

Speculative Writing and Environmentalist Politics: Ecocritical Readings of *Oryx and Crake* and *Der Schwarm*

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Abstract:

This paper provides a comparative ecocritical study of two contemporary novels, *Oryx and Crake* (2003) by Canadian Margaret Atwood and *Der Schwarm* (The Swarm; 2004) by German Frank Schätzing, in order to emphasize the global dimension of environmental concerns expressed by these authors on one hand, and the need for what Ursula K. Heise has termed a 'sense of planet' in the required scholarship on the other. While the two texts differ in style and format, they both represent natural disasters that are results of misguided scientific developments and political decisions. Both, *Oryx and Crake* and *Der Schwarm*, focus on the involvement of the so-called 'natural' or 'hard sciences', mostly genetic engineering in Atwood's story and oceanography, as well as marine biology along with petro-chemistry in Schätzing's. They likewise provide sources of suggested comfort, and through the diversity of settings underline a global urgency as it relates to concepts such as 'globalization', 'sustainability', and 'risk society'.

Keywords: Atwood, Ecocriticism, *Oryx and Crake*, Schätzing, Speculative Fiction