

Breaking the Rules: Three Novels Innovating Genre Fiction

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ABSTRACT

In this project, I argue that certain texts that straddle the line between literary and genre fiction go unrecognized for important innovations. After establishing the rules and conventions of dystopian fiction, the hardboiled detective novel, and the zombie apocalypse narrative, I attempt to show how three novels subvert these rules as a means to convey social commentary. Despite their novel approaches to the genres they work within, aspects of each novel has been looked over by literary critics.

The novels under consideration are Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, a dystopian novel under the science fiction genre, Brian Evenson's *Last Days*, a subversion of the hardboiled detective novel, and Colson Whitehead's *Zone One*, a literary take on the zombie apocalypse subgenre of horror fiction. Each novel breaks, bends, or ignores the rules of the genre they are working within as a vehicle for their social commentary, and yet go unrecognized by critics.