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Silenced Bodies, Profitable Flesh: A Feminist Response to Child Sexual Exploitation Through Oryx's Reimagined Voice

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This paper examines child sexual exploitation through a feminist lens, interweaving an analysis of Japan's JK (joshi kosei) business with a reimagined monologue based on Margaret Atwood's character Oryx. Through creative exposition, the author explores how family structures simultaneously perpetuate and protect against exploitation. The work identifies critical gaps in Japanese legislation that enable child exploitation despite surface-level reforms, revealing how patriarchal structures commodify bodies typically protected within family units. The author argues that pornography and prostitution function as forms of "sexual cannibalism" that dehumanize bodies into consumable parts. By examining Oryx's fictional journey alongside real-world exploitation in Japan, the article advocates for educational initiatives, strengthened family support systems, and ethical consumer choices to restore the protective function of family and combat sexual exploitation.

Introduction

When families fail to protect, who protects the children? This question, which drives my analysis, emerged from my contribution to Our Monologues, a charitable event organized by V-Day Osaka and Ikunogakuen that aimed to amplify “the voices of people of marginalized genders, including women, non-binary folks, and trans folks from a variety of backgrounds and experiences” to advance feminist consciousness and combat gender-based violence in Japan (“Our Monologues”).¹ Through examining both real-world exploitation and fictional representation, I argue that



¹ V-Day is an organization that promotes creative events to raise awareness, funds, and encourage existing anti-violence organizations. Representing a global activist movement to end violence against women and the planet, V-Day believes that “when art and activism come together, they have the power to transform systems and change culture” (“About V-Day”). Ikunogakuen is a non-profit/governmental organization that offers services to survivors of domestic violence or other forms of abuse. They provide emergency shelter and telephone counselling to foreign residents and LGBTQ communities (“Mission”).

family structures, rather than consistently providing protection, often create the very conditions that enable child sexual exploitation while simultaneously offering the cultural frameworks necessary for resistance.

This analysis unfolds through four interconnected elements that reveal how patriarchal systems exploit familial structures to commodify vulnerable bodies. First, I examine contemporary child trafficking for sexual exploitation in Japan,² where legislative gaps and cultural complicity create markets for abuse while undermining family protective authority. Second, the study explores how Japan's *JK* (*joshi kosei* or high school girls) business weaponises the traditional familial term *oniisan* (big brother) to normalize predatory relationships through cultural manipulation and looking American familial trafficking statistics. Third, I provide a feminist reading of Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), analysing how the fictional character Oryx's trafficking experience illuminates the systematic breakdown of protective family structures and their replacement with commodification systems. Finally, the article presents a creative reimagining of Oryx's voice through a monologue set to the rhythm of the song "Zombie" by The Cranberries, demonstrating how artistic expression can channel collective resistance against exploitation.

The central thesis threading through this analysis reveals a devastating paradox that challenges foundational assumptions about protective institutions. While families have been theorised across cultures as protective units – from Talcott Parson's functionalist model positioning of the nuclear family as society's primary socialisation and protection mechanism to anthropological frameworks documenting kinship systems as survival networks that shield vulnerable members from external threats (Foote 41; Massey) – the reality proves far more complex. Cultural traditions similarly claim protective functions through established hierarchies and behavioural codes designed to safeguard community members, while state systems justify their authority through promises of citizen protection. Yet, research on familial trafficking demonstrates that "exploitation is often normalised and accepted within the family culture, sometimes spanning generations" ("Navigating the Unique Complexities in Familial Trafficking").

² According to *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, "child" refers to "anyone below 18 years of age" ("Article I (Definition of the Child)").

What makes this analysis distinct from existing scholarship is its interdisciplinary methodology, which fuses literary studies, cultural analysis, and creative practice to reveal patterns of exploitation across seemingly disparate contexts. While previous studies have examined familial trafficking in Japan, American domestic trafficking, or Atwood's fiction in isolation, this paper traces identical mechanisms from Oryx's fictional separation from protective family bonds to Japan's appropriation of familial honorifics in commercial sexual transactions to documented US American trafficking statistics. The inclusion of Atwood's fiction serves a crucial analytical function: by examining how these documented real-world patterns reach their logical extreme in *Oryx and Crake*, it becomes clear how the mechanisms already operate in contemporary contexts. Furthermore, the creative reimagining of Oryx's voice through a protest song demonstrates how artistic expression can both channel collective resistance and give voice to experiences that traditional academic discourse often fails to capture. This tripartite approach reveals something that purely empirical or purely textual studies miss: the failure of protective familial functions is not incidental but structural, requiring not just policy reform but fundamental transformation of the patriarchal frameworks that enable such systematic betrayal of trust.

Sexual Exploitation of Minors in Japan: Behind the Facade of Safety

As Japan prepared for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, the government faced mounting pressure to address child prostitution and pornography to maintain its reputation as one of the world's safest countries (Nagata). Yet, despite a 2014 legislation criminalizing child pornography and 2019 regulations in areas like Kabukicho,³ the law's narrow scope continues to enable widespread abuse (Campbell; Reith-Banks). The statistics reveal the scale of this institutional failure. The law permits continued production and distribution of *chaku ero* – sexually suggestive photographs of elementary school girls aged seven to twelve (Boer-Buquicchio) – alongside Lolita-themed comics and anime depicting child sexual abuse (Campbell). While anti-prostitution laws exist on paper, they fail to prevent commercial sexual

³ "In Kabukicho, anyone (women) walking around is approached by people trying to recruit them for sexual activities. And yet there is no effective measure in place to address this situation", notes Kazuna Kanajiri, who belongs to a nonprofit organization called Paps that offers support to victims of sexual violence (qtd. in Keneko).

exploitation in establishments including “soaplands” (bathhouses offering sexual services), “fashion health shops” (massage parlours with sexual services), and “image clubs” (fantasy role-play venues) – euphemistic terms that sanitize their actual function (Reith-Banks).

Most critically, Japanese law primarily recognises only foreign victims of sex trafficking, ignoring domestic cases documented by organisations like Lighthouse and Colabo.⁴ Official statistics reported just forty-seven trafficking cases – including twenty-eight adults and nineteen children – in 2019, while experts estimate actual numbers reach “tens of thousands” (*Trafficking in Persons Report* 283; Ryu 12). Inadequate social services compound this legislative blind spot. For instance, only 3,250 child welfare workers were available to address 122,578 reported cases of child abuse in 2019, with none specialising in sex trafficking recovery (Campbell). Vulnerable children become trapped in cycles of exploitation and victims often abandon education and employment, with many suffering from long-term psychological trauma or death by suicide (Campbell).⁵

This systemic failure creates perfect conditions for exploitation but it does not operate in a cultural vacuum. These legislative gaps reflect Japan’s patriarchal structure and its troubling acceptance of paedophilic desires. As Professor Kazue Muta of Osaka University observes:

Japan is a patriarchal society, and it has this mentality that the young and seemingly innocent are valuable and more alluring. However, many Japanese consider *enjo kosai* and JK business deviant, yet place the blame on girls. Many people see it as a problem with girls, not with men. (qtd. in Ryu 7)

Derived from *joshi-kosei*, meaning high school girls in Japanese, *JK* business refers to the practice of compensated dating with adolescent schoolgirls. It is a catch-all for cafés, shops,

⁴ Founded by Shihoko Fujiwara, Lighthouse is an organisation working to “eliminate the issue of human trafficking, especially sex trafficking, in Japan” (“Who We Are”). The organisation offers services such as consultations, awareness campaigns and seminars while, at the same time, pushing the government to act, as “there are currently no laws against human trafficking in Japan” (“Who We Are”). Colabo is an NGO that aims to create a society in which “girls in trouble do not find themselves being exploited or exposed to violence”. Apart from providing shelter, food, clothing, and consultations, Yumeno Nito and her team often drive a big pink bus to hotspots in central Tokyo and set up their mobile Tsubomi Café to assist at-risk girls (“What We Do”).

⁵ In addition, prostituted children are at high risk of “infectious disease, pregnancy, mental illness, substance abuse, malnutrition, and violence” (Willis and Levy 1418-9).

and online agencies that provide a range of activities from the not-so-overtly sexual to the overtly sexual (Reith-Banks).⁶ This misplaced blame enables the *JK* business – an industry fetishising adolescent girls and commodifying their bodies – to thrive within a consumer culture that socialises children to pursue “quick money-making mechanisms” (Ryu 5). The *JK* business specifically exploits the transitional space between traditional family obligations and modern consumer identities by targeting adolescents navigating independence from family structures while capitalising on men’s desires to exert patriarchal control outside their own family units.

The scale is staggering: approximately 170,000 junior high and high school girls engage in prostitution annually, while 48.3% of Japanese men report lifetime commercial sex service use (Adelstein; Ghaznavi et al. 9). Despite a 2017 Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly ordinance regulating dating services involving teenage girls,⁷ the industry persists and female adult workers are encouraged to wear school uniforms, “feeding the appetite for the illicit buying of pornography and making real schoolgirls more vulnerable” (Reith-Banks). Problematically, these practices “appear to be socially accepted and tolerated” in Japan (Boer-Buquicchio); as Fujiwara criticizes, “we almost allow men to say: ‘Yeah, I’m attracted to young children, as young as 14, 15’ ” (qtd. in Reith-Banks). As noted in “Sexnomics”, one in ten Japanese men has a Lolita complex, with fifteen percent having viewed child pornography and ten percent owning such material (Adelstein; Campbell). Compared to approximately 1,520 cases in 2014, around 2,470 consultations on sexual abuse of children were reported at child guidance centres in Japan in 2023 (“Number of Consultation on Sexual Abuses of Children”). Nevertheless, the government only reported 577 cases of child prostitution involving at least 503 suspects and 390 victims (“2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Japan”). In this report, the government did not identify most of the children involved in these cases as trafficking victims, resulting in a significant under-identification of victims.

⁶ For instance, men can pay money to chat, hold hands, go for a walk with, or even sleep on the laps of underage schoolgirls (Campbell). Other services include massage treatments, photo-taking sessions and “workshops” in which girls reveal glimpses of their underwear as they sit doing something (Reith-Banks).

⁷ According to *Kyodo News*, the *JK* business operators are obligated to “file a business registration with the Tokyo Metropolitan Public Safety Commissions and make a list of employees to verify their ages”; violators face “penalties of up to one year in prison or a fine of up to 1 million yen” (“Tokyo Ordinance to Regulate Dating Services”).

This cultural tolerance extends beyond Japan's borders through transnational exploitation networks. This operates bidirectionally: victims from Eastern Europe, Russia, South America, and Southeast Asia are trafficked into Japan as entertainers while Japanese offenders travel to Southeast Asian countries like Thailand and the Philippines as sex tourists (Ryu 11). Regarding the former, marriage frequently serves as an exploitation mechanism; marriages between Japanese males and Filipino females surged from 8,397 couples in 2004 to 12,150 in 2006 (qtd. in West). This spike prompted Japan's 2009 Action Plan, designed to combat child sexual exploitation, eliminate child pornography and provide victim assistance in foreign languages ("Consideration of Reports"). As a result, government-identified trafficking victims subsequently decreased from 117 in 2005 to just 17 in 2009. However, Kaoru Aoyama, Associate Professor at the Graduate School of International Studies at Kobe University, emphasises that these figures "are surely not an accurate reflection of the true number of victims, given that out of 100,000 illegal migrants living in Japan in 2009, only 17 victims of trafficking were reported" (West).

Outbound exploitation proves equally concerning. While solid data on Japanese men's involvement in child prostitution in Southeast Asia remains scarce, Thailand alone attracted over 720,000 male Japanese tourists in 2003 (qtd. in Yokota 115), making them the leading international consumers of commercial sex in Southeast Asia. Sociologist Louise Brown's research indicates that most people pursuing underage prostitutes are Asian locals, suggesting Japanese citizens' involvement in purchasing minors for sex (1-3). Against the backdrop of one to ten million children forced into prostitution globally each year (Willis and Levy 1417), these patterns illuminate how exploitation operates across borders. This reality demands an understanding of both the systematic vulnerabilities that trafficking creates and the cultural mechanisms that enable such widespread abuse.

The problem is not just governmental. Attachment theory and child development research position families as the primary protective institution, providing a "secure base" that includes economic security and emotional bonding that motivates safety knowledge transmission (Bowlby 163-4). Yet, as the following analysis reveals, patriarchal family structures often become sites of exploitation rather than protection, creating the very vulnerabilities that traffickers strategically exploit.

No One Can Hurt You Like Family: Familial Linguistic/Emotional Manipulation

The manipulation of family bonds is trafficking's most insidious weapon – one that operates through both the perversion of existing relationships and the strategic exploitation of cultural expectations of familial trust. This dynamic manifests differently across cultural contexts, but its underlying mechanism remains consistent: traffickers weaponise the very relationships and language patterns that children are taught to trust. In Japan, this exploitation operates through deeply embedded cultural language patterns, particularly the honorific family terminology that structures Japanese social relationships.

The traditional Japanese family or *ie* system historically provided clear hierarchical protections based on “patrilineal descent, patriarchal authority, and patrilocal residence” with emphasis placed on “strong filial piety and continuation of the family line” that remains culturally influential despite legal modernisation (Piotrowski et al. 613). This patriarchal foundation proves crucial: by embedding male authority within familial structures, the *ie* system creates linguistic patterns that inherently privilege older men's relationships with younger family members. When these same linguistic patterns extend beyond biological families, they can carry this embodied power imbalance into commercial contexts. The term *oniisan* (big brother) exemplifies this vulnerability. Japanese family terminology operates through complex honorific systems where “younger siblings address older ones by title”, making such address “part of modern Japanese etiquette” and its omission “a serious breach of manners” (“Family”). However, this cultural weight extends beyond biological families. *Oniisan* is commonly used to address older “nonrelatives” in commercial contexts, allowing service industries to invoke familial trust (Duc-Krakov 38). When young people are culturally conditioned to defer to older male “family” figures, predators can systematically weaponise this deference.

In *JK* business, this linguistic exploitation becomes systematic. Men purchase “companionship” from schoolgirls who address them using familial honorifics, transforming commercial sexual transactions into pseudo-familial relationships. As Yuki Ishikawa notes, “the men were like older brothers” who assumed false protective, paternal roles that masked their predatory intentions (“Preying on the Vulnerable”). A survey revealed that over one-third (thirty-six percent) of girls involved in *JK* business had not disclosed their participation to their parents, indicating potentially strained or unsupportive family relationships (Fujiwara

et al. 2016; Ogaki 4). “This lack of a healthy family relationship”, as Mutsumi Ogaki concludes, “left the girls with unhealthy relationships with their peers who encouraged them to engage in ‘JK business’” (4). The linguistic manipulation here serves a dual function: schoolgirls addressing clients as *oniisan* allows men to justify their actions as benevolent guidance rather than commercial (sexual) exploitation while simultaneously normalising and obscuring the transaction’s predatory reality.

This pattern of exploiting familial structures is not limited to Japan but proves central to child sexual exploitation globally. Research on familial trafficking in the United States reveals that “approximately 90% of exploited young children are being trafficked by an adult family member” with victims “most likely to report being coerced through psychological means, as opposed to physical abuse” (“Familial Trafficking Statistics”). This psychological approach proves devastatingly effective because children naturally depend on adult family members for survival and guidance, making them particularly vulnerable when those same adults become predators. The exploitation operates through the systematic corruption of trust relationships, where “trust and loyalty between parents and children can make it easier for traffickers to rationalize and downplay the exploitation” (“What is Familial Trafficking?”). As “family members entrusted with caring for the children are often the ones grooming, manipulating, abusing, and exploiting them”, the abuse becomes “normalized and accepted within the family culture, sometimes spanning generations” (“Navigating the Unique Complexities in Familial Trafficking”). Traffickers can begin “grooming and trafficking the victim at a much earlier age than in other types of trafficking”, weaponising children’s instinctual vulnerability to familial authority from the earliest developmental stages (“No One Can Hurt You Like Family”). This exploitation succeeds precisely because it mimics protective family functions while violating that trust.

Children and teenagers, particularly in East and Southeast Asia, are culturally conditioned to seek love, safety, and guidance from older family figures (Han and Cheung 31). When traffickers, whether actual relatives or those adopting familial roles, exploit this programming, they weaponise these children’s most fundamental survival instincts. The devastating effectiveness of this manipulation emerges clearly when we examine how it operates in fictional contexts that mirror these documented realities. Margaret Atwood’s

Oryx and Crake provides a lens for understanding how these real-world patterns of familial betrayal reach their logical extreme in systematic commodification.

A Feminist Reading of *Oryx and Crake*: Bodies as Contested Territory

Atwood's fiction reveals what happens when the documented patterns of familial manipulation and systematic commodification that we see in contemporary trafficking reach their logical extreme: the complete destruction of protective family structures and their replacement with systems designed to commodify vulnerable bodies. In the post-apocalyptic world of *Oryx and Crake*, traditional family units have dissolved, replaced by corporate structures that utilise familial language while erasing actual kinship bonds. Eight-year-old Southeast Asian Oryx exemplifies this perverse substitution when her poor parents sell her to a man named Uncle En, not her actual uncle but a trafficker who adopts familial titles to mask commercial transactions. Uncle En's operation demonstrates how traffickers systematically exploit both the presence and absence of family bonds. He uses Oryx to sell flowers, attracting and blackmailing paedophiles through her innocent appearance – a strategy that weaponises the very qualities that should invoke protective instincts. After his death, she becomes enslaved in child pornography production, where repeated dehumanization teaches her to view men as mere walking penises: "What did his face look like? Oryx couldn't remember. She could remember the singularity of his penis, but she couldn't remember the singularity of his face" (Atwood 154). False kinship extends through the entire exploitation network; the men who abuse her are euphemistically called "uncles", transforming predators into supposed family members through the same linguistic manipulation occurring in the commercial appropriation of *oniisan* in Japan.

Within this objectifying environment, Oryx develops a pragmatic understanding that everything, including love, has a price:

Of course (said Oryx), having a money value was no substitute for love. Every child should have love. Every person should have it. She herself would rather have had her mother's love... but love was undependable, it came and then it went, so it was good to have a money value, because then at least those who wanted to make a profit from you would make sure you were fed enough and not damaged too much. Also, there were many who

had neither love nor a money value, and having one of these things was better than having nothing. (Atwood 126)

This passage reveals the destructive logic that emerges from the failure of familial protection. Oryx's longing for maternal love represents more than personal need; it exposes the structural collapse that makes exploitation possible. Her mother's love should have been her protection, the barrier between her and predators. Instead, her parents become her first traffickers, initiating the very cycle that replaces genuine family bonds with commercial ones: "In exchange for the child apprentice, he [Uncle En] would give the fathers, or else the widowed mothers, a good price, or what he said was a good price" and "with this money, the mothers who sold their children would be able to give the remaining children a better chance in life" (Atwood 137). This foundational betrayal creates the psychological framework for everything that follows. When family fails in this fundamental way, children must rationalise their abandonment through whatever framework allows for survival. In Oryx's case, this manifests in a capitalist logic that reduces human worth to market value: "So I learned about life...that everything has a price" (Atwood 162). However, Oryx's response to this betrayal reveals both exploitation's deep toll while also demonstrating forms of resistance that operate within such severely constrained circumstances.

The most striking aspect of Oryx's psychological adaptation is her refusal to express anger toward her abusers. Instead, she demonstrates what appears to be remarkable magnanimity. When Uncle En, who profits from her sexual abuse through blackmail, says, "you are a smart girl! I could marry you. Would you like that?" Oryx interprets this as familial affection: "this was as close to love as Oryx could get right then, so she felt happy" (Atwood 155). After his death, she claims "he could have done much worse things to me, and he didn't do them. I cried when I heard he was dead. I cried and cried" (Atwood 159). When Jimmy presses her about potential rape by Jack, the pornographic filmmaker, she reprimands, "why do you want to talk about ugly things? ... We should think only beautiful things, as much as we can. There is so much beautiful in the world if you look around. You are looking only at the dirt under your feet, Jimmy. It's not good for you" (Atwood 168-9). Oryx's reactions function on multiple levels simultaneously. On the surface, they represent genuine adaptation, her optimism makes her "manageable" to abusers while protecting her psyche from complete breakdown, but they also constitute a form of resistance that Jimmy fails to grasp fully. By refusing to be

consumed by victimhood, Oryx maintains agency within impossible circumstances. More significantly, she transforms exploitation into opportunity through strategic exchange: “He taught me to read. To speak English and to read English words. Talking first, then reading... it was a good trade” (Atwood 166). This is not passive acceptance. It is calculated resistance against patriarchal oppression, using the only currency she possesses to gain the tools that will ultimately matter. The full significance of this resistance only becomes clear when we trace its consequences. Oryx’s hard-won education becomes the foundation for her eventual role teaching Crake’s genetically engineered beings, representing a progression from victim to educator that positions her as both casualty and collaborator in humanity’s replacement. In this light, her psychological adaptations reveal themselves as more than survival mechanisms, they become the very qualities that qualify her to nurture humanity’s successors. The question that haunts the text is whether this represents triumph or tragedy, or, perhaps, both simultaneously.

This progression from victim to collaborator underscores the novel’s central feminist insight that women’s bodies become contested territory in patriarchal power struggles. As Madeline Davies argues, violated female bodies “are never neutral sites but are always active articulations of territorial disputes” (58). Oryx’s story represents countless children and women whose social value derives solely from their sexuality, their dependence on male desire reflecting political structures that promote gender inequality. The mechanics of this system are brutally clear in Oryx’s own words: “If they wanted you to smile then you had to smile, if they wanted you to cry, you had to do that too. Whatever it was, you had to do it, and you did it because you were afraid not to... You did what they told you to do to the men who came, and then sometimes those men did things to you” (Atwood 163). But, I would argue, the crucial point of the text is that the child pornography and prostitution that Oryx experiences do not just exploit individual victims – they function as discriminatory practices that institutionalise subordination while eroding the family systems that might otherwise protect vulnerable members. The very structures meant to nurture become the mechanisms of commodification.

Atwood extends this analysis through her central metaphor of sexual cannibalism, which captures how systems of pornography and prostitution consume female bodies. This feminist framework reveals trafficking and sexual exploitation as processes involving the

objectification, commodification, and fragmentation of living female bodies.⁸ Male consumers become the “eaters”, female bodies the “eaten” (Parker 364). This dynamic is embodied in young Oryx’s sad eyes that ultimately inspires Crake’s decision to eradicate human sexuality entirely. The Crackers’ simplified reproduction system represents Crake’s radical response to the very family structures that enabled Oryx’s exploitation. By eliminating family bonds, attachment and the conditions that made her vulnerable, he attempts to solve the problem at its source. Yet this solution raises questions about what we lose when we eliminate the systems that create both love and exploitation. Understanding these recurring patterns of exploitation, from Oryx’s false uncles to Japan’s manipulated honorifics to American familial trafficking, forces us to confront a crucial challenge: how does one give voice to experiences that span cultures and generations while honouring both fictional and real victims of these systematic violations?

Oryx’s Voice Reimagined: A Feminist Resistance

Oryx’s story is not just hers. The mechanisms that destroy her – family breakdown, the selling of young bodies, those poisonous promises of “opportunity” – these same patterns devour children from Bangkok to Tokyo’s *JK* districts to American truck stops. Different languages, same predators, same vulnerabilities. But how does one give voice to something this vast? How does one honour not just Oryx but the thousands of others whose stories will never be heard? The following response, structured around The Cranberries’ “Zombie”, attempts exactly that by channelling Oryx’s voice while speaking for trafficked children everywhere.

[Verse 1]

Another girl is taken

⁸ Atwood’s distinctive feminist approach positions social observation rather than ideological commitment as the foundation for recognising inequality. As she stated in 1983: “Am I a propagandist? No! Am I an observer of society? Yes! And no one who observes society can fail to make observations that are feminist” (qtd. in Jamkhandi 5). This perspective explains why Atwood’s feminist insights emerge naturally from social documentation rather than political stance-taking, making feminism less of an ideology than an inevitable consequence of clear-sighted realism about women’s constrained circumstances.

away from her family.

She crosses the border – arriving at a place
where she does not belong.

[Pre-Chorus]

She is scared, and she cries, holding onto her clothes,
which are made by her mom; the last thing she has.

She is locked in a room, and she must obey
what they told her to do in order to survive.

[Chorus]

And you pay, and you pay,
Monster, monster, for your own pleasure.
What's in your head, in your head?
Monster, monster, monster-er-er, oh

[Verse 2]

Her mom was told that
she would live with a good family,
And one day she would be able to come back
to see her own family.

[Pre-Chorus]

But that was all a lie – her body was abused;
all the time, all the time, she is told to endure.
Every time, when she feels that she's not gonna make it,
in her head, in her head, she thinks of her ma.

[Chorus]

And you pay, and you pay,
Monster, monster, for your own pleasure.

What's in your head, in your head?

Monster, monster, monster-er-er-er

The choice to adapt The Cranberries' "Zombie" is particularly appropriate because it mirrors Atwood's approach to speculative fiction. The original song is a powerful protest addressing violence and tragedy in political conflict, with lyrics expressing deep anger, grief, and frustration over the senseless loss of innocent lives (Song 201). This emotional spectrum provides an ideal structure for channelling the experiences of exploitation, though the connection runs deeper than emotional resonance.

Like Atwood's speculative fiction, this creative work uses documented real-world foundations to illuminate hidden truths through artistic transformation. Atwood famously insists her work is "speculative fiction, not science fiction" (qtd. in "Aliens Have Taken the Place of Angels"). Beginning with documented realities, she then pushes them through creative transformation to reveal what we might otherwise miss. This analysis follows that exact trajectory: starting with concrete statistics about trafficking and exploitation, examining how Atwood's fiction reflects those documented patterns, then channelling that understanding into creative work firmly grounded in reality.

By adapting this protest rhythm, the reimagined song transforms individual suffering into a collective voice, revealing how exploitation systematically targets family bonds through both their destruction and perversion. Oryx's removal from her biological family creates a protective void that traffickers strategically exploit while her clothes "made by her mom" symbolise severed connections that might have shielded her from harm. When she recalls "her ma" during moments of abuse, family memory becomes simultaneously a source of psychological survival and a painful reminder of abandonment.

The false promise that "she would live with a good family" demonstrates how traffickers' adopt familial language and structures while delivering their opposite: exploitation disguised as care. These dynamics mirror the vulnerabilities experienced by minors in Japan's *JK* business, where the breakdown of traditional protection mechanisms similarly leaves young people susceptible to predatory relationships that masquerade as familial care, and the

documented reality that ninety percent of American child trafficking involves family members who exploit their trusted positions to normalise abuse across generations.

In short, this creative analysis does not merely interpret fiction – it uses fiction as a lens to see reality more clearly, exactly as Atwood does. The reimagined monologue channels real-world experiences through artistic expression, creating a space for voices that are often silenced while revealing the universal patterns of familial manipulation that transcend cultural boundaries.

Conclusion

The trajectory from documented contemporary trafficking to fictional representation to creative resistance reveals truths about how patriarchal systems can be used to weaponise the very institutions designed to protect minors. Two critical insights emerge from this analysis that demand recognition and action. First, the breakdown of familial supportive systems creates exploitable vulnerabilities that transcend cultural boundaries. Whether through economic desperation driving Southeast Asian families to sell children, inadequate support systems leaving Japanese teenagers vulnerable to *JK* business exploitation, or the documented reality that most American child trafficking involves family members, the erosion of family integrity consistently creates conditions where predators can operate. This exploitation functions through both the presence and absence of family bonds – whether through Oryx's separation from maternal protection, commercial appropriation of *oniisan* to facilitate pseudo-familial commercial relationships in Japan, or American family members exploiting trusted positions to normalise abuse across generations. The linguistic and emotional manipulation reveals trafficking as fundamentally a crime of relationship betrayal rather than stranger abduction, operating by weaponizing children's instinct to seek safety and guidance from older (family) figures. When families become sites of exploitation, children lose their most fundamental defence against commodification and dehumanisation.

Second, state complicity through legislative gaps and cultural tolerance creates profitable markets for exploitation while systematically undermining the family's protective authority. Japan's approach – identifying hundreds of children in commercial sexual exploitation without adequate trafficking screening, maintaining legal loopholes that permit

chaku ero production, and culturally tolerating practices where approximately half of the male population uses commercial sex services – reflects a governmental failure that extends far beyond individual preference. These statistics reveal a systematic cultural acceptance of practices that commodify young bodies for adult consumption, creating an environment where minors can be easily lured into sex-related activities.

Moving forward requires supporting organisations that provide direct assistance while advocating for comprehensive legal reforms that address domestic trafficking loopholes; implementing education programs teaching consent, healthy relationships, and media literacy from early ages; strengthening family support systems through economic assistance and mental health resources; and making ethical consumer choices that challenge the normalisation of exploitative practices. Yet, beyond these practical measures, this analysis reveals the need for more ethical cultivation through the arts. The painful trajectory from Oryx's childhood victimisation to her role in creating beings designed to eliminate human family structures in *Oryx and Crake* illuminates both the human cost of our consumption choices and the radical transformations necessary to protect vulnerable individuals. While her story emerges from Southeast Asian trafficking and unfolds in a speculative future, the mechanisms of family dissolution, linguistic-emotional manipulation, and systematic commodification operate across geographical and temporal boundaries. The creative reimagining of Oryx's voice through protest song demonstrates how artistic expression can channel collective resistance while honouring individual experiences of exploitation. By recognising trafficking as systematic relationship manipulation rather than isolated criminal acts, we can begin building alternative frameworks based on genuine protection rather than predation.

Ultimately, this analysis reveals that protecting minors requires more than individual family strength or state legislation. It demands fundamental transformation of patriarchal and capitalist structures that enable a systematic betrayal of trust relationships. Only through recognising these realities and taking concrete action to counter them can we move toward restoring the genuinely protective function of the family, whether biological, chosen, or institutional, and creating a world where all bodies are valued beyond their capacity for exploitation. The question that opened this analysis – when families fail to protect, who protects the children? – can only be answered through a collective commitment to building

relationships and institutions based on protection rather than predation, resistance rather than consumption.

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