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文學意象與生物醫學倫理學：《末世男女》與《別讓我走》中之情感性「後人類主義」探討

The Literary Imagery and Biomedical Ethics: Affective Post-humanism in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

Introduction

Exploration in biomedical and genetic engineering and a series of cloning-related breakthroughs in the latter decades of the 20th century have given rise to concern about the possibility of moral/ethical conflicts between humans and the creatures they create. We are living in a biotechnological era, and contemporary Western society is immersed in controversies surrounding its possibilities and problems. Disputes over its potential as a tool for environmental/medical salvation and the fear of its use have been going on for a long time, yet the ways in which genetic engineering may shape life on Earth in the future remain vague. Contemporary debates and speculation about the prospects of genetic engineering, such as reproductive cloning, reveals a way in which such beings, considered fake copies of genuine humans, challenge the ontological/existential notions of the human existence, particularly in relation to the issues of self-identity, individuality, and authenticity. The world is aware of the potential for drastic change that science and biomedicine offer, as well as their associated dangers. Therefore, it is not surprising that writers have paid attention to the devastating consequences of genetic engineering. During the 20th and 21st centuries, there have been several notable dystopian literary works. In this research project, Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* are studied, as their appearance can be viewed in part as the result of the tremendous influence that genetic engineering could have in the 21st century. Since scientific advancement is a key factor in the postmodern adventure, it is vital to call attention to the transformative and potentially dangerous powers of science and technology in an age in which biotechnology reigns.

Research Goals

This research project aims to, through an interdisciplinary approach, explore the intersections of literature, philosophy, and human biotechnology, providing a dynamic starting ground for a speculative literary critique of biomedical ethics by examining Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me go* and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*. Given the implications of the philosophical considerations such as ongoing sensory and moral deprivation of the human experience, this study intends to show how this speculative literature serves as a transitional narrative space for the discussion of current biomedical philosophies and genetic engineering practices in human culture and society and where

it might lead to in the future. This analysis investigates controversial issues such as the possibility of immanent subjectivity and identity being embedded within human clones and the practice of relational ethics.

Literature Review

The ways in which genetic engineering may shape life on Earth in the future remain vague. Contemporary debates and speculation about the prospects of genetic engineering, such as reproductive cloning, reveal how these beings, seen to be fake copies of genuine humans, challenging the ontological/existential notions of the human existence, in relation to issues of self-identity, individuality, and authenticity in particular. A large number of dystopian literary works were produced during the 20th and 21st centuries, such as *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, *1984* by George Orwell, *Riddley Walker* by Russell Hoban, *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Oryx and Crake*, and *The Year of the Flood* by Margaret Atwood, and *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro. The archetypal *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley in 19th century should also be mentioned. The appearance of the two primary works explored in this project, Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, can be understood to result in part from the tremendous influence that genetic engineering could have in the 21st century. The world has become aware of the enormous potential for drastic change that science and biomedicine offer and the dangers associated with them. Therefore, it is not surprising that writers pay a great deal of attention to the devastating consequences of genetic engineering's influence. As Atwood notes, speculative literary works "invent nothing that we haven't already invented or started to invent," and they presage a hazy future of excessive biotechnology and serve as warnings of its catastrophic prospects.

Throughout history, the human species has long practiced logo-centrism, which is derived from traditional Enlightenment humanism that considers man to be at the center of the world and a historically autonomous agent whose rationality produces history. A sense of totality and unified self-identity contribute to the subject of traditional liberal humanism. Yet, Friedrich Nietzsche breaks with the binary opposition of classic philosophy. In 1966, Michel Foucault, in *The Order of Things*, revealed that "the human" had been actually invented by the Enlightenment. Subsequently, post-structuralism and post-modernism have further dissolved inherent subjectivity, claiming that the supposedly sovereign subject is actually constructed by culture and society. The ensuing denaturalization of this subject has challenged the ontological foundations on which traditional humanism was established. The post-human subject involves a critical deconstruction of the

universal liberal humanist subject, based on the revolutionary thoughts of Karl Marx, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jean-François Lyotard, among others. The dismantling of a unified subjectivity actually provides space for alternative post-humanist notions. As Davies and Hayles indicates, post-humanism observes that there has never been one totalized, unified, and cohesive concept of “human,” a designation that was granted by manmade cultures to bestow upon themselves the faculties of reason and autonomous agency.

To borrow Donna Haraway’s notions of cyborgs, cloned humans are considered a hybrid of technology and organism, the creatures of social reality as well as fiction—partly human animals. Cloned humans retain some form of organic sensory perception while also enjoying technological augmentations. Thinking of genuine humans in this way may enable us to have the humility we so desperately need in our social relations with other non-humans, particularly because it encourages us to engage our imaginations and to recognize both the generative and destructive fictions in our worldviews as we struggle to comprehend our ontological predicament regarding the meaning of life. As reflected in popular cultural/literary depictions of the post-human, this uncertainty is met with the response that, although all of the possible features of physical bodies can be modified and manipulated, the experience of the body, which is perceived through sensation and processed through emotions, remains the locus wherein individual identity is formed. This techno-scientific transformation reveals a desire to find a human identity that remains constant within a flexible and mutating body, that of the cloned human.

Methods, procedures, and progress

Given a sense of ethics and philosophy, this research project brings together literary works, social theories, and discourses of science and post-humanist studies to articulate a thorough analysis of the convergence of literature, genetic engineering, and biomedical ethics. Central to this project is the ethics of care for others in the aura of post-humanism, which is understood as a trope to illustrate an aesthetic reflective in the technologically mediated world within which humans are immersed. Thus, drawing academic inspiration from a wide range of interdisciplinary theories and border studies, I will analyze the phenomena represented in the literary texts through the lens of post-humanism, ethics of care for others, and notions of “relational autonomy.” The first part of this study investigates the use of the cloned human as a metaphor, and reveals a problematized relationship between human originals and cloned humans, which concerns the traditional ontological question: how do human originals perceive or define the cloned human, and the possibility of the other way around. The first section will elucidate the ontological questions of

identity and subjectivity in the context of post-humanism. The second section will further discuss the notion of relational autonomy and the possibility of ethical care for others among original and cloned humans.

Results and Discussions

The study of post-humanism is relatively recent and innovative in the fields of both literary and cultural study. This study attempts to explore and explain what it means to be human in a post-humanist world in a not-distant-future as expressed in literature, and to foster an understanding of the role of ethics within the social history of this biotechnological era.

In an alternative way, for better or worse, genetic engineering is a violation of being/existence in terms of living processes rather than static qualities. Through the philosophy and practices embedded within genetic engineering that ultimately change other non-human life forms into biological machines, human beings are distorting our own experience of the world, and thus changing our values and belief systems as well as ourselves. If we continue down the biotechnological path without questioning its philosophical as well as ideological basis, we risk leaving all traces of humanity behind. Without a profound method for dialogue between the humanity discipline and biotechnology, we may run the risk of eliminating our ability to ponder metaphysics and to question our own actions and fundamental beliefs. Neither the research nor the discussed literary works directly oppose the development of biomedicine and genetic engineering. Rather, they aim at providing a space for deeper understanding of the society in which we now live, and a moment for us to stop and consider how we will use biotechnology and the role it will have in shaping our lives in the future.

The preliminary research result has been transformed into a conference paper accepted by the 20th EALA International Conference 2012. Further details are given in Appendix I.

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The “Eighth” Day of Genesis: the Spectacle of Nature and the Ethics for Bioregional Community in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*

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Abstract

Margaret Atwood’s speculative novel, *Oryx and Crake*, incorporates themes associated with dystopian fictions to create a futuristic tale. In *Oryx and Crake*, large scientific companies use their knowledge of transgenesis and genetic engineering to exert authoritarian control over the populace. Scientific advancement becomes questionable and even dystopian. As genetic engineering has been employed to control the formation of life, the post-apocalyptic setting of the novel, in a way, is portrayed as a bizarre “spectacle” of nature engaging with the potential social, political, economic and moral consequences of the changing environment on a global scale: the creation of transgenic species, the pharmaceutical companies profiting from “inventing” diseases by manipulating genetic codes of certain viruses, Crake’s biological cosmology of eliminating all mankind and creating the genetically engineered human-like “Crakers” to withstand a devastated environment. Therefore, the paper aims to examine how the “spectacle” context of transgenesis represents and conceptualizes the relationship between humans and other species in the way that anthropocentric humanity’s situation in this “brave new biosphere” requires an extra level of pondering. As Guy Debord argues, the spectacle is actually a “social relationship between people that is mediated by images” and that this relationship “appears at once as society itself.” In the first part of the paper, I examine the parallel developments between the notions of “spectacle” theory and the modes of consumerism in an age of advanced bio-technology. The second part of the paper moves to a close reading/analysis of *Oryx and Crake*, explicating how the spectacle in the novel has integrated itself into society as well as permeated all reality. Atwood portrays one of the main characters, Crake as a scientist-authoritarian as well as a trickster who spends a significant amount of time watching internet videos of live executions, suicide, animal killing and pornography. Crake creates a grand illusion-like game that becomes the horrifying and bizarre post-catastrophe reality. As the “spectacle” is constituted to delineate the media and consumer society, it is significant to elucidate how the spectacle-form is produced, constructed, circulated and functioning in the novel. In analyzing these characters, who face problems of self-classification as they experience life in an at-risk environment, I delve into the intertwined correlation between imperiled natural environments and their human inhabitants. Finally, I intend to re-evaluate the understanding and the possibility to create an ecologically ethical society without destroying that which makes us humanity. Atwood also hints at her own ethical position and argues that mankind confronts a pivotal moment in history where humans might re-route the path away from inattentiveness to awareness of nature. At the end of the novel, the narrator Snowman’s predicament of confused identity at this crossroads in

environmental history signals the initiation of an alternative potential ethics for the bioregional community.

Keywords: Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, spectacle, ethics, transgenesis