbolic statuses: “*Watch out for the leaders, Crake used to say. First the leaders and the led, then the tyrants and the slaves, then the massacres. That’s how it’s always gone.*” [original italics] (155). Jimmy’s introduction of symbolic logic to the Crakers and social structure through language and art inevitably lays the foundations of biopolitical power. The Crakers do not struggle with each other for leadership but organically produce a leader to take the social precedence in communicating with Jimmy. The means by which Jimmy affects the Crakers’ life simultaneously creates the types of social hierarchy that, for instance, he calls leadership.

Language operating at the level of symbolism makes Jimmy, in accordance with Foucault’s arguments on production of discourse, an agent of “power-knowledge” and thus “an agent of transformation of human life” (Foucault 1978: 143). Jimmy’s use of language and knowledge discourse can actually be seen as a lexical reflection of power. However, Jimmy’s function within the Crakers’ landscape is disempowering to him as his knowledge does not have an organic authority since Jimmy expresses the words and events according to his individual perception and interest. One example of power knowledge in the novel occurs when Jimmy tells the Crakers that if they talk too much they will be “toast” (97). The Crakers then ask the meaning of the word. Jimmy realizes his mistake by using a

word that the Crakers would not understand even if he explains it in the simplest way. When left alone Jimmy reflects on the word himself:

“What is toast?” says Snowman [Jimmy] to himself,...*Toast is when you take a piece of bread—What is bread? Bread is when you take some flour—What is flour? We’ll skip that part, it’s too complicated. Bread is something you can eat...You cook it...Please, why do you cook it? Why don’t you just eat the plant?...*

“Forget it,” says Snowman. “Let’s try again.”

Toast was a pointless invention from the Dark Ages. Toast was an implementation of torture that caused all those subjected to it to regurgitate in verbal form the sins and crimes of their past lives. Toast was a ritual item devoured by fetishists in the belief that it would enhance their kinetic and sexual powers. Toast cannot be explained by any rational means.

Toast is me.

I am toast.” (Oryx and Crake 98)

This passage demonstrates the moment in which Jimmy realizes that meaning is secondary to the language about it just like the body is secondary to the discourses around it. The word “toast” is has no signified content for the Crakers, and this lack of a signified allows Jimmy to alter the meaning of the word. This scene also suggests that any and all signifiers from the past can be altered since the Crakers do not have any historical connection to the signifiers of the past. In this context, Jimmy’s reluctance to explain what “toast” means to the Crakers also displays

Jimmy's new power in creating the discourse of the Crakers. In this way, this scene exposes how power can be exerted and maintained through power-knowledge that delimits relationships between a word and a range of possibilities. Jimmy's remark when he says, "Toast is me. I am toast" expresses the relationship between truth and power. As Foucault argues, "'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'régime' of truth." (*Power/Knowledge* 133). The truth is what Jimmy/Snowman wants it to be: he can invent the truth or reform, reassign and reconstruct the truth of the word such as when he tells himself: "These people were like blank pages, he could write whatever he wanted on them" (*Oryx and Crake* 349). Jimmy's relationship to language is now a way in which he has power over the Crakers. Ironically, it is the Crakers themselves who in their own quest for self knowledge mobilize Jimmy's regime of power over them.

Jimmy maintains power through re-encoding epistemological discourse into an earthly language. Unlike Crake whose scientific discourse institutionalizes the Crakers, Jimmy's relation to the Crakers portrays a relatively satisfied but existentially dissatisfied existence of a utopian socialist. Even though he maintains a level of control because, as Foucault describes power, it "traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge [and] produces discourse" (*Power/Knowledge* 119), he struggles against the Crakers' utopic body. Jimmy does not try to manipulate their determined, conditioned and disciplined life. He meets them in Crake's imaginary space called Paradise Dome but then finds himself living with them in a post-apocalyptic world in which the Crakers' physical life exists within the framework of human history: being a product of that history.

In this stream of human history in contrast with what Crake aims by creating the Crakers, that is making them “more human” but post-human, Jimmy delights in historicizing them by giving names such as “Abraham Lincoln,” “Empress Josephine,” or “Madame Curie” (100-101). Despite all the opportunities that emerge for Jimmy to offer a system of biopolitic, he does not, at this point, employ power-knowledge to enslave the Crakers. They attempt to self-organize, and this does not preclude their potential biopolitical organization. Jimmy sees the Crakers as the dramatization of the reproduction of human subjects and subjectivities: how subjects respond to, negotiate and fight with subjectivation processes. By the end of the novel, Jimmy seems to learn that the post-humanist project through which Crake wanted to immunize the Crakers from religion, language, sexuality and culture is a utopian effort that lacks the protean distribution of power dynamics. Crake believes that he strengthens the Crakers in giving them bare life, which places the Crakers into a place where they are exempt from political *bios* but become fictive bodies stuck between the status of human animal or men whose lives are constantly redefined in their condition as selective recipients of knowledge—the precarious “zone of indistinction and continuous transition between man and beast” (*Homo Sacer* 109).

Even though Crake strips life that is properly organized from the Crakers he fails to erase their internal lives or desires for a creation myth. Crake places an emphasis on the soul when Jimmy recalls, “We’re hard-wired for dreams, [Crake]’d said. He couldn’t get rid of singing either. Singing and dreams were entwined.” (*Oryx and Crake* 352). After spending time with them Jimmy discovers that Crakers are not merely a healthy, immunized human animal but domesticated human

experiments who develop a sense of love or aesthetics. They care for Oryx and Crake, make idols of them and ask Jimmy to animate or narrate events that they think can explain their existence. Unlike Crake's tenets, Jimmy does not believe that Crakers are a corrected version of faulty "hormone robots" as Crake refers to humans. To Jimmy they are ambiguous victims of the human desire to produce endless reproductions of themselves.

The carer role Jimmy reluctantly undertakes eases the pain of loneliness in a dystopian world. As the narration states:

At first he'd improvised, but no they're demanding dogma: he would deviate from orthodoxy at his peril. He might not lose his life—these people aren't violent or given bloodthirsty acts of retribution, or not so far—but he'd lose his audience. They'd turn their backs on him, they'd wander away. He is Craker's prophet now, whether he likes it or not; and the prophet of Oryx as well. That, or nothing. He needs to be listened to, he needs to be heard. He needs at least the illusion of being understood. (*Oryx and Crake* 104)

This passage in which Jimmy wagers his own survival on the Crakers highlights the moment of his personal transition to an agent of biopower. He perceives that he lives in a biopolitical zone in which his legal identity is tenuous and almost impossible to change, but easy to lose. He realizes that knowledge and power are related correlatively and therefore accepts the role the Crakers mark out for him: "Crake's prophet." Knowledge, to Jimmy, becomes the product of an exertion of power that he uses to survive after this moment. Unlike Crake who invests in Crakers as liberated objects of biopolitical production, Jimmy sees that there are no transgressive

possibilities of the body—even if it erroneously appears to be free of discourses about it—but penetration of life by knowledge and power.

What might be the alternative horizon for the Crakers? Can we imagine a world for them in which their bodies are characterized by a less political, more human, configuration of biopower? Or, provided countless utopian possibilities at the end of which we hope for a better future but give away to collective despair, isn't it naïve of Crake to imagine that he can disassociate the body from politics with such romantic notions of existence? Quite simply, Crake's vision is entangled in the broader notion of biopolitics that shelters dispersed possibilities of production of life and power relations. That is why, paradoxically, the utopian ideas of non-hierarchical social order—although speculative—uncontrolled by power/knowledge, language or religion fail to produce a liberating effect. The point rather is that Crakers, as implied by Foucauldian theory, are alienated from Aristotle's formulation of "political animal[s]" (Foucault 1978: 143), but are what Timothy Campbell and Adam Sitze would refer as "millennial animal[s]" (*Biopolitics: A Reader* 14) who "appea[r] to have become *autonomous* (italic in the original text) from existence." What is so moving in Campbell and Sitze's claim is that the condition of mankind whose "existence" – their emphasis lays on the etymological *ex-sistere*, "to stand outside"—"is separated from living being" (15), now depends solely on and fully "being." Clearly, the Crakers are classified manifestations of a bio-fictional existence that shows us the inescapability of the biopolitical in the novel. Biopower's hold and understanding of life permeates alternative narratives, such as Crake's utopian vision, in which the intended cause mutates into reverse. For example, the Crakers begin to question their new bodies and the consequences of their lives. As Campbell

and Sitze explain the difference between existence and life more readily, “[p]ower’s “grasp” of life (in the double sense of grip and understanding) does not allow us [as readers to imagine a constitutive dimension] to stand outside of our own lives, to project ourselves, to devise narratives [that will enable us] to change the conditions of our living non-existence” 15). Despite the desire to improve human life and humanity, bodies change, but power’s grasp of life remains the same.



Conclusion

In *The Political Unconscious*, Fredric Jameson suggests that there is no narrative that does not so much express criticism of its age as historicize it, especially at points of contact between the material, lived world and the imaginary spheres of literature and cinema. This argument might open up an obvious link to literary analysis, since texts, as Jameson claims, “come before us as the always-already-read,” whereby we encounter them “through sedimented layers of previous interpretations” (ix-x). Similarly Michel Foucault notes in his essay “*What is an Author?*” that an author is someone “only in the limited sense of a person to whom the production of a text, book, or a work can be legitimately attributed...[the] position [authors undertake is] a position I will call “transdiscursive” ” (*The Essential Foucault* 386). By this, Foucault means that writers of a certain stamp do not only write their own books, but also produce “the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts” (387). In a sense, a transdiscursive position is a position from which the possibilities of particular systems of discourse and textual production are made possible. What is at stake in these claims from prominent thinkers of literature and philosophy, both those who disclose perplexing philosophical questions and carry out philosophical thought experiments? There is something fundamental and utterly inescapable at stake in these claims, which relates to one of Jameson’s propositions that “individual narrative[s],” should be “grasped as the imaginary resolution of a real contradiction” (*The Political Unconscious* 62). If it is possible to link Foucault and Jameson’s position, the possibility of a certain kind of textuality is also a kind of resolution to and a naming of a real contradiction. As a

consequence, a narrative text embodies not only the conditions of its own production, but the conditions and possibilities of the discursive situations and enunciations which communicate, at a larger social level, with the historical dimension.

In part, I read this embodiment in the claim made by Jameson in his final paragraph to the first chapter of his meditation on the interpretation of history and narrative:

History is therefore the experience of Necessity, and it is this alone which can forestall its thematization or reification as a mere object of representation or as one master code among many others. Necessity is not in that sense a type of content, but rather the inexorable form of events; it is therefore a narrative category in the enlarged sense of some properly narrative political unconscious which has been argued here, a retextualization of History which does not propose the latter as some new representation or “vision,” some new content, but as the formal effects of Althusser, following Spinoza, calls an “absent cause.” Conceived in this sense, History is what it hurts, it is what refuses desire and sets inexorable limits to individual as well as collective praxis, which its “ruses” turn into grisly and ironic reversals of their overt intention. But this History can be apprehended only through its effects, and never directly as some reified force. This is indeed the ultimate sense in which History as ground and untranscendable horizon needs no particular theoretical justification: we may be sure that its alienating necessities will not forget us, however much we might prefer to ignore them. (*The Political Unconscious* 87-88)

The connection, specifically, between history and narrative is expressed powerfully in this passage, or definitive, as it encompasses how the texts studied in this paper exemplify their historical period in the process of demonstrating the way in which the State can grab life for purposes of its control, maintenance and discipline. In fact, they not only demonstrate such effects of power on the individual and population, but in the process of doing that, they transform the text from tackling merely individual issues of life within a given political system to assessing the experience of life as controlled and penetrated by that system; the novels do not create systems as much as the systems are embodied in the actions and dialogue of character, which is also a product of both the political system in the text and the mechanics of the text itself. The representative dimension of fictions points out the “histories” that “hurt,” or as Jameson put it, “Histor[ies that] can be apprehended only through [their] effects.” We cannot gauge the consequences of political utility of the human body without, possibly, looking at the power dimensions behind these fictions and film. Jameson uses the word “Necessity,” emphatically, not to describe “a type of content” but to convey a driving force, the condensed reasons behind certain moments in history. History, then, (and Jameson cautions us about its misreadings, misuse, and overuse through reification,) emerges from necessity: it “refuses desire” and, plausibly, returns as a new necessity.

The notion of “history,” as Jameson argues, presents us the grounding to compare the absences in which these narratives are founded. Necessity itself opens the site for the interplay of “*ideologemes*,” which he defines as the “smallest intelligible unit[s] of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes” (61). And in these texts it permeates narrative by enunciating the individual

and localized traumas as local expressions of systematic catastrophes. The destiny of a particular individual no longer appears as “an individual *parole* or utterance” (61) as Jameson writes, stressing the second horizon of a political interpretation. A text need not stress the wider social significance of its own historicity as an artwork (this happens regardless of intent), but lends itself to a collective history manifest in “socially symbolic acts” (5). The “absent cause,” as a ground of history and the catalyst of socially symbolic acts, provides us with the structural conditions for what can only amount to a catalogue of the effects of trauma. The “ruses” of history, as Jameson suggests, turn into realities already loaded with ideologies that are “always-already-read.” The types of realities, therefore, that produce these narratives demand the texts to respond to a question that they do not know they were asked. *The Children of Men* and *Oryx and Crake*, in this way, abandon their independent, monadic articulations in such a way that the absent causes are brought back into the text through the unresolved contradictions they convey.

From this perspective, we can rethink all kinds of cultural artifacts breaking in to the text to address orchestrated social conflicts that have real effects on how we act on, think about or speak to tell our problems. To anticipate the meaning of this intrusion, Jameson refers to Claude Lévi Strauss’s visual analysis of Caduveo Indians of Brazil in an anthropological study, in which Jameson thinks Lévi-Strauss debunks the notions of “individual narrative,” or the “symbolic enactment of the social within the formal and the aesthetic” by reinterpreting an excerpt from *Triste Tropiques*:

[T]hey were never lucky enough to resolve their contradictions, or to disguise them with the help of institutions artfully devised for that purpose. On the

social level, the remedy was lacking...but it was never completely out of their grasp. It was within them, never objectively formulated, but present as a source of *confusion and disquiet* (my emphasis). Yet, since they were unable to conceptualize or to live this solution directly, they began to dream it, to project it into the imaginary.” (*The Political Unconscious* 64)

How does Jameson put this “confusion and disquiet” into use? The visual reading of the Caduveo Indian people’s facial art, more than explicit belief, describes a certain form of symbolic act, as Jameson sees it, and to him suggests “a purely formal resolution in the aesthetic realm,” expressed to give a meaning to the organizational principles of their hierarchical social order (64). For Jameson, the facial art Strauss codifies is a visual text that can be read and interpreted as a cultural artifact, much like literature, architecture, music or film for that matter, which is indicative of the nucleus of any “absent cause” that produces a response, an effect to contribute to history or what he defines by saying, “a single vast unfinished plot” (4).

What I have argued in my presentation of the novels in the previous chapters, is that both novels are alert to a global crisis regarding power and its control over the body. What these novels both present are bodies that are created, maintained, and managed as long as they are fit for a specific function either under capital or under the ideology of reproduction. They betray a tremendous cynicism in which the body is limited in its ability to resist or rebel against its limitations, and both novels would laugh at any juvenile claims to “free will” in an age of perfect surveillance, control, and bioengineering. The absent cause around which these two texts circle is a history that may be coming to its end, and this post-apocalypticism never really

announces a new day, but only suggests that while the alternatives to extinction are few, they may, in fact, exist.

Jameson's epigraph to *The Political Unconscious*, calls for readers to "Always historicize!" (ix). His notion of historicity—which is particularly fitting for thinking about power relations—has been complemented and augmented by Foucault in his concept of "biopower" and "biopolitics." In his books *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality* (1976), Foucault historicizes the past to demonstrate its creation of the present. Foucault's main interest lies in the effective ways of questioning the "necessities," or what Strauss calls "confusion and disquiet" of events or individual experiences, by looking at genealogy of relations of power and the formation of scientific knowledge that supports them. Underlying the relations of power, for Foucault, reside social processes and domains of knowledge that transform ways of life and being in ways that classify and categorize the human body (*The Essential Foucault* 140-141).

Understanding power relationships, then, according to Foucault, is only possible by historicizing the application and function of the institutions and mechanisms that generate the constitutive effects which transform our way of living and relating to the social reality. His analysis of the prison and the historical development of criminal punishment in *Discipline and Punish* or his cautious research revealing the social constructions and medical interventions behind sexuality in *The History of Sexuality* affirm the inescapable political utility of human body that is bound to such power-knowledge relations and contradictions operative in society. The use of the prison, to Foucault, is inextricably bound up with a body of power-knowledge that regulates and justifies the practice of punitive power.

Sexuality, Foucault claims, is also a product of power because it is medically produced and turned into an issue of a scientific truth discourse. This discourse constructs an individuals' desire, identity and health. In this way, it posits another practice of power whereby a person's conceptions and experiences of it is always-already conceived by cultural conventions, norms or mechanisms of knowledge such as doctors, therapists, psychologists or psychiatrists who prescribe normative sexuality to subjects.

The connection of power to bio-power—that is, to the shift from a repressive or destructive power to a power that is protective of life—is in one way explicit: sex and sexuality have always implied regulatory control of propagation, birth, mortality and health of the individual bodies as well as population. This much, perhaps, to Foucault, introduces an analytical grid to analyze the medicalization of life and the reinforcement of social control taking over the management of the population. These readings, then, I suggest, are Foucault's way of echoing the causes of the dysfunction in society that, through genealogies, he strips away the façade of “nature” and “the natural” conditions by historicizing their very human institutions.

To circle back to the idea of historicizing and to his essay “What is an Author?” in which Foucault refers to Homer, Aristotle, Marx, Freud or Ann Radcliffe to communicate his influential insight that identifies authors of this kind as the “founders of discursivity” (*The Essential Foucault* 387). The forms they create evoke the preconditions of historical movements, or what Jameson refers to as history's “passions, its forms, structures, experiences and struggles, [which inform] those of the present day” as Jameson refers to the artifacts of philosophers of unique symbolic acts (*The Political Unconscious* 2). These historians, thinkers or writers

made it possible to imagine and produce “the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts” (*The Essential Foucault 2*). Foucault’s genealogies resonate today in, for instance, Agamben’s work, which not only questions Foucault’s arguments but also reinterprets them, diverges from them and opens up new possibilities of discourse instead of merely “reifying” them. The turn from history to biopolitics provides a newly authorized rhetoric with which to discuss the constraints of the human body on a political level which is, through literature, exposed in its own graspable form.

Biopolitical history has this transformation and production of the discursive space of protection of life affecting the core of politics in which sovereign power or power-knowledge intervene and in terms of which living beings as biological entities are measured and massified on the level of populations. No doubt historicization of the human body and discourses around the corpus have influenced the form of cultural artifacts and elevated fields of literary and philosophical analysis to a more unified, self-conscious discourse to argue the effects of biopolitics in these symbolic acts. Note again that, in foregrounding biopolitics, I am not claiming that this thematizing of the text is the only method for analyzing the ways in which the material bodies of men are penetrated by political processes and power structures. Instead, by applying biopolitics to fictions and films where central narrative also includes economic and political realities, we disclose and give an explanation to the possibilities of the “political unconscious” in text’s resolution of conflicts that cannot otherwise be resolved discursively or historically.

This puts into perspective the connective tissue between these two novels which makes them part and parcel of a historical period that has directed attention to

the productive forces and to the damage these productive forces of biopolitics trigger in the process of producing subjectivities. Any particular events or similarities to the real social life these texts unpack manifest the ways in which the State can grab life for purposes of its control, maintenance and disciplining which provides an access to current shared realities. The subject of infertility in both texts, whether literally or symbolically, can be interpreted as a critique of economic constraints within biopolitical history intimately linked to the relations of production: reproduction of both people and systems. Through this symbolic level, P.D James and Cuarón describe a shift from an era of bio-power to a biopolitical system in which they re-imagine Britain as the space that exposes and articulates the power mechanisms of a national and global economy experienced in a post-industrial society.

With such notions, *The Children of Men* raises questions about the workings of oppressive monarchical power to maintain control of the population, while the film version mediates contemporary forms of governance where power operates as a complex, ubiquitous network of—arguably—modern democracy. *Children of Men* foregrounds the internalization of the mechanics of power and the effects of late capitalism in the second half of the last century: it does not constitute such a hierarchical space but develops the idea of that “camp” and “state of exception” (as Agamben argues) are the architectures and politics of the modern space for the body. The field of conflict is expressly put forward in the refugee status which affects our way of thinking about issues of sovereign, law, politics and state of emergency that locate the human body outside of the terrain of one’s own rational self-interest. One unique philosophical comment comes from Slavoj Žižek who sees *Children of Men*’s fundamental contradiction as an irresolvable “ideological despair of late capitalism,”

based on his views of the refugee figure and the concentration of governmental power obstructing the human body to exist outside of the camp that already—perhaps inescapably—as Agamben concludes, escaped its walls. It hardly needs emphasizing that the function of *Quietus* in the novel, in the process of which people are voluntarily or involuntarily are killed under a forced euthanasia, or the Bexhill Refugee Camp where people resort to bare life designate the notorious implications of detainee camps nowadays. A provocative step forward in Cuarón's text is his blunt portrayal of the States of the conditions of concentration camps. The camp isolates, massifies and protects life in order to maintain its power; that is, the State grasps the body by its bareness, which is both central and peripheral to the body.

Atwood's thought experiment in *Oryx and Crake*, unlike James's or Cuarón's, imagines the massive decentralization of power represented by transnational corporations putting the human body under bio-scientific control. Although the novel does not make explicit judgments about the medicalization of bodies, it underpins the historical processes that relates to contemporary forms of medical interventions: the genome project, genetically modified organisms, organ harvesting in animals, and the preimplantation of embryos to profile "better" humans. Here the management of the relations between corporate authority and the individual become even more complex and contaminating at the level of how one becomes the object and subject of surveillance and power: online pornography, websites roaming live suicides and executions, video games that provide an access to a nightmarish vision of power putting bodies in contact with ruses of late capitalism.

This problem in *Oryx and Crake* emerges as infertility that provides a kind of subversion of a resolution in the text. Žižek captures this contradiction when commenting on *Children of Men*:

I think the true infertility is the very lack of meaningful historical experience. It's a society of pure meaningless historical experience. Today ideology is no longer big causes such as socialism, equality, justice, democracy. The basic injunction is "have a good time" or to put in more spiritualist terms "realize yourself." (*Children of Men* DVD commentary)

It is clear, at least, that, Žižek defines the incommunicable problematic of the society as James and Atwood imagine it. On an individual level man is biologically placated by fantastic constructions such as the BlyssPluss pill, which itself embodies the patriarchal capitalistic paranoia of the populace. No doubt Jimmy and Crake's fondness of sexuality and violence discourse depicts, precisely, the kinds of sentiments Žižek mentions to speak of the experience of commodifying ones' self that, arguably, separates the individual from his/her historicity. This capitalistic venture reaches its absolutism in the creation of Crakers.

Crake's model of production is, unlike his literary peers Victor Frankenstein and Dr. Moreau, indicative of a desire that seeks to disconnect the human body from its historical and cultural climate for the purposes of defying relating values. There is no need to dispute the intervention of the Divine in Crake's symbolic act, or at least the assumed motives, that underlie the amputation of the God: the irony, cynicism and irreverence of late capitalism that finds sacrilege in the prosthetic God: men. Crakers, in other words, encapsulate a transformative significance that resketch

Crake as the *homo faber* whose utopian ideal bolstered in the nihilistic weight of his own name is but a concoction. I side with Jameson who says, “our imaginations are hostages to our mode of production” (*Archeologies of the Future* xviii). Crake’s mode of production seems, after all, not liberating which recalls Foucault’s view at the end of *History of Sexuality* where he thinks the irony of men’s preoccupation with sexuality—or life and politics for that matter—is the unfounded belief that “our ‘liberation’ is in balance” (159).

Our starting point is the fact that these novels communicate across each other versions of apocalypse in particular places and times. The issues these texts possess, in themselves, raise questions of power that demand susceptibility on our part especially at points of contact between philosophy and literature. To me, the best literature tackles real contradictions, in fact, as Jameson has written, “not only real contradictions of capitalist modernity that evolve in convulsive moments, but also the visibility of such contradictions from stage to historical stage, or in other words the capacity of each one to be named, to be thematized and to be represented” (*Archaeologies of the Future* 13). P.D. James, Cuarón and Atwood contribute in their literature to these reference points and in doing so already, borrowing the term from Foucault, are the founders of *future* discursivities that wage against the historical applications of biopower and biopolitics of their times.

In the course of this study, I analyzed how these texts assess temporal relations of biopolitics and, as fictions, substantiate the modern dimensions of a new relationship between sovereignty and life, thus enabling us to read the present systems and contemporary mechanisms of power. I have argued that reading a text through this approach not only provides a means of reading literary or political

theory, but also opens up new literary spaces in which we can extend or augment the culturally-sanctioned practices of interpreting texts. These texts reiterate a historicity and allude to an “uninterrupted narrative” (*The Political Unconscious* 4) in which their substance dramatize not only the production of human subjects’ response to, but also, their negotiation of power, and that, in a way, delivers an ethos which takes the biopolitical way of reading to an important and speculative conclusion: the historical telos of literature as a cultural artifact is to provide an imaginative access to fictional worlds that we have never inhabited, but that have nevertheless inhabited us.



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