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Reality: A Creation of the Mind

Reality, the one we used to know, is no more—it has been twisted inside out. Even imagination and fantasy are hiding their faces in shame: they are outdated, no more *à la mode*. Maybe we are too, with our old understandings, our perspective out of fashion in a shifting world! And if imagination is what makes our sensory experience meaningful, that enables us to interpret and make sense of that experience, whether from a conventional perspective or from a fresh, original, individual one. It is what makes perception more than the mere physical stimulation of sensory organs. Imagination also produces mental imagery, visual and otherwise, which is what makes it possible for us to think outside the confines of our present perceptual reality, to consider memories of the past and possibilities for the future, and to weigh alternatives against one another. Thus, as Nigel J.T. Thomas says, imagination makes possible all our thinking about what is, what has been and, perhaps most importantly, what might be.

What might be! That is the core of what needs to be discussed.

What is trendy today is a neo—mixture of the imagination, fantasy and reality in a bowl. Advanced sciences, technologies, and virtual realities that expand the limits of the mind—these new ideas play with mathematical spaces and worlds within worlds in a surrealist collage that erases and merges these boundaries into a new literary geography that was unimaginable before, I believe not a long time ago.

Simply expressed, because of those computer-generated worlds that can be explored in real time, the world we explore virtually is continuously re-computed as it is explored—what you do affects what happens next. The computer will respond to whatever you do inside its world.

How do we as readers deal with these blurry scientific ideas when they manifest themselves in fiction?

I mean that, compared to this reality of a mesh of matrixes, writing in the old simple reality, imagination and fantasy is a baby's lullaby. To better explain what I have in mind, I will describe a novel in which the writer, through his protagonist, took tentative steps into his up-to-date imagination to a strange place, full of multi-layered parallel worlds. He delved deeper and deeper, taking us with him into strange ideas of quantum computers that will create all manner of havoc in the universe. We wandered further into the place where lurked the danger of harnessing the energy of the vacuum between reflective plates, until finally Ringer, the main character, forgot where the door was, and we were bound there forever!

More or less, Andrew Crumey's *Mobius Dick* is a novel written in a strange scientific-historic-philosophical fiction frame that transcends the physical limits of the world, the past, the present and the future in a fictional style that sometimes sends the reader's mind into turmoil and blurs his rational thinking, requiring him to update his knowledge of physics. So if he wants to understand, he will search to find that when waves are measured, they mysteriously 'collapse' in a quantum jump; thus, an electron is everywhere and nowhere until it interacts, leaving its footprint on the universe. Two conflicting stories can therefore be true, because when the universe splits after any event,

what is 'real' depends on your frame of reference—according to The Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics formulated by Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg.

Here exactly is the idea of meshed boundaries, which means that a mere split of a hair exists in between.

At the end of the book, we find ourselves all-in-all in a state of not knowing if it was a dream dreamt a long time ago, or a memory recollected in the future. We are left to wonder which universe is real, if not all of them.

On the other hand it is not exactly a science fiction novel, it is between genres—literature which has been updated to belong to a new writing era with advanced literary insights powered by neo-literary visions, if that is possible to say.

And to make things more complicated, this novel is constructed upon a text message on a cell phone, which might have been sent from either the past or the future.

The text message says: call me: H. Full stop. A random text message can generate all manner of chaos.

And chaos is the nature of these boundaries now.

Reality becomes unbelievable, imagination becomes reality! Fantasy is what is happening everywhere. The events in the novel are part of a reality that has already happened, with one reality writing itself over the top of another like a multi-dimensional layered text. A complex text.

This novel is an investigation into the philosophical question of reality, fantasy and imagination; madness; twisted logic; amnesia; music; phones; doppelgangers; dreams inside dreams. A novel in which fact is conjoined with fiction, and the line between reality and fantasy becomes very problematic indeed. In a way, it is a new inventive fiction which makes us analyze reality itself.

Crume, who is compared to Jorge Luis Borges and Calvino, is an unusual voice in contemporary fiction.

Andrew Crume has a Ph.D. in theoretical physics, is literary editor of *Scotland on Sunday* and has written four novels, *Mobius Dick* being his fifth. His works have been widely translated and praised worldwide. He lives in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

I have a strange story that has to do with this novel. I found out about it through the on-line literary magazine *Barcelona Review*, became interested, and began a search to learn more about the writer and his works. Then I started another search on quantum theory and the butterfly effect (which means in simple language: the notion of a butterfly flapping its wings in one area of the world, causing a tornado or another weather event to occur in another remote area of the world) and doppelgangers and multi-universes, and then another search after all the famous musicians and writers who appeared in the novel (such as Melville, Thomas Mann, Schrödinger, Schumann, and Harry Dick). As I was dreaming of actually acquiring the book, trying to figure how, not a day after, an unexpected call came. A long-forgotten friend in London asked if I need something from

there. And so the novel came via DHL. A week later I read it, became listless for days, wrote a review about it in my weekly column in the *Jamahiriyah Review*—and then I had a strange dream, a dream in which I had written something about the novel and was reading it to people in a place I had never seen before, and that, in the last lines of my paper, I was telling those in the audience that I had dreamt about them and this place before, discussing the vanishing of the boundaries between reality, fantasy and imagination and multi-parallel realities with them, using *Mobius Dick* as an example!

Thank you.