ABSTRACT

This project examines how certain literary texts might challenge assumptions about what it means to be a human. Modern society and medicine relies heavily on technology. Advances in medical technology have led to the development of technologies that could give medicine the power to redefine what it means to be human.

My research started by examining common theories of what constituted a human; many of which were comparisons of humans to other beings such as animals and machines or computers. This led me to explore posthumanism theory.

Posthumanism is a broad term inclusive of ideas about the redefinition of the human; many of which were comparisons of humans to other beings such as technology, animals, and machines. By containing parts of our biological structure, the pigoons contest the superiority of the human race, and our “more human” species and therefore reflects posthumanism’s challenge of anthropocentricism and speciesism.

SPECIESISM AND THE ANIMAL IN ORYX AND CRAKE

- Posthumanism criticises anthropocentrism and a purely species point of view (Marchesini, 2013)
- In Oryx and Crake, Margaret Atwood has created a vision of the future where a genetically engineered disease has led to the destruction of the conventional human race. Into this landscape Atwood inserts new perspectives on what it means to be human in the form of genetically created human-animal hybrids, the pigoons and the Crakers. The Crakers are the scariest of all, “the genetically engineered humanoids with a few animal characteristics”.
- By examining the research done by Atwood we can see how she has taken many evolutionary theories and new medical technology to use as a driving force and a tool to reveal boundaries between humans and other species and machines.
- By containing parts of our biological structure, the pigoons contest the superiority of the human race, and our “more human” species and therefore reflects posthumanism’s challenge of anthropocentricism and speciesism.

NEVER LET ME GO, "LESS THAN HUMAN" CLONE

- This novel represents the destruction of the human race. Into this landscape Atwood inserts new perspectives on what it means to be human in the form of genetically created human-animal hybrids, the pigoons and the Crakers. The Crakers are the scariest of all, “the genetically engineered humanoids with a few animal characteristics”.
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CONCLUSIONS AND RELEVANCE

- By containing parts of our biological structure, the pigoons contest the superiority of the human race, and our “more human” species and therefore reflects posthumanism’s challenge of anthropocentricism and speciesism.

APE AS ARTIST

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SOMA AND “HYMNOPAEDIA”

- Soma and “Hymnopaedia” – Citizens are dehumanised through conditioning and suppression of emotion. Medical technology dehumanised the citizens of Brave New World through removal of emotions in exchange for medically manufactured happiness.

TECHNOLOGY AND THE CYBORG

- In Brave New World, through various means, Huxley has portrayed a contested version of the human. By medical creating them and controlling their lives the citizens have been dehumanised and are barely distinguishable from machines such as the robotic Soma and the machines of government.
- I have read this as a literary representation of the posthumanism cyborg that defines boundaries and can be representative of our society’s growing reliance on technology. This can reclassify what we consider to be “human only” qualities. This novel represents how society’s reliance on technology can re-classify our sense of hierarchy over machines.

ABSTRACT

This project examines how certain literary texts represent medical technology’s ability to challenge assumptions about what it means to be a human.

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