

**SNOWBALL VS. SNOWMAN:
A DYSTOPIAN BRIDGE BETWEEN GEORGE ORWELL'S *ANIMAL FARM*
AND MARGARET ATWOOD'S *ORYX & CRAKE***

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Resumo: De acordo com Jean-François Beaulieu (2006) obras diatópicas têm permeado a literatura ocidental durante distintos períodos históricos, os quais apresentam características específicas e, logo, provocam ansiedades as mais diversas nas experiências dos autores. Tendo isso em mente, o objetivo deste artigo é o de analisar se, como e em que sentido a novela de George Orwell *Animal Farm* (1945) e o romance de Margaret Atwood *Oryx & Crake* (2003) podem nos ajudar a compreender como o mundo globalizado contemporâneo foi capaz de contornar algumas das apreensões que assombravam os escritores enquanto, paradoxalmente, acabou por gerar novas versões destas. Sendo assim, e para promover uma ponte produtiva entre as narrativas de Orwell e Atwood, o estudo investiga quanto daquilo que foi problematizado por Orwell, com relação ao contexto histórico de *Animal Farm*, parece não ter sido superado, mas, na verdade, reconfigurado na distopia de Atwood.

Palavras-chave: Distopia. Orwell. Atwood. Poder. Comércio.

Abstract: According to Jean-François Beaulieu (2006), literary dystopias have permeated Western literature during distinct historic periods, each of these with its own specificities and, thus, triggering varying anxieties in the writers' mind. Taking that into account, the purpose of this essay is to investigate if and how George Orwell's novella *Animal Farm* (1945) and Margaret Atwood's novel *Oryx & Crake* (2003) might help us understand how the contemporary globalised world has been able to evade some of the old apprehensions that haunted human lives and controversially allowed for the emergence of brand-new versions of such apprehensions. Therefore, and to promote a profitable bridge between Orwell and Atwood's narratives, this study analyses how much of that which has been problematized by Orwell, regarding the historical context of *Animal Farm*, seems to have been not surpassed but, actually, reshaped in Atwood's dystopia.

Keywords: Dystopia. Orwell. Atwood. Power. Commerce.

Nowadays people know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Oscar Wilde

Introduction

Dystopian novels have accompanied Western civilization for a long time, at different historical moments, usually times of crisis in institutions and world views. Each of the writers who opt to portray a dystopic narrative fictionalizes upon a background that is generally related to realistic facts, whose structure might change indefinitely provided that its cornerstone regards the fear towards matter-of-fact possibilities.

The problem to be investigated in this essay concerns the ideological shift in the characteristics of dystopian settings between a period of great economic and governmental changes; under the premise that the advent of different political movements, the rise of technology, the empowerment of commercial trades and its inevitable reinforcement of excessive materialism have all helped to redesign the dystopian apprehensions of contemporary society. In the words of David Harvey (2000, p. 222), “the risk and uncertainty we now experience acquires its scale, complexity, and far-reaching implications by virtue of processes that have produced the massive industrial, technological, urban, demographic, lifestyle, and intellectual transformations and uneven developments that we have witnessed in the latter half of the twentieth century”.

Therefore, one might assume that dystopian fictions still have a purpose in the contemporary world, their target being more complex and abstract than the absolutist regimes so criticized in other moments – such as the Russian Communism, German Nazism, and Italian Fascism – not in spite of the several advancements of neoliberal civilization but because of them, as I shall further discuss.

The overall purpose of this essay is to show how Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx & Crake* problematizes the spread binary idea that left-wing policies naturally restrain people’s freedom – an issue to be illustrated through a comparison of

Atwood's novel, written in 2003, with George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, written in 1945, more than half a century before – whilst right-wing ones set them free. Atwood's novel implies that, today, freedom does not depend only on government but also on the power granted to commerce, profiteering, technology and the commodification of human values and nature.

My hypothesis is that there is not a direct connection between government control and financial inequalities but rather that poverty is produced and reproduced because excessive riches and materialist behavior are fomented in contemporaneity – thus indirectly exercising the same control that absolutist governments once practiced. The existence of a State does not necessarily entail the existence of corruption since the latter is not merely a consequence of institution per se, but of its ambitions. As Eduardo Galeano states, regarding the drawbacks of a capitalist political and social system, "Wealthy capitalist centers in our own time cannot be explained without the existence of poor and subjected outskirts: the one and the other make up the same system" (GALEANO, 1997, p.30).

In other words, the fact that market has been gradually amplifying its thriving status does not necessarily imply that the population has responded likewise, for according to David Harvey (2010, p. 185), "the geographic landscape of capital is perpetually evolving, largely under the impulsion of the speculative needs of further accumulation and only secondarily in relation to the needs of people". That is, the general idea that market growth and improvement would naturally result in the betterment of peoples' lives is not accurate whatsoever.

The specific purpose of the analysis is to show how Atwood's narrator, Snowman, questions what Jean-François Beaulieu calls the "utopian dream envisioned by capitalist corporations" (BEAULIEU, 2006, p.63), implying that, notwithstanding how absent totalitarian regimes might be from our most likely future, society is still controlled by a controversial financial system that has turned people into slaves of materialism. Nonetheless, *Oryx & Crake* does not offer the readers an inevitable path for contemporary society but, actually, by giving them the chance to realize how dystopian the future can be, Atwood asks

them not to accept such a prospect. As Carolyn Merchant puts it, “Narratives however are not deterministic. Their plots and ethical implications can be embraced or challenged. Naming the narrative gives people the power to [...] bring about change and to break out of the confines a particular storyline” (MERCHANT, 2003, p. 36).

This predictable storyline of technological and commercial paradise is illustrated by the discourse of several characters and events in the novel, and the essay aims at analyzing the unique manner in which the narrator experiences the paradox of such events and wherein these characters are situated; thereupon, I want to find out whether and, if so, how *Snowman* reverses the concepts repeatedly endorsed in his surrounding atmosphere, in which “everything has a price” (ATWOOD, 2003, p. 139).

The general context of this investigation concerns the exaggerations of a neoliberal period in which dystopian moments and events are the consequence of contemporary self-destructive thirst for profit, and wherein futile interests and material needs have overcome the basic needs of society. For this contextualization to be effectively carried out I will be relying basically on Harvey’s *Spaces of Hope* (2000) and *The Enigma of Capital and the Crisis of Capitalism* (2010). And for the ideological myth that technological advances and expansionist trades will lead us to improvements and to the implementation of equal rights, I will be using Merchant’s arguments in *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture*.

Moreover, in order to contextualize the dystopian fictions produced by the creativity of “pessimist” writers – in this case George Orwell and Margaret Atwood –and dystopian moments which are the consequence of vicious past and present megalomaniacs – in this study, specifically, the Russian revolution and the commodification of human values – Atwood’s article “Writing Oryx and Crake” and Darvish & Mohammadreza’s “From Utopian Dream to Dystopian Reality: George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* a Case Study” will be brought.

Although produced in very different social and political contexts, both Atwood’s and Orwell’s narratives depict what Darvish & Mohammadreza (2011, p. 101) have called the dystopian condition of representing a “deliberate attack

on the idea and possibility of utopia". It is also necessary to consider Atwood's change of perspective brought up in *Oryx & Crake* regarding her unorthodox utopia and dystopia for "the subversion of utopian aims by evil forces in classical dystopias traditionally leads to the emergence of a dystopian system or regime that persecutes and terrorizes people" (ATWOOD, 2003, p. 65). Perhaps this is the greatest difference, and one of paramount importance for the analysis, between *Animal Farm* and *Oryx & Crake*.

Furthermore, drawing on Jean-François Beaulieu dissertation "The Role and Representation of Nature in a selection of English-Canadian Dystopian Novels", my objective is to provide a contextual framework for seeing Atwood's novel connection with its political and social surroundings as clearly as it happens when one looks at Orwell's novella. If the analogies brought by the British author between his narrative and Russian communism are possible, I want to test similar analogies between Atwood's novel and our contemporary reality in terms of the relationship between the decaying humanities and the all-powerful technology, seen by most as being the answer for everything.

My hypothesis is that there is not much difference between our contemporary potential and the one shared by *Oryx & Crake*'s scientists, who, as Beaulieu remarks, "reshape their environment according to their own utopian fantasies, disregarding the nefarious consequences of their actions" (BEAULIEU, 2006, p. 67). Is this a far-fetched idea, or the portrait of our society? Correspondingly, and for my comparison between *Oryx & Crake*'s narrator –Snowman– and one of the main characters of *Animal Farm* –Snowball – during the development of both narratives to be cogently delineated, Jayne Glover's "Human/Nature: Ecological Philosophy in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*" is to provide my main axioms. Glover's article contributes to one of the main tenets of this essay by asking "whether the trappings of civilization are really representative of human culture, or if there is more to civilization than baseball caps, sunglasses and digital watches" (GLOVER, 2009, p. 56).

1 The contemporary maintenance of dystopia

For my comparison between two dystopian novels to be effectively carried out I need first a working definition of Utopia. Darvish and Najjar, in their analysis of *Animal Farm*, have described it as “a place for good and ideal life” (DARVISH & MOHAMMADREZA, 2011, p. 100). However, it would be naïve to think that such an abstract term can have universal characteristics. Even though his main criticism was avowedly against Stalinism, George Orwell himself had strong reasons to believe that utopia would never be possible in a communist society, especially after fighting in the Spanish Civil War and being arrested by the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (N.K.V.D) under the accusation of Trotskyism. Written four years before 1984, *Animal Farm* allegorically exposes minutely and meticulously how dictatorial regimes, which were pretty much in vogue at those times, find ways to manipulate peoples' lives. Although his main focus was Stalin, as just mentioned, the careful development of the novel's characters might be easily applied to several other cases of government control.

Animal Farm emulates the structure of political revolutions and shows how government corruption and thirst for power have not only obliterated the possibilities of improvements after the command of a region is assumed by a party based on equality but also made the situation of the common citizens, who eagerly endorsed the revolution, much worse. In the words of Darvish and Mohammadreza (2011, p. 103), “the energetic and positive mood disappears after the Rebellion, as the difficulties of the animals become progressively worse, and as their leader becomes more cruel and selfish”.

The reader realizes that the novel is not about Utopia but about Dystopia as he/she discovers that the pigs, who are the ones leading the new regime, “fail to create a saner and perfect world” (ORWELL, 1984, p. 101) since they “take over all power and privilege” (ORWELL, 1984, p. 104). It does not take long for the first action regarding class privileging to take place: “animals had assumed as a matter of course that these [the apples] would be shared out equally; one day, however, the order went forth that all the windfalls were to be collected and brought to the harness-room for the use of the pigs. At this some of the other animals murmured, but it was no use” (ORWELL, 1984, p. 14).

Oryx & Crake, which Jean-François Beaulieu (2006, p. 63) summarized as “the story of a utopian dream envisioned by capitalist corporations”, was published in 2003, a period when dictatorships’ popularity, repeatedly and globally carped at, had already decreased irreversibly. In spite of that, Atwood’s novel exposes a future society where the equality advocated by the pigs of *Animal Farm* has again not been achieved: “It [the university] was surrounded – Jimmy observed as the train pulled in – by [...] huts put together from scavenged materials – sheets of tin, slabs of plywood – and inhabited no doubt by squatters”. Jimmy, or Snowman as he will later baptize himself, observes the poverty that surrounds the rich bits of the dystopian Canada imagined by Atwood; he is one of the few who belong to the privileged fraction of the country’s population, and shockingly observes the ones who have not been so lucky: “How did such people exist? Jimmy had no idea. Yet there they were, on the other side of the razor wire. A couple of them [...] shouted something that the bulletproof glass shut out.” (ATWOOD, 2003, p. 185).

Therefore, Atwood’s setting is one which conveys hierarchical social inequalities, with a few people receiving most of the benefits of neoliberal politics whereas the great majority suffers their negative consequences. Similarly to what happens in the *Animal’s Farm*, where the pigs gradually canalize power and control to their own interests, Snowman observes how the poverty of many people is maintained for the richness of a few to be guaranteed. Showing us a reality that is not related to something already surpassed but actually a contemporary issue, Atwood does not focus on government but in commerce and, thus, “sets her dystopia apart from standard dystopian models” (BEAULIEU, 2006, p. 61).

Despite the progress propaganda, so recurring in our contemporary capitalist enterprises, Carolyn Merchant questions the ingenuous idea that the opposite of destruction is construction since both can happen at the same time: “overdevelopment, [...] consumption, pollution, and scarcity are critical issues confronting all of humanity. Through these contrasting stories, we can see both progress and decline in different places at different times” (MERCHANT, 2003,

p. 4). For the marginalized characters in *Oryx & Crake* “the progressive story is a decline” (MERCHANT, 2003, p. 155).

In Orwell’s novella, when the pigs want the other animals to accept their condition, they tend to remind them about how worse things were before the revolution – although they were not worse at all – and we are all aware that this tactics served this purpose in several left-wing dictatorial regimes. In capitalist and neoliberal societies, though, such a process is not so conspicuous but seems to be even more effective; due to the great international contact provided by globalization, instead of thinking how things were in the past, people justify inequalities based on how things could be in the present, having learned to compare their condition with the ones which are worse in distinct regions. Hence the lack of rebellion in the most depredated classes of Western contemporary capitalism; people were taught to be passive and to understand their situation as privileged, no matter how unfair it might be.

My point can be easily illustrated in a dialogue in which Oryx explains to Snowman how she and the other prostitutes lived after they had been sold by their families:

[S]ome of these girls seemed content with their situations. The garages were nice, they said, better than what they’d had at home. The meals were regular. The work wasn’t too hard. It was true they weren’t paid and they couldn’t go out anywhere, but there was nothing different or surprising to them about that. (ATWOOD, 2003, p. 254)

But why has inequality been enhanced if Atwood’s characters have all the tools to make it vanish? Actually it would be too romantic to believe that the freedom to innovate and negotiate developmental activities would inevitably result in favorable outcomes to everyone. Atwood implies that the “progress” and “evolution” so strongly supported by the novel’s scientists are not a sign that they are worried about improving the lives of others since their inventions, according to Jayne Glover (2009, p. 53) “often seem motivated by financial gain—either their own, or that of large companies for whom they work”.

Comparing *Animal Farm* with *Oryx & Crake* means contrasting two similar fears in very distinct historical periods. Even though it may sound as if things

were preposterously exaggerated in Atwood's novel, this happens due to the lack of careful observation. Capitalism has been the most destructive economic model of Western civilization, and if things are said to be or look as if they are "better" nowadays, it does not necessarily mean that they are: "Over the last three centuries marked by the rise of capitalism, the rate and spread of destruction has increased enormously. [...] We are more circumspect now in our rhetoric, though not necessarily in our practices." (HARVEY, 2010, p. 185).

Comparing the novels one can see how pertinent Harvey's argument is, indeed: "All the animals worked like slaves that year. Apart from the regular work of the farm, and the rebuilding of the windmill, there was the schoolhouse for the young pigs, which was started in March" (HARVEY, 2010, p. 45). In *Animal Farm* the animals are told to work endlessly not only because of the party, but also because if they do that with discipline one day in the future they are going to retire in order to enjoy calm and workless days and eventually die peacefully:

Snowball did not deny that to build it [the windmill] would be a cult business. [...] But he maintained that it could all be done in a year. And thereafter, he declared, so much labor would be saved that the animals would only need to work three days a week" (ORWELL, 1984, p. 20).

Doesn't this sound familiar? The pigs recurring discourse about the importance of working hard is not abandoned but reshaped by Atwood since, instead of addressing an agenda against political absolutist threat, her intention is to caution us "against lethal aspects of our industrial and technocratic societies" (BEAULIEU, 2006, p. 73).

The house, the pool, the furniture – all belonged to the OrganInc Compound, where the top people lived. Increasingly, the middle-range execs and the junior scientists lived there too. Jimmy's father said it was better that way, because nobody had to commute to work from the Modules. Despite the sterile transport corridors and the high-speed bullet trains, there was always a risk when you went through the city (ATWOOD, 2003, p. 26-27).

Just as it is happening in our society, it is very natural in this novel for people to live where they work, based on similar reasons – e.g. traffic and/or violence. Due to ideological changes in the functioning of social relationships

brought as a consequence of capital accumulation, and to a palpable increase in some details which structure the basis of neoliberalism—selfishness, individualism, thirst for making money, competition – people are gradually giving up undergoing once pleasurable activities unconnected to their job. If in *Animal Farm* excessive work is caused by a blind faith in Animalism, the left-wing party, in *Oryx & Crake* it is the “consequence of human progress” (BEAULIEU, 2006, p. 73) in an extremely right-wing society.

In Orwell’s novella Snowball tries to convince the other animals that there are other important tasks they should be undertaking besides “working hard”. He tries to do many other things but does not have time to achieve much since the pig Napoleon, his right-hand revolutionary, launches a surprise attack against him. Snowball ends up running away from dystopia, whilst in *Oryx & Crake* Snowman eventually becomes the only one left in it after Crake’s ambitious project of killing the human race for a new species to thrive is put into practice. His society is pretty distinct from that of Snowball, but the value given to work is not less prominent if compared to it.

If one of *Animal Farm*’s main criticisms addresses working as the first requisite of an obsolete political regime, Atwood’s novel shows how men kept working in contemporaneity as to accumulate more money, without ever being able to spend it, and to be part of the ambitious project of industrialization, that, besides Snowman, no one had thought of questioning so far. Observing the leftovers of civilization, he reflects upon a sign he stumbles upon:

Men at Work, that used to mean. Strange to think of the endless labor, the digging, the hammering, the carving, the lifting, the drilling, day by day, year by year, century by century; and now the endless crumbling that must be going on everywhere. Sandcastles in the wind. (ATWOOD, 2003, p. 45)

This is just one of the many occurrences – which happen more and more often as the story develops—when the reader experiences such a severe pessimism regarding Western civilization since, as Beaulieu has argued, “Snowman becomes gradually aware of the dystopian consequences originating from the rise of an idealistic capitalist order” (ATWOOD, 2003, p. 69). In *Animal Farm*, as previously shown, people work harder than they did before the

revolution because of their discipline and faith towards the regime. Many things are important for a good “animalist”, but, chiefly, they are required to believe in the party’s judgment, accept whatever is decided by the ones in control, and fear those who are not part of their regime.

Having learned the importance of other values before the rebellion, however, sometimes the requirements of the party impinge upon the animals’ experience. Their task is far from being a simple one, since they must learn how to turn a blind eye to what seem to be crystalline facts just because they are told to. This is exactly what happens when the pig Squealer, whose job is to stop evidence from unveiling the cruelty of the party, criticizes Snowball, an asset of the revolution whose ambitious projects and selfless ideas about long-term improvements had already served their purposes and were now hindering the megalomaniacs of Napoleon. Actually one can arguably associate the story of Snowball—betrayed by Napoleon – to the life of Che Guevara – betrayed by Fidel Castro – or Trotsky – betrayed by Stalin; the former option being more applicable since Orwell was a Trotskyite, as mentioned previously:

Snowball [...] was no better than a criminal!’ ‘No! He fought bravely at the Battle of the Cowshed,’ said somebody. ‘Bravery is not enough,’ said Squealer. ‘Loyalty and obedience are more important. [...] Discipline, comrades, iron discipline! That is the watchword for today. One false step, and our enemies would be upon us’” (ORWELL, 1984, p. 22).

Due to technological progress, internet democracy, access to information, and the increasing withdrawal of State power in the globalised and Westernized world – where the public sphere is day by day losing space to the private one—it would be very hard to think that such “loyalty and obedience” to absolutist parties would be something achievable in the future of contemporary society, but for George Orwell’s period it obviously was not. On the other hand, if the influences of government control in society’s actions have faded away from Atwood’s dystopian worries, those of “capitalist corporations are omnipresent in *Oryx and Crake*” (BEAULIEU, 2006, p. 78). The values of Atwood’s characters have not been disrupted because they fear their enemies nor because they are

forced by the government, but because they fear not making enough money and are forced by their materialist needs, as it happens to Snowman's father:

The main idea was to find a method of replacing the older epidermis with a fresh one, not a laser-thinned or dermabraded short-term resurfacing but a genuine start-over skin that would be wrinkle- and blemish-free. [...] The rewards in the case of success would be enormous, Jimmy's father explained. What well-to-do and once-young, once-beautiful woman or man, cranked up on hormonal supplements and shot full of vitamins but hampered by the unforgiving mirror, wouldn't sell their house, their gated retirement villa, their kids, and their soul to get a second kick at the sexual can? [...] "you've thought up yet another way to rip off a bunch of desperate people?" said Jimmy's mother in that new slow, anger-free voice. [...] They can rot as far as you and your pals are concerned. Don't you remember the way we used to talk, everything we wanted to do? Making life better for people – not just people with money. You used to be so . . . you had ideals, then." "Sure," said Jimmy's father in a tired voice. "I've still got them. I just can't afford them" (ATWOOD, 2003, pp. 55-57).

The future imagined by Atwood is much more possible than the one imagined by Orwell. In the excerpt above the reader can notice how the medical "advancements" designed by Snowman's father do not aim at improving human life or curing diseases, but purely at making money. The commodification of Medicine is not a dystopia, it is a reality. Cosmetic surgeries are increasing continuously; moreover, even after severe financial crises in Western economy, people are still spending money they do not have in order to get "prettier" or "younger" and, thus, more easily accepted in a highly futile civilization. Hence, in the 21st century people do not give up their values due to an absolutist regime but because they "can't afford" such values either.

Living in a capitalist and materialist historical moment, our values go in a similar direction; neoliberalism has not affected only our economic system but also our ideological frames. Recovering such values requires altering the kernel of our society's functioning inasmuch as, in the words of Harvey (2000, p. 214),

grappling with responsibilities and ethical engagements towards all others entails the construction of discursive regimes, systems of knowledge, and ways of thinking that come together to define a different kind of imaginary and different modes of action from those [...] so typical of the capitalist entrepreneur.

Conclusion

Finally, perhaps we might briefly sum up the dystopian atmosphere of *Animal Farm* and *Oryx & Crake* as permeated by two main maxims. Boxer, the horse who represents the mass of repressed animals in the former, learned after the rebellion that besides working as hard as possible he should also understand that the party's leader can never be questioned: "Boxer, who had now had time to think things over, voiced the general feeling by saying: 'If Comrade Napoleon says it, it must be right.' And from then on he adopted the maxim, 'Napoleon is always right,' in addition to his private motto of 'I will work harder'" (ORWELL, 1984, p. 22).

In the latter, on the other hand, Oryx, the porn actress whom Snowman falls in love with, exposes how she has found out the maxim which she needed to acknowledge in order to survive in the Westernized world. This happens when she describes how those who direct the films in which she has taken part convey their intention: these men all had ideas about what should be in their movie [...]. [T]here would have to be a discussion about how much that new thing ought to cost. 'So I learned about life,' said Oryx. 'Learned what?' said Jimmy [...] 'That everything has a price,' said Oryx" (ATWOOD, 2003, p. 138).

Hence, if "Napoleon is always right" is a token of the sociopolitical injustices of our former fears, so is "Everything has a price" very representative of our contemporary ones. In the contemporary world, as Merchant strongly emphasizes, "the free-market economy's growth-oriented ethic, which uses both natural and human resources inequitably to create profits, presents the greatest challenge" (MERCHANT, 2003, p. 225). What makes such challenge increasingly intricate is the fact that this "free-market economy's growth-oriented ethic" is not ethical at all; and this might mean that many of the tools previously applied by the absolutist government have been not only sustained but actually retextualised by the materialist desires of contemporaneity. The political system articulated by the pigs in *Animal Farm* involves ideological maneuvers aiming at mitigating reality and providing palpability to fiction:

Afterwards Squealer made a round of the farm and set the animals' minds at rest. He assured them that the resolution against engaging in trade and using money had never been passed, or even suggested. It was pure imagination, probably traceable in the beginning to lies circulated by Snowball. A few animals still felt faintly doubtful, but Squealer asked them shrewdly, 'Are you certain that this is not something that you have dreamed, comrades? Have you any record of such a resolution? Is it written down anywhere?' And since it was certainly true that nothing of the kind existed in writing, the animals were satisfied that they had been mistaken (ORWELL, 1984, p. 26).

However, we still keep being deceived by cheap propaganda today. The "Squealers" of our times also manipulate our so-called democratic neoliberal activities to express the meanings they want us to believe in. And this is pretty much how *Oryx & Crake's* narrative is developed as a critique against the idea that just because we live in a right-wing environment we are devoid of this sort of control. Atwood's view on profiteering enterprises completely destitute of ethical or moral preoccupations offers the reader a chance to ponder upon how dystopian or realistic her perspective is:

he [Snowman] skipped the gym he'd develop flab overnight, where none was before. His energy level was sinking, and he had to watch his Joltbar intake: too many steroids could shrink your dick, and though it said on the package that this problem had been fixed [...], he'd written enough package copy not to believe this" (ATWOOD, 2003, p. 252).

This does not sound as a dystopian possibility to me at all. Western society is actually growing up knowledgeable about the fact that television commercials, like Squealer's information and *Oryx & Crake* package copies, do not convey any truthful information; we know that we cannot believe in how a brand describes its products, in how the news broadcast events, and in what politicians promise in their campaigns since everything is unconditionally permeated by endless lies.

Nevertheless, that does not bother us whatsoever, and if it does it is not enough for us to feel the need for subverting such a system, which has become second nature in our civilization. The problem with neoliberal enterprises is that they are not put forward as the best scheme for societal progress, but as the only possible one. I finish this essay with a question that Atwood herself has asked and to which I am afraid that providing a positive answer would be not optimistic but childishly naive: "What if we continue down the road we're already

on? How slippery is the slope? What are our saving graces? Who's got the will to stop us?" (ATWOOD, 2003, p. 286).

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