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Oryx and Crake as a Transrealism Discourse

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ABSTRACT

The literature of modern era has witnessed numerous cross-genre fiction experiments including the blending of elements of historical and science fiction. A few examples are the combining of science fiction and horror aspects, detective fiction and dystopian visions, high tech and low living, and science fiction and historical elements. The purpose of this essay is to analyse and explore transrealism, a unique literary form of the twenty-first century that shifts from the traditional genre of realism in literary fiction to science fiction. Whether they are horror or fantasy, the essential elements of what is known as transrealism are tracked in Canadian author Margaret Atwood's 2003 book *Oryx and Crake*.

Keywords: Transrealism; Literary movement; Realism; Fantasy; *Oryx and Crake*.

Author and mathematician Rudy Rucker first used the word transrealism in his 1983 essay "A Transrealist Manifesto," which was published in the *Bulletin of the Science Writers of America*. It refers to a technique of writing that combines realism with science fiction elements. Rucker describes it as "writing about immediate perception in a fantastic way", employing "the tools of fantasy and SF to thicken and intensify realistic fiction". Rucker claims that "transrealism attempts to explore both

the higher reality in which life is rooted as well as immanent reality. According to Broderick's 2000 extension of this idea, transrealism "demotes with heart portraying against its spectacular and disrupting Realistic beings with rich inner lives and emotional histories—some of them robots or aliens—invented settings that somewhat resembled the density of recognizable or real people". Examining specific points is made easier by Broderick's enlarged definition. Through the prism

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of “transrealist discourse,” current writers’ fictional works are examined, however the term’s definition in this research is restricted to an interaction between Dreams and actualities. Combining speculative fiction with scathing psychological truth-telling is transrealism. In these pieces, transrealist discourse examines the difficulties of identity transformation within a larger framework of social marginalization. removal In transrealist discourse, fantasy and realism meet at the intersections to produce discordant feelings, such as fragmentation, and what Broderick refers to as disruptive imagined situations. Despairing, afraid, and alone. Another literary endeavor that challenges perceptions and puts its face up against “consensus reality” is transrealism. The *Handmaid’s Tale*, Margaret Atwood’s dystopian novel that was first published in 1985, is regarded as her literary debut on what is thought to be a new literary movement of the 21st century. Whatever the case, this book undoubtedly headed and hinted at her later literary obsessions, which have been described as the ideal fusion of the fantastical and the real. The author herself considers her book *Oryx and Crake*, which came out nearly two decades after *The Handmaid’s Tale*, to be more of speculative fiction than science fiction. because it avoids discussing impossible scenarios or, in the case of *The Handmaid’s Tale*, something that humans haven’t already accomplished in some other location or era, or time, or for which the technology did not exist. Because “the bioengineered apocalypse [the author] imagines is impeccably researched and sickeningly possible,” the world in which *Oryx and Crake* are situated is “only a few steps ahead of our own” (Brown 2003). Genetic engineering, pigeons, wolvoogs, rakunks, Crakers, and a mad scientist in a contemporary Dr. Frankenstein are all featured in the book as a result of the scientist’s ethical transgression. The primary character of the narrative, Snowman, whose real name is Jimmy, also adopts the animal code name “Thickney” in order to participate in the online game Extinctathon. Jimmy’s childhood friend is Glenn, whose player-name in the game is from “the Red-necked Crake” and whose main goal as being a brilliant geneticist

is to replace homo sapiens, destructive species, with their more peaceful and environmentally friendly version, but eventually turns into a mad scientist whose invention of a wonder drug BlyssPluss causes mass chaos and initiates the process of wiping out the human race. *Oryx*, whose name originates from an African antelope, is a mysterious girl whom Jimmy and Crake recognize from a child pornography site. Crake hires her for sexual services and as a teacher to the superhuman Crakers.

Atwood challenges and blurs the boundaries between humanity and monstrosity by imagining a world in which bioengineered creatures with human DNA begin to outnumber people. Specifically, the bioengineered Crakers eventually transform Snowman into an outcast who resembles the Frankenstein’s monster since they are more adapted to the post-apocalyptic Wasteland. Viruses and transgenic creatures—pigeons with “human neocortex tissue growing in their crafty, wicked heads” and perfectly formed Crakers, from whose brain all human negative impulses are erased—that reproduce themselves and go wild pose a constant threat to Snowman, even after he survives the catastrophe. For the majority of the book, Snowman feels like the sole survivor, thus he can’t help but contemplate what it means to be human. He exhibits both anxiety and hope for human company even though he sees three other survivors and hears human voices on the radio towards the end of the tale. The division that occurs between “word people” (Snowman) and “numbers people” (Crakers) prior to the epidemic ultimately becomes the division that occurs between bioengineered and non-bioengineered entities afterwards. In other words, while Snowman is more “human” in a traditional (organic) sense, he suddenly becomes the “other” and is so dehumanized and eventually given less power than the superhuman Crakers. The human form is challenged by their partial likeness to humans. The “hypothetical wonderkid[s]” whose reproduction technique is more drastic than cloning are created by combining the best genes of all Earthlings. Furthermore, Crackle created them to

be impervious to bad symbology like kingdoms, icons, gods, or money, as well as racism, hierarchy, territoriality, and sexuality. Unlike the Crakers, the Snowman enjoys being an outsider, an intruder, an animal, and even a monster. He finally begins to whistle “like a leper’s bell” to mischievous Crackers to announce his presence (2003, 152). He acknowledges at one point that pigeons, who are rapidly growing hybrids of humans and pigs, might have conquered the world if they had fingers. The Snowman is fading, growing older, and ultimately changing into an animal or perhaps a monster—in contrast to those Instagmic entities who are always evolving or who are flawless.

We shall examine another fascialist aspect in Atwood’s book using the example of Crake the crazy scientist. Specifically, it is set in an enlightened, ultramodern era. In a technocratic age, Oryx and Crake accurately portray humanity as technological slaves. Si Given the close relationship between technocracy and capitalism, a talented scientist Additionally, Crake is a byproduct of capitalist machinery. It is just because the technocratic system values “numbers people” that Crake is able to abuse his position and ultimately bring about the extinction of the human species. Nevertheless, the forces of commerce ingrained in the very fabric of the contemporary technocratic scientific system have corrupted his scientific ideals, his obsessive curiosity, and the Whiz Kid components of his mind. Crake is a transgenic scientist, one of the new breed of butchers who work with both humans and animals. moreover, tampering with life and giving up any life to advance science A few test subjects of Crake’s sexual tonic Blyss Pluss had literally fucked themselves to death, attacked elderly women and domestic animals, and there had been a few regrettable incidents of priapism and split dicks during the trial stage of the product.” When faced with such casualties, Crake does not display any emotional response; instead, he determines that his medication “still nod[s] some tweaking.”

Because the language “had lost its salinity; it had become thin, contingent, slippery, a viscid film on which (Snowman) was sliding around like an eyeball on a plate,” Oryx and Crake also caution against the language’s extinction. Because Crakers are illiterate, there are no readers in the future, hence any reader that Snowman may hope to find is long gone. This is why Snowman’s first attempt to keep a journal fails. He initially considers telling the three survivors he sees at the end of the book about his misfortunes, but he quickly gives up out of concern that they could hurt him: “There are three of them and only one of him.” They would disappear, doing what he would have done there, but they would still lurk and spy. They would ambush him in the shadows and strike him in the head with a rock. He had no idea when they might arrive. His need for control and dominance, his faith in hierarchy, and his mistrust of foreigners all work against his goal of becoming a storyteller and leaving his mark on the newly formed world order. He eventually leaves behind nothing but the snow-covered tracks. Specifically, in a time when biotechnology and capitalism have collaborated to create a monster, figures like the Snowman are demonized and their deformity represents the cost of humanity’s anthropocentrism.

Transrealism is intended to be “uncomfortable as it shows us that “our reality is at best created,” in contrast to escapist fantasies that pull readers further from reality or science fiction tales that reassure us that the reality we rely on is fixed. There is, at worst, “no escape from that realisation,” according to Rucker. Rucker uses the phrase “consensus reality” to describe transrealism; Atwood uses this term to criticize it in her novel. In other words, consensus reality determines who is and is not normal from a variety of angles and addresses issues such as anthropocentrism, racism, sexuality, capitalism, modern consumerism, and man’s lack of empathy when confronted with scenes of mass destruction (as evidenced by Le Snowman’s unexpected admission that he lacked empathy when he witnesses the scenes of demise of the human race), political oppression, etc,

When Aldous Huxley penned his novel *Brave New World* in 1932, the themes of genetic engineering, animal and human cloning, and gene manipulation undoubtedly established dystopian novels as a subgenre of science fiction. However, this concept has left the sci-fi genre and into the fields of post humanism realism and transrealism today, when biotechnology is so pervasive as to develop such optat situations in reality. Although Atwood's novel presents a dehumanized future, it is more grounded in the post-industrialist consumer society's current reality than in a futuristic ideal.

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