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Wiping the Slate?

**Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy and Challenges to the
Concept of Cultural Memory**

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1 Introduction

“All it takes . . . is the elimination of one generation. One generation of anything . . . break the link in time between one generation and the next, and it’s game over forever” (*O&C* 223). This true but nevertheless very bleak observation lies at the heart of Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy, consisting of *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2006), and *MaddAddam* (2013)¹. It is a story about many things – the morals of gene-splicing, the danger of capitalism, a reflection on language and its power as well as its limits. Issues of knowledge and remembering are raised and the overall realisation that, indeed, continuity is paramount to ensure a future. It is a story set in a world that has taken current western trends one step further. What some call dystopia others call science-fiction; Atwood herself prefers the term speculative fiction (“Ustopia” n. pag.). These genre discussions are somewhat futile though. Atwood oftentimes mixes different text forms and modes of storytelling to create a unique and rich tableau. A celebration of intertextuality, fully equipped with allusions, satire, myth and biblical stories, to name but a few. The *MaddAddam* trilogy continues in the same vein when the author lets a western world not unlike ours be swept away by a virus. Given that few people survive this epidemic one impertinent question remains: Who are the ones able to remember and name it, then? There is Jimmy, formerly best friend to Crake who invented the virus and eventually let it loose on the world. On the outset Jimmy is convinced that he is alone – save for the genetically modified humanoids that Crake has created parallel to his work on the virus. A two stage plan: wipe out humanity and let the Children of Crake or Crakers take over. The Crakers share the ability to speak English with Jimmy but other than that there is not much to compare. Their bodily functions are decidedly different, showing features of a multitude of animals, making them perfectly adapted to the post-plague situation. Their temper is mellow since Crake’s aim was to rid these quasi-humans of any traits that might lead to anger, wars, religion or art. It is Jimmy who is the relic of an old world that was built on these concepts. Since the Crakers were raised in a laboratory situation and only released by Jimmy after the plague had hit they do not have a notion of the world outside or the maxims according to which humanity had lived.

Over the course of the trilogy more surviving characters are introduced. Toby becomes the second protagonist to the trilogy, a woman who comes from a different background than Jimmy. Where Jimmy grew up in sheltered compounds she is shaped by the world outside this

¹ Throughout this paper these novels will be abbreviated with *O&C*, *YotF*, and *MA*.

safe space, having made it through life in the cities. In Atwood's world-building, the compounds and the cities work as polar opposites. Toby as well as the other survivors she reconnects with are part of an eco-religious group, the God's Gardeners. They eventually meet Jimmy and the Crakers, forming a group of survivors whose knowledge refers to a world extinct and who are struggling to conceive a concept of a possible future. It is this moment which this paper chooses as its starting point. The setting as well as the limited number of survivors beg the question not only of the worth of knowledge but also of the dynamics in processes of remembering, individually as well as collectively. As Olick points out collective memory "is something – or rather many things – we *do*, not something – or many things – we *have*" ("Mnemonic Practices" 159, italics in original). With this he clarifies what Maurice Halbwachs worked on a few decades earlier, namely the social dimension of memory. According to him, individuals remember not merely alone but in groups since memories are recalled to an individual "externally, and the groups of which I am a part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them, upon condition, to be sure, that I turn toward them and adopt, at least for the moment, their way of thinking" (Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* 38). Both kinds of memories depend on each other. Yet it is important to point out that Halbwachs does not suggest a collective psyche. He acknowledges the importance of groups to the processes of remembering but the basis of his approach is the individual, who is part of a multitude of groups. The collective functions as a framework in which the individual is situated, giving it the possibility to draw on the group's context. What is remembered with ease is usually part of more than one milieu (Halbwachs, *kollektives Gedächtnis* 29), forgetting sets in through the failure to reconstruct the groups with whom they were experienced. They leave traces which can be a trigger for former members to return to the group, at least in thought (*kollektives Gedächtnis* 122). Halbwachs furthermore points out that memories are not fixed – every time they are recalled they are reconstructed and seen in the light of the present, catering to current needs. In the 1980s and 1990s, Jan and Aleida Assmann rediscovered Halbwachs' work and built on it. Rather than talking about collective memory they proposed to divide Halbwachs' concept into two sub-categories, communicative and cultural memory. The basic notion behind this is that of the time frame. Communicative memory is the short-term memory of a society, fluid in its members and the distribution of roles. Knowledge primarily circulates through communication. Cultural memory, on the other hand, extends this time frame: it refers to the body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image" (J. Assmann, "Collective Memory" 132) and operates via clear distinctions as well as specialised keepers of

knowledge in both written and oral cultures. Moreover, memory does not only reside in people's minds: with the development of a writing culture knowledge can be externalised and stored regardless of the original witnesses' fate. Criticism towards Assmann's concept is largely focussed on the restrictive nature of media that carry memory as well as the missing consideration of popular culture as a means for identity building, individual as collective (Stocker 57). Additionally, a desideratum for a new media extension to the idea of archive and canon exists; it does not account for entirely electronic forms of an archive or a comprehensive view of the Internet as an archive. This last reflection, however, will not be of importance for this paper since the post-plague situation is not technology-affine but rather basic in its functions. In fact, the challenge this paper attempts to highlight is the opposite of a decentralised internet archive, namely a culture trying to grasp information that is just out of reach. What happens if former figures of memory are not existent anymore and the remembering party does not re-instate them? Coming back to Atwood's few surviving characters and the desolate surroundings they find themselves in it becomes clear that their cultural memory is indeed drastically reduced, limited to what they can actually remember without the help of external media.

The novels themselves are written as a memory narrative, covering several years and building narratives in fragmented storytelling which ultimately form a coherent story. It is this focus on the individual as part of the collective doing the remembering that poses the interesting initial moment: how much of their memory, personal as well as collective, is kept and passed on? What happens to cultural memory if there is no one left to receive it? With the help of Halbwachs and Assmann's research the *MaddAddam* trilogy will be examined in regard to these questions. Due to the particular setting the novel offers an insight into the processes of cultural memory at the crucial moment: the transfer of a radical event to long-term memory, as well as challenges that might inhibit its formation. The first part will take a closer look at the protagonists Jimmy and Toby and what could be called the individualisation of cultural memory. The dynamics of remembering and forgetting will be stressed in light of the importance of affective groups for cultural memory. Furthermore, the question of an audience is considered as well – one of the factors usually not taken into consideration when it comes to studies on cultural memory. The problem that especially figures of memory face are largely questions of conception and maintenance; reception, on the other hand, is usually implied rather than analysed, put on the sideline in favour of considering the represented party. Yet these two factors are inherently linked. As Confino points out, “the crucial issue in the history of memory is not how a past is represented but why it was received or rejected. For every

society sets up images of the past” (1390). The drastically reduced number of people sharing the same fate is paramount in Atwood’s trilogy, presenting an apt opportunity to look further into reception. Moving on from the individual the setting will be examined via application of Pierre Nora’s concept of lieux de mémoire. As an external trigger of memory the surroundings have a certain influence on the remembering or forgetting party, independent from social groups but nevertheless shaped by them. The post-plague situation is also a perfect basis to examine changing meanings of relics – memory does not only need occasion but also a narrative, opening itself up for potential reinterpretations given the right circumstances. Moving on from the assessment of the post-plague situation and its influence on memory and forgetting this paper focuses on practices of orality and the subsequent building of identity-securing knowledge along with a corpus of original stories and rituals. The process of manifesting new cultural memory will be looked at along with an analysis of the intermediaries. Dynamics of selection and censorship start in practices of orality and are followed through when it comes to the establishing of a written culture. Here, the question of a recipient is posed anew but on a collective rather than on an individual scale, lending itself to considerations of the future. Touching on the subject of memories inscribed in the body the physicality of writing will be considered.

Of course this paper does not lay claim to give a comprehensive account of the workings of memory in Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy – the novels are far too complex to be entirely itemised within the given scope. Nevertheless the following pages shall give an insight into the dynamics of cultural memory, looking at crucial challenges to their formation and opening up further questions that are worth investigating.

2 Cultural Memory: From Individual to Collective... to Individual?

2.1 Individualisation of Collective Memory

“Everyone has other people” (*MA* 137) seems to be a simple and true observation when it comes to an average life – every individual has contact to other people, it is virtually impossible to avoid contact entirely throughout a lifetime. The outset of Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy does not suggest otherwise when we are introduced to Jimmy. Yet one significant detail shows the fragility of a statement taken at face-value. Jimmy is the sole survivor of the Waterless Flood, the plague that allegedly extinguished all life on earth. It would be a typical last-man narrative if it weren’t for the Crakers, the genetically engineered lab experiment of Jimmy’s former best friend Crake. Yet despite this kind of company Jimmy feels utterly alone. The Crakers know nothing about the plague and the former world, experiencing it on a day-to-day basis.

The starting point of Atwood’s trilogy shows challenges to collective memory, at least in Jimmy’s case. Maurice Halbwachs was the first to propose the concept of collective memory, which focuses not on individual processes of remembering but on the social framework within which individuals recall. Collective memory comes into existence when individuals recall events they have experienced together since these recollections are inherently shaped by the social frame they are produced in. According to Halbwachs an individual needs communication as well as identification with a social group to remember, “I turn to these people, I momentarily adopt their viewpoint, and I re-enter their group in order to better remember” (*The Collective Memory* 24). Exchanges with the group additionally sharpen as well as deform individual memories; this factor points to the nature of the collective, namely that it restricts individual memories in favour of creating a coherent narrative for the group. The group itself then turns to the collective experience and reproduces its identity through it. Halbwachs is fairly cautious in naming these groups who share memories. Rather than basing their distinction exclusively on social classes or structures of society he gives examples: family, and teacher and student relations as well as people “who have been brought close together – for example, by a shared task, mutual devotion, common ancestry, or artistic endeavour” (*The Collective Memory* 32). So people who come together on the basis of affective ties. Halbwachs also points out that every individual belongs to several such groups and thereby is a member of several collective memories – additionally, these groups are not necessarily long-lived and the “succession of our remembrances, of even our most personal

ones, is always explained by changes occurring in our relationships to various collective milieus – in short, by the transformations these milieus undergo separately and as a whole” (Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* 49).

In Atwood’s post-plague situation there is no group left for Jimmy to draw on. He presumes all other human beings to be dead and gone, leaving him in a state of utmost isolation from his peers. The social dimension Halbwachs worked on does not apply to Jimmy, not anymore. Therefore, the only human point of view is his own, making it difficult for him to produce new memories that show continuity to his life before the plague. So what appeared to be a statement is turned into a question here: Does everyone have other people? Spoken with Halbwachs this question can be answered with a clear yes. He points out that it is not necessary for people to be present in order to serve as an impetus for an individual’s memory; considering them in thought is enough and thus, Halbwachs claims, no one is ever truly alone. Even during other people’s absence memories remain collective (*kollektives Gedächtnis* 2). In *Oryx and Crake* it seems that Atwood takes this notion literally. Jimmy carries around a multitude of people in his mind in the form of voices. These can be sorted in two categories, namely autobiographical and semantic memory. As the name implies autobiographical memory refers to the personal memories of an individual. It constitutes their understanding of themselves and additionally provides the way in which this understanding is passed on to others (Misztal 9). On several occasions Jimmy feels the presence of his deceased girlfriend Oryx and talks to her. The conversation is a monologue, though – in his mind Oryx answers solely via reaction rather than through language. Still her apparent presence is much coveted by Jimmy (*O&C* 113) but it does not necessarily support Jimmy’s sense of self. It rather strengthens the idea that she is not real; her appearance may be a short-term solace yet with every disappearance Jimmy is brought back to his bleak reality, fully aware that what he wants is ultimately out of reach. The other kind of voice he carries around stems from his semantic memory, which stores facts about the world. Interestingly enough, Jimmy does not simply remember what he had once read in a book. The facts are clothed in voices as well which echoes Aleida Assmann’s observation that language is the most powerful stabiliser of memories (*Western Civilization* 239). “*When dealing with indigenous peoples, says the book in his head – a more modern book this time, late twentieth century, the voice a confident female’s – you must attempt to respect their traditions...*” (*O&C* 97, italics in original). In this quote it becomes apparent that Jimmy replays what he has learned, externalising the knowledge to another voice than his own so that he can subsequently comment on it, “Some earnest aid worker in a khaki jungle outfit, with netting under the arms and a hundred pockets.

Condescending self-righteous cow, thinks she's got all the answers . . . If she were here she'd need a whole new take on indigenous" (*O&C* 97). Halbwachs points out the possibility to enter a group in thought in order to achieve continuity (*kollektives Gedächtnis* 122). When it comes to memories of Oryx this is well true. Jimmy attempts to recreate his image of her with the help of their shared experiences but still continuity is difficult to come by, "No answer, no response. She was never very forthcoming at the best of times" (*O&C* 114). When it comes to semantic memory, however, it is the other way around. Fragments of knowledge simply appear in his mind, unsolicited but still insistent. Instead of controlling them and consciously decide to let them stimulate his memory he is utterly at their mercy. This circumstance is further stressed when he is haunted by a memory fragment while talking to the Crakers; in something akin to frustration he pleads, "Please, not now, thinks Snowman. Not in company. In company, he can't answer back" (*O&C* 161)². Said company consists of the Crakers who, despite or even because of their origin in a laboratory, indeed have a collective identity. Details are to follow but for now it is noteworthy that Jimmy pays more attention to the voices in his head rather than attempting to meaningfully interact with the Crakers which would lead to the formation of identity – or, in this case, a reformation or adjustment of personal and individual identity – given they establish a "shared world of symbolic meaning" (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 116). Jimmy is clearly able to reflect on the nature of these voices as echoes from the past that only he can hear. At the same time, however, he engages with them and comments on the fragments. His social group is in his head and consists of practices of passive remembering, references to his own past. What he hears belongs to the time before the plague and functions as a reminder not only of Oryx and the knowledge of the past but of himself. Instead of strengthening his sense of belonging, however, these remains achieve the opposite. Since cultural memory "works by reconstructing, that is, it always relates its knowledge to an actual and contemporary situation" (J. Assmann, "Collective Memory" 130) the fragments open up an almost grotesque abyss between the past and the present rather than closing it: the advice from the book on indigenous cultures is of course related to Jimmy's connection to the Crakers but ultimately it is utterly useless and even gains a mocking quality. Memories, here, are not necessarily a positive force of self-construction but gain a sharper edge that works towards the opposite.

The other implications of Jimmy's physical isolation are equally interesting: due to the absence of other humans Jimmy carries the weight of collective memory on his shoulders. Jan

² Snowman is the name Jimmy adapted when he first shows himself to the Crakers. The reasons and implications will be looked at in 2.3

and Aleida Assmann introduce a distinction to Halbwachs' idea of collective memory, namely to split it into what they call communicative and cultural memory. They concur with Halbwachs' observations concerning the importance of social groups and further introduce the factors of time and passing on of cultural knowledge to his understanding of collective memory. Communicative memory therefore refers to the memory of a society that covers the last 80 to 100 years. It is cultural memory that stores anything beyond it and in order to do so it must follow a different structure than communicative memory. Whereas communicative memory is largely based on oral exchange and interaction as well as showing no clear distribution of roles within the participating members cultural memory operates much stricter: specialised keepers of knowledge are responsible to pass it on and special figures of memory emerge, along with rituals and commemorative media that ensure longevity. It refers to fixed points in the past and its function is to ensure a collective and cultural identity for the people involved (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 37). Jimmy does not have a like-minded survivor to engage in the kind of conversation communicative memory refers to. Neither does he have the resources or abilities to carry cultural memory all by himself. As has been shown his social group exists solely in his head and therefore, the main pillar of cultural memory is effectively gone: the collective for which it exists and to whom it gives structure has disappeared. As Zelizer writes, "another basic premise in our understanding of collective memory concerns its partiality. No single memory contains all that we know, or could know, about any given event, personality, or issue. Rather, memories are often pieced together like a mosaic" (224). What is left is one survivor who cannot know the entire wealth of cultural memory nor do justice to the parts he can remember. The failure to constitute an individual identity, consisting of a coherent self-image, and personal identity, relating to social accountability (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 113), due to the absence of his group extends to his collective identity, depriving Jimmy of a real possibility to work against his impending loss of self.

Moreover, forgetting sets in, decimating further what is left of cultural memory. The integral part of remembering is indeed forgetting. Memory needs occasions (Schmidt 193) whereas forgetting is the default status of the human mind. And for a good reason: in order to ensure that new information can be acquired the mind needs to forget since it is restricted by neural capacity (A. Assmann, "Canon and Archive" 97). Such occasion can be a calendar of festive rights or another kind of figure of memory that is established via cultural memory. Figures of memory are characterised by their reference to time and place, their relationship to a group, and the capacity to reconstruct (J. Assmann, "Collective Memory" 130). In Atwood's novel all occasion for memory is gone. As Schmidt points out, what "is remembered and what is

forgotten first of all depends upon the subjective management of identity, which in turn is steered by emotions, needs, norms, and aims” (193, 194). Norms and aims are largely missing from the post-plague situation and Jimmy increasingly feels the influence this circumstance has on himself, “‘I’ve shrunk! My brain is the size of a grape!’ But he doesn’t know which it is, bigger or smaller, because there’s nobody to measure himself by. He’s lost in the fog, no benchmarks” (*O&C* 237). Additionally, the memories that do not taunt Jimmy simply appear to be useless and unable to improve on his situation. Jimmy “doesn’t care about the iron in his blood or the calcium in his skeletal frame; he’s tired of being, he wants to be someone else” (*O&C* 107) and it is this attitude which Aleida Assmann characterises as passive forgetting: neglect and disregard as well as losing and dispersing, all of which are unintentional (“Canon and Archive” 98). Step by step cultural memory shrinks due to the absence of necessity. What is left, then, is memory via emotions and needs.

Despite the impending danger of forgetting Jimmy is keenly aware that he is the only who has access to memories of the world before the plague. This gives him if not an occasion at least an incentive to remember, this time consciously, “‘Hang on to the words,’ he tells himself. The odd words, the old words, the rare ones. *Valance. Norn. Serendipity. Pibroch. Lubricious.* When they’re gone out of his head, these words, they’ll be gone, everywhere, forever. As if they had never been” (*O&C* 68, italics in original). Rather than trying to retain information that could be factually conducive to his survival Jimmy decides to focus on words. Building on the idea of memory via emotions Nora points out that insecurity about the shape of the future puts the individual under the obligation to remember, to “stockpile, as it were, in a pious and somewhat indiscriminate fashion, any visible trace or material sign that might eventually testify to what we are or what we will have become” (“Upsurge” 6). In a way, this behaviour is applicable to Jimmy’s situation: remembering the words might be just as useful (or useless, for that matter) as retaining other forms of past. He stockpiles first and foremost for himself and due to his own categorisation as a “word person” as opposed to a scientific “number person” (*O&C* 67) this decision makes more sense – it is an act not only of saving the language of the past but also of saving himself, showing the intricate connection between memory and identity. Yet much like the uninvited voices single words also appear and disappear at random, “From nowhere, a word appears: *Mesozoic*. He can see the word, he can hear the word, but he can’t reach the word. He can’t attach anything to it. This is happening too much lately, this dissolution of meaning, the entries on his cherished wordlists drifting off into space” (*O&C* 39). Here, the workings of memory are clearly presented. Despite Jimmy’s best efforts certain words prove to be without referent in his situation, a signifier without

signified. What cannot be remembered is therefore at risk of losing its meaning and dissolving into single pieces devoid of meaning. Stockpiling, as proposed by Nora, does not happen literally, though. Even though the late society Jimmy comes from is a written culture no mention is made of libraries, museums, or other places that could potentially help him carry the burden of cultural memory. Therefore, all remembering Jimmy attempts is restricted to his own mind and dependent on what he considers to be occasions of memory. On the one hand he desperately tries to hold on to the memories and knowledge of the world before the plague yet on the other hand he does not attempt to establish a framework that would make this task easier for him. As a consequence, forgetting is here no possibility to make room for new experiences but a tragedy as far as the understanding of cultural memory and its passing on is concerned. Questions of recipients and overall use will be posed in due time but it is interesting to note here that Jimmy feels responsible to function as an archive. Even though he can still call on the remnants of his group of times past he is effectively “lost in the fog” and it becomes clear that in order to retain both cultural memory as well as his sense of identity Jimmy is in need of contact with others which “also entails contact with ourselves, and the self of personal identity is simply not available to us without communication and interaction” (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 116).

The second novel of the trilogy, *The Year of the Flood*, covers the same time frame as *Oryx and Crake* but focuses on a different cast. Whereas Jimmy and Crake are children of the Compounds we encounter Toby, a woman from what is called the pleeblands, meaning cities³. Much like Jimmy she thinks she is the last person on earth but in contrast to him she knows neither about Crake nor about the existence of the Crakers, isolating her not only from her groups but from any kind of society. She too draws on voices inside her head that are the remnants of one of her groups, in this following case the so-called God’s Gardeners, an eco-sect that predicted the plague and took precautions in the form of supplies and basic survival skills. “An old moon draws the past, said Pilar: whatever arrives from the shadows you must greet as a blessing” (*YotF* 238) is a piece of advice his deceased friend gives her and thereby establishes an understanding of memories as a positive force. Whereas Jimmy’s encounters with his memories are largely characterised by displeasure Toby adheres to Pilar’s words and attempts to see them as a blessing. A difficult task by all means and she concludes, “I wasn’t in the picture because I’m the frame, she thinks. It’s only me, holding it all together. It’s only

³ The future Atwood predicts is one of dichotomies. The world is run by corporations which results in a distinction not between rich and poor but between scientists and citizens who do not work for a corporation. Whereas the scientists live in sealed-off Compounds, guarded by a special force, the cities or pleeblands harbour the rest of society which is oftentimes used as a testing ground for new bioforms.

a handful of fading neural pathways. It's only a mirage" (*YotF* 239). Ultimately, the memories she consciously evokes are neither positive nor negative but are treated as moments that happened. Interesting is her observation about being the frame; it seems like an extended version of the mirror metaphor Jan Assmann uses to explain the mediated experience of oneself. Just as "we are unable to see our face except in a mirror, we are unable to see our inner self other than by reflection, and it is the latter that creates awareness" (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 116). Toby's missing reflection in her own memories shows an awareness of the workings of memory and identity. In her function as the frame her inner self is indeed not made visible but it has a different function, namely putting her in charge. She is not overwhelmed by her past in the way Jimmy is, but at the same time her memories do not secure her personality either: if everything she remembers is considered a mirage not even her control over her memories can provide a framework. The lack of interaction with other people, real people, poses the same challenge to her as it does to Jimmy. Her main former group, the God's Gardeners, knew about the impending catastrophe and taught their members to be self-sufficient. One of the main ideas to arrive at this self-sufficiency is the ability to correctly remember, "We had our slates and chalk because we always drew the Wild Botanicals to help us memorize them. Then we'd wipe off our drawings, and the plant would be in our heads. There's nothing like drawing a thing to make you really see it" (*YotF* 149). It is this routine that gives her the strength to remain calm in the face of the post-plague situation. Whereas Jimmy is vaguely quoting from books he read Toby is more accustomed to the practise of memorising facts. Yet even this advantage only goes so far. Bergthaller points out that the God's Gardeners at the same time "impart useful ecological knowledge and habitualize the group's members to environmentally responsible behaviour, they also create a symbolic order within which their survival can become meaningful" (740). In principle this observation is fitting since their calendar is a figure of memory around which Toby can construct her identity. In *The Year of the Flood*, that is. In Bergthaller's defence the concluding novel *MaddAddam* had not been published at the time of his essay and it is then Toby experiences the limits of her mnemonic practice. After a while she loses track of days and tries to recall the festivities of the God's Gardeners, "On the other hand it may be Saint Jane Goodall's Day. *Thank you, Oh Lord, for blessing the life of Saint Jane Goodall . . . and also our own deep... our own deep what?* Toby rummages for the next phrase. She's slipping" (*MA* 135, italics in original). The confidence the God's Gardeners had in memories and practices of orality is definitely a part of Toby's self-conception but here the absence of other members has drastic influence. Neither communicative nor cultural memory can be upheld by

one person alone and the additional loss of a calendar eradicates the order of her figures of memory.

As Fortunati and Lamberti point out, memory “becomes an ‘act of survival,’ of consciousness and creativity, fundamental to the formation and rewriting of identity” (129) and Jimmy and Toby seem to be the perfect examples for it. Both protagonists struggle with the necessary consciousness as well as the creativity to adapt their identity. Especially Jimmy vehemently fights against the situation he is in, “Get me out! he hears himself thinking. But he isn’t locked up, he’s not in prison. What could be more *out* than where he is?” (*O&C* 45). The challenges to cultural memory and, by extension, to their identities are numerous. Indeed no one is ever truly alone given they grew up among others but as has been shown these imagined peers are not enough. Identity and memory both thrive on interaction and its absence proves to be a danger to either. As Zelizer rightly stresses “collective memories can be tested most effectively against other memories, and less effectively against any absolutist past” (224). Jimmy and Toby do not have access to either; Jimmy “doesn’t know which is worse, a past he can’t regain or a present that will destroy him if he looks at it too clearly, then there’s the future. Sheer vertigo” (*O&C* 147). Each time-compartment poses different problems to his identity and has its own dynamics of memory, reality and consequences. “Identity, including that of the ‘I’, is always a social construct, and as such it is always cultural” says Jan Assmann (*Early Civilization* 113) and brings together the problem of the post-plague situation: culture, cultural memory, and identity do not concur.

2.2 Is There Anybody Out There?

So far the post-plague situation seems fairly desperate and inescapable, weighing heavily on the survivors. Looking at Rigney’s definition of the term cultural memory another factor comes into play. Cultural memory “highlights the extent to which shared memories of the past are the product of mediation, textualization and acts of communication” (“Plenitude” 14) and as has already been established the difficulty here lies in the absence of people who share experiences. However, this quotation also hints at another factor largely unheeded within the field: that of the recipient. Of course the recipient is usually part of the same group from which cultural memory is produced but given the special circumstances in the *MaddAddam* trilogy the opportunity for further investigation arises. Jimmy would be “legendary if there were anyone left to relate legends” (*O&C* 307) and since there is no one, it calls for a closer look at the Crakers. Raised in a laboratory environment the Crakers are part two of Crake’s

plan: the first is the distribution of a drug, dressed up as a pill for potency, that infects everyone who takes it with the virus that brought about the plague. Then, when no one is left, humanity would be replaced by the genetically engineered Crakers. Their design is partly based on the demands of the post-plague situation but the main objective in their creation is the absence of symbolic thinking. According to Crake the “king-of-the-castle hard-wiring that had plagued humanity had, in them, been unwired” (*O&C* 305) since they do not have concepts of possession, race, and social structures. Their bodies have human form but they are equipped with further features that distinguish them from the average human such as rapid growth cycles and phases of being in heat, the ability to purr like cats to soothe wounds and stimulate healing, a diet of grass and leaves that corresponds largely to grazing. They are able to speak and additionally, they share a special form of singing as a communicative system among themselves. All in all, the difference to human beings could not be greater and this circumstance is clearly shown in Jimmy’s missing connection to them. Even though they share the ability to communicate Jimmy feels excluded from the apparent collective the Crakers present. Just as the voices in Jimmy’s head belong to his past his whole existence becomes the epitome of times long ago when he says that on “some non-conscious level Snowman must serve as a reminder to these people, and not a pleasant one: he’s what they may have been once” (*O&C* 106). Nothing in the Craker’s behaviour points towards this realisation but still they are keenly aware that there is a difference between him and them. Especially the children are curious to talk to Jimmy and assess his difference first-hand, trying to find out “whether he has two eyes really, or three” (*O&C* 7). Jimmy’s isolation is further intensified through these clear borders between the Crakers and him. It is not only their physical differences that make it difficult for him to find a connection to them but also the temporal distance. An imagined scene he evokes takes the form of a stage play, “Silence would fall, as in tragic plays of long ago when the doomed protagonist made an entrance, enveloped in his cloak of contagious bad news . . . *I’m your past*, he might intone. *I’m your ancestor, come from the land of the dead. Now I’m lost, I can’t get back, I’m stranded here, I’m all alone. Let me in!*” (*O&C* 106). As a remnant of the past Jimmy fashions himself as a memory for the Crakers but due to their lack of lived time they are unlikely to understand the meaning of his words. The interesting thing here, however, proves to be the form of Jimmy’s imagination. Straub points out that the “integration of events into generally intelligible stories” (223) is an integral part of recollections and it is Jimmy’s turns to the dramatic set-up of a stage play that gives his experiences structure. In making himself the protagonist he automatically turns the Crakers into his audience but it is then that the use of such a cultural

template stops. Even though it helps him to make sense of his situation it is exceedingly clear that the Crakers cannot draw on the same cultural resources as him. “*Oh Snowman, how may we be of help to you?* The mild smiles, the polite surprise, the puzzled goodwill” (*O&C* 106, italics in original) is the reaction Jimmy predicts should he perform. It is not disinterest or disregard but the absence of shared cultural memory that makes communication largely difficult; after all it is not simply about the exchange of words but about their meaning. Nora points out that we “are no longer on very good terms with the past” and says that we communicate with it through vestiges which hold the key to our identity (“Upsurge” 7) and, in this case, Jimmy is the personification of the past – he inhabits it, he is a vestige but ultimately he does not connect with his past as such. What is more Jimmy does not represent a past the Crakers identify with either, neither factually nor on an emotional level. They cannot possibly function as recipients for the cultural memory Jimmy carries, therefore unearthing another factor that favours its eventual loss. The difficulties posed to Jimmy’s personal identity are also intensified through this circumstance since his memories cannot be helpful in his attempt to endow his experiences “with sense and meaning that conforms to socio-cultural standards” (223) which Straub highlights as one of the main tasks of recollection. Jimmy’s socio-cultural standards do not meet those of the Crakers and vice versa.

Another vestige is Toby, entirely isolated and without another group to compare her own existence with. She does not inhabit the past as literally as Jimmy does but tries to find meaning in the present, in her peculiar situation. “Why has she been saved alive? . . . Why not someone younger, someone with more optimism and fresher cells? She ought to trust that she’s here for a reason – to bear witness, to transmit a message, to salvage at least something from the general wreck. She ought to trust, but she can’t” (*YotF* 95).⁴ Her immediate reaction is one similar to Jimmy’s preservation of odd words. Collect information, transfer the events into personal memory, narrative, and, eventually, cultural memory so that they can be handed down. Rather than accepting that she has fallen victim to arbitrary circumstances the situation is elevated to one of meaning. At least temporarily until her trust wanes. The interesting thing here is that Toby does not merely draw on cultural templates in an attempt to form a coherent narrative. She is also aware of the process. Eakin stresses that “the present is not a story yet. We can know it only indirectly, and we are conditioned socially – and I would speculate neurologically as well – to absorb our journeys across time in narrative terms” (157). She is

⁴ For an analysis of the commodification of women’s bodies in *The Year of the Flood* see Bouson, J. Brooks. “‘We’re using up the earth. It’s almost gone’: A Return to the Post-Apocalyptic Future in Margaret Atwood’s *The Year of the Flood*.” *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 46.1 (2011): 9-26. Web. 2 April 2016.

immersed in a present that does not adhere to any narrative patterns as her existential questions show and therefore it becomes difficult to transform it into an intelligible story. It is this train of thought that first hints at another aspect that is involved in matters of the past and recollection, namely the future. Aside from securing an individual identity the use of stories or witness reports is generally to be told later, and additionally to be told to someone else. The existence of such a recipient is largely assumed in reflections on cultural memory; humans as a species are not exactly threatened and thus there will always be someone to listen to an account of things past. The relevant question then becomes one of sustainability and longevity in order to secure a place in the multitude of accounts. The *MaddAddam* trilogy, however, indeed qualifies as “a laboratory in which we can experiment with the possibilities for culturally admissible constructions of the past” (Neumann 342). There is a past, there is culture to be passed on but no one left to receive it. The recipient that would be necessary to discard Toby’s doubts is out of reach, both physically and temporally, and makes her aware of the process of recollection and preservation. She understands that her belief in continuity is the one thing that will keep her from going insane but at the same time she knows that it is, to echo her earlier words, a mirage. In her situation, a message without an addressee does not gain the poetic gravity of an open letter but pointedly shows the futility of the effort. The past “is no longer the guarantee of the future, and it is largely for this reason that memory has come to play such an active role in society and been invested with a promise of continuity” (“Upsurge” 8) says Nora and describes the challenge accurately. With only oneself as the audience for a story, the story in which oneself is the protagonist, the difficulty of sustaining personal identity crosses over to autobiographical identity. Distinction from others is not possible and no means of reflection are given; as Eakin stresses, “Social accountability conditions us from early childhood to believe that our recognition as persons is to be transacted through the exchange of identity narratives. The verdict of those for whom we perform is virtually axiomatic: no satisfactory narrative (or no narrative at all), no self” (44). While this appears to be true the challenge here is the reverse dependence of audience and narrative: the audience is absent and therefore cannot shape the narrative into a satisfactory one.

The future and its inhabitants are uncertain, the past is no guarantee of the future, and the present is largely aim- and meaningless as a result – things appear bleak without working mechanisms of cultural memory. Kermode points out that the apocalypse “depends on a concord of imaginatively recorded past and imaginatively predicted future, achieved on behalf of us, who remain ‘in the midst’” (8). The setting can well be described as post-apocalyptic

but still Kermode's observation is apt: Toby searches for compliance between her past and the future she cannot grasp which therefore becomes the object of imagination. "What to eat, where to shit, how to take shelter, who and what to kill: are these the basics? thinks Toby. Is this what we've come to, or come down to; or else come back to?" (*MA* 98) shows her musings on the subject and stresses that she is still 'in the midst'. The direction this development takes is not clear at all which points towards a somewhat eternal present. The main idea of Kermode's essay is that the notion of an ending gives the present meaning; the apocalypse, however, already happened in the form of the plague. Indeed the apocalypse, biblical or otherwise, does not constitute an absolute ending. It rather produces a new present after the catastrophe but robs it of a clearly graspable future. Until the next apocalypse is predicted.

2.3 Coping Mechanisms

A "usable past" (Neumann 338) is very difficult to come by in an isolated situation. The survivors' attempts to form their experiences according to narrative templates stress the connection between cultural memory and identity but ultimately, an audience that provides exchange is absolutely essential. Luckily, Margaret Atwood does not let her brave protagonists die alone and confused – Toby finds Ren, a student of hers in the God's Gardeners and Jimmy develops a coping mechanism that counterbalances his impending loss of sanity. By now it seems clear that these happenings are not an easy fix for the situation Atwood describes which is why it is interesting to look at the way cultural memory and identity is handled further.

The appearance of Ren is a beacon of hope to Toby. Finding one of her own, so to speak, she finally has the audience she longed for in order to make sense of her situation. "Just to have a second person on the premises – even a feeble person, even a sick person who sleeps most of the time – just this makes the Spa seem like a cozy domestic dwelling rather than a haunted house. I've been the ghost, thinks Toby" (*YotF* 360). It is not only communication that stabilises her personal identity but simply Ren's presence, working in the way that Welzer describes as "cooperation—the central category of human existence" (292). Even though they have not seen each other since the plague it is the reconstruction of a former group that takes place here. Halbwachs observes that such reunions always harbour the potential of failing. If the former members have developed in such different directions that no common ground remains it is impossible to rebuild the group they once belonged to (*kollektives Gedächtnis* 9).

The catastrophe has certainly influenced both Ren and Toby as the quote shows: Ren is suffering physically as well as mentally and Toby is acutely aware of her own status. The fact that she considers herself a ghost without human interaction stresses further what all earlier analysis has already shown. Not the return of the repressed in a Freudian sense occurs but rather the loss of herself and the connection to her life world. Despite their time apart it is possible for Toby to reconstruct their group by means of affective ties that are still intact. In Ren she finds not only an audience but another person who shares the survival of the plague with her; which is not to say that they talk about it since both women are deeply traumatised (*YotF* 361). Their past is only partly reconstructed, then. They draw on their shared experiences in the God's Gardeners but anything that happened between then and their reunion is hardly mentioned, and if so for purely factual knowledge. Ren tells "a little of her story" which ends with a "blackout. She can't get any farther than that" (*YotF* 362). The traumatic events of the past cannot be voiced and are rejected by their carriers in an attempt to protect themselves. As Welzer points out the "desire for continuity is not merely an individual wish; without the continuity of the identity of its members, a social group or society could not function" (292) but in this case it is not the verbalisation of Ren's story that provides continuity for their reinstated group. It is rather company that is paramount and given that the two women already know each other and share an emotional bond continuity is easier accomplished than in Jimmy's case. It is indeed the otherness of the Crakers (at least as seen through Jimmy's eyes – the Crakers definitely beg to differ) that makes it difficult for him to build a memory community with them. His only means of identity creation, or rather identity continuation, is the contrast that the Crakers present. The main cultural tool he can employ to do so is communication, more specifically language. This mode of communication hints at the formal possibility to create common ground on which culture and society can be built on. It is interesting, however, that the Crakers do have access to another form of communication, namely singing. It is "unlike anything he [Jimmy] has ever heard in his vanished life: it's beyond the human level, or below it" (*O&C* 105). What is a group-defining feature for the Crakers distances Jimmy farther. Via spoken language he can integrate into the group but his missing ability to communicate via singing puts him on the sidelines again. The "shared world of symbolic meaning" (116) Jan Assmann identifies as a prerequisite for identity formation is not to be regarded as a collective identity. Still, this world is only partly given and trust in a lingua franca becomes the main objective. Even though Jimmy states that he "feels the need to hear a human voice – a fully human voice, like his own" (*O&C* 10) he is aware that interaction with the Crakers is his only means to secure his autobiographical as well as

personal identity. After all, he is not oblivious to the process of disintegration his identity falls prey to. In fact, he partly supports it by means of appropriation. Before Jimmy shows himself to the Crakers for the first time he decides to rename himself to Snowman, his reason being that he “needed to forget the past – the distant past, the immediate past, the past in any form. He needed to exist only in the present, without guilt, without expectation. As the Crakers did. Perhaps a different name would do that for him” (*O&C* 349). What happens here is at the same time a dissolution of the self and a new construction. Whereas Jimmy cannot act against the other factors that facilitate his decline, namely the traumatic experience of the plague, survivor’s guilt, and his poor performance as an archive, he is the active party in this instant. In consciously deciding to leave his name and his past behind, he reclaims his self-determination to some degree, an act that is conducive to his identity in a somewhat unusual way. No therapeutical coming-to-terms with the past is his assumed way out. Instead, a clean slate is the overall idea, a new personality to accommodate the challenges of the new situation. Whisker proposes that Jimmy’s transformation into Snowman is a step that increases his crisis when she says, “For him, signifier and signified, in this case the words and the real world, are disjointed, and as a result, language loses its ability to evoke any meaning at all” (155). While the first part is certainly accurate the second statement seems a little hasty. Yes, language appears to be slipping away from him as has been shown via the declining word lists he holds on to. Most of his words indeed refer to signifiers that do not exist anymore but the result is not meaninglessness of the entire language system. If that were the case, especially Jimmy’s choice of name would not carry the weight it obviously does in the text. It is a decision that shows conscious reflection on the meaning of the word and additionally, it is not an act entirely unblemished by the past. His main motivation is his anger at Crake. He is forced to live in a world designed by Crake, even the Crakers carry his name as a collective identity and therefore constantly remind him of the influence his former friend has on him still. Naming himself after the Abominable Snowman Jimmy regains a shred of self-determination since it was “one of Crake’s rules that no name should be chosen for which a physical equivalent . . . could be demonstrated” (*O&C* 7). Instead of entirely starting without remnants of the past Jimmy’s newly conceived identity is a negation of the values Crake held. Moreover, choosing a mythical creature as a namesake shows Jimmy’s position among the Crakers. While it is his own personal joke (which usually points towards the orator’s awareness of meaningful language) a process of normalisation is put in motion as well. Since the Crakers do not know the cultural implication the denotation snowman carries

they use it like any other name. If anything, it is the Craker's stripped-down language that deprives the words of their pre-plague meaning.

Leaving behind his birth name Jimmy hopes for a clear break with his past while taking on a new, controlled personality, one that is untouched by Crake or the world before the catastrophe; at least on the surface. Moreover, the Crakers will not be able to provide a trigger for Jimmy to recall his pre-plague life. These recollections remain truly personal. On the basis of his new identity, then, new and meaningful relations can be built. Snowman's identity is also clearly aimed at the Crakers. In presenting himself as their unlikely shepherd Jimmy constructs a connection between them. His spiteful feeling towards Crake informs the nature of this connection too when Jimmy presents him as a sort of deity. The Craker's knowledge is initially limited to basic lessons about plants and animals (*O&C* 309) but with Jimmy's intervention they develop the concept of an unseen deity – the first step towards a shared cultural memory between Jimmy and the Crakers. Continuity for Jimmy seems to be tied to the presence of Crake's ideas, either in forms intended or subverted. Through his prophet-like status in the group he automatically takes up a position of authority that is readily accepted by his new audience. Here, an ulterior motive also comes into play, "The people would never eat a fish themselves, but they have to bring him one a week because he's told them Crake has decreed it. They've accepted Snowman's monstrosity, they've known from the beginning he was a separate order of being, so they weren't surprised by this" (*O&C* 101). Jimmy institutionalises what is a personal need via drawing on their shared symbols. The regularity of the ritual also secures continuity and even though the future might only be foreseeable until the next fish offering it is a graspable concept again. Continuity is not achieved by Jimmy's own act of remembering and connecting his former life to the new situation. Instead, he turns the tables and makes sure that he becomes worthy of the Craker's remembrance. Starting out from the newly donned character Snowman his identity narrative is built on his function as a prophet and the fish-ritual is the first figure of memory attached to him. It is not a one-sided ritual, though. Jimmy offers a story in return that gives him the possibility to reflect on his situation and, as DiMarco says, hold on to his humanity ("Wendigo" 140). The freedom inherent in his break with the past becomes particularly evident here. Jimmy can draw on what remains of the pre-plague cultural memory in order to concoct rules for the Crakers. He becomes the authority on new cultural memory of the Crakers which is a task he can actually take on. In contrast to 'human' cultural memory which he tries to retain the new set of culture has a specific audience to which he can cater. The formation of new memory communities shows how dependent identity, memory, narratives, as well as recipients are on each other.

This interdependency becomes exceedingly clear when Jimmy fears that he might lose his newly gained audience again if he chose to change the Crake dogma he built up, “He is Crake’s prophet now, whether he likes it or not; and the prophet of Oryx as well. That, or nothing. And he couldn’t stand being nothing, to know himself to be nothing. He needs to be listened to, he needs to be heard. He needs at least the illusion of being understood” (*O&C* 104). Even though he has considerable amount of freedom in forming this new narrative Jimmy needs to adhere to rules of continuity. On an individual level for himself, on a collective level to ensure their group does not dissolve for lack of cooperation (Welzer 292). Maintenance becomes the main objective once the group is formed but, as will be shown, cooperation and cultural memory are no static concepts.

3 Relics, Remnants, Sites of Memory

3.1 The Insisting Past

Cultural memory is not only dependent on groups, communication and narratives alone. Halbwachs points out that every collective memory has a temporal and spatial group as its carrier (Halbwachs, *kollektives Gedächtnis* 73). Of course places do not have an “innate faculty of memory” (A. Assmann, *Western Civilization* 282) but they are an important factor to construct memories. A material setting gives memories stability, makes them authentic and provides additional continuity. If memory is connected to a place the likelihood of its endurance is higher since it outlasts the span of an individual’s life, eras, and other artifacts (ibid.). Different places of memory have ties to different groups; one tangible example is the generational place that connects a place to the history of the family that inhabits it. Figures of memory that fix cultural memory of a given group also need to be connected to time and space to provide them with substance. This is done through “the adherence to primal or outstanding events and through the periodic rhythms to which these memories refer” (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 24). Inhabited spaces show the same dynamic along with objects connected to them, providing a sense of continuity in their stable use. Places supply memories with physical points of references that speak of permanence.

Then there is the other side of the coin, spaces which are uninhabited. Ruins are for instance a place of commemoration that is marked by a clear cut. The story that is attached to this place has abruptly ended and all that is left from it are material relics which stand out in contrast to their environment and are thus identifiable. Instead of demonstrating the presence of a memory it points towards the contrary: all that is tangible in a ruin is the absence of continuity. The connection to the present is broken up and the only way to regain continuity is via memory and a narrative that completes the fragments the relics present (A. Assmann, *Western Civilization* 292). Hence, memory exists in several relations to physical places and it is therefore especially interesting to look at the setting and objects in the *MaddAddam* trilogy. Narratives can be provided partly, as can recollections; the question is to which extend the setting can be considered a site of memory and how it influences the memory of the survivors. Especially in speculative novels, or critical utopia in the words of Tom Moylan (17), the setting has a specific function. Rather than providing merely a background upon which the story can unfold the setting becomes the central element of the text (Moylan 45). In this trilogy, Atwood even doubles the notion of a dystopia. Not only the present is a dystopian

wasteland but also the past which the human survivors recall qualifies as a dystopia, thriving on loss of impulse control while being influenced and ultimately controlled by corporations⁵.

The protagonists are thrust from a technologically jaded world into a setting they are not accustomed to and especially in Jimmy's case the surrounding proves to be hostile to him. He lacks food and drink and due to the freed gene-spliced animals he is at risk of being attacked. To avoid this he lives in a tree. His outward appearance also does not match the one of an average 21st century person, even one living in a dystopia. Instead he is wrapped in a bed sheet that becomes dirtier by the hour (*O&C* 38, 39). DiMarco analyses this regression to an animal-like status as 'going wendigo', invoking a Canadian mythical creature that is a victim to its surroundings ("Wendigo" 137). Given that a large part of the trilogy deals with the repercussions of the plague the situation can be categorised in 'before' and 'after'. According to Machat the deterioration of the natural world is not entirely due to the catastrophe but happened before (106).⁶ Still the greatest rupture happened due to the plague and with dire consequences for both humans and objects.

The offshore towers stand out in the dark silhouette against it, rising improbably out of the pink and pale blue of the lagoon. The shrieks of the birds that nest out there and the distant ocean grinding against the ersatz reefs of rusted car parts and jumbled bricks and assorted rubble sound almost like holiday traffic (*O&C* 3)

Immediate associations to the world before are made by Jimmy even though the concept of holiday traffic is utterly irrelevant to his situation. Not only is there barely any survivor but also no such concept as holidays, let alone traffic. Just the noise operates as an external trigger that brings up scenes from the past Jimmy remembers. On a practical level this external trigger works like the recollections from books he read – spontaneous, uncontrollable, and highlighting the discrepancy between the past and the situation he finds himself in. Similarly, "... red light from the setting sun hits the tower blocks in the water, illuminating an unbroken pane here and there, as if a scattering of lamps has been turned on" (*O&C* 95) speaks of memories of how things have been. This particular connection between Jimmy and the

⁵ For further information on the circumstances of the world before the plague see Bergthaller, Hannes. "Housebreaking the Human Animal: Humanism and the Problem of Sustainability in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*." (2010) *English Studies* 91:7 (2010): 728-743. Web. 12 Jan 2016.

⁶ For more information on the revival of nature in *Oryx and Crake* see Machat, Sibylle. *In the Ruins of Civilization – Narrative Structures, World constructions and Physical Realities in the Post-Apocalyptic Novel*. Diss. Universität Flensburg, 2013. Print.

embodiment of his former lifeworld can be described, in Nora's words, as "a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn – but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists" ("Between Memory and History" 7). He calls such sites *lieux de mémoire* and in order to qualify as one Nora stresses the interplay of the material, functional, and symbolic dimension it harbours. The material dimension refers to tangible objects from the past as well as events like a minute of silence. When he talks about the functional dimension he means the specific function a cultural object has in a society. The symbolic dimension goes one step further and introduces for instance rituals or a certain gravity that the object in question acquires ("Between Memory and History" 19). The panes here are the material dimension and the fact that some of them are unbroken illustrates the functional dimension. Additionally, their exceptional character points to what was once a sign of society. Symbolically, they signify not only Jimmy's lost past but the absence of former normality. This example also points towards the problem in Nora's conception of *lieux de mémoire* since such an analysis is largely possible for any kind of object or setting that is connected to a shift in status quo. His insight is that natural *milieux de mémoire* shift to *lieux de mémoire* which need a narrative to substitute the original milieu in order to remain relevant (Nora, "Between Memory and History" 7). Yet as Erll points out, Nora himself deconstructs his own categories with a wealth of contributions to the subject (*Erinnerungskulturen* 27). Aleida Assmann also works on the concept of sites of memory and offers the following description, "The shattered fragments of a lost or destroyed way of life are used to authenticate stories that in turn become reference points for a new cultural memory" (A. Assmann, *Western Civilization* 292). In essence it echoes Nora's observation but focuses more on a future use of the site of memory. To fully appreciate the meaning of the first part of this quote it is useful to look at the German original.

Erinnerungsorte sind zersprengte Fragmente eines verlorenen oder zerstörten Lebenszusammenhangs. Denn mit der Aufgabe und Zerstörung eines Ortes ist seine Geschichte noch nicht vorbei; er hält materielle Relikte fest, die zu Elementen von Erzählungen und damit wiederum zu Bezugspunkten eines neuen kulturellen Gedächtnisses werden (A. Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume* 309)

Her focus is not on the memory that becomes visible but on the way of life that was lost. Most importantly, 'Lebenszusammenhang' holds a different implication that the translated 'way of life' since it stronger relates the underlying idea of continuity and time that is central to her

argument. Time is also a crucial factor in Nora's understanding since he points out that "the most fundamental purpose of the *lieu de mémoire* is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial" (Nora, "Between Memory and History" 19, italics in original). It holds a similar function like a figure of memory then, making the recipient aware of the cultural memory attached to it and aiming to keep it in circulation.

Especially the mention of time is of interest to this paper. One of the most poignant sentences in the *MaddAddam* trilogy comes from Toby before she reconnects with Ren. She is staying in the spa where she worked before the plague and spends her days "waiting for meaningful time to resume" (*MA* 136). The lost *Lebenszusammenhang* that has the biggest influence in the *MaddAddam* trilogy is time itself. Not a site in a physical understanding but as a concept that structures reality and is suddenly lost. This happens via the change in surroundings and therefore, it is possible to see more than one lost *Lebenszusammenhang*; the desolate buildings and scattered objects are the basis for a rupture of another order, namely time. Interesting to note here is the passiveness Toby exhibits in the face of this absence of meaningful time. Jan Assmann stresses that every culture builds up a system of position and negation that makes the construction of meaning possible. Forgetfulness is used to deter the member of a society to question its contingencies which is "the fact that their constructed realities could be differently conceived" (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 117). The concept of time is such a construct that appears to be given rather than questioned. And even in this status of lost time Toby does not question it – meaningful time has simply stopped and much like its installation happened automatically via social structures Toby hopes that its continuation will occur in like terms. But what is striking here is that she holds the key to what meaningful refers to in this scenario. "Then, when time had begun again and real people had entered it" (*MA* 282) explicates it: other people are the prerequisite for her time to be restored, to continue the way of life previously eradicated. Real people as in company, tangible, in-the-flesh people rather than the voices she carries around with her. Interaction then becomes not only the decisive factor for identity formation but also to structure the surroundings one lives in. Here, its influence extends to metaphysical concepts.

When it comes to Jimmy, still in contact only with the Crakers, there is an interesting addendum to the factors already introduced by Toby's experience with missing time. "[Z]ero hour. It causes a jolt of terror to run through him, this absence of official time. Nobody nowhere knows what time it is" (*O&C* 3) is his take on things. Jimmy's connection to it is

also coined by emotion but it is the absence that strikes him as particularly horrific. He too relies on time as an outside system that is unquestionable but unlike Toby it is no calm waiting game for Jimmy. What ‘meaningful time’ is to Toby appears to be ‘official time’ to Jimmy though with one main distinction. Toby’s need for meaning can be widely interpreted and is intricately bound to her as a person, to her understanding of meaningful. Jimmy, however, appears to look for an authority on the question. His need for official time is also a need to share this framework of time with someone else. For now the unifying factor between him and possible other survivors is the absence of official time, as the last part suggests. It builds identity for a group Jimmy is not sure exists. Seen with Nora’s three categories it is difficult to pin down time as a lieu de mémoire. The material dimension is difficult to find even though Nora stresses that it need not be a tangible object (“Between Memory and History” 22). On a functional level time one can point out that time structures the lives of people in a society. Symbolically one can assess it as an embodiment of a lifespan as well as well as a means of constituting meaning and continuity. These functions are certainly in interaction in this example but a similar case could be made for any object of the past – or the entire setting. Nora’s categories are not necessarily as clearly applicable as they appear to be at first glance. In Jimmy’s hypothetical consideration time can be considered as a temporary lieu de mémoire or, perhaps more precisely, it has the function of one.

Time is not only treated via affective ties and as a general society-producing factor. It is additionally anchored in the setting and in connection to the protagonist. Jimmy wears a watch from the time before the plague and out of habit “he looks at his watch – . . . although it no longer works. He wears it now as his only talisman” (*O&C* 3). The fact that the watch is broken points to the disintegration of time while simultaneously it tries to re-establish it symbolically, creating the “push and pull . . . moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned” (“Between Memory and History” 12) Nora holds responsible for creating a lieu de mémoire. Extending this dynamic it is to note that the watch is devoid of use in another way, too, for even if official time were restored it would not work in its intended form. Middleton and Brown describe timetables, ambitions, anxieties and legal contracts as “‘futile gestures of consciousness’” if they are presented without relationship to the future (241). The present depends on futures and the watch here highlights the difficulty of constituting either. Is the watch a lieu de mémoire, then? Another difficulty with Nora’s concept is that he does not distinguish between lieux de mémoire and relics. It is useful to look to Aleida Assmann once more for a sharper distinction. As seen before she considers sites of memory to be made up from relics that hold onto the past. A relic, then, embodies the

past in an object that is separated from its former context. It needs to stand out, be remarkable in the current situation. A carrier of function has become a carrier of signs (A. Assmann, “Speichern” 5, 6) and as a relic it solely points to a past that cannot be grasped otherwise. The watch indeed functions as a sign of things past and points towards something absent – time is not literally absent but it feels that way for Jimmy, evoking the abrupt discontinuation of a story that Assmann sees materialised in relics (*Western Civilization* 292). Jimmy is the recipient of the relic and hence, it is his understanding that turns the watch into a relic in the first place. Connected to the larger idea of a site of memory the second use of the watch comes into play: it has become a talisman to Jimmy, his only talisman as is stressed. Devoid of his function the watch highlights the possibility to become reference points for a new cultural memory and Jimmy’s connection to the watch has already changed. For now it would be a bit of a stretch to apply the notion of cultural memory to explain this occurring shift but this relic gains further importance as will be shown in the chapter on orality and rituals.

Aside from relics the setting is also defined by other kinds of remains that tie it to the lost Lebenszusammenhang Jimmy and Toby suffer from. Whereas the watch is already in a state of transformation other remains are used for practical reasons. Clothes and cutlery, for instance, are gleaned when Jimmy and Toby encounter each other and are joined by further survivors. The collection proves to be quite colourful,

Around the table is a collection of random chairs: kitchen, plastic, upholstered, swivel. On the tablecloth . . . are plates and glasses, some already used, and cups, and cutlery. It’s like a surrealist painting from the twentieth century: every object ultra-solid, crisp, hard-edged, except that none of them should be here. But why not? thinks Toby. Why shouldn’t they be here? Nothing in the material world died when the people did. Once, there were too many people and not enough stuff; now it’s the other way around (*MA* 33)

All these gleaned objects are used in their intended form and therefore, the past as the completely revoked does not apply to them to make them relics (A. Assmann, “Speichern” 6). Also, they are provided with a context. Their relic-like appearance to Toby is not based on the missing narrative of the objects but on their deviation from their former values, hence they could more aptly be called remnants. Again the use of cultural templates becomes important, though not by making use of narrative tropes. The present is conceived in terms of visual art and the signification of this connection lies not in its medium but in the tradition that is invoked: surrealism. Established in the 1920s surrealism is influenced by Freud’s works and

draws on the unconscious and dreams (Hewitt 298). The practice of juxtaposing elements that are objects of the everyday yet not related to each other resides at the heart of the tradition and aims to defamiliarise the familiar. Collage practices “allow the everyday to become vivid again by making the ordinary strange through transferring it to surprise contexts and placing it in unusual combinations” (Highmore 46). A very fitting comparison, then, and it is possible to extend it further. Surrealist tendencies do not stop at the diverse assortment of remnants but are also applicable to the entire post-plague setting. The unlikely mix of survivors points towards this since they all come from different backgrounds but are connected to each other via the God’s Gardeners and their splinter cell eco-terrorist group MaddAddam. Most strikingly, however, is Jimmy’s assessment of the setting, “Every moment he’s lived in the past few months was dreamed first by Crake” (*O&C* 218), taking up the notion of the unconscious. The disparate table setting is hence more than just a trigger for Toby to reminisce about objects and their respective worth. Ironically, the act of putting together these disparate objects visibly constructs the notion of surrealism. Toby creates the basis upon which her cultural template is used. It becomes an encompassing description of their situation and the place their lives are anchored to. The assortment of objects represents a tradition that is based on alienating the everyday and thanks to her remaining cultural memory Toby is equipped with a cultural template to make sense of it.

Another relevant factor here is to be extracted from the following quote, “Now that history is over, we’re living in luxury, as far as goods and chattels go” (*MA* 33), the mentioning of the ending of history that influences physical remnants. Halbwachs stresses that memory and history are related in a sequence. History starts where memory is no longer inhabited and this is due to the opposing characteristics each concept is based on. Memory deals with familiarity and similarity in Halbwachs’ understanding since it tries to form a coherent narrative. History, on the other hand, is interested in the moments of change which result in something new. According to him, history begins when tradition and memory cease (*Das kollektive Gedächtnis* 100). What Toby describes here is firstly the presence of a superimposed concept like that of time, or ‘official time’ to connect it to Jimmy’s assessment of the situation. History is an absolute account that cannot be challenged, fixing a certain narrative into uninhabited and cultural memory and figures of memory that can be passed on. Normally, it succeeds individual and collective memory but here the challenge is another: history ceases to be passed on in the situation they find themselves in. The crucial change has happened and as has been shown, it is uninhabited in so far as that neither of the survivors attempt to incorporate it into their identity narrative. However, it is interesting to point out the following

observation by Kermode, “the End itself, in modern literary plotting loses its downbeat, tonic-and-dominant finality, and we think of it . . . as immanent rather than imminent” (30). The plague as such is certainly a clear cut but in tune with Kermode’s statement the catastrophe continues and becomes an immanent factor in the protagonists’ lives. Not at least via the spatialisation of memory in the form of relics and remnants. History is apparently over but what is it followed by? The reversal of the sequence that Halbwachs proposes hands the responsibility back to memory from what it appears. The fixed place in life the remnants had in former times dissipates again. This does not show in their use, however, since they are incorporated in what could be called everyday life and utilised in the intended way. Yet the new context frees them from the worth history has put upon them. “The plates looked antique, or at least expensive. But now she could break the whole set and it wouldn’t cause a ripple anywhere but in her own mind” (*MA* 33) points out the change of social structures and, as Aleida Assmann states, “hitherto unheeded things may call for new retrospective attention” (“Memory” 213). This retrospective attention that is bestowed on everyday objects also functions as a means of making the former society visible (J. Assmann, “Collective Memory” 133). The underlying cultural heritage which is a prerequisite for this unveiling comes in the form of the survivors. Toby can appropriately access the worth such objects had in pre-plague times and with it comes the realisation that it is artificially constructed. Moreover, she is aware that she is still deeply immersed in pre-plague structures since a destruction of valuable plates would indeed bother her. History and memory thus do not exist in entirely separate forms but “should be grasped as two complementary modes of cultural memory” (A. Assmann, *Western Civilization* 123). Seemingly normal or everyday objects therefore become not only carriers of memory but also point to the gap between the pre- and post-plague setting, highlighting either status.

In Assmann’s understanding of the term the entire setting can be read as a site of memory that is in turn made up from different kinds of relics and remnants. Looked at with Nora’s categories, however, makes for a more difficult reading. The objects human beings surround themselves with “all represent our concepts of practicality, comfort, beauty, and, to a certain extent, our own identity” (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 6) and as such they usually cover all three dimensions Nora proposes. Indeed this is the main criticism directed against him and the concept of lieux de mémoire – the question is, then, what does not qualify as a lieu de mémoire. Nora himself appears to be aware of this difficulty and answers this inquiry with one simple feature: the will to remember. For “if we were to abandon this criterion, we would quickly drift into admitting virtually everything as worthy of remembrance” (Nora, “Between

Memory and History” 19). The protagonists’ associations connected with places appear entirely involuntary and are even rejected if they skirt too close to the traumatic content of memories. Cultural templates are invoked only via outside triggers either and there is a distinct lack of an attempt to build a tangible archive of any kind. Neither of the protagonists exhibit a clear will to remember the past while being immersed in relics and remnants of former times. One of Nora’s decisive factors is not adhered to in the humans that survived the plague. In fact, everything points towards an opposite trend. Concerning the will to remember, it is interesting to look at the situation with a different focus. A will to remember is not visible in the human survivors but brought in by the Crakers. The categories are distributed to different groups here and the following section takes a closer look at the influence of the Crakers.

3.2 Reading into the Setting

Relics and remnants keep the past and the moment of the catastrophe circulated in the survivors’ minds even though their voluntary memory rejects both notions. The Crakers, however, are not in the same position as the humans in the post-plague setting. Due to their raising in a laboratory environment they are deprived of any world knowledge, limiting their cultural memory to basic lessons about botany and to the moment Jimmy led them out of the laboratory. Hence, they do not feel the consequences of the plague like the human survivors do. Their understanding of the past is unrelated to that of the survivors for they have neither memory nor history to conceive of a time before their existence. Insofar, it is not the will to remember since they do not have anything to recall. It is rather the will to learn that drives them to interact with the objects in the post-plague environment. This distinction, however, does not change the outcome of the situation.

The survivors consciously salvage things that can be used immediately, in the present, even though the past still clings to these objects. Survival is the main aim and there is no place for superfluous things. It is the Crakers then, who bring other objects to Jimmy’s attention, objects that do not fall into the category of useful items for him. Especially the Craker children scan the beach for remains which they then bring to Jimmy in high hopes of him explaining their use to them. “They lift out the objects, hold them up as if offering them for sale: a hubcap, a piano key, a chunk of palegreen pop bottle smoothed by the ocean . . . Snowman feels like weeping. What can he tell them? There’s no way of explaining to them what these curious items are, or were” (*O&C* 7). Of course the Craker children are unable to

infer the intended use of these objects since they belong to a culture they are not only decidedly different from but also utterly unaware of. “If the link between memory and the lost past is broken,” Aleida Assmann writes, “places of memory will become unreadable” (*Western Civilization* 300) and the Crakers cannot establish a connection between the objects and a corresponding memory largely because they do not have a concept of the past they refer to. They cannot attach meaning to their findings and look for ways to make them readable – the key to which is Jimmy as the personification of this link between memory and the lost past. The objects as such are not readable from the outside. It takes someone who is familiar with the narrative and use clinging to them and thus “it entails reading into and not out of the text” (A. Assmann, *Western Civilization* 295). This is precisely what the Crakers demand of Jimmy. A difficult task since any cultural basis is missing between him and them. The only thing left to do for Jimmy is keeping his answer vague. “These are things from before” (*O&C* 7) is his explanation, constituting a reply that comes as close as possible to the adherence of reading into the text the setting provides. The personal memories that are necessarily evoked by the confrontation with objects from the past are again not recalled voluntarily. Once more Jimmy is exposed to outward triggers, in this case even more so since the Crakers actively ask him about things past. He has two functions in this scenario, that of the link as well as that of the interpreter. Being the medium and the intermediary he is again in a position of influence. Whatever he claims these objects to be will be accepted by the Crakers and likely to be remembered and passed on. The status of being Crake’s prophet discussed earlier therefore also extends to matters that are independent of him. Jimmy’s access to memories is the basis for this influence and highlights another distinction of memory: that of storage and functional memory. Aleida Assmann proposes to distinguish not between history and memory but to employ the idea of inhabited, functional, and uninhabited, storage, memory. Functional memory largely works by being selective, normative, group- and future-oriented. It employs strategies to construct meaning between events whereas storage memory holds unusable and dated information that is largely unstructured. In seeing it as a foreground/background dualism change is accounted for. If the dominant foreground is broken up information from the background has the chance to come to the fore. This dualism works on a personal as well as on a cultural scale if the culture uses writing (A. Assmann, *Western Civilization* 123 ff.). Here, however, writing is not necessary to invoke this distinction. The change is inscribed in the environment. The setting is the text and Jimmy is the person to read it, an additional archive in his own right. The act of bringing objects to Jimmy and demanding an explanation shows the workings of functional and storage memory.

The objects themselves have become part of an archive since they are indeed unstructured; life has “not only moved on but has trampled heedlessly over these disconnected remnants” (A. Assmann, *Western Civilization* 292). “Booby traps from the past” (*O&C* 7) is Jimmy’s assessment of the objects and as Machat notes, they do not qualify as ruins or relics yet because they still produce continuity in Jimmy’s mind; they are simply objects “devoid of their function” (111). For the Crakers such a distinction does not apply and it is their selection of objects from the archived setting that brings them back into the realm of functional memory. To them, Jimmy functions as storage memory and interpreter. He is present with a choice because even though he is asked to read into the text of the setting he has the opportunity to shape the functional memory that will come into existence once he offers an explanation. He is in charge not only of functional memory but also cultural memory due to the status he holds in relation to the Crakers. The setting, uncharted to the Crakers, is dependent on a story that functions as an explanation. Interestingly, Assmann points out that these stories do not necessarily need to be true – the important factor is not the authenticity but rather the incorporation into a system of orality and circulation (A. Assmann, *Western Civilization* 298). For the Crakers this circumstance is of little importance but for Jimmy it means a possibility to reinterpret the events of the past. There is no storage memory left that would correct his own functional memory; he is in charge and through his story telling the performative character of cultural memory is stressed. The Crakers are the outside force that brings up Jimmy’s past and attempt to enrich their surrounding with meaning. Jimmy is forced to confront what he attempts to forget but he regains control of his past by means of fictionalisation. Ricoeur stresses that narratives “are at the same time the occasion for manipulation through reading and directing narratives, but also the place where a certain healing of memory may begin” (9) and it is Jimmy’s chance to grasp. When asked about objects or specifics of his body he does not answer truthfully but makes up explanations. The concept of a beard, for instance, is utterly incomprehensible to the Crakers and Jimmy tells them feathers grow out of his face. Thereby he stops the transmission of pre-plague normality and instead builds up a new status quo. Not only substantial questions belong to this newly found collective memory but also seemingly small details, resulting in the Crakers collecting facts about him. “*Snowman was once a bird but he’s forgotten how to fly and the rest of his feathers fell out, and so he is cold and he needs a second skin, and he has to wrap himself up.*” (*O&C* 8, italics in original) shows the amalgamation that happens. Visual observations, informed by objects from the site of memory they live in, are paired with fragments of Jimmy’s fictional narrative and the Crakers’ own capacity for imagination. “The ‘magic’ of

the place of memory results from its status as a ‘contact zone’” writes Aleida Assmann (*Western Civilization* 322). Whether magic is the right term is probably debatable but contact is definitely the decisive factor here – functional and storage memory come into contact with each other, objects with their use and non-use, people with carriers of memory and groups contrast each other via other groups. Cultural memory is visibly connected to the setting here which can be considered a site of memory though not in the way Nora uses the denotation. The challenge to the concept here comes in the form of division. Every group, or individual for that matter, has a different relation to the setting. It does not evoke the same memories and cultural concepts in everyone but it is clear that the setting does work as a place that holds on to the past in a physical way. Olick points out that since “the ability to recall is highly cue and state-dependent, remembering is obviously highly dependent on a number of contextual factors, factors that are themselves always in flux” (“Two Cultures” 340) which become visible in the post-plague setting. Not only are the individuals’ and groups’ pasts brought into the situation but also the changing meaning of it due to contact and interaction. Despite its solidifying character for the people living in a certain situation cultural memory is no static concept. The following section will take a closer look at the mediation of the resulting memories and practices of orality that are used in order to form and ultimately maintain the groups that so far appear somewhat changeable.

4 Orality and Ritual

4.1 Communicative Memory and Specialisation

The post-plague world is an oral one – not for the absence of the ability to write but for the fact that it is not practiced. Orality is therefore the main tool of meaning-making, a practise that is deeply dependent on an interlocutor (Ong 34). The survivors are not an oral culture as such; their structures of story-telling and retaining memory are not designed to function without a means of externalising the content for later use. “She ought to write such things down” (*MA* 135) muses Toby when she begins to forget the figures of memory the God’s Gardeners were based around; even though she is trained to work with oral structures the need to externalise knowledge is an insisting one. Given that the Crakers are designed to be perfectly adapted to a world after the plague it is interesting to look at their retention of memory and community building. Throughout the novels the narrator is always focalised via a human survivor (Whisker 156) rather than giving insight into the mind of the Crakers and so the reader gains a first impression of the absence of writing through Jimmy’s eyes. The fact that the Crakers are not a literate group like the ones he belonged to for all of his life points to another gap between them (*O&C* 41). It is noteworthy that the missing connection is presented as a disadvantage rather than turning the absence of a writing culture into an inferior trait; a train of thought that could have easily been integrated since it is exceedingly difficult for a literate person to imagine a culture that works entirely without written records (Ong 31). Throughout the trilogy it becomes evident that oral culture simply follows different structures and adheres to different rules. Ong is in favour of describing such a culture as “untouched by writing” or as a “primary oral culture” rather than “preliterate” to prevent a categorisation of inferior and superior (cf. 8, 31). The Crakers – a little spoiler ahead – are both but for now the focus is on their practise of orality and the functions it has in relation to their group building and sense of community.

One of the most striking things in the Craker’s behaviour, aside from their genetic differences and resulting customs, is their fondness for “repetition, they learn things by heart” (*O&C* 102). The basis is similar to Jimmy and his attempts to retain his lists of words. The main difference between these two modes of remembering, however, lies in the presence of an interlocutor. Whereas Jimmy repeats the lists of words in the confinement of his own head and, slowly but surely, forgets them the Crakers verbalise their findings. They do not only have one kind of interlocutor but two: like-minded members of their own group as well as Jimmy. It is tempting to distinguish them as interlocutors for communicative and cultural

memory, respectively. Jimmy establishing himself as their prophet seems to make this division a sensible one but upon a closer look it cannot hold entirely. His function in their group is not solely that of the specialist and keeper of cultural memory; he is also a part of communicative memory.

The Crakers appear to discuss Jimmy among themselves which results in “a stock of lore, of conjecture about him” (*O&C* 8). His alleged features (those that differentiate him from the Crakers) are circulated within the group and open to interpretation by anyone who chooses to add to his gradual mystification. No specialists are required and their relationship is almost one of equality when it comes to verbalising his traits. His standing in relation to the group of Crakers seems to be one of an oddity, a curiosity that they cannot help but discuss. This, however, does not mean that Jimmy’s words carry more weight than the assumptions made by the Crakers themselves. They do ask questions concerning the differences they are aware of and interested in, such as his beard for instance, and repeat these questions regularly (*O&C* 8), indicating the importance Jimmy holds for them since in “a primary oral culture conceptualized knowledge that is not repeated aloud soon vanishes” (Ong 41). Jimmy is involved in their communicative memory in so far that he provides the basis for their more far-fetched assumptions. Ultimately, however, his input is just as influential as that of the Crakers. His status as subject of their inquiry does not give him the authority to provide a coherent narrative that would explain his otherness to them. Interestingly enough, the Crakers do not ask this of him, either. They rather take his answers along with their own ideas and weave the resulting narrative themselves – a different practice than the one they employ when it comes to cultural memory. Jimmy’s own representation is largely out of his hands as he is treated like a participant in communicative memory. Whereas the Craker’s otherness to Jimmy presents a threat to his sense of self the situation is reverse here: the Craker’s understanding of themselves as a group is strengthened internally via their communication based on mutual maxims and externally via the perceived differences to Jimmy. Their description and notions connected to Jimmy do not simply consist of scattered facts that they have picked up in passing but is put into a narrative frame and repeated (*O&C* 8), given that “[s]ustained thought in an oral culture is tied to communication” (Ong 34). This is also the basis for the Crakers to qualify as a group. They are aware of it, too, and through communication they negotiate their actions and values which are challenged by a given situation. Jan Assmann calls the text which answers the question ‘What should we do?’ a normative text, one of the two main pillars of identity-securing knowledge (*Early Civilization* 123). The complimentary question is ‘Who are we?’, which is answered by a formative text.

Together they culminate in a clear outline of a group. Indeed the Crakers appear to be the only living creatures in the trilogy who have a sense of social identity, a “consciousness of social belonging” (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 120). Considering that they do not have a corpus of texts that addresses these questions it is necessary to open the definition a little; Jan Assmann stresses that not only written documents are part of such a system of shared symbols but also myths, dances, tattoos and similar manifestations of distinctive features (*Early Civilization* 120). Here, the text can easily be substituted by the oral answer to the questions. At a later stage in the story, Jimmy and the Crakers reunite with Toby, Ren, and a handful other survivors who all know each other from the time before the plague, partly via their God’s Gardener connection, partly due to their meeting in high school. At this point Jimmy is very sick and sleeping or unconscious most of the time and therefore cannot function as a bridge between the Crakers and the unlikely band of survivors. It is then that the normative knowledge of the Crakers is challenged and becomes visible. They are unsure how to react when faced with human women and first discuss among themselves how to handle the situation. When they do not arrive at a satisfying conclusion to their problem their reaction is to look to Jimmy for guidance “If Snowman was here . . . He would tell us how we should act” (*YotF* 410). Drawing on communicative memory circulated among them is no option to solve their situation; cultural memory, however, may prove to be helpful. In this moment, Jimmy’s position shifts in correlation to their group. He is immediately restored as a specialist who has access to knowledge that the Crakers lack, making his hypothetical answer a dogmatic fact. As Ong writes, knowledge “is hard to come by and precious, and society regards highly those wise old men and women who specialize in conserving it, who know and can tell the stories of the days of old” (41). Seen from the Craker’s point of view Jimmy has already proven his occupation as their guardian, given that he has led them from the laboratory to the seaside where they now live. The connection they think he has with Crake gives him additional credibility, especially seeing that he seems to have an answer for every question the Crakers ask. Hence, in the moment a need for advice arises the situation is no longer one of communicative memory. Their insecurity can be solved by an answer that – in their eyes – only Jimmy can provide them with. Instead of asking the other survivors who are present in the situation the Crakers hold on to their trust in Jimmy’s words, further stressing the specialised function that sets him apart not only from the Crakers but also from the other remaining humans. The Crakers circulate their normative knowledge but it is Jimmy who adds to it in case the established information needs adjustment.

4.2 Ritual

Aside from Jimmy's authority on normative information the second constituent of identity-forming knowledge is also circulated among the Crakers. The answer to the question 'Who are we?' holds a group's formative knowledge (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 123) and in the trilogy it comes in the form of the fish-ritual. As has been noted already Jimmy asks the Crakers to bring him a fish a week. This first part is a somewhat private undertaking and highlights Jimmy's dependence on the ritual when he "crams handfuls of fishiness into his mouth and sucks out the eyes and cheeks, groaning with pleasure" (*O&C* 101). The Crakers are not involved but still it is the prerequisite for the second part of the ritual which becomes important in matters of orality: after Jimmy has eaten the fish he is obliged to tell the Crakers the 'Story of Crake'. At the very core this arrangement is a trade born out of necessity: food in exchange for a story. Dunlop sees this development in a practical way, claiming that human and non-human lives "are bundled into a single category—all lives are objects whose purpose is to entertain" (Dunlop 5). To some extent this is certainly true but she misses one important point here. The story Jimmy tells is not just a random anecdote that is constructed to entertain the Crakers. On the contrary, it is a very specific narrative that has the significant function of carrying and circulating their formative knowledge. 'The Story of Crake' can well be considered a myth since it is embedded in ceremony (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 123) and repeated in regular intervals. Additionally, the ceremony is the only way to gain access to cultural memory in oral cultures and it "divides up the time structure of illiterate societies into the everyday and the ceremonial" (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 42).

The first hint that the ritual marks a special point in time begins even before the actual story is narrated, namely via the gathering of props. In this instance, the watch becomes important again. For Jimmy, it is part of the archive; its addressee is absent and it "is de-contextualized and disconnected from . . . former frames" (A. Assmann, "Canon and Archive" 99) which fixed its meaning. As discussed earlier his relationship to the watch shifts from being a functional item to being a talisman. The potential inherent in such relics, that of being "open to new contexts and lend[ing] themselves to new interpretations" (*ibid.*) is further stressed when it comes to the importance the watch has for the Crakers. In order for the narrative part of the ritual to begin Jimmy needs to wear the watch because it is his alleged means of contacting Crake, "'Just a minute, I'll ask Crake.' He holds his watch up to the sky, turns it around on his wrist, then puts it to his ear as if listening to it" (*O&C* 9). Contrary to the human survivors the Crakers do not have material relics that remind them or that prompt a narrative to bridge the gap between then and now. All items they encounter are essentially

new ones, free from memory. The watch therefore is not imbued with a new meaning for them but with *a* meaning. The Crakers “follow each motion, enthralled” (ibid.) which already hints at a quasi-religious awe they exhibit in the face of Jimmy’s imaginary contact to an unseen entity. For Jimmy, the watch loses its original meaning in relation to his understanding of time and self while it gains meaning in the eyes of the Crakers. It becomes a figure of memory for them, qualifying as an almost magical object. It is noteworthy that the Crakers cannot operate the watch in the way they see Jimmy do it. As Machat points out they actively ask Jimmy to contact Crake (112) which in turn reinforces his position as a carrier of memory. Without question they accept that Jimmy has this particular ability, a circumstance firmly rooted in their belief in his status as an initiated person.

The second indispensable object that announces the beginning of the ritual is a battered old Red Sox cap. The Craker’s respect towards this item is equally great, “It seems to be a sacred object to them. The hat. Sort of taboo. They can carry it around but they can’t put it on” (*MA* 230). Cultural memory “is imbued with an element of the sacred” (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 38) and whereas Jimmy suffers from the implication the objects evoke in him the Crakers are spell-bound in the presence of their material cultural memory. The hat is connected to ‘The Story of Crake’ just as the watch is but its meaning is not that elaborate. It does not have an additional functional task to fulfil other than being worn – an insignia of sorts, a visualisation of the special position Jimmy holds. “Everything can become a symbol to denote community. It is not the medium that decides, but the structure and functions of the signs” (*Early Civilization* 121) says Jan Assmann, echoing Roland Barthes’ stance that myth is a form of speech and has limits in form rather than in substance (251). Both the watch and the hat take on a meaning within the limits of the form and serve a particular purpose, namely the entrance into the ritual. In an oral culture knowledge is passed on via “assembly and personal presence” (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 42) and to start the subsequent ritual the Crakers gather around Jimmy. Even though this narrative is entirely informed by the new cultural memory they built up there are hints of the past in it. They are only readable to Jimmy, of course, when he “brings out one of his finds – an orange plastic pail, faded to pink but otherwise undamaged. He tries not to imagine what has happened to the child who must once have owned it” (*O&C* 102). Tying in with the idea of relics and remnants it becomes clear that cultural memory is largely the dominant yet never the only way of looking at things. Traces of memory are various but it takes a certain background to be able to decode them. Ultimately, they are existent even if they are not voiced. And Jimmy remains silent, proceeding with the ritual in the established fashion. “‘Bring some water,’ he says, holding

out the pail. There's a scramble around the ring of torches: hands reach out, feet scamper off into the darkness" (*O&C* 102). With this equipment Jimmy tells the story that starts with the chaos, i.e. the time before he led the Crakers out of their laboratory; a fixed point in the past which has become the content of their cultural memory. "'In the chaos, everything was mixed together,' he 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" (*O&C* 103)⁷ and thereby creates a visual representation of said chaos. The important aspect that is shown here lies in the function of the action. The combined action evokes simultaneousness; the verbal text of the ritual is not merely a told story but underlaid with a sense of immediacy. The chaos is something that has happened in the past but here it is assembled in the present, in front of the audience. As Northrop Frye stresses, "the myth does to time what the metaphor does to space . . . The present becomes a moment in which, in Eliot's phrase, the past and future are gathered" ("Universally" 7) and it is this moment from which the ritual gains its strength. It is a highly formalised act that connects Jimmy's reciting with a visible, graspable object. Frye furthermore writes that the preliterate myth "arises in a state of society which there is not as yet a firm and consistent distinction between subject and object" ("Mythical Approach" 239) which helps understand the Crakers' demand of Jimmy to show them "a picture of chaos" (*O&C* 102). Memory turns history into myth and eradicates the distinction between them so that not necessarily the objective facts are remembered and passed on (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 37). Interestingly, what is coded as chaos for the Crakers are the last memories Jimmy has of a world he perceived to be ordered. A clear inversion happens here which is due to the fact that the Crakers are the recipients of the ritual. The knowledge that is circulated adheres to their needs instead of Jimmy's. Myths are supposed to be motivational (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 123) and it is the next part of the ritual that carries this function in particular.

When Jimmy mixes the water and the earth the participatory structure of the ritual becomes evident. The gathering of the necessary props already established the Crakers as an integral part of the ritual and in the ceremony proper they are equally involved, this time via verbal participation. Jimmy's narration functions as a prompt for them to interject.

⁷ His version of the Craker's origin myth is strongly influenced by the story of Babel, another cultural template. Told in the almost religious setting this narrative gives additional depth to Jimmy's gradual deification of Crake, rooting it in Christianity.

'There,' he says. 'Chaos. You can't drink it...'
'No!' A chorus.
'You can't eat it...'
'No, you can't eat it!' Laughter.
'You can't swim in it, you can't stand on it...'
'No! No!' They love this bit. (*O&C* 103)

The ritual is not only a recital in connection with a visual aid. It also encourages the Crakers to actively participate as well as become emotionally involved. The motivational character of the ritual coincides with the climax, the pouring away of the chaos when Jimmy is “sloshing the water off to the side, then turns the pail upside down. ‘There. Empty. And this is how Crake did the Great Rearrangement and made the Great Emptiness. He cleared away the dirt, he cleared room...’ ‘For his children! For the Children of Crake!’” (*O&C* 103). Several things are in play here. On the one hand it is a clear representation of the ‘bad’ past that is over and done with, opening up the possibility of a pleasant present as well as a positive future. Given that the Crakers are utterly ignorant of the world as being post-apocalyptic it is interesting to look at the categorisation Frye suggests concerning what he calls preliterate myth. He points out that “the primary question about a preliterate myth is not Is it true?, because the linguistic problems in establishing verbal truth are not yet in the foreground. The primary question is something more like Do we have to know this?, and the affirmative answer characterizes the genuine preliterate myth” (“Mythical Approach” 239). The amount of truthfulness is somewhat irrelevant to the content carried by the ‘Story of Crake’ since it serves the function of affirming the Craker’s identity. So on the other hand it is a clear answer to the formative question that provides a group with a social identity. The Crakers are not simply being told that they are a group to which that name is attached. Rather, they supply the name themselves and through a verbal prompt Jimmy issues in the frame of the ritual. It is a ceremony that “is not tied to one specific medium. Therefore, they can be represented across the spectrum of available media” (Erl, “Mediality” 392) and address a multitude of dimensions. Watch, hat, and the mud standing in for the notion of the chaos all contribute to the complexity of the Craker’s cultural memory and its circulation. Aside from these factors the ritual also provides the group with a sense of continuity which is a decisive factor in the forming of an identity, personal as well as collective as has been discussed. Myths have the task to create order – especially in an illiterate culture “order is not a given – it needs ritual staging and mythical articulation to counter the ubiquitous disorder” (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 124). It is

therefore striking that chaos and the clearing thereof is the topic of the ritual. It stresses Jimmy's overall sentiment towards the post-plague situation and in turn converts it into a motivational message for the Crakers, a message that promises hope as well as a coherence that extends beyond the present.

Before Jimmy and the Crakers reunite with the other human survivors the ritual as such is bound to Jimmy's authority. When he is unable to carry out the ceremony, however, it becomes clear that it is not necessarily him as a personality that is important. It is rather the function he holds. The Crakers as a group are clearly dependent on the ritual in order to reaffirm their social identity; Jimmy's inability to perform is reason enough for them to become active in looking for another specialised person. Their choice finally falls on Toby and is explained in the following, "Then he will tell us the stories of Crake . . . But today you must tell them to us.' 'Me?' says Toby. 'But I don't know the stories of Crake!' 'You will learn them,' says the man. 'It will happen. Because Snowman-the-Jimmy is the helper of Crake, and you are the helper of Snowman-the-Jimmy. That is why.'" (MA 38) Their reasoning is simple enough and it shows their awareness of groups. Rather than looking for a specialist among their own the Crakers turn to the other human survivors. Even though Toby plainly states that she does not know the stories the Crakers consider her to be better equipped for the job than any of them. The connection to Jimmy as a main reason seems somewhat plausible but it is noteworthy here that they do not consider their own relation to him. During the ritual the Crakers participate but even this previous knowledge is considered to be less worthy than the simple fact that Toby's status as a non-Craker and Jimmy's helper. The choice of initiated person is largely driven by the otherness the humans present to the Crakers; another means of outlining their group and reaffirming their identity. Toby herself is overwhelmed with the sudden authority she holds and tries her best to accommodate the Craker's need for a ritual. "They prompt, they interrupt, they fill in the parts she's missed. What they want from her is a seamless performance, as well as more information than she either knows or can invent. She's a poor substitute for Snowman-the-Jimmy, but they're doing what they can to polish her up" (MA 45). Even though the Crakers take on a larger participatory role their prompting does not in any way upstage Toby or indicates that one of the Crakers would be fitter for the job. It rather helps Toby along so she can live up to the function Jimmy had before her. The ritual becomes a group effort on a performative level but still adheres to the main fundamental structure it had before.

4.3 Of Flags, Maggots, and New Heroes

Even when the protagonists meet and reconnect with other people the handling of memory and identity is not automatically solved. The difficulties outlined in chapter two of this paper are resolved in so far as that there is the possibility of interaction with fellow human beings that stops the disintegration of identity for the time being. When it comes to memory, however, the challenge is not solved but shifted. Cultural memory is no longer carried solely by an individual but that does not automatically mean that group formation takes place. “If we were carrying a flag, thinks Toby, what would be on it?” (*MA* 346) accurately depicts the situation. The gathering of humans has all the potential of evoking a social identity: they all survived the plague, they live in the same surroundings now, and partly they already know each other from the time before the catastrophe. But as Halbwachs points out a group is not merely reformed if the former members assemble again. If they have changed in the mean time and to such an extent that they cannot revive the group-feeling of earlier times then the difference is too large to be bridged (*kollektives Gedächtnis* 9). While the reconnection between Toby and Ren worked the situation here is a different one. With a total of twelve human survivors not everyone knew everyone before the plague and due to this new constellation it becomes impossible to recreate the former groups. Additionally, they have neither formative nor normative knowledge to circulate. The restitution of their personal and autobiographical identities is given via interaction and the presence of a somewhat like-minded interlocutor. A collective or social identity, however, is not formed. There is no banner under which they would willingly gather. Everyone has survived by means of a different strategy but ultimately, all humans involved are deeply traumatised and do not voice their experiences – which, incidentally, can be considered the one trait they actually have in common. Due to the post-plague situation their sense of the past is effectively split into foundational memory, i.e. their lives before the plague, and autobiographical memory of the recent past, i.e. everything that happens after their meeting. In an oral culture this circumstance is called the floating gap, as proposed by Jan Vansina (23 f.). The recent and the remote past are clearly remembered whereas the part in the middle is lacking in substance. Jan Assmann explicates additionally that one cannot entirely accurately speak of a gap when it comes to memory discourse because “both levels of the past merge seamlessly into one another” (*Early Civilization* 35). Given that the structure of the human’s late society does not function like an oral culture it might be a little daring to apply the concept of the floating gap to their situation. The fact that they have temporarily given up writing does not automatically account for an oral culture. Here, however, the case for something akin to a floating gap can

be made. Throughout the novels all conversation among the human survivors revolve around the present and immediate past, assessing their situation and discussing ways of making do with what they have. Securing their orientation in the post-plague setting is their main objective. Once they and the Crakers have moved from the seashore to a derelict yet intact house it is interesting to note that further topics are brought up: the nature of the Crakers is discussed, as is the difference in species (*MA* 206) and Crake's possible motives for creating them in the first place (*MA* 140). It covers a shorter timeframe than the one the notion of a floating gap is usually applied and additionally, their remote past does not go back to the origin story of their human cultural memory. But given that their subject of discussion is the post-plague world an analogy can be drawn. Crake and his motivations can be considered as the remote past, the origin of the situation they are in now, whereas their hunt for food and shelter informs the recent past. The events of the plague proper and the time it took to arrive at the status quo they have, which would correspond to the floating gap, are referenced vaguely and far in between. The reason for that is, as outlined before, the traumatic events of the rupture. Due to the Craker's conceived cultural memory, however, a possibility arises. The human survivors are aware of the ritual and the stories the Crakers consider to be true. Given that they partly knew Crake they are not only aware that the stories are superimposed but also know the rough outline of the truth that is hidden in the Craker's account of their origin myth. One the one hand Rigney is right in pointing out that in this "superimposition of one narrative on another, we can see how new frames of relevance help revitalize earlier memories and infuse them with renewed cultural significance" ("Plenitude" 19). On the other hand, however, it is the revitalisation that is not desired at all. The one thing, then, that is detached from the moment of rupture and still connected to the present is the Craker's origin story. The cultural memory the humans share is muted in favour of recognising the Craker's corpus of culture. It does not function as a unifying myth for humans and Crakers to form a closely-knit group, of course, but the possibility inherent in memory discourse becomes visible here. The important factor is not necessarily the shared experience a group has made in the past but rather the mediation thereof. The humans cover their quasi-floating gap with the Craker's story as a basis of cultural memory they all work with, regardless of their personal knowledge about the past. As Rigney stresses, the "cultural memory of those experiences is the ongoing result of public communication" ("Plenitude" 15) and it is the notion of continuity that is important. Cultural memory is a concept that is fluid rather than static and can be shaped via ongoing discourse. Circumventing traumatic experiences is here achieved by first employing orality-like practices and then adapting another narrative as an alternative version of the past.

This, of course, is only possible if one has access to a substantial amount of not only facts but also cultural templates and to the cultural memory of other groups.

In connection with this circumstance it is also interesting to look at the formation of a shared canon. The existence of the Crakers and their trust in Jimmy's authority might make for a colonising story when looked at superficially. Throughout the novels and especially in *MaddAddam*, when several human survivors and the Crakers eventually live together in a dwelling, this possible notion is broken up. When caring for Jimmy it becomes clear that both the Crakers and Toby employ their knowledge and abilities.

'What are those,' said one of the two Craker women, the tall one. 'Why do you put those little animals on Snowman-the-Jimmy? Are they eating him?'... 'Oryx sent them,' said Toby. That seemed to be a good answer, because they smiled. 'They are called *maggots*,' she continued. 'They are eating the pain.' . . . 'Should we eat the pain too?' . . . 'The pain tastes good only to the maggots' . . . The two Craker women placed their hands on him and began to purr. (*MA* 21, 22, italics in original)

In the context of the Craker's oral culture the situation is one of apprenticeship. They are the students and learn from Toby's expertise with the clear aim to help. Noteworthy here is the respect with which the interaction is carried out. Toby does not pronounce her way of helping Jimmy to be the right one – she simply applies what she has learned from the God's Gardeners without an attempt to educate her audience. Only when the Crakers ask does a moment of confrontation occur. She is clearly seen as a teacher figure by the Crakers as they observe and ask for further information. She uses this position not for ulterior motives and to manipulate the Crakers in any way but actually draws on their register to explain what is happening. A more scientific explanation of the maggots eating the rotting flesh and cleaning the wound would not be meaningful for the Crakers. The failing of such an explanation can be witnessed when Crozier tries to explain how a solar panel works and illuminates a light bulb and the Crakers are "puzzled, it's obvious to them that the light bulbs are like lumiroses, or the green rabbits that come out at dusk: they glow because Oryx made them that way" (*MA* 42). Crozier does not use language that is meaningful to the Crakers even though his intentions are to educate them. Their cultural understanding is too diverse and the gap is not bridged via language or another shared symbol system, resulting in a failed attempt at communication. The crucial point here is the oral structure of the Crakers. As a primary oral culture they "learn a great deal and possess and practice great wisdom, but they do not

‘study’. They learn by apprenticeship” (Ong 9). This is another factor that makes Toby’s communicative effort with them a success. What she practices is a visible, graspable lesson that is close “to the living human lifeworld” (Ong 49) and thus minimally abstract. Crozier’s lesson, on the other hand, is remote from situational learning and therefore does not appeal to the Crakers. The interaction between humans and Crakers is largely informed by structures of oral culture but that does not mean that the literate individual imposes on the illiterate. Toby’s endeavour is not to force her knowledge on the Crakers but to present it in a way they understand and, eventually, can apply themselves should the need arise. Additionally, the Crakers are actively involved in the situation, too. They make use of their inherent feature, namely purring, to help Jimmy’s body recover. The fact that this happens in tune with the maggot therapy Toby applies shows the workings of the new canon that is evolving; both Crakers and human methods co-exist and even if they do not necessarily complement each other they do not cancel each other out. Either method seems to contribute to Jimmy’s well-being and it is the possibility inherent in their respectful communication that might influence their shared corpus.

Looking at all the additions to their corpus would be intriguing yet proves to be beyond the scope of this paper. One example, however, should be mentioned here, that is the gradual heroisation of Zeb, a loveable-rogue leader type among the survivors. Much like the scattered objects the Crakers bring to Jimmy they pick up information about Zeb, simply from overhearing the humans talk. This information is first circulated among themselves (*MA* 48) before, in the setting of the ritual, the Crakers actively ask Toby about it. In fact, they even interrupt her story about Crake in order to learn more about Zeb, “We know the story of Crake, we know it many times. Now tell us the story of Zeb, Oh Toby. The story of how Zeb ate a bear!” (*MA* 53)⁸ It is remarkable that they wait until the ritual in so far as that it gives Zeb’s story a weightiness that rivals Crake’s. Clearly drawing on Toby’s function as an authority in that moment they ask not for an entertaining story alone but for a piece of cultural memory, a myth they can reproduce. A large part of *MaddAddam* deals with Zeb’s back story that Toby turns into a hero-narrative for the Crakers in her capacity as their story teller, adapting his experiences into a language they understand.⁹ Sex workers in full-body costumes of scales are turned into mythical snake women (*MA* 256) and Zeb’s encounter with a bear is

⁸ The German title of *MaddAddam* is “Die Geschichte von Zeb” [The Story of Zeb]

⁹ For further research it would be interesting to look at gradual mystification of male characters in the novels. Crake, Jimmy, and Zeb are all adapted by the Crakers as potential heroes while Toby is not. She remains a carrier of cultural memory despite being in the same position as Jimmy.

equally dramatised (*MA* 84). As Rigney writes forms of remembrance “derive their meaning from some narrativizing act of remembrance in which individual figures struggle, succumb, or survive” (“Dynamics” 347). A motif of magic pervades the stories she tells, tying in with the narratives Jimmy started. The story she tells is tailored to her audience and “both repetition and change structure the ways that Atwood’s narrators make sense of their world: narrative as a fundamentally human process undermines utopian aspirations” (Gutiérrez-Jones 131). Crake’s utopian aspirations, that is. The fact that Toby knows how to adapt her register to make the Crakers understand, however, also paves the way for censorship and brings with it the opportunity to corrupt them. Even though the outcome of their practices of communicative memory is one of hybridity Jimmy and Toby are still considered specialists in matters of cultural memory. Especially Toby becomes aware of her authority in transforming events into memory, “About the events of that evening . . . Toby later made two stories. The first story was the one she told out loud, to the Children of Crake; it had a happy outcome, or as happy as she could manage. The second, for herself alone, was not so cheerful” (*MA* 9). The involvement of several aims and people as well as practices of conscious selection are all in play when it comes to cultural memory and one “need be careful, therefore, not to presume at the outset that every society has one collective memory or that it is obvious and unproblematic how (and which) public memories will be produced” (Olick, “Mnemonic Practices” 159). The Crakers will never know the course of events like Jimmy and Toby do. In fact, they as the two mouthpieces of Crake have a conversation about the points highlighted by Olick.

‘I had to tell them something.’

‘So you made up a nice story,’ says Toby.

‘Well, crap, I could hardly tell them the truth. So yes. And yes, I could’ve done a smarter job of it . . . So it makes me puke to hear them grovelling about fucking Crake and singing his fucking praises every time his stupid name comes up.’

‘But that’s the story we’ve got’ . . .

‘Whatever. . . Just keep doing what you’re doing. You can add stuff in, go to town, they’ll eat it up. I hear they’re fanboys for Zeb these days. Stick with that plotline, it’s got legs. Just keep them from finding out what a bogus fraud everything is.’ (*MA* 256)

The narrative nature of cultural memory becomes exceedingly clear in this exchange. An objective truth is nothing that can ever be established due to a multitude of points of view on one event and here, one step further is taken. Fictionalisation becomes the prime principle Jimmy and Toby adhere to, made easy by the Craker's restricted lifetime and experiences. They draw on narrative structures to construct a coherent past for the Crakers and as a consequence, they remember the past in almost the same way. As Gross points out, "frames of memory can be powerful instruments of control" and the "social group that can determine the regnant schemata can also exert a great deal of influence over how the rest of the population apprehends the past and, by extension, the present and future as well" (116 f). The Crakers are entirely unaware of this influence Toby and Jimmy have on them. The control the humans exert is not one of malicious intent, as it seems, but appears to be born out of concern for the Crakers (*MA* 265). Not entirely altruistic, though, since the endurance of the stories is of the utmost importance and turns into a political matter. If the Crakers found out the extent of the catastrophe and the subsequent lies they have been told there would be no possibility for Jimmy and Toby to justify their earlier stories. Granted, the Crakers do not appear to be vengeful and angry creatures but their understanding of the world is elaborate enough to realise when stories contradict each other (cf. *O&C* 97). Yes, the system is open for change since it allows the Crakers to bring in new topics but regardless of the direction the narrative takes continuity is paramount in order to secure Jimmy's and Toby's place as figures of authority as well as carriers of memory. Creating cultural memory for the Crakers therefore becomes primarily a practice of storytelling and plotting, the aim being to create a coherent narrative. For better or worse, once a feature is added in it stays. Jimmy's supposed liberation from Crake discussed in chapter two loses its feeling of spite when it becomes clear that he is effectively trapped in the story he himself created. While "these people were like blank pages, he could write whatever he wanted on them" (*O&C* 349) the flip side of the coin is the fact that Jimmy is indeed no blank page but immersed in a network of recollections.

It seems like a certain amount of pain is a prerequisite in Atwood's world to be a carrier of memory. Toby and Jimmy as well as the other survivors certainly carry this trait whereas the Craker's resistance towards negativity and their withholding of the events before the plague make them unlikely mouthpieces in that respect. However, they learn. The narrative climax of *MaddAddam* is a battle between the humans in alliance with the gene-spliced pigeons¹⁰

¹⁰ This diminutive name denotes genetically modified pigs, created in the compounds to grow human tissue organs. They show fierce intelligence and present a threat to the survivors before the Crakers communicate with them wordlessly and an alliance is forged against the Painballers.

against the other form of human survivors: brutal and reckless criminals who, in the pre-plague world, were not imprisoned but instead forced to fight each other to the death in an arena. The event is called Painball and the psychological scars the participants suffer leave them devoid of compassion or humanity. Throughout the novels the Painballers periodically appear as rather generic antagonists. When the unlikely alliance goes to battle it is a Craker child named Blackbeard who accompanies them as an interpreter between humans and pigoons. They return to the laboratory in which the Crakers were raised and in the air lock in front of it still lie the bodies of Oryx and Crake.¹¹ It is Jimmy who breaks down at the sight of the bodies and mutters their names. For Blackbeard then, “the single elements acquire their peculiar meanings only because they are integrated into a narrative pattern or plot” (Brockmeier 36) which is here provided by Jimmy. Blackbeard, in his capacity as a believer of Crake, comes into contact with his gods, so to speak, and it is this moment that qualifies as a fall and introduces the element of pain into his character, “He turns his frightened face up to her: she can see the sudden fall, the crash, the damage. ‘Oh Toby, this is Oryx and this is Crake? . . . Oryx and Crake must be beautiful! Like the stories! They cannot be a smelly bone!’ He begins to cry as if his heart will break” (*MA* 356). Blackbeard cannot go back to the innocence he had before now that he knows the stories he has been fed are only that: stories that veil an ugly truth. In this moment, he effectively leaves the Craker group and becomes as knowledgeable as the humans. The ramifications of this fall are revealed in the next chapter which opens with Blackbeard telling ‘The Story of the Battle’ to the Crakers. It is a moment of initiation for him that is enabled through his fall and it is interesting to look at the way he tells the story of an event he has experienced first-hand and which has undercut his trust in the world he thought was real. Unlike the human survivors Blackbeard does not simply leave out the painful and potentially traumatic aspect of his story. The crucial moment of him seeing Oryx and Crake’s bodies is not glossed over but openly shared. His account is infused with emotions as he unmistakably states that “I felt a very bad feeling, and I was frightened” (*MA* 359) – a clear difference in story-telling in comparison to Jimmy and Toby. As Brockmeier points out “almost every individual develops a different combination of social frames of memory and, accordingly, remembers and forgets differently” (24). When it comes to the story Blackbeard creates for the Craker collective he himself becomes the focaliser. In Jimmy’s and Toby’s account no agency of their own can be found when they tell stories of people other than themselves. Blackbeard’s story, then, is first and foremost a witness report

¹¹ Crake slits Oryx’s throat and is shot by Jimmy in the moment the plague breaks out in a twist of assisted suicide that ends the love triangle between them.

in terms of narrative type. He recalls the dialogue with Toby in an orality-centric fashion, weaving it into his narration. He shares the moment of rupture with the other Crakers but it is directly followed by the explanation Toby gave him, “And Oryx and Crake had different forms now, not dead ones, and they are good and kind. And beautiful. The way we know, from the stories.” (MA 360) It is this moment in which the witness report turns into an explanatory story and draws on the cultural templates the Crakers are aware of. Individually, Toby as a co-constructor of this story and a trusted person to Blackbeard “renders previously uncertain representations of experience subjectively valid” (Echterhoff 272). Through the text it does not become clear whether Blackbeard actually believes this explanation or whether he passes it on to calm the Crakers. It does, however, turn the story into a coherent memory for Blackbeard when, in the moment of perception, he transforms “a given thing into a phenomenon which can be and is worth being memorized, a *meaningful* and *therefore* communicable experience” (Straub 221). Toby’s assistance as a co-constructor also works on a collective level by extension, offering a narrative template for sharing it with the other Crakers. Blackbeard’s reference to their knowledge about Oryx and Crake “from the stories” stresses the needed continuity again and functions as a means of structuring and organising the new event. As Straub points out, once established this connection and its maintenance becomes a task of memory (221). Sure enough, Blackbeard becomes a carrier of memory and his task is not restricted to telling the story of the battle. Instead, he is fully instated in this function, having to go through the fish-eating ritual before he can tell what has occurred. The preparations for the ritual are not changed, even though it is against his nature to eat a fish Blackbeard has to adhere to the customs. The ritual beforehand provides the frame for the following myth as discussed earlier and therefore Blackbeard’s addition to the corpus is presented in a context of cultural memory.

5 Writing

5.1 A Difference in Motives

The plague influences not only the physical world but also practices of memory retention. Archives that contain written records are lacking, or rather not mentioned, and producing new literary content is connected to a number of difficulties; in fact, throughout the trilogy there are a multitude of hints that stress the futility of writing in the face of a dramatic event such as the plague. Useless scribbles on bathroom stalls that somehow remain and "...a notebook, its pages soaked, the handwriting illegible" (*O&C* 226) stand in for what once was a literate culture. No mention is made of new media even though Atwood goes to length in establishing them in pre-plague times, stressing the accessibility as well as the seductive influence they have, especially on Jimmy and Crake. The eco-terrorist group MaddAddam arrange their actions via an internet platform and the overall function of new media as distracting and catering to the users' impulses is explicated before the plague. Afterwards, however, no mention is made thereof and it seems that the reader is supposed to be content with the explication that electricity is missing. As much as this system entirely disintegrated with a simple change of the prerequisites writing is also potentially at risk. Its main function, namely externalising knowledge, collapses without a system that preserves not only the content but also the physical media it is stored in. It is symptomatic for the post-plague setting that writing is treated almost like a relic – the immediate addressee is gone and the situational connection is broken up.

As long as there has been writing there has been criticism towards it. On the one hand writing is independent of face-to-face situations and therefore extends the reach of a given piece of information. On the other hand the lack of control over the reception of the text makes for wariness (Stocker 34). Misunderstandings and unintelligibility could occur and what was meant to be preserved could potentially be lost after all. The criticism or rather the challenge the concept of writing faces in Atwood's post-apocalypse lies in other aspects, however. Instead of considering the accessibility of and to writing two aspects are brought up even before a word is written down: the necessity of a recipient in the form of a future reader and the matter of content. These prerequisites are incidentally embodied by Jimmy and Toby in their function as carriers of memory. Both of them are literate persons and have used writing as a system before the plague. Lack of knowledge is not the reason they are reluctant to put pen to paper. They know about the uses and failings of writing as much as the next average 21st century western person but it is once again the influence of the changed surrounding that

makes them question and ultimately doubt concepts that were stable before the plague. For Jimmy, the decisive question is the audience. As discussed in chapter two of this paper he is largely dependent on people to receive his words in order to form an identity. The reception is the crucial aspect that turns his words into a coherent story. When it comes to writing his problem is reiterated to a certain extent, “Or he could keep a diary. Set down his impressions. There must be lots of paper lying around . . . He could emulate the captains of old ships, in olden times – the ship going down in a storm, the captain in his cabin, doomed but intrepid, filling in the logbook” (*O&C* 40, 41). Jimmy’s thoughts on writing are informed by narrative patterns and cultural templates as much as his practice of orality is. The unfamiliar situation is appropriated via the use of such templates and Wertsch argues that they “are often not part of the ‘subjective memory’ of the people who use them, but they often introduce a powerful perspective that shapes the memories we have, even though we are not consciously aware of this” (648). The origin of the captain-narrative is of no importance for Jimmy but by using it he consciously introduces it as a perspective on his situation. Highlighting the last-man narrative the template corresponds to his perceived situation, that much is clear, but what appears to be remarkable is the actual implementation; Jimmy picks the captain image. Implied in it is the heroic death, a man who adheres to his duties until his last breath. Contrasted with Jimmy’s situation and his behaviour the difference could not be greater. He is barely getting by and indulges in leftover alcohol when he finds it and, additionally, he has no mission to speak of. His role as caretaker for the Crakers, given to him by Crake himself (*O&C* 321), is essentially unnecessary since they are perfectly adapted to the situation. It is Jimmy who is struggling. His idea of writing in an imitation of a captain then does not so much represent the actual situation but Jimmy’s conceived impression of himself. The end is imminent in his eyes and he partly hopes that he is the dutiful captain whose account will be read later so that other people can dwell on his heroic death. A matter of narcissism, essentially. Not to disagree with DiMarco who points out that Jimmy’s return to the compounds is driven by hunger rather than a desire for glory (“Paradise Lost” 190) but it is sensible to distinguish between motive and representation here. While his main aim is to secure further sustenance he is also concerned with the story he potentially becomes in case he does not return to the Crakers. “For a while they’ll [the Crakers] wonder where he’s gone, but he’s already provided an answer to that: he’s gone to be with Crake. He’ll become a secondary player in their mythology, such as it is – a sort of backup demiurge. He’ll be falsely remembered. He won’t be mourned” (*O&C* 224). The kind of remembrance Jimmy hopes for is that of *fama*, immortality of the name which “one can to a certain extent prepare and

accomplish much during one's own lifetime" since it "has a great deal to do with the image that a person creates of himself" (A. Assmann, *Western Civilization* 23). It is not for lack of knowledge or material Jimmy refrains from writing but the fact that any "reader he can possibly imagine is in the past" (*O&C* 41) and that, unlike a castaway, there is no chance of someone to find "his ledger, and learn his fate" (*ibid*). His reservations about writing then are not overly concerned with questions of content and sustaining useful memory but about a possible audience to witness his suffering. He needs to be acknowledged in his pain – a service the Crakers cannot provide because they do not understand that Jimmy is ailing in the first place. His practice of orality in relation to the Crakers is not ideal but gives him a possibility to connect with someone who qualifies as an audience. The narrative patterns in his oral performances are informed by the Craker's demand for stories but when it comes to writing there is one decisive difference: the Crakers cannot read. Jimmy's audience is effectively non-existent before he knows of Toby and the other survivors. As Whisker writes, "Atwood uses traditional strategies of imaginary audiences to firm up reality and continuity and to authenticate narrative, which is consistently undercutting its own ontological security" (153). Only Jimmy has the necessary abilities and to his mind he cannot be author and audience in the same capacity. On the one hand it does not function along the lines of *fama* which needs three interconnected conditions: "great deeds, a record of them, and remembrance by posterity" (A. Assmann, *Western Civilization* 29), tasks that cannot be fulfilled by one person even though the deeds and the record thereof is potentially in Jimmy's hands. To achieve the last part he is dependent on having a literate audience. On the other hand it would entail Jimmy facing himself and, as discussed, his experience of the moment of rupture is the one thing he does not want to deal with. It does not become clear why Jimmy does not teach them to read and write. The fact that the Crakers are able to develop abstract thought to a certain degree points towards a realistic possibility in the first novel already but their illiteracy seems an unchangeable fact to Jimmy.

Moreover, Jimmy does not use the opportunity of externalising his cherished word lists. At first glance this might be perplexing since in that instance, he is the audience. His emotional attachment to the words is already shown in the pre-plague world when he saves old library books from being destroyed, functioning as their "defender and preserver" (*O&C* 195). He attempts to retain the words for himself, to grasp at the world he has essentially lost. A possible reason for him to refrain from writing anything down can additionally be found in Jan Assmann's observation that "texts in themselves do not automatically circulate – they must be circulated – and if this ceases to happen, they become a grave for, rather than the

bearer of, meaning” (*Early Civilization* 74). Chance and threat are simultaneously present in a text and in Jimmy’s situation both features are dramatised. Given that there is no audience to circulate the potential texts he could produce Jimmy’s account is likely to be written down and eventually rendered unintelligible. The underlying sense of inevitable demise that is exemplified in the captain analogy is not merely restricted to the situation Jimmy finds himself in. It also shows the limits of writing and stresses the need for an audience that can decrypt the text. “Writing prolongs life and ensures remembrance only if planted in the memories of future generations” (A. Assmann, “Trash” 125) but in the post-plague world the notion of a future cannot be easily evoked – not even via writing.

Toby, when isolated and hiding out in her former workplace, also contemplates the uses of writing to her situation but other than Jimmy she actually goes through with it. During her time at the God’s Gardeners she learned to rely largely on mnemonic practices¹² but when she realises that her knowledge is in danger of being forgotten she considers writing in the following way:

She could go further, and record the ways and sayings of the now-vanished God’s Gardeners for the future . . . If there is anyone in the future, that is; and if they’ll be able to read . . . And even if reading persists, will anyone in the future be interested in the doings of an obscure and then outlawed and then disbanded green religious cult? Maybe acting as if she believes in such a future will help to create it . . . though it’s hard to concentrate on the idea of a future (*MA* 135, 136)

Her doubt about an audience mirrors that of Jimmy at a first glance because for her the question of an audience is intricately connected to the existence of a future, too. But there is one decisive difference: Toby cares about the content of her possible writing and its potential use. Her motivation for this train of thought also lies in the teachings of the eco-cult as she recalls the words of their leader, “While the Flood rages, you must count the days, said Adam One. You must observe the risings of the Sun and the changings of the Moon, because to everything there is a season” (*MA* 163). Implied in this decree is an audience; even though there is no one to read her report right in this moment there will be a recipient in the future for

¹² The reason for the reliance on memory in the God’s Gardeners is largely political. If they do not leave a paper trail then they and their actions cannot be traced by the corporations against which their splinter cell MaddAddam acts. Adam One, their leader, elevates the credo to an ideology and reinforces it with sermons about sustainability and reliability, “The Spirit travels from mouth to mouth, not from thing to thing: books could be burnt, paper crumble away, computers could be destroyed” (*YotF* 6)

apparently the simple reason that there always has been one. Reductionist and naïve as this may seem it solves the problem of the recipient that keeps Jimmy from writing. For Toby, it is the starting point to order her thoughts and to externalise the knowledge she has. She re-appropriates “language as a medium of utopia. When everything is demolished, destroyed, and forgotten, Toby continues to record. Unlike Snowman’s remembering the past in his own head, Toby keeps writing, by which she can preserve the memories of the past” (Moon 115). The pursuant question, then, is which memories she preserves and why. Her first impulse is not unlike Jimmy’s when she begins a notebook and under “each Saint’s Day name she writes her gardening notes: what was planted, what was harvested, what phase of the moon, what insect guests” (*MA* 163). Dunlop’s assumption about entertaining texts and narratives discussed before fails to apply here, too: the nature of Toby’s writing is sober, driven by facts and observations in what amounts to a logbook. Even though she apparently believes in a recipient the difficulty that is the audience is not entirely over with. It rather opens up further issues that stress the connection between content and recipient. Toby carefully considers what else to write and dwells on the nature of the potential audience of her words, “What kind of a story – what kind of history will be of any use at all, to people she can’t know will exist, in the future she can’t foresee? Zeb and the Bear, she writes, Zeb and MaddAddam. Zeb and Crake. All of these stories could be set down” (*MA* 203). The range of possible narratives is wide, especially once she is in contact with the other survivors both human and Crakers. What is remarkable here is that Toby considers the bigger picture; Jimmy simply needs someone to acknowledge his words. Toby, on the other hand, asks more refined questions about the nature of her recipients which “like the other constraints—the purpose of writing and the form of the writing, for instance—is an external element that helps to guide that thinking and remembering” (Magnificio 172). She rightly wonders whether the teachings of the God’s Gardeners will be of use to future generations; especially because she does not know how the world will develop and what kind of offspring the future will foster. Her approach is essentially one of practicality. Whereas Jimmy aims for immortalisation of his fate Toby distances herself from the text in so far as that she has no desire to be acknowledged as the author. For her, it is about externalising knowledge and, to some extent, nurturing the ones that come after her. Her considerations deal with a world in which she personally is of little consequence once the needed knowledge is written down. In the quotation above it also becomes exceedingly clear that Toby is aware of the fact that she is not merely writing a story. What she puts down in writing will be considered history if it is revived by future readers.

Toby's struggle to put into words is, aside from the unknown audience, due to what Ingersoll calls a "culturally vacant cosmos" (171). The post-plague situation is not entirely the clean slate Crake intended it to be but when it comes to writing one might well regard the metaphor. Because of the absence of written records memory is all that remains, as seen with the snippets of literature that reside in Jimmy's mind, and as such there is no cultural corpus Toby can position her writing against. She cannot provide a counter-narrative because there is simply no narrative – the slate is as clean as can be. Intertextuality is not given since there are no texts with which her account can possibly come in contact with. The future reader will not have the residue of textual knowledge that she and Jimmy carry but receive her text in a vacuum or, depending on the future culture, in a framework of texts yet unwritten. This improbability of inferring missing knowledge intensifies the aspect of selection and, on a textual level, the responsibility of fixing the meaning since "every reference must be specified independently of the knowledge of each single participant in the communication, yet must be understandable for all of them—that is, independently from the specific cognitive contents" (Esposito 187). The impossibility to grasp the future audience both in terms of culture and resulting cultural artefacts aggravates the task Toby has set for herself.

5.2 Selection and Censorship

The selection of the content is no censorship as such but it shows the authority that the written word holds by design: what is written has the potential to last (A. Assmann, *Western Civilization* 171). Both Jimmy and Toby experience its influence on their own accounts. In Jimmy's case he finds a piece of his own writing when on a supply run back to the laboratory. It "must have been the last thing he'd ever written. The last thing he'd ever write. He picks [the sheets] up with curiosity. What is it that the Jimmy he'd once been had seen fit to communicate, or at least to record . . . for the edification of a world that no longer exists?" (*O&C* 346). The break between Jimmy and Snowman is particularly stressed here, showing that Snowman has little understanding for the optimism that Jimmy was driven by. Additionally, since it is considered the very last thing he would put down in writing, it gains the gravity of an absolute account with no further texts to challenge it. The note shows both selection and censorship because certain passages are crossed out and corrected. Obviously the crossed out words are the first to have been written and therefore it stands to reason that they represent Jimmy's first impulse of describing the situation. Interestingly enough, the typographical particularity does not render the text unintelligible. Rather than being entirely

erased the words remain visible under the horizontal line (cf. Haubenreich 174). Thus, the examples highlight the different influences Jimmy is under by first negating and then correcting the choice of words. The first correction, “Recent ~~extraordinary events~~ catastrophe” (*O&C* 346), speaks of Jimmy’s earlier work at an advertising company. “Extraordinary events” carries a headline-like connotation that makes the recipient take notice immediately, infused with sensationalism and immediacy. The belated “catastrophe” effectively erases the implicit meaning and offers a far more sober and most of all negative representation of the situation. Whereas extraordinary events promise excitement and gossip a catastrophe is a threat and this truth is exemplified in Jimmy’s correction. Even though the word “catastrophe” should be the one that is transmitted to a future reader the earlier description is still visible, providing the second word with weightiness it would not have without the crossed out expression. The discrepancy between the words is therefore clearly outlined and seen together they give an insight into the struggles of the moment of rupture. The second case works with the same materiality in so far as that the crossed out word is still legible and hence providing an alternative to the subsequently superimposed concept. Its topic is Crake’s decease which Jimmy put down as “~~assisted suicide~~ death” (*O&C* 246). Here, the sugar-coating that is shown in the first example is inverted. Jimmy’s first assessment of the situation is entirely right; Crake slit Oryx’s throat in order to provoke Jimmy to shoot and kill him, which he eventually did. Jimmy’s inability to put this incident into words permeates the entirety of *Oryx and Crake*. It is thus interesting to see that his first instinct is to write the truth. The traumatic event is put down in technical terminology but nevertheless it reaches to the heart of the matter. As Aleida Assmann points out memory is not only limited by neural but also cultural constraints as well as “by psychological pressures, with the effect that painful or incongruent memories are hidden, displaced, overwritten, and possibly effaced” (A. Assmann, “Canon and Archive” 97). Jimmy’s account of Oryx’s and Crake’s death is eventually overwritten and replaced with a neutral term. The purposefully driven assisted suicide becomes a mere death that is not further specified. Jimmy’s own responsibility in shooting Crake is cleared even though it still simmers under the surface, both in text and his conscience. “Though several competing schemata may exist simultaneously, one is usually dominant, and hence more effective in selecting and ordering what is considered noteworthy about the past” writes Gross (116) and it is not only Jimmy’s peace of mind that this practice of crossing out and overwriting favours. Additionally, it retrospectively absolves Crake of his deeds. Given the fact that Jimmy’s relationship to language and writing is one coined by narcissism it is likely to read the revised notes not merely as pieces of future history but

infused with a strong sense of self-portrayal. Upon looking at his note he considers that he “could have mentioned the change in Crake’s fridge magnets” (*O&C* 347) which, throughout the novel, holds hints at his plans. Selection and censorship both influence the reception of the writing and at the same time it becomes evident that an interpreter is needed, someone who can provide the missing pieces. The note as such can be considered a piece of life-writing then and thus cannot be taken at face value. The text does not hold unmediated memory and, together with the censorship employed by Jimmy, makes for a restricted account of possible cultural memory; it does, however, disclose memory cultures (Saunders 322f). The reader is introduced to this note towards the end of the first novel and here, the cultural template of the captain of the sinking ship is invoked again. The style of the note mirrors the logbook technique and in tune with the analogy Jimmy’s note ends abruptly, “As for Crake’s motives, I can only speculate. Perhaps...” (*O&C* 347). Exactly why the sentence ends at this point is not revealed, leaving the reader of the novel as much in the dark about what happened next as the potential future reader of the note. Even Jimmy appears to be unaware when the split between him and Snowman is stressed again, “Here the handwriting stops. Whatever Jimmy’s speculations might have been on the subject of Crake’s motives, they had not been recorded. Snowman crumpled the sheets up” (*O&C* 347). His reaction of discarding the note shows additionally what he thinks would happen with his records – they become useless, are possibly read but not understood, and ultimately utterly insignificant in the face of a new situation.

Toby also experiences the need to censor her own writing. As seen before she sticks largely to a fact-driven style devoid of emotions when she notes down the daily occurrences. At one point, however, she observes Jimmy and the procession of Crakers making their way towards the seashore. “*Hallucination?* she’d written.” (*YotF* 164, italics in original) as an entry and understandably so – at this point in time she is unaware of the existence of other survivors and, most importantly, the existence of the Crakers. When she reassess her diary entry and the description she had given of the “strange procession” (*ibid.*) Toby begins to doubt her own experience. The factual importance her other records have is effectively threatened by possible hallucinations and the relationship between writer and addressee is particularly interesting here. Looking at the text as a form of diary Ong notes that it “demands, in a way, the maximum fictionalization of the utterer and the addressee. Writing is always a kind of imitation talking, and in a diary therefore I am pretending that I am talking to myself” (102). Toby’s reassessment of the situation is the fictionalisation of herself – wouldn’t it fit better into the plot if the question mark were erased? While she ponders her own writing she is both

writer and recipient, shaping the narrative into an intelligible form. Intelligible to herself, that is. “That was why she’s decided it must have been a hallucination: the blueness. And the crystalline, otherworldly singing. She’d seen the figures for only a moment. They were there, then they’d vanished, like smoke . . . They couldn’t possibly be real” (*YotF* 164).¹³ Suddenly what Toby perceives as reality does not fit into the possibilities of her internalised cultural template and thus, she considers it a hallucination. The question mark, however, becomes the sticky point for her. If it stays she admits to an insecurity that has not been featured in her notes before since she “can still recite the entire list off by heart” (*YotF* 163) when it comes to facts; with a question mark behind ‘hallucination’, however, a potential future reader would mark her as an unreliable narrator. Her focus on the content and impact of her writing is stressed here again. Even though Toby herself is somewhat unsure about her experience she knows her other information to be right. It is not so much a matter of portraying herself as a sane person, then, but of ensuring the correct reception of her other pieces of writing. As a consequence, she “takes out her pencil and scratches out the question mark. Hallucination, it says now. Pure. Simple. No doubt about it” (*YotF* 165). Unlike in Jimmy’s attempt at censorship Toby does not merely strike through the respective punctuation mark. It is entirely effaced here and thus fixes the observation. No palimpsest that offers a glimpse at earlier considerations and therefore Toby achieves the sense that “writing itself encouraged some sense of noetic closure. By isolating thought on a written surface, detached from any interlocutor, making utterances in this sense autonomous and indifferent to attack, writing presents utterance and thought as uninvolved with all else, somehow self-contained, complete” (Ong 132). The fact that she can clearly tell that she experienced hallucinations additionally shows that she is capable of self-reflection and thus makes her a trustworthy author in the eyes of a potential future reader. This seemingly secure framework is undercut again, though, since it still harbours the possibility of returning hallucinations which then might go unnoticed. Her effort is understandable yet it does not entirely fix the meaning she intends and ultimately, it is the recipient who acts as the judge of her situation

When the survivors and the Crakers finally live together Toby continues to write and the mode of censorship changes. In fact, the entire writing situation is altered when she teaches Blackbeard, the Craker child, to read and write. For her fellow humans Toby does not need to employ censorship – they all know about the dynamics with the Crakers and it additionally seems that the humans are not interested in her records anyway. Now that Blackbeard is able to decipher her writing, however, Toby needs to filter her words yet again. As she and Jimmy

¹³ The sign for the Crakers to be in heat is the change of colour in their abdomen.

agreed the Crakers shall not find out that the situation is post-apocalyptic to the humans hence her corpus of possible stories is automatically narrowed. Moreover, it shows in small moments like the following, “The Crakers sang all the way.’ She adds, ‘...which was somewhat hard on the nerves.’ But then, reflecting that Blackbeard is making so much progress in his writing that he might someday be able to read her entries, she scratches it out” (*MA* 375). Again the practice of entirely scratching out her words is employed. Now, however, she does have a specific recipient, namely Blackbeard. The corrections she makes are now pointedly aimed at him and, by extension, the Crakers. This circumstance automatically fixes the content and the style in which she writes. Additionally, it provides a basis that helps her decide which stories to put down. Where Jimmy accepted and mourned a missing recipient Toby eventually creates one herself.

5.3 Materiality, Physicality, Sacred Texts

Writing itself poses many challenges upon the author in a dire situation such as the one in *MaddAddam* – the literate background of the characters makes for an inhibited relation to putting things down in ink. Their understanding of writing is informed by their literate past, naturally; a past that used electronic devices to record text and make them infinitely adaptable and sharable. Jimmy fashions himself to be the only one with a fondness for printed books, a rarity in the pre-plague world. Before looking at the physicality of writing a closer look at the materiality is favourable. Since the rupture any form of print media is gone and thus writing becomes again what it has been for a long time – a physical action that is carried out by hand and written down on a graspable surface. In Toby’s case she begins her journal “on some old AnooYoo Spa-in-the-Park notepaper. Each ink page is topped with two long-lashed eyes, one of them winking, and with a lipstick kiss . . . they’re companions of sorts” (*YotF* 163). When reunited with the other humans her writing continues in a “cheap schooltime drugstore notebook” (*MA* 201) that features entire figures rather than only stylised body fragments: a boy and a girl smile at her from the cover and evoke uneasiness in her. “They are only paper children, but they seem dead now anyway, like all the real children” (*MA* 201). Drawing on the slate-imagery from earlier it is to say that here the immaculate surface of the slate is not the decisive factor. For Toby, it is the very existence of the slate, in this case notepaper and drugstore notebook, that evokes memories and emotions in her. Even without explicit notes the slate/paper carries memories. The Crakers, once again, do not have a working understanding of either writing or meaning of paper children. “‘That is not me,’ says

Blackbeard, frowning . . . ‘It is only some marks’” (*MA* 203) is Blackbeard’s harsh verdict on his first contact with the written representation of his name and it highlights a very simple and elementary fact: writing itself is a highly artificial system (Olson and Torrance 20). The unity of the signifier and the signified is not given but created in the recipients mind and thus, reading and writing is a matter of learning a skill that is not anchored in the body like speech is. In fact, there is something of a paradox at work: the words themselves have their origin in a tangible body but are realised in invisible sound waves whereas writing is graspable but cut off from its source. Still it stands to reason that there is a connection between writing and the body – the human body that is, capable of creating writing. It is this connection that Toby draws on when explaining the concept to Blackbeard. “You need to be the voice of the writing” (*MA* 202) she teaches him and reintroduces the importance of the body. For literate humans, the text is usually considered to be separate from the author; or, as Ong puts it, writing “separates the knower from the known and thus sets up conditions for ‘objectivity,’ in the sense of personal disengagement or distancing” (46). In highlighting the possibility for a text to be read out loud Toby circumvents this distance and rather engages text and reader. The focus lies on the communicative potential that a text has as opposed to its fixedness on a durable surface. “Reading is when you turn these marks back into sounds”” (*MA* 202) she explains, making use of what she knows Blackbeard is familiar with. The basis of writing and Blackbeard’s socialisation in an oral culture come together here. It is not only Blackbeard’s unfamiliarity with writing but the overall absence of the concept in everyday life that shapes her explanation. Billboards and newspapers, graffiti and timetables – whereas a person in a written culture is constantly aware of writing the Crakers do entirely without, not even exposed to it in the form of, for them, meaningless signs. Writing is ultimately abstract and a secondary practice; oral “expression can exist and mostly has existed without any writing at all, writing never without orality” (Ong 8). It is this basis in the body and in orality that Toby reintroduces into her explanation. The framework is not of particular importance here but rather the possibilities it harbours – one of which being the performative action of reading and of reading aloud. Writing and reading are not merely closed and inanimate systems but work on a performative level. For Blackbeard’s understanding, though, it is the sign that does the performance. “‘It told my name to Ren!’” (*MA* 203) he excitedly proclaims, treating the word as a carrier of a voice. Toby’s explanation is not entirely taken up by him but the general dynamic remains the same for both are right: the reader has to be the voice of writing but the written word in itself does have a voice, too.

At this point in the novel Blackbeard is not yet an initiated carrier of memory but has the tools at hand to begin to externalise knowledge.

'What are you writing?' Toby says.

'I am writing the names, Oh Toby,' says Blackbeard. And, sure enough, that's what he's been doing. TOBY. ZEB. CRAK. REBECA. ORIX. SNOWMANTHEJIMY.

'He's collecting them,' says Rebecca. 'Names. Who's next?' she says to Blackbeard.

'Next I will write Amanda,' says Blackbeard solemnly. 'And Ren. So they can talk to me.' (MA 262)

Blackbeard's first attempt at writing may be dismissed as meaningless because he is simply practicing a skill. To master it, repetition is needed and thus he starts with names as an easy category of words. A more refined reason can be found once again in his socialisation in a primary oral culture. "Successful retention in memory is built up by repetition" (Havelock 71) and Blackbeard chooses to shift this imperative from spoken to written language. Intuitively he grasps the possibility of externalising knowledge and thus he writes down what he aims to remember rather than listing off random items to train the motor skill that is needed to write. It is noteworthy in this context that he chooses to write down names rather than a story he has internalised. "Oral people commonly think of names . . . as conveying power over things" (33) states Ong and this sentiment is echoed in Blackbeard's reasoning. He sees the typographic representation of names as a communicative bridge between him and the denoted person. Blackbeard evokes not only the name but the entire person on the page, giving them a second life in writing, so to speak. In this frame of reasoning power consists of enabling the communication in the first place. It is also of interest to note that Blackbeard is not bothered by questions of an audience like Jimmy and Toby are; the names form a loose list that has neither an addressee nor a recipient. Writing for Blackbeard is then first and foremost a communicative tool between him and people he already knows. Thoughts of passing on knowledge to unknown or unborn people and the censorship that might be involved are yet to follow. His focus on the performative action additionally solves the problem that writing "does not in itself provide continuity . . . it may often break the continuity that is integral to oral tradition" (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 85). In Blackbeard's hands writing is not yet elevated to a medium of cultural memory and thus exists on the edge of oral tradition. It does not intervene with established customs among the Crakers and the fact that Blackbeard

considers it to be grounded in oral tradition to begin with, given that the voice carries the knowledge, it does not present the stark cut Assmann predicts. The influence rather happens the other way around through Blackbeard's orality-centric view on writing.

Not only the voice metaphor is invoked when it comes to the bodily realm of writing. In fact, this time it is the other way around – when Toby talks to Blackbeard about her inability to bear children she is tempted to say that she has scars inside her, only to refrain from going into detail. The following conversation is her anticipation of the way the Crakers would receive the simile:

A scar is like writing on your body. It tells about something that once happened to you, such as a cut on your skin where blood came out. . . I do not understand . . . you cut your skin open and then it is a scar, and that scar turns into a voice? No, she should stay away from the whole scar business. Otherwise she might inspire the Crakers to start carving themselves up to see if they can let out the voices” (MA 91, 92, italics in original)

The Crakers literal understanding and lack of abstract thought is the main focus in this quote but more interesting is the connection between writing and a mark that is rooted in pain. If one extends the simile it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that writing only comes into existence when something out of the order happens: a wound for instance, a sort of behaviour that ends in pain on an individual level, a catastrophe or a violent clash on a collective level. Both events are inscribed, either in the body or in the cultural memory of a given society. Paul Ricoeur points out that “most events to do with the founding of any community are acts and events of violence . . . In a sense, collective memory is a kind of storage of such violent blows, wounds and scars” (Ricoeur 8). In the same way that the body records extreme conditions by way of scars, both physical and mental, cultural memory etches it into written documents. As Aleida Assmann points out, though, that while the present continuously imposes on the shape of memory – cultural as well as communicative – there are “physically inscribed experiences and injuries that, we are told by the experts, defy deliberate manipulation” (*Western Civilization* 238, 239). The dynamics might be similar but physical and mental trauma cannot be changed and influenced in the way cultural memory potentially can. In the Craker's understanding, however, a concept like trauma is not existent. Their literal minds harbour the possibility to reinterpret language as being strongly connected to the

body.¹⁴ The crucial difference between the human concept of writing and the Craker one is the connotation of the focus on physicality.

When it comes to the body as a site or carrier of memory Nietzsche claims that “only what does not cease to give pain remains in one’s memory” (37). Proverbs of burnt children who dread fire come to mind and this conviction positions itself clearly in opposition to Halbwachs’ idea of memory. Nietzsche claims it is pain that makes memory lasting whereas Halbwachs stresses the necessity of positive affective ties as discussed before. Building on the analysis thus far it is interesting to see how these diverging opinions on the workings of memory are implemented when it comes to writing. Aside from Jimmy and Toby another character seems to be in touch with the physicality of writing before the plague: Ren, who grew up among the God’s Gardeners and only begins to trust words when she returns to the Compounds. Her teenage diaries appear to be the only thing written by hand in the wake of “a retro craze: people could hack your computer, but they couldn’t hack a paper book” (*YotF* 221). She is familiar with the materiality as well as the physicality of handwriting, even referring to words as tangible objects that might rub off on her (*YotF* 216). Like most of the other characters Ren does not remain unscathed in the aftermath of the plague. In *The Year of the Flood* she is raped by the Painballers. “Also there’s a dark place in me, like ink spilled into my brain” (*YotF* 394) is the way she describes the memory – or rather the repressed memory of what happened. Scratching out, effacing, and covering up are all what Aleida Assmann calls “active forgetting” (“Canon and Archive” 97) and in Ren’s case, the connection of mental and bodily harm with writing is made not by way of words but by materiality. Jimmy has the possibility to circumvent his traumatic past with the new cultural memory he invents for the Crakers. Ren, however, has no such opportunity. The imagination of ink spilled into her brain shows an even stronger form of censorship than what Jimmy and Toby do on the page, not erasing but burying the ‘script’ of her past under it without an alternative narrative. Her experience is utterly personal and it is the ink simile that is of importance here: being a tool for writing and creating it is at the same time also an instrument of censorship if applied differently. The possibility of writing down words is inherent in ink but words “cannot capture the trauma. Because they belong to everyone and everything, words cannot encompass something incomparable, something unique” (A. Assmann, *Western*

¹⁴ Additionally, it is to mention that the Crakers themselves are physically immaculate, “each one naked, each one perfect, each one a different skin colour – chocolate, rose, tea, butter, cream, honey – but each with green eyes. Crake’s aesthetic” (*O&C* 8). The concept of scars is as foreign to them as the concept of writing initially – they would not know one if they saw one, even on a human. From their point of view it might as well be part of the human’s body plan and no external marking.

Civilization 248). Words are carriers of memory and it precisely this immortalisation that Ren wants to avoid. The experience cannot be undone but it can be covered up with the same materials that could potentially create legible memory. The humans in *MaddAddam* largely connect the body and writing in terms of Nietzsche's understanding of memory.

The Crakers, however, look upon the matter differently. First and foremost it is to say that they do not carry scars and thus do not have first-hand experience with the connection between pain and memory – except for Blackbeard, that is. The emotional trauma upon seeing the bodies of Oryx and Crake changes him as it functions as an initiation rite; the wound happens in the moment yet the mark he bears remains after the first initial pain is gone (cf. Clastres 186). Even though Nietzsche's approach is applicable to him it is interesting to see that Blackbeard's influence turns the other Craker's conception of writing and memory into a positive, Halbwachsian one. In his initiation as a carrier of memory his ability to write is bound up as well and, in the two concluding chapters after the battle, all human voices are gone from the novel. It is Blackbeard who takes over as narrator as he explains how Toby set up a writing culture. She explained to the Crakers how to properly store books and thereby their cultural memory as well as telling them to attach further pages (*MA* 387). Additionally, she established an initiation rite for the Crakers – “And each time a person came into the knowledge of writing, and the paper, and the pen, and the ink, and the reading, that one also was to make the same Book with the same writing in it” (*MA* 387). The importance of the text is clearly highlighted in this quasi-print culture she sets up. The scar that is the decisive mark for an initiated person is distanced from pain and instead substituted by a ‘body’ of work that needs to be done. Blackbeard furthermore stresses the connection between memory and materiality when he states that “ink of different colours can be made from berries, and we made some purple ink from the elderberries with Pilar's Spirit in them, and we wrote the Words of Pilar in that ink” (*MA* 386). Pilar's memory is therefore not only ensured in the text itself but also in the material used, bringing to mind Rigney's prerequisite for a strong figure of memory: distribution across several media (“Plenitude” 18). Writing culture is not passed on without change from humans to Crakers and writing itself thus becomes “both an act of memory and a new interpretation” (Lachmann 301) on a content as well as formal level. The material aspect of writing gains importance in the hands of the Crakers and thus it appears to be not so much a return to earlier conceptions of writing but rather a new discovery. Whereas Toby writes on random paper that is infused with unintentional memories the Crakers consciously chose the materials to use in order to create a coherent sign.

Writing is taken up by the Craker collective in the same vein as by the individual Blackbeard, namely as an additional system of communication. It is him who passes on the knowledge of writing but he honours Toby's guidance in the process, "And she showed me how to turn the marks back into a voice, so that when I look at the page and read the words, it is Toby's voice that I hear. And when I speak these words out loud, you too are hearing Toby's voice" (*MA* 385). Memory retention is supplemented by commemoration in the sense of Halbwachs in this case, via affection and estimation. Moreover, Blackbeard stresses the communicative nature of writing once more when he refers to the importance of articulated writing. Much like in the case of Pilar's ink, he invokes not just any voice but Toby's. The abstraction necessary for this step is due to writing; on the one hand it is the object upon which Blackbeard exemplifies his thought, on the other hand it is the underlying system that facilitates it since writing transforms speech and thought (Ong 85). When talking about the book and the subsequent copies Blackbeard depicts it as a storage system "so that we might know all the Words about Crake, and Oryx, and our Defender Zeb, and his brother, Adam" (*MA* 387). What happens here is externalisation of the stories the Crakers know in forms of oral stories, some connected to a ritual. According to Jan Assmann, the "element of repetition recedes, as ritual changes to textual continuity; now we have a different container for meaning" (*Early Civilization* 74). Textual continuity is certainly a factor that the Craker's are beginning to value and it is noteworthy that a sacred text comes into existence with the introduction of writing, namely *The Story of Toby*. Through Blackbeard's point of view the reader takes part in the reading thereof and curiously, the fish ritual is performed, "I am putting on the red hat of Snowman-the-Jimmy . . . And I have put the fish into my mouth, and taken it out again. Now it's time to listen, while I read to you from the *Story of Toby*" (*MA* 388). The cultural significance of the ritual as a gateway to a story of cultural memory is kept but the original content is replaced. In the sense of Assmann's statement repetition does not necessarily recede but is complimented by the medium of text. The story is read out rather than performed anew, making it a sacred text since it "does not require any interpretation, but simply a ritually guaranteed recitation that scrupulously observes all of the prescriptions relating to time, place, and accuracy" (J. Assmann, *Early Civilization* 79). It is noteworthy that Blackbeard's explanations about writing and the quasi-print culture are also shared in the communal setting of the ritual. Formative and normative knowledge is thus still circulated in the same way it was when Jimmy functioned as their carrier of memory. Considering writing and the resulting texts as different containers for meaning is not entirely applicable; they function as additional ones. In these early days of the Craker's written culture their cultural memory is thus not shifted from

one medium to another but supplemented with an additional system to retain knowledge and elements of the past.

6 Conclusion

The challenges to cultural memory in Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy are numerous. In fact, read as a work on remembrance her speculative fiction becomes an exercise in the dynamics of memory. The way individuals remember certainly differs from remembrance within a group but Halbwachs is right in pointing out that all memories are essentially social, even if the remembered event was experienced alone. In the *MaddAddam* trilogy this becomes the decisive factor – what happens with collective knowledge and memory if the collective is no longer existent? It certainly cannot be borne on individual shoulders as Jimmy's failure to cope indicates. His dependence on written history shows the limitations a person without familiarity of mnemonic practices. Toby, skilled in learning things by heart, also begins to forget when waiting out alone. Without records of the past one can only remember what one already knows and even this content is constantly threatened by forgetting. Since the past is reconstructed each time it is recalled forgetting happens because of the lack of stimulus for remembering. This is why a post-apocalyptic set of novels like *MaddAddam* is particularly interesting to look at; it is not merely negligence that makes people forget certain things but it dramatises the communicative element of memory. In fact, the necessity of a recipient connects all human memory workings in the novels. Largely disregarded in history studies the audience becomes the most important challenge in speculative fiction. Left on their own Jimmy and Toby both show difficulties in constituting an identity. The remembrance of their former groups is not enough to assure them of their past and additionally, new memories are difficult to construct given the actual absence of the social factor the post-plague situation brings with it. Their sense of continuity is entirely disrupted and all cultural templates they are familiar with fail to encompass the situation in a satisfactory way. In short: the protagonists are left without an identity narrative. To counterbalance this loss of self Jimmy and Toby find different ways of coping. In Jimmy's case he effectively circumvents his traumatic past. In becoming his alter ego Snowman and establishing himself as a prophet to the Crakers he does not join a new group which would provide him with an identity but he puts himself in connection with them. The past he invents for the Crakers becomes his own past which he holds on to in an attempt to forget Crake's murder-suicide plot. On the one hand it is successful since he is not isolated anymore and holds a position of authority; both over the

Crakers and over the representation of the past. On the other hand, however, he is trapped in the narrative he built up himself, tied to Crake rather than cutting him out of the story entirely. Toby is lucky enough to encounter Ren and manages to partly rebuild her former group. Affective ties that are still intact give them both the possibility to feel the security of times past while also providing enough support that a recalling of their hurtful experiences is not necessary. Continuity is thus not necessarily achieved by own acts of remembering but by finding a basis that gives opportunity for forgetting and offers an alternative past that can be recalled.

The main factor that threatens these newly conceived groups and relations is the setting. In critical utopia the setting becomes an intrinsic part of the novel rather than a mere background and in *MaddAddam* it even features as a site of memory. For the human survivors the entire world has become a lieu de mémoire which in turn is made up from relics and remnants that are infused with the past, regardless whether they are used in their intended form or reappropriated in a new context. Additionally, they impose on the remembering humans to recall the past involuntarily. The workings of memory are clearly highlighted when the Crakers interact with the items. For them, they are simply objects they have not seen before and thus are devoid of meaning. To receive this meaning they turn to Jimmy who cannot help but be reminded of things past. The information he provides the Crakers with, however, does not correspond to that of the pre-plague world. In his function as prophet he has the authority to shape collective and cultural memory even if he cannot entirely fix his personal remembering. It is also the metaphysical concept of time that becomes a site of memory for Toby and Jimmy. The plague as a rupture has stopped official time for them, adding to the difficulty in constituting a secure identity since it cannot be rooted in surroundings. Everything that made time meaningful is absent from their situation and the clear cut of history and memory is reimagined – with the end of history comes a renewal of memory culture which is paramount to create a future. It is only the Crakers who can be considered a community of remembrance in the novels. They have the advantage of interlocutors, namely themselves and Jimmy. Through him they develop and circulate their formative and normative values that carry the basis of their group. Even though it seems that the human survivors have the upper hand when it comes to shaping the Craker's cultural memory their relation develops into a hybrid form. The Crakers ask, the human answer, and influenced by continuity and remaining cultural templates they create content that becomes the corpus of post-plague cultural memory.

The element of pain that Nietzsche sees as an intrinsic part of constituting memory is also featured in *MaddAddam*, both in the recollections of the human survivors and in the involuntary initiation rite Blackbeard goes through. After seeing his gods dead on the floor the Craker boy becomes a carrier of memory and eventually takes over the role of authority when it comes to their ritual. With a fellow Craker taking on this function the mode of narration changes and a new twist on the representation of the past is employed. Whereas the humans try to outrun their painful memories Blackbeard openly discusses his feelings as they become part of the official account of the event. Toby's influence in his reception of the event highlights the way memories are shaped by co-creators who disperse the individual's doubt. Together they create a story that befits the event and also the amount of input the Crakers are deemed capable of understanding. Questions of censorship go hand in hand with it too and it becomes clear that official accounts (or those that are meant to be passed on) are no representations of the events but influenced by the audience as well. The Craker's assumed capacity for following the narrative shapes it decidedly and thus new cultural memory is clearly tailored to their needs rather than proclaiming an objective truth.

It is not only in oral practices that this form of censorship is practised. Even more so in writing it becomes apparent because it is partly possible to witness the development of the censorship and selection. In the novels both Toby and Jimmy see the challenges to writing, albeit in different ways. Jimmy is clearly driven by the idea of memory as *fama*. His aim is to be remembered in the way he sees himself, as a tragic yet heroic figure but this ambition is undercut by his own failure to produce such content. In dismissing the Crakers as a possible audience for written documents he rather remembers inwardly, another facet of his narcissism. The censorship found in the last note he had written as Jimmy before deciding to become Snowman also shows the interplay of different forces. In crossing out words but letting them remain legible Jimmy shows how he is influenced by cultural restraints, psychological pressure, as well as what he considers to be the truth. Toby's understanding of writing goes into a different direction: she is largely preoccupied by matters of content rather than remembrance of her as a person. The audience is also a decisive factor for her but in terms of target group. She aims to pass on knowledge that will be useful for future generations and once she finds a recipient in the Crakers it helps her fix both style and content. When Blackbeard learns to write, however, another kind of censorship becomes necessary since he has no concept of a world before the plague and Toby intends to keep it that way. In teaching Blackbeard to read and write Toby does not only pass on a system of communication and memory retention but also reconnects writing with the body; the Crakers understand it as a

positive connection whereas the humans use writing similes to encompass pain and suffering. In the Craker's hands writing gains a physicality and materiality that is closely connected to commemoration, extending memory to the system. Not only the words carry memory but the used ink as well and thus another layer of commemoration is added. Rather than changing from an oral to a written culture both modes of cultural memory are retained and complement each other.

In memory lies power and influence and the novels show that memory is neither a static nor simple concept. Workings of memory are omnipresent whether they are acknowledged or not and additionally, cultural memory changes depending on the point of view one decides on. Even though it is supposed to be a collective understanding of a certain event the *MaddAddam* trilogy impressively stresses that the individuals it is composed of are exactly that: individual characters who have their own recollections which might not necessarily concur with the collective circulated account. Mediation and public commemoration are the carriers of cultural memory but still other versions of events exist. Looking at those the performative character of memory is highlighted while it also paves the way for a more refined understanding of the dynamics involved. For future research it is interesting to look at cultural memory in a framework of post-humanism in order to stress the role of the Crakers further. Questions of the scope of humanity they show in connection with the ability and need to retain memory might prove to be illuminating in the field. Ultimately, the novels stress the cultural dimensions which memory is created in and further insights can be gained by considering the influence of post-humanism as well as the apparently inevitable human exceptionalism. Notions of gender among the human survivors are already covered widely but in light of the male-centeredness of the Craker's memory discourse it would be sensible to investigate in Atwood's understanding of gender in post-humanist creatures, especially given the feminist tones in her work. Particularly in regard to speculative fiction and critical utopia as a medium of potentially pioneering ideas this connection is worth exploring.

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