

Oryx and crake: the confusion with evolution

[Science](#), [Biology](#)



Throughout the novel *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood accentuates how individuals' humanistic thinking will mitigate by scientific progress that is caused by perverse uses of scientific power and knowledge. Many scientists today rely on advanced biological science and genetic experiments, which allows them to exercise their abuse of nature. They try to find new technological innovations and biological solutions that can either award them with materialistic gains or fame. However, they are not able to understand the immoral conduct of their actions and experiments that can put life in danger. Therefore, Atwood suggests her novel is a speculative fiction that demonstrates how the future will be if scientists don't understand the costs of biological science's effect on the world. Margaret Atwood's 2003 novel *Oryx and Crake* conveys the cultural ascension of science that disputes the moral and ethical responsibilities of evolution manipulating nature through experiments. Additionally, Lake examines Atwood's novel and suggests that cultural change caused by science will change society by allowing an individual to create solutions to many problems.

Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood describes a future Earth where a deadly plague has killed the human population except for Snowman/Jimmy. Jimmy is the only human throughout most of the book that survives and adopts the persona of Snowman who lives with the green-eyed Children of Crake. Jimmy also experiences many flashbacks throughout the novel that describes his life before the plague with his friend Crake and lover Oryx. Jimmy's childhood was spent inside the Compound that houses scientists' families. His parents were reputable scientists who worked at different corporations to experiment on animals and different cures. Crake was Jimmy's childhood friend with who

he spent much time with at his house. They performed many activities together such as playing board games and watching videos until they went to separate colleges. Oryx is a female that both Jimmy and Crake love throughout the novel since her childhood who unintentionally performed illicit activities. Oryx and Crake both die before the plague kills the human population, while Jimmy survives by taking an injection. Snowman then survives with Crakers, genetically modified individuals, that were developed by Craker before the plague. Through flashbacks, Jimmy informs the readers that Crake killed Oryx before the plague by slitting her throat and Jimmy shoots Crake in a fit of rage. In the conclusion of the novel, Jimmy is informed by the Crakers that there are other humans who lived through the plague, which allows him to question if he should acknowledge their presence or not.

Interestingly enough, Atwood relies on several animals to demonstrate how individuals will challenge the differences of humans and animals. Scientific progress in Oryx and Crake accentuates how humans are treated differently by animals since they are uncomfortable at the idea of killing and using wolvogs and pigeons for their benefit. For example, scientists and individuals in the novel refuse to kill pigeons for food because of human organs inside them. However, Jimmy compares himself to an animal on numerous occasions to describe how he feels sympathy for them since they are victims of evolution: " He thought of pigeons as creatures much like himself. Neither he nor they had a lot of say in what was going on." In the previous sentence from Chapter 2, Jimmy is eating in the OrganInc Corporation's cafeteria that serves food mostly made out of pork, ham, and bacon, which refers to

pigeons. Jimmy understands that animals and humans are distinct because he despises eating food created from pigeons that contains human organs that represents cannibalism. Though Jimmy believes that there is a distinction between animals and humans, the novel accentuates that humans are similar to nature because they all use their intelligence to find unpleasant solutions to many life problems such as Crake. Crake creates a deadly plague that will help solve individuals' problems by killing them that rids them of their purpose in life. Furthermore, Christina Lake's analysis claims that "when the line between virtual and real is erased, no one need take ethical responsibility for actions performed against people." Crake creates the plague and conducts his experiments that will be detrimental for humans when he has no sense for immoral conduct because of his need to find solutions.

Additionally, Atwood refers to the differences between insides and outsides and the attempts to keep both separated. The Compound in the novel demonstrates how sanitation and safety is important for the scientists who work for corporations by keeping viruses out of cells and by keeping diseases out of the compound. On the other hand, the Pleeblands are outside of compounds that represents fear, poverty, and desolation. The main difference between the two is order that signifies social and economic hierarchies. The Compound remains closed off and turns a blind eye towards the world by ignoring the effect of their viruses and experiments on the outside world. The differences between insides and outsides exemplifies the effect of corporations and its power that creates commodification for its interests. The world becomes a representation of the outside when the

plague kills the human population and eliminates the Compound. Jimmy and the Crakers have to survive in the outside world where they are treated equally by nature unlike his life in the Compound. They all remain in fear and desolate as they search for their meaning in life. By rejecting the traditional ideals of faith, justice, and morality, Jimmy and Crakers have to survive through their spiritual dissolution and aimlessness. Additionally, Lake even accentuates that “ the narcissist sees others as a mirror to the self and thus finds it difficult to connect to the outside world” through three different causes: family breakdowns, modern bureaucracy, and proliferation of societal images. These three causes affect both Jimmy and Crake in their life that allows them to connect with the outside world through a different perspective. Jimmy even barely survives in the outside after the plague and compares his life to his childhood spent inside the Compound.

Thus, Margaret Atwood’s 2003 novel *Oryx and Crake* conveys the cultural ascension of science that disputes the moral and ethical responsibilities of evolution manipulating nature through experiments. The relationship between Jimmy and Crake demonstrates how individuals try to pursue their goals by knowledge that can become detrimental if it cannot be controlled. For example, Crake is a brilliant scientist who possesses knowledge and lives a prosperous life with immoral behaviors, while Jimmy has a better personality and more responsible though he lacks knowledge. This novel foreshadows how technology and science, such as the content on the internet, will commodify individuals by changing their certain way of thinking.