

The manipulative power of word-formation devices in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*

Abstract

Apart from speculating about a series of issues open to debate, such as the dark side of progress and globalization or the conflict between science and morality, Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) offers a feasible insight into the state of the English language in the near future as far as the development of the lexicon is concerned. In the light of Foucault's theories on power, knowledge and discourse, this article approaches the novel from a linguistic perspective and undertakes an analysis of lexical innovation which comprises fields of interest, devices, motivations and users. The conclusions drawn from the analysis can be summarized as follows: in the first place, it is verified that the major fields of development for lexical creativity are science and technology, learning, consumerism, and media and entertainment, in other words, the fields through which *number* people (the group in control) exert power; secondly, from a strictly linguistic point of view, new vocabulary arises from the use of existing bases and productive word-formation devices like derivation, shortening and compounding; thirdly, the motivations behind the use of these mechanisms are critical, pragmatic, communicative and connotative, but new words are also created to ensure the perpetuation of the system; lastly, inasmuch as they form part of discourse, new items also contribute to the creation of individual and collective identities.

Key words: Foucault, manipulation, power, productivity, word-formation