

Impossible idyll



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael*, Mother Culture is the embodiment of unquestioned influences man is accustomed to living by. Her story tells the Takers that they were intended to lead the world into paradise; however, quite the opposite happened. Because of Mother Culture's bias towards the Takers, the world has been brought into a continuous downfall that cannot be stopped. Mother Culture's favorable view of the Takers also leads to their arrogance and the irony in their story. Mother Culture's story exhibits the irony in the Takers' failed attempt to create paradise.

As the perpetuator of the Taker culture, Mother Culture continuously glorifies the flawed lifestyle that was founded on ignorance and conceit. Ironically, the majority of the Taker society is unaware of Mother Culture's existence, and so, Ishmael enlightens the narrator on whom Mother Culture is. "Mother Culture teaches you that is as it should be" (37). Mother Culture is essentially a guru to the Takers and the spine to their of life. She teaches the Takers who they are and what they are supposed to be. "Except for a few thousand savages scattered here and there, all the peoples of the earth are now enacting this story" (37). Although Mother Culture has stories for both the Takers and Leavers, she feels all of mankind should follow the Takers' story. She considers less civilized beings to be savages, which creates hubris and is the basis for the global downfall the Takers are initiating. Mother Culture profoundly influences the Takers' lifestyle, deifying the outright flaws that the Takers exhibit.

Mother Culture's story of paradise creates a damaging arrogance in the Takers' way of life. Ishmael says, reiterating the Narrator's belief, "The world was made for man to conquer and rule, and under human rule it was

meant to become a paradise” (82). The pedestal on which the Takers are placed creates an arrogance in their way of life. The Takers believe they are the prophesized rulers of the world and that it belongs to them entirely; This leads to an egotistical mindset that is largely responsible for their twisted perception of Mother Culture’s overarching story. The Taker arrogance, fueled by Mother Culture, is not only damaging to the Earth, it is damaging to the Takers’ ability to reverse the harm that they have done.

Mother Culture’s construction of the Taker’s story created their disastrous pride. The Taker’s lifestyle has ironically lead them to believe that they are always right, when in fact they could not be more wrong. “ The story the Takers have been enacting here for the past ten thousand years is not only disastrous for mankind and for the world, it’s fundamentally unhealthy and unsatisfying...” (147). The Takers believe that their actions are beneficial to all of the world, especially themselves, because all they see is the short-term benefit their actions have on their own kind. In reality, the Takers’ actions are subjecting the world to a slow death through power hungry methods of living, “...It’s a megalomaniac fantasy, and enacting it has given the Takers a culture riddled with greed, cruelty, mental illness, crime and drug addiction” (147). The Takers see the ‘ self-benefit’ instead of the destruction upon everything else. Their unjustified pride and ignorant obsession with power leads them to continue their dangerous way of life.

Mother Culture’s story of Taker culture has had a horribly ironic outcome. They pushed the world into a slow, constant decline. As Ishmael tells the narrator, “ You’re captives of a civilizational system that more or less compels you to go on destroying the world in order to live” (25). It is this

captive mindset of the Takers that leads to their impending destruction of the world. The Takers are so encaptured by Mother Culture's story that it leads them to treat the world with gross disvalue and neglect. Ironically enough, the Takers believe this is acting out their own perfection. The Takers do not realize that what they are doing is detrimental to each inhabitant of the world, including themselves. One would not think upon seeing the result the Takers have had on this earth that they were believed to engender a paradise and bring the world into a new, brilliant age.

By personifying culture as a motherly figure, it is presented as another character in the novel. As a 'mother,' culture nurtures, feeds, and gives the Takers the tools they need to understand the society that they are born into. This society and the Taker way of life is largely influenced by Mother Culture. The bias that is presented upon the Takers over other beings is largely responsible for the ironic destruction of the world. The Takers are supported by Mother Culture to create a perfect world as a result of following her story. Instead, the Taker story was misconstrued and ingrained ignorance, arrogance, and pride into their way of life for so long it became a normality. The Takers behindhand realization of their errors is detrimental to the world and all of its inhabitants. With Mother Culture taking charge in the Takers lifestyle, the creation of a paradise is nothing but impossible.