

# The “Greening” of Postmodern Discourse in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* and Graham Swift’s *Waterland*

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For Klaus Stierstorfer, the key question for our times is whether postmodernist writers are ‘able to move beyond a negotiation of life without footholds, so to speak, towards some kind of newly-constituted solidity, and hence leading ‘beyond’ most scholars concepts of postmodernism’ (216). In this essay, I will argue that the groundlessness associated with postmodernism is not as entrenched within its discourse as it may appear. Graham Swift’s *Waterland* (1992) and Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* (2003) are two postmodernist works that present a more rooted ideology through their direct engagement with green issues. These seemingly disparate novels share an ecopostmodernist platform that raises questions about the human relationship with nature, while conforming to many of the aesthetic values of postmodernism. Both works actively interrogate the boundaries between human/animal/machine and nature/civilisation, revealing environmentally aware perspectives informed by a postmodern sensibility. In their encompassing of environmental and ecological perspectives, both novels critique elements of postmodernity and contemporary consumer capitalism, and raise serious questions about our relationship to the world around us. In defiance of traditional notions of postmodernism, Atwood’s and Swift’s novels exemplify an engagement with the natural world and present conceptions of reality that do not accept disengagement or detachment as a suitable response to the perceived ‘postmodernist cataclysms threatening the grounds of human existence’ (Stierstorfer 234).

There are elements of postmodern discourse that are heavily critiqued for a lack of environmental responsibility. The sense of disconnection at the heart of deconstructive postmodernism is arguably antithetical to an ecological perspective, as through that disconnection humanity is removed from its environment. The groundlessness of this type of postmodernism is

expressed in Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*, wherein he describes the four stages through which the sign becomes increasingly removed from the object it signifies:

- (1) It is the reflection of a basic reality.
- (2) It masks and perverts a basic reality.
- (3) It masks the absence of a basic reality
- (4) It bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum (152-53).

An example of this is seen in the way in which the traditional understanding of language as intimately connected to the reality it describes breaks down in postmodern discourse. For realist ecocritics (Glen A. Love, Lawrence Buell, Terry Gifford, Laurence Coupe), the groundlessness of postmodernism is to be condemned as at best disconnected from green issues, and at worst anti-environmentalist. Often with little to no stake in the realism of the phenomenal world, postmodernist literature isn't as conducive to ecocritical readings as the poetry of the Romantics, or the plays of Shakespeare, but is it fair that it should be dismissed entirely out of hand by ecocritics?

An early proponent of theories of 'ecocentric postmodernism', Serpil Oppermann is among those who are critical of what Dora Phillips calls 'a realist variety of ecocriticism' (135), which bases itself on the idea that language can (and should) represent "reality": in Oppermann's words, this is an approach that, 'mistakes words for things' ("Theorizing Ecocriticism" 110). In her defence of postmodern discourse as a subject for ecocritical study, Oppermann asserts, 'it is wrong to reduce postmodernism to one defining position because postmodern discourse itself rests on conflicting positions of different theoretical discussions' ("Ecocentric Postmodern Theory" 20). In recognising the diversity of postmodernism, Oppermann opens the door to consider those postmodernist texts that do possess an amount of ecological vision. Not only does Oppermann recognise that postmodernism in literature covers many different narratives, approaches, and preoccupations, but she also goes some way to reclaiming the kind of deconstructive postmodernism that comes in for

the harshest criticism. Oppermann states, 'Postmodernism does not dismantle the structure of our world, but it successfully demonstrates how it has already been dismantled by our present discursive formations behind which lies the widespread tendency to fragment the world, to disconnect and to disorient human culture from nature' ("Ecocentric Postmodern Theory" 22). Oppermann's argument, then, is that postmodernism, including deconstructive postmodernism, actively exposes, rather than initiates or complies with, the emptiness of today's social and political practices. As such, it can be well placed to engage in environmentalist discourse.

Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and Graham Swift's *Waterland* are two postmodernist works that, in their own way, each deal with green issues. While Atwood's novel is more obviously environmentalist, Swift's novel also reaches towards questions of humanity's relationship with nature, both on a personal and on a societal level. *Waterland* follows a history teacher and former fen dweller as he explores his past and meditates on his role in modern society through frequent metaphors of land reclamation and the perpetual pushing back and forth between land and water. Pamela Cooper reads Graham Swift's novel through deconstructive discourse. She finds that the 'purposive orchestration of land and water' (380) in the novel highlights the artificiality of nature, confusing essentialising categories and thereby admitting nature into the realm of discourse. Cooper's perspective explicitly speaks to a 'greening' of postmodern discourse in *Waterland* wherein nature is shown to no longer be 'untouched by the artificial, available to interpretation but somehow outside of discourse' (397). Cooper's analysis, however, would reduce representations of nature in Swift's novel to the level of discourse. For Cooper, the land in *Waterland* is presented as 'a sort of miniature simulacrum: a tense impersonation of the "natural world" at a levitated remove from itself, a performance of a performance within a performance' (376). This view is substantiated in the text through the descriptions of the Fens: 'And what are the Fens, which so imitate in their levelness the natural disposition of water, but a landscape which, of all landscapes, most approximates to

Nothing? Every Fenman secretly concedes this; every Fenman suffers now and then the illusion that the land he walks over is floating...’ (13). This description, however, does not go quite so far as to constitute the ‘effective removal of the ground of the natural—the land—to the floating realms of hyperreality and simulation’ (379) as Cooper would suggest, but rather establishes the postmodernist dilemma of uncertain ground as a point of discussion in the text. That this sense of simulation, or hyperreality, is an illusion suffered ‘now and then’ is suggestive of a problematic state rather than an accepted ontology.

Margaret Atwood’s work has long been concerned with environmental issues<sup>1</sup>, and her novel *Oryx and Crake* continues this preoccupation. It follows the story of a potentially lone human survivor of a catastrophe, as he watches over a group of genetically engineered humans, known after their creator as Crakers. Like *Waterland*, this novel critiques as well as represents a postmodernist sense of remove between the real and the imagined through the type society her novel portrays, a society described by Coral Ann Howells as ‘a decadent postmodern culture described by Jean Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulations*, which “threatens the difference between “true” and “false”, between ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’ by undermining the foundations of referential reality’ (176). As with Swift’s novel, there is a sense of discomfort surrounding these elements of simulation. Sitting in the Paradise Lounge with its ‘(fake palm trees, canned music, real Campari, real soda)’ (356), Jimmy is faced with a meal of ‘(melon, prosciutto, a French Brie with a label that appeared authentic)’ (360). The use of parenthesis indicates Jimmy’s discomfort with the normalisation of fakes. Jimmy’s asides show that the issue of what is real and what is not is not something that gets discussed, and that as a result, he feels alone in his unease.

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<sup>1</sup> Atwood’s environmentalism can be traced through both her fiction and her non-fiction works. From her early novel *Surfacing* (1979), through much of her poetry, including the collections *Interlunar* (1984) and *Morning in the Burned House* (1995), and in lectures such as “Scientific Romancing: The Kesterton Lecture”, which was given at Carleton University in January 2004.

Following the disaster, the narrative world in *Oryx and Crake* gives way to what is both a post-apocalyptic landscape, and, especially for the Crakers, a paradise: ‘after everything that’s happened, how can the world still be so beautiful? Because it is’ (429). Jimmy’s reaction to his environment, its beauty, and the beauty he sees in the Crakers and their way of life is a central part of Atwood’s resistance to the sterility of postmodernism. Importantly, this beauty is not a phenomenon created through apocalypse. Atwood does not condone Crake’s efforts to rid the world of humanity and in so doing start again, but rather allows Jimmy’s perspective to find beauty in his surroundings. It is ‘still so beautiful’ after the destruction of humanity, not made beautiful by it. The sense of beauty here comes from Jimmy’s aesthetic faculties, from his way of seeing the world, rather than from the objective reality or the pure science of Crake’s vision. As Shannon Hengen observes, Atwood, ‘reminds us of the importance of the imagination and so of the arts as companions to science. To separate them, or to ignore and degrade the arts altogether, is to threaten our very being as human’ (75). The importance of the arts is further underlined in the novel through the narrative sympathy for the students at The Martha Graham Academy, and the framing of storytelling as a means of salvation.

The Martha Graham Academy, ‘set up by a clutch of now-dead rich liberal bleeding hearts from New York as an Arts and Humanities college’ (219), accommodates courses such as ‘Applied Rhetoric, Medical Ethics and Terminology, Applied Semantics, Relativistics and Advanced Mischaracterisation, Comparative Cultural Psychology, and the rest’ (221). The ominous side-lining of medical ethics with ‘the rest’, the homogenised lump that used to be the humanities, allows for the unchecked advancement of genetic research, and Crake’s ultimately fatal experiments. This devaluation of the arts and humanities creates a world where language has no use other than ‘window- dressing [...] decorating the cold, hard, numerical real world in flossy 2-D verbiage’ (221). An all but meaningless world in which the disconnect between Signifier and Signified appears to be a

permanent and irreversible one, where language, without humanity, has lost its ability to evoke meaning: “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’ (78). The disappearance of meaning in language and creativity is lamented in Atwood’s text. The Crakers display a capacity for symbolic thought and a desire for knowledge of the world around them in spite of Crake’s intentions: “You don’t get it,’ said Crake, in his you-are-a-moron voice. “That stuff’s been edited out.” “Well, actually, they did ask,” said Oryx. “Today they asked who made them”” (366). This innate curiosity suggests that language, symbolism and creative thought are essential human characteristics. To deny meaning to language, therefore, is to deny human nature.

Atwood and Swift present nature as both environment and as ecosystem within their texts. Nature as environment is positioned in the background, outside of the self, whereas nature viewed as ecosystemic involves the individual in a network of connections between human and non-human, animal and plant. The monist/dualist dichotomy in philosophy in some ways reflects the differences in attitude between viewing nature as ecosystemic and viewing nature as environment. The monist view, when applied to an environmental context, perceives the single unity of nature. The dualist perspective, in contrast, invokes Descartes’ mind/body dualism to describe the separation between the individual and the natural world. In Atwood’s novel, Crake exemplifies the monist perspective, believing that, ‘all the ways in which we differ from other species are matters of degree, which can be all the better illuminated by seeing them as gradations within an essential sameness of being’ (Soper 49-50). For Crake, everything is natural: “I don’t believe in Nature either,” said Crake. “Or not with a capital N”” (242). Crake’s view therefore is one of ‘deterministic naturalism.’ As Kate Soper states, ‘Such a view would have us regard human culture as itself no less a part of nature than the culture of other species, the generation of nuclear-power or rock-music coming just as naturally

to us as the creation of the spider-web to the spider or nectar-gathering to the bee' (59). Crake's experiments with gene splicing and bioengineering are to him, therefore, part of the natural course, "If you could tell they were fake," said Crake, "it was a bad job. These butterflies fly, they mate, they lay eggs, caterpillars come out'" (236). As J. Brooks Bouson has noted, 'Crake's words reflect the "postmodern" scientific mindset that openly flouts the "laws" of nature posited by modern science and works to collapse boundaries among species' (145). This perspective is not concerned with the environment in its natural sense: nature can be bioengineered. The explorative rather than didactic nature of Atwood's novel allows for a simultaneous criticism of the dualist, environmental perspective, 'There had been something willed about it though, [Jimmy's] ignorance. Or not willed, exactly: structured. He'd grown up in walled spaces, and then he had become one. He had shut things out' (216). In a revelation resonant with our own times, the ignorance engendered by a strictly environmental, dualistic world-view is what allows Crake's destructive plans to come to fruition.

In *Waterland*, a dualist perspective pervades, 'Only nature knows neither memory nor history' (82). The natural world, then, inhabits time in a purely organic way with no desire to narrate or comprehend in the way that humans, 'the storytelling animal' (47) do. This separation between nature and culture/civilisation in the novel is not presented as an immovable divide, however, as the categories themselves become confused in a postmodernist blurring of boundaries. This is shown in the novel through the subject of History itself, which for Crick, inhabits both worlds. There is an 'artificial' and a 'natural' history that are inextricably linked: 'There are times when we have to disentangle history from fairy-tale. There are times (they come round really quite often) when good dry textbook history takes a plunge into swamps of myth and has to be retrieved with empirical fishing lines' (86). The 'good, dry, textbook history' purports to be an 'accredited sub-science' that constructs its narratives on the 'solid ground' of 'facts' (64). Crick mocks such a view of history and prefers the 'old swamps of myth' that never pretend to arrive at objective truth. He believes that our

imagination ought to have the freedom 'to find whatever meaning we like in history' (106). This latter kind of history is referred to as 'natural history', while the kind which has pretensions to objectivity is referred to as 'artificial history' (155-56). In *Waterland*, therefore, History is itself as much a part of nature as of culture. Lawrence Buell argues that an environmentally oriented work is one in which 'the nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history' (Garrard 53); by this definition, Graham Swift's *Waterland*, through its representation of History, can certainly be seen as such a work.

Both *Oryx and Crake* and *Waterland* work to destabilise any perceived boundaries within their narratives. In *Waterland*, the Fens themselves, as a place where there is a constant oscillation between land and water, demonstrate, 'a blurring together at the very heart of separation; they locate the collapsing of boundaries at the precise point of primeval splitting, where difference and otherness emerge' (Cooper 380). This blurring of boundaries is further evidenced in the relationships between human and nature. Kate Soper asks, 'is there a rigid and theoretically unbridgeable divide between the 'cultural' and the 'natural', or is the distinction between humanity and animality . . . a matter of degree rather than a difference of kind?' (42). In *Waterland*, Dick Crick is presented as a liminal figure in many ways; he is described variously as a 'potato-head' (27), a 'fish of a man' (390) and as 'a sort of machine' (38). The many states of being associated with the character of Dick would suggest not only an encapsulation of both human and animal, but also a disturbance of boundaries between the organic and the inorganic. Dick's descriptors are paralleled in *Oryx and Crake* in the character of Jimmy, 'apelike man or manlike ape' (8), and the uncertain nature of the Crakers, "'Are they robots or what?'" (355). The merging of these various states of being is indicative of an ecosystemic representation of humanity's relationship to nature, as according to deep ecologist Warwick Fox, 'To the extent that we perceive boundaries, we fall short of an ecological consciousness' (196).

Perhaps in opposition to the blurred boundaries between human/animal and human/machine in these works, there is also a level of disconnect between humanity and its natural environment present in both novels. Harold Fromm has stated, 'Nature, whose effects on man were formerly *immediate*, is now *mediated* by technology so that it appears that technology and not Nature is actually responsible for everything' (43). The mediation of reality through technology is an idea explored extensively in Atwood's novel, 'The whole thing seemed more like a movie' (399). The ignorant destructiveness of biotechnology is underpinned by Jimmy and Crake's moral ignorance when surfing the internet for the most sordid and gruesome websites with no consideration for the potential realities behind them. As Gina Wisker has observed: 'Atwood indicts a blinkered removal from moral engagement evidenced in the hubristic game 'Extinctathon', which enacts in virtual play space the death of millions of species, matched by their actual deaths in the world outside the Compound' (152-3). There is a sense in this mediated society that actions are without consequences. In *Waterland*, this same removal is evidenced in Crick's move from the Fens to Greenwich, the seat of mechanised time, 'the line of zero longitude' (146). It is here, at this remove that Mary steals a baby for her own, 'I got him from Safeways. I got him from Safeways in Lewisham' (269). This key event in the novel signifies the commodification of nature in a consumer driven society. Mary's assertion that she 'got' the baby from the supermarket as if it were just another product is a comment that strikes to the very heart of life in the postmodern, consumer-capitalist age.

Through discussions of fertility and reproduction, both Atwood and Swift demonstrate the sterility of deconstructive postmodernism. In *Waterland*, Swift writes, 'women are equipped with a miniature model of reality: an empty but fillable vessel. A vessel in which much can be made to happen, and to issue in consequence. In which dramas can be brewed, things can be hatched out of nothing' (42). The link made between reality and fertility and the notion that 'things can be hatched out of nothing' would suggest that postmodern reality is capable of producing creativity, that reality

itself is not infertile. In discussions of sexuality and reproduction within the text, however, the technology and consumerism of postmodernity are presented as sterile breeding grounds: 'which is why he talks, for solace, to his motor-bike, more than he talks to any living thing. And why it has been said (and Freddie Parr is one of the chief rumour-mongers) that Dick is so fond of his motor-bike that he sometimes rides to secluded spots, gets down with it on the grass and...' (38). The relationship Dick Crick has with his motor-bike represents 'the transfer of sexual functioning from the "organic" to the mechanical' (Cooper 385), a state which cannot produce any furtherance of being. As Pamela Cooper observes, 'sexualized and feminized but inorganic, the bike effectively replaces the cycles of human generativity with the utilitarian repetitiveness of mass production' (388).

Similarly, Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* presents us with Blysspluss, a pill that protects against sexually transmitted diseases, provides unlimited libido, sexual prowess, a general sense of energy and well-being and prolonged youth' (346). However, 'there would be a fourth that would not be advertised. The Blysspluss pill would also act as a sure-fire one-time-does-it-all birth-control pill' (347). Crake's plans for population control provides the ultimate in sexual freedom while nullifying the natural purpose: procreation. This pill operates symbolically as a criticism of the surface without depth, pleasure without purpose, associated with deconstructive postmodernism. Significantly, it is also this pill that contains within it the haemorrhagic that would put an end to the destructive humanity Crake perceives in the world. In contrast to a destructive humanity, at odds with their environment, the Crakers' life cycle has been engineered for the benefit of the environment: 'they're programmed to drop dead at age thirty' (356). The 'programming' of the Crakers highlights their artificiality, though as biological, organic creatures, they, unlike the devastated human world, can reproduce. Beyond Crake's mechanical view of his creations, they are arguably natural and, importantly, untainted by the products of postmodernity, the 'things from before' (7). Furthermore,

the potential for creativity and symbolic thought evidenced in their desire for stories and their creation of the effigy of Snowman/Jimmy is linked to their biological fertility, suggesting a correlation between cultural sterility and biological sterility.

Deconstructive postmodernism has often been allied with a sense of meaninglessness and a preoccupation with apocalyptic visions. This aspect of the discourse can be seen in *Oryx and Crake* and *Waterland* through biological and nuclear threat respectively. In *Waterland*, Crick's student, Price, has no sense of a future for himself or his generation. He is part of a society with his peers, 'The Holocaust Club- the anti- Armageddon League. We haven't decided on a name yet' (236), which speaks to the disaffection engendered in a groundless society. Further, Crick's position as a history teacher is under constant threat within the novel, as he has to justify the value of the subject to the school. The role of history in a postmodern society is as uncertain as the sense of reality it would attempt to draw on; Fredric Jameson has posited,

... [T]he disappearance of a sense of history, the way in which our entire contemporary social system has little by little begun to lose its capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in a perpetual present and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions of the kind which earlier social formations have had in one way or another to preserve (179).

Deconstructive postmodernism is a product of historic detachment and a sense of nothingness. Swift's *Waterland*, however, posits a choice between something and nothing. The sense of apocalypse experienced by Price and his peers is contextualised as 'the old, old feeling, that everything might amount to nothing' (269). *Waterland* re-establishes connection to history and the world through the stories Crick tells and the curiosity that is at the centre of these formulations: it is curiosity that 'weds us to the world' (206). The loss of a sense of history is also felt in *Oryx and Crake* with Jimmy's apparent status as the last human on the planet. Yet his 'backward-pointing footprints' as the

‘Abominable Snowman’ (8) and the stories he tells to the Crakers reveal a connection to his past and the histories and myths of humanity. This is in contrast to the world before Crake’s plan unfolded, wherein Jimmy’s walled up, closed off existence succumbs to the ‘perpetual present’ of a postmodern society. Seemingly alone in the world, Jimmy loses his sense of mechanical time, his stopped watch symbolising a break from culturally imposed time structures and a return to an all-encompassing natural time, which, it can be argued, allows Jimmy to reclaim his own humanity, just as humanity itself seems to have ended. In both of these novels, then, the sense of the loss of history is present in the narrative, though it doesn’t take over. For both writers, stories keep history alive, and provide hope for the future.

Both novels also question traditional notions of progress. In *Waterland*, the Fens in their emptiness are attributed with the possibilities of ‘an Idea, a drawing-board for your plans’ (17), a possibility that is seen to have appealed to generations of ambitious men. This ambition and solid belief in progress is associated with the Atkinson family, who believe that what is important is not history, but the science and technology by which they can control reality (16). They believe in equipping people with practical, relevant knowledge since they are firmly wedded to the ‘Idea of Revolutionary Progress’ (69). This enterprising nature is also apparent in the character of Crake in *Oryx and Crake*, ‘He kept saying “Wave of the future,” which got irritating after the third time’ (236). In both novels these attempts towards scientific progress lead to disaster: the tragedies of the Atkinson family history in *Waterland* and the seeming end of humanity in *Oryx and Crake*. For Tom Crick, ‘it’s progress if you can stop the world from slipping away’ (253). He argues that while the chaos of reality can never be mastered by a complete explanation, history can at least teach us ‘a knowledge of the limits of our power to explain’ (81). This viewpoint evidences a fatalistic acceptance that progress is always illusory and a realisation that ‘the wide world is sinking’ and ‘drowning in mud’ (15). The silt of the fens ‘demolishes as it builds; which is simultaneous accretion

and erosion; neither progress nor decay' (7). Progress may be an illusion, but the movements and cycles of life continue all the same. As Ronald McKinney observes, Swift 'uses the ecological metaphor of land reclamation as its central device for showing how postmodern praxis can avoid both mindless optimism and hopeless despair (821).

Narrative and stories take centre stage in *Waterland* as a way of dealing with the so-called crises of postmodernity. Tom Crick defines the human person as 'the story-telling animal' who has to tell stories, since 'as long as there's a story, it's all right' (47). As Klaus Stierstorfer states, stories, 'constitute a concerted effort to (re-)establish meaning, primarily for Crick's life, but increasingly with wider implications as readers discover that very elementary human concerns are at issue' (225). The reversion to the traditional fairy tale mode in broaching difficult topics, 'once upon a time there was a father who fell in love with his daughter' (226), demonstrates Crick's use of story-telling to combat the difficult realities of the 'knife blade called Now' (27). As opposed to the Atkinson's attempts towards scientific, technological progress, Crick's story-telling can be seen as a literal progression forward: 'In theory therefore, solid ground is after all just possible, albeit in a moment out of time and in the narrative process' (227). The importance of narrative to Jimmy's survival in *Oryx and Crake* is similarly paramount. Jimmy's interaction with the Crakers is based on his construction of their reality through narrating a story of their origins and offering explanations for the world they see around them, 'A story is what they want, in exchange for every slaughtered fish. Well, I owe them, Snowman thinks. God of Bullshit, fail me not' (117-118). As Gina Wisker notes, 'Jimmy seems to stay alive through creating and recreating his own history and his current world. He is a basic storytelling man' (135). His stories literally keep him alive through the food he receives from the Crakers, and also work to maintain his sense of reality: 'The Abominable Snowman—existing and not existing, flickering at the edges of blizzards, apelike man or manlike ape, stealthy, elusive, known only through rumours and through its backward- pointing footprints' (8). The

incorporation of mythology into his self-description demonstrates Jimmy's need to narrate himself into being in this new world. The power of storytelling in both of these narratives is the single most effective weapon against any sense of the groundlessness we associate with postmodernity, and with postmodernist texts.

In *Waterland* and *Oryx and Crake*, Graham Swift and Margaret Atwood both make recourse to narrative and artistic creativity as a redemptive and natural way of being in the world. Wendy Wheeler has suggested, '[...] the *outcome* of postmodernity, seen as the attempt to live with loss and uncertainty as a permanent condition, might be the discovery or invention of ways of being in the world which move beyond the harsh individualism of utilitarian modernity, and towards a different way of accounting for and valuing human needs' (65). While boundaries and states of being are problematised in both novels, the naturalness of humanity's capacity for story-telling is emphasised strongly in both. Atwood's and Swift's novels evidence a 'greening' of postmodern discourse through their attempts to reconnect with the Earth through narrative. As Klaus Stierstorfer observes, 'Discourses regularly breed their counter-discourses within them, new beginnings leading beyond anything reasonably adaptable to a postmodernist concept may appear in the midst of postmodernist negotiations (232). Through their critiques of deconstructive postmodernism and their interrogations of postmodernity as a social condition, Atwood and Swift attempt to counter some of the popularised notions of postmodern discourse. Their novels represent a different kind of postmodernism that attempts to reconnect with the Earth, and strives for grounding rather than accepting immateriality and disconnection.

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