

Narrative Structure in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*

Rajeshwari S.

II - M.A. English,

Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur.

Abstract

This research paper enlightens the presence of narrative structure in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*. Margaret Atwood is a Canadian writer, poet, an essayist and an environmental activist. Canadian literature reflects the idea of nature, frontier life, and Canada's position. Margaret Atwood's first work was the pamphlet of poetry "Double Persephone". She is an author of more than forty works. This novel *Oryx and Crake* is considered as speculative fiction is an umbrella type narrative fiction, which contains a mixture of supernatural elements such as horror, fantasy, utopian and dystopian fiction, apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic. The study of narratives and narrative structure is called as narratology. The main objective of this paper is to prove the narrative analyses that is present between the stories of past and present.

Key Words: Narration, Heterodiegetic narrator, Homodiegetic narrator, Character, Story, Narrator, Mimesis, Imitation.

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Literature is not only a mirror: it is also a map, geography of mind

-Margaret Atwood

Literature is an art which gives an immense pleasure to the readers. It reflects the experience of author through his/her writings. Atwood was awarded Prince Asturias Prize for Literature in Spain for this novel. She also published the graphic novel *Angel Catbird*. She has won more than fifty five awards in Canada.

The novel *Oryx and Crake* is considered as a speculative fiction. It was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize for fiction. The novel *Oryx and Crake* is split into two paths first one is Snowman's life after the extinction of human population in Earth. He is the protagonist of the story. Second storyline is about the past life of snowman. This novel *Oryx and Crake* is not about the future, it is about the present. This novel *Oryx and Crake* consists of fifteen chapters. This story describes how the latest scientific techniques pave a way to wipe the human race from the world.

The title *Oryx and Crake* refers to the bad impact of scientific techniques in society. In *Oryx and Crake*, Oryx is four large antelope species. Crake precisely is the antagonist's real name, his real name is Glenn, he renamed his name as Crake during the playing extinction, an online game. Crake is a name of gaming character; it is an alien like creature. One comes to know that, Snowman is never given more importance though he is the protagonist, she used him as a connector between the past and present. He is also the narrator of the story.

The novel is divided into two paths, the first talks about the Snowman's attempt to survive after the human population of the world has been wiped out by JUVE virus, created by Crake, a brilliant scientist and close friend of Jimmy (Snowman's name before the virus hit on the world), and second storyline talks about the Crakers, disease, and about the loneliness of Snowman.

This novel can be read as Snowman's downfall from master to monster—he loses his lofty human status and becomes virtually a monster in comparison with the bioengineered creatures—I will inquire into the dynamics of this decline. Insofar as biotechnology renders the pigeons and the Crakers either part - or super- human. (Ku 111)

The study of Narratives and Narrative structure is called as Narratology. The theory is coined by Tzvetan Todorov. "Narratology, which is the study of narrative structures. Narratology is a branch of structuralism, but it has achieved a certain independence from its parent, and this justifies it being given a chapter of its own" (Barry). The modern Narratology began with the Russian Formalists Vladimir Propp and Mikhail Bakhtin.

Narrative theory – or to use the internationally accepted term narratology (Fr. narratologie; Ger. Erzähltheorie) – is the study of narrative as a genre. Its objective is to describe the constants, variables and combinations typical of narrative and to clarify how these characteristics of narrative texts connect within the framework of theoretical models (typologies). (Fludernik 6)

Narrative is a term which refers to the way of storytelling. It helps to create a meaningful story. "Narrative is derived from 'narrate' and that narration is a very widespread activity. Narrative is therefore closely bound up with the speech act of narrating and hence also with the figure of a narrator" (Fludernik 2).

Narrative structure is used to unfold the story or plot. In a plot, there is open and closed structure. If the story is presented in the form of the close structure means the story ends with perfect conclusion. It is also known as Closure. If the story is presented in the open structure it is indicated that there is no final ending there is only a minor ending.. Mimesis, refers to imitation or reflection. It imitates the life in the form of art and literature. Copy of the real world is called as mimesis. The novel *Oryx and Crake* reflects the exact world after the exploitation of human race through scientific technology.

The opposite of mimesis is diegesis, the story telling by a narrator who explains thoughts and actions of characters. Within Paradise, said Crake – and they'd visit the facility after lunch – there were two major initiatives going forward. The first – the BlyssPlus Pill – was prophylactic in nature, and the logic behind it was simple: eliminate the external causes of death and you were halfway there. (Atwood 345)

The Narrator, who tells the story is the one, controls everything such as character and the events. Narrator narrates the story in point of view. There are three main points of view

1. Omniscient-Narrator is not a character in the story, but he tells everything about each and every character.
2. First Person Point of view-he is character in the story, his pronouns such as I and me. He may be credible(can be trusted) or unreliable narrator(biased and does not reveal the truth)
3. Third Person Point of view-narrator gives the thoughts and reaction of the character. Narrator pronouns the character as he, she and they.

In *Oryx and Crake* the whole story is narrated in the form of third person point of view, here the whole story is narrated by Snowman in present tense.

Metadiegetic narrative level is mainly used in the story within a story. Here a narrator, who occurs within the story. Snowman occurs within the story and he narrates the story of Crake and Oryx.

The intradiegetic (or diegetic, i.e. first-level) narrative, the extradiegetic narrator recounts what occurred at that first level; a character in that story can, in turn, become an intradiegetic narrator whose narrative, at the second level, will then be a metadiegetic narrative. This process can extend to further meta-levels, forming a series of narratives patterned recursively in the fashion of Chinese boxes or Russian dolls. (Radoš 7)

Narrative is divided into two types- (i) Heterodiegetic (ii) Homodiegetic

Heterodiegetic, here the narrator explains about the characters and event which are present, he describes everything in the story without participating in the story. Homodiegetic, here narrators are presented as characters and he narrates, if the homodiegetic narrator is protagonist he/she is called as homodiegetic narrator. Snowman is a homodiegetic narrator. He himself is the protagonist of the novel and he narrates the whole story in the novel.

two types of narrative: heterodiegetic – where the narrator is absent from the story s/he tells, i.e. Her in the Iliad, or Flaubert in *Sentimental Education* – and homodiegetic – where the narrator is present as a character in the story he tells i.e - Gil Blas, or Lockwood in *Wuthering Heights*). If the narrator is the main protagonist, the hero, not a mere bystander, of his/her narrative than this narrator homodiegetic narrative can be further classified as autodiegetic. (Radoš 7-8)

There is Overt and Covert narrator in the plot. Overt narrator, have a distinct personality, he/she makes his/ her opinions know. “An overt narrator is one that can be clearly seen to tell the story – though not necessarily a first-person narrator – and to be articulating his/her own views and making his/her presence felt stylistically as well as on the metanarrative level” (Fludernik 21). Here overt narrator is Jimmy he narrates his own story and his friends Crake’s story after the human extinction. Every story is described by the narrator; there may be many narrators in one novel. Stories also narrated to the narratee. Narratee is a person who is present inside the text, with whom the narrator is speaking.

The narratee (Fr. narrataire; Ger. Leserfigur) is the intrafictional addressee of the narrator's discourse. S/he may also be a fictional character: the narrator tells . . . person is not active on the plot level and exists only 'offstage'. (Fludernik 23)

Chapter is a main division in the book, always present with a number or title. "The practice of dividing texts into chapters only goes back as far as the early modern period," (Fludernik 24). A story within a story, sometimes that story consists within another story. It is called as Frame narrative or primary narrative.

"Crake was never born," says Snowman. "He came down out of the sky, like thunder. Now go away please, I'm tired." He'll add to this fable later. Maybe he'll endow Crake with horns, and wings of fire, and allow him a tail for good measure. (Atwood 121)

It contains the secondary narrative named embedded narrative. Frame narrative, here story is surrounded by a secondary story, in order to make a story within a story, through the unique storytelling. Snowman's story is considered as frame narrative because it contains remaining story within it.

Embedding narrative is also called as secondary narrative. Embedded narrative occurs within the framing narrative. It consists of the main story within it.

"Who cares, who cares," he'd whispered to himself. He didn't want to have a father anyway, or be a father, or have a son or be one. He wanted to be himself, alone, unique, self-created and self-sufficient. From now on he was going to be fancy-free, doing whatever he liked, picking globes of ripe life off the life trees, taking a bite or two, sucking out the juice, throwing away the rinds. (Atwood 206)

It covers the major portion in the story. Frame narrative only occurs in the first and last few pages. Embedded narrative occurs in the meeting point of the three elements such as insertion, subordination and homogeneity. The novel represent the connection between past and present Snowman (Jimmy) is disguised himself as connector.

A proper case of embedding occurs when three criteria are met: "when there is insertion (attributive discourse provides a link between two discourses), subordination (which excludes juxtaposition), and homogeneity (e.g. one sequence inserted into another). (Radoš 8)

Flashback narrative technique is used to refer the past events that already took place in this story *Oryx and Crake*. Flash- a quick glimpse, back, something that previously happened. This technique helps to realize about the characters and what they did to create the story.

Flash forward technique is used to represent the future elements which readers expected, projected and imagined. It helps to reveal the relevant part of the story that gives pleasure to audience.

Metafiction is a form of fiction. The term Metafiction was coined by William H. Gass in 1970. He used in his book *Fiction and Figure of Life*. Later it was expended by Robert Scholes. Meta which means above, therefore Metafiction is above the fiction. Its own way of construction continuously reminds the readers to be aware that

they are viewing or reading the fictional work. It is intentional allusion. It is a style of prose narrative, which directs towards the process of fictive composition.

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