

Draft 1

Assimilation in an Artificial World

The lens through which people interpret the world is often influenced by those around them in ways that can completely alter one's outlook on the future. Despite the potential advantages of a scientifically-dominated tomorrow in an inevitably changing world, feelings of assimilation have the potential to perpetuate throughout the minds of conservative beings who have no interest, yet no choice in adhering to the technologically-laden world. This existential dichotomy, illustrated by the scientific assimilation in the novel *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood, prevents the narrator, Jimmy/Snowman, from finding solace.

Throughout the novel, Jimmy's best friend, Crake, develops a portfolio of scientific discoveries in genetic engineering while Jimmy focuses on the arts and humanities. Crake's insurmountable intelligence and obvious advocacy for the sciences leave Jimmy to question Crake's unbending focus on scientific endeavours, leaving Jimmy alienated, powerless, and doubtful of Crake's motives and mutual loyalty. When Crake puts forth his plan to expedite his genetically-engineered empire, Jimmy questionably adheres to his companionship despite a growing reluctance to his scientific innovations. It is only when Crake introduces the ChickieNobs project involving artificial chickens programmed only for consumption that Jimmy feels as if "some line has been crossed, some boundary transgressed" (250). Jimmy's reaction to this genetic monstrosity indicates his epiphany that, despite his inability to defend the inevitable, technology was not the way forward for a healthy society. In foreshadowing the ecological repercussions of the ChickieNobs, Jimmy wonders whether "they are on the market yet" (247), anticipating that the worst has yet to come. As the world turns toward science, Jimmy further elicits insecurities and feelings of inadequacy as he pursues his Problematics degree. He knows no way to seek refuge from his emotional disconnect with Crake, his only friend, and conjures false remedies to cope with his contempt and lower status. He argues to himself that he was "a student at the Martha Graham Academy, so he felt some need to defend the art-and-creativity turf" (203), attempting to assert his validity and importance in a world that

threatens to kill anything to do with art and naturality. Unfortunately, Crake does not “believe in nature” (205), further breeding the tensions between the two and their ideologies.

Jimmy also experiences mortification from Sharon’s reprisal against his father’s unethical scientific endeavours, leaving Jimmy to face the world without any parental consolation while seeking refuge in the company of others. Sharon, whom Jimmy always looked up to as a child, argues that his father’s HelthWyzer organization “is wrong, it’s a moral cesspool” (66) and subsequently departs from the family as his father seeks an alternative relationship with Ramona. Jimmy, abandoned by the one figure apart from himself with a shared opposition against the sciences, is left without future guidance. Furthermore, when Jimmy witnesses her execution, her last words, “Don’t let me down” (313), are an ambitious yet hopeless case coming from the one individual Jimmy looked up to as his hope is figuratively and literally dying away. As such, Jimmy takes to other companions to seek pity and relief from his assimilation by befriending several females whom he told of “his scandalous mother” (232) while letting his “ill winds blow far and find a ready welcome. [...] Soon the women would be consoling him, and he’d roll around in their sympathy” (232). In letting out his negative parental experience through an emotional outrage to his listeners, he falls victim to artificial gratifications to blanket his inner turmoil but ultimately fails to destroy it. The familial predicament Jimmy must face further prevents him from finding solace and ultimately presses him to seek refuge with Crake to find at least something to rely on.

Assimilation continues to plague Snowman, as Jimmy now calls himself, due to his sudden encounter and subsequent bleak relationship with the Crakers that do not understand him nor represent his morals. His moral crisis emerges the moment he “punched in the door code” (418) and “led the Crakers out” (418) as an obligation to Crake’s influence over Jimmy. This influence ultimately allows Jimmy to release the Crakers and care for them, despite not knowing what the future holds for them and himself. He already found out, however, that the “Crakers were like blank pages” (415) that Jimmy must instill morals and feelings into, despite not receiving the same time and affection from his own parents. This further leaves Jimmy to question his own existence in a world devoid of any opportunity to grow. The Crakers also incessantly implore Snowman’s “human” features, such as the “moss growing out of [his] face” (11)

before telling them to leave so that he can cherish the “One more scrap from the burning scrapbook in his head” (13). Everything pertaining to naturalness is slowly burning away from Snowman’s mind as he grows increasingly irritable and hopeless about the future. In a final epiphany of the inevitability of having no other choice, Snowman realizes that “although the Crakers weren’t his business, they were now his responsibility” (416). He becomes forced to assimilate into the Craker world, since as far as Snowman could tell, they were the closest things on the planet to being natural, despite contributing little to his ease.

Despite his attempts to find comfort in Crake’s technological haven, Jimmy/Snowman’s natural preference for the arts and humanities causes him to develop feelings of reluctance and powerlessness as he assimilates himself into the unforgiving future. This dichotomy between artificial and human prevents people, especially Jimmy/Snowman, from truly understanding where they truly fit in a world that threatens to destroy the natural balance of life.

Draft 2 (focus on the difficulty of finding one's purpose in the world, rather than being assimilated since he isn't really being assimilated, but becoming uncertain and practically hopeless)

Assimilation in an Artificial World

The lens through which people interpret the world is often influenced by those around them in ways that can completely alter one's outlook on the future. Despite the potential advantages of a scientifically-dominated future in an inevitably changing world, feelings of assimilation can perpetuate throughout the minds of conservative beings who have no interest yet no choice in adhering to the technologically-laden world. This existential dichotomy, perpetrated by the scientific progress in the novel *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood, dissuades the narrator, Jimmy/Snowman, from finding consolation and purpose.

The novel opens with Snowman, the narrator, describing his experience with the artificial Crakers. Having relinquished to the environmental destruction as per Crake's scientific calamities, Snowman must face the bleak relationship with the Crakers that do not understand him nor represent his morals. Much of Snowman's flashbacks illustrate his nonparticipant and onlooker behaviour; as a man of humanities, Snowman had no choice but to abide by Crake's scientific prospects since he was the narrator's only friend. When Snowman finally "punched in the door code for the last time [...] and led the Crakers out of Paradise" (418), he did so out of mutual respect for Crake. Despite this innocuous decision, Snowman eventually submits to the realization that the "Crakers were like blank pages [whom] he could write whatever he wanted" (415), devoid of the affection Snowman pursued endlessly since his parental dissociation. It is Snowman's turn to instill morals and feelings into the Crakers, assuming the role of a parent he never had the opportunity to appreciate, leaving him to question his existence as a species doomed through environmental and scientific exploitation. The Crakers also incessantly implore Snowman's "human" features, such as the "moss growing out of [his] face" (11), before telling them to leave so that he can cherish the "One more scrap from the burning scrapbook in his head" (13). Everything pertaining to naturality is slowly burning away from Snowman's mind as he grows

increasingly irritable and hopeless about the future. Facing the certainty of having no other choice, Snowman realizes that “although the Crakers weren’t his business, they were now his responsibility” (416). He becomes forced to relinquish his obsolete values acquired from the past, reluctantly assimilating himself into the Craker world as he struggles to find a sense of purpose in a world saturated by the artificial.

Snowman’s struggles stem from a childhood devoid of parental affection and future guidance. When Sharon departs his family due to her reprisal against his father’s scientific endeavours, Jimmy (pre-apocalypse Snowman) is left to face the world through means of artificial gratification to replenish the void his mother unveiled. Sharon, whom Jimmy always looked up to as a child, argues that his father’s HelthWyzer organization “is wrong, it’s a moral cesspool” (66) before leaving Jimmy to face the uncertainties of his family and future. Her final words, “Don’t let me down” (313), affirm Jimmy’s ideals of scientific opposition he was destined to uphold since his mother’s departure, but her conjecture does not fare well for Jimmy as scientific progress continues to dehumanize the world around him. As such, Jimmy takes to other companions to seek relief by befriending several females whom he told of “his scandalous mother” (232) while letting his “ill winds blow far and find a ready welcome. [...] Soon the women would be consoling him, and he’d roll around in their sympathy” (232). By expressing his tortuous “ill winds” and thoughts to his listeners, Jimmy falls victim to the sensual, instant gratification of female comradery before “he’d lost interest [...], stopped answering their e-messages” (314) and fell into a deep depression. This predicament further prevents Jimmy from finding his purpose and presses him to seek refuge with Crake in a final attempt to seek consolation from his mother’s death.

Jimmy realizes, however, that in Crake’s company is the real threat of insurmountable intelligence and advocacy for the sciences, leaving Jimmy alienated, powerless, and doubtful of Crake’s motives. Jimmy’s strong ties to the arts and humanities deviate from Crake’s plan to expedite his genetically-engineered Crakerian empire, but he remains attached to his companionship. It is when Crake introduces the ChickieNobs project involving artificial chickens bred only for consumption that Jimmy feels as if “some line has been crossed, some boundary transgressed” (250). Jimmy’s reaction to this

genetic monstrosity indicates his epiphany that, despite his inability to defend the inevitable, technology was not the way forward for the human race. As the world turns toward science, Jimmy further elicits insecurities and feelings of inadequacy as he pursues his Problematics degree. He knows no way to manage his emotional disconnect with Crake, his only friend, and conjures false remedies to cope with his contempt and lower societal status. He argues to himself that he was “a student at the Martha Graham Academy, so he felt some need to defend the art-and-creativity turf” (203), attempting to assert his importance in a world that threatens to kill anything to do with art and human presence. Unfortunately, Crake does not “believe in nature” (205), further breeding the tensions between the two and their ideologies.

Despite his attempts to find comfort in Crake’s technological haven, the narrator’s natural preference for the arts and humanities causes him to develop feelings of reluctance and powerlessness as he embodies himself into the antagonistic future. This dichotomy between artificial and human prevents the narrator from understanding where he truly fits in a world that threatens to destroy the natural balance of life.

Draft 3 – brushing up upon previous edits

Losing Identity amid Scientific Progress

The lens through which people interpret the world is influenced by their surroundings, often at the expense of self-understanding and identity. Despite the allure of a scientifically-dominated society in an inevitably changing world, feelings of assimilation can persist throughout the minds of conservative beings who have no interest yet no choice in adhering to the technologically-laden world, as demonstrated by the scientific progress in the novel *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood. This existential dichotomy, brought upon by science, dissuades the narrator from finding identity and purpose.

The novel opens with Snowman, the narrator, describing his experience with the Crakers: artificial humans developed by Snowman's companion Crake to perfect the human race, released into the wild under the care of Snowman. Having relinquished to the environmental destruction from Crake's scientific calamities, Snowman, the only human he still knows to exist, must face his bleak relationship with the Crakers that do not understand him nor represent his morals. Much of Snowman's flashbacks illustrate his nonparticipant and onlooker behaviour; as a Problematics graduate and humanities advocate, Snowman had no choice but to abide by Crake's scientific prospects since he "was among the scant handful of Jimmy's friends" (83) whom he could rely on. When Snowman finally "punched in the door code for the last time [...] and led the Crakers out of Paradise" (418), he did so out of mutual respect for Crake. However, Snowman eventually realizes that the "Crakers were like blank pages [whom] he could write whatever he wanted" (415), devoid of the affection Snowman pursued since his parental dissociation. It is Snowman's turn to instill morals and feelings into the Crakers, taking the role of a parent he never had the opportunity to appreciate. The Crakers also incessantly implore Snowman's "human" features, such as the "moss growing out of [his] face" (11), before telling them to leave so that he can cherish the "One more scrap from the burning scrapbook in his head" (13). Everything related to naturalness retreats from Snowman's mind as he grows increasingly irritable and hopeless about the future, realizing that "although the Crakers weren't his business, they were now his responsibility" (416).

Snowman's resignation to his fate, hence his loss of identity, is integral to the novel's theme, where human connections remain threatened by Crake's mission to cultivate a mechanical worldview in light of scientific progress.

Snowman's struggles also stem from a childhood devoid of parental affection and future guidance. Jimmy (pre-apocalypse Snowman) must persevere through artificial gratification to replenish the void Sharon unveiled when she left the family in retaliation against his father's scientific prospects. She, whom Jimmy always looked up to as a child, argues that his father's HelthWyzer organization "is wrong, it's a moral cesspool" (66) before leaving Jimmy to face the uncertainties of his family and future. Her final words, "Don't let me down" (313), affirm Jimmy's ideals of scientific opposition he was destined to uphold since his mother's departure. However, her conjecture does not fare well for Jimmy as Crake's backing for artificial beings and a do-it-all "BlyssPluss Pill" designed to increase "sexual prowess" (355) and "prolong youth" (355) continues to dehumanize the world around him. Consequently, Jimmy takes to other companions for relief by befriending several females. He described to them "his scandalous mother" (232) while letting his "ill winds blow far and find a ready welcome. [...] Soon the women would be consoling him, and he'd roll around in their sympathy" (232). By expressing his tortuous "ill winds" and thoughts to his listeners, Jimmy falls victim to the sensual, instant gratification of female comradery before "he'd lost interest [...], stopped answering their e-messages" (314) and fell into a deep depression. The predicament between scientific progress and its ability to destroy human connections remains a critical theme throughout the novel, where science and big pharma hold an economic and social monopoly over its victims that prevents them from discovering real, mutual fellowship. This further prevents Jimmy from finding his purpose, pressing him to take refuge with Crake in a final attempt to seek consolation from all that awaits him.

Later, Jimmy realizes that in Crake's company lies the real threat of insurmountable intelligence and advocacy for the sciences, leaving Jimmy ostracized and doubtful of Crake's motives. Jimmy's strong ties to the arts and humanities deviate from Crake's plan to expedite his genetically-engineered Crakerian empire, but he remains respectful towards Crake's power and intelligence due to his

companionship. Much of the novel focuses on Jimmy's search for identity and Crake's contrasting dreams to mechanize humankind as illustrated above, but Jimmy finds mental refuge through Crake despite his corrupt intentions, highlighting the connection between science and the social desperation it tends to incur within Jimmy. Hence, desperation eventually plagues him when Crake introduces the ChickieNobs project involving artificial chickens bred only for consumption, causing Jimmy to feel as if "some line has been crossed, some boundary transgressed" (250). His reaction to this genetic monstrosity indicates his epiphany that, despite his inability to defend the inevitable, technology was not the way forward for the human race. As the world turns toward science, Jimmy knows no way to manage his emotional disconnect with Crake, his only friend, and conjures false remedies to cope with his contempt and lower societal status. He argues to himself that he was "a student at the Martha Graham Academy, so he felt some need to defend the art-and-creativity turf" (203), attempting to assert his importance in a world that threatens to kill anything to do with art and human presence. Unfortunately, Crake does not "believe in nature" (205), further breeding the tensions between the two and their ideologies.

Despite his attempts to find comfort in Crake's technological haven, the narrator's preference for the arts and humanities causes him to develop feelings of powerlessness and irrelevance as he embodies himself into the antagonistic future. The novel especially highlights how scientific progress robs people of their identity through artificiality, desperation, and corporate dominance, illustrating the conflict between artificial and human that prevents the narrator from understanding where he truly fits in a world that threatens to destroy the natural balance of life.

Final (5th draft): Grappling for Identity

Influence can take several forms, such as a prevalent figure of divine inspiration or a devastating dystopia that threatens to strip away every aspect of one's identity. Margaret Atwood's depiction of scientific progress—despite its initial allure—in the novel *Oryx and Crake* is such an example that can wreak mental havoc among the minds of conservative beings with no interest yet no choice in adhering to the technologically-burdened world. This existential dichotomy, brought upon by science, ultimately prevents Snowman, the narrator, from finding identity and purpose within his surroundings.

The novel opens with Snowman describing his experience with the Crakers: artificial humans developed by Snowman's companion Crake to perfect the human race, released into the wild under the care of Snowman. He, the only human he knows to exist, is the victim of Crake's scientific calamities leading to the environmental catastrophe he must face amid his bleak relationship with the Crakers that do not understand him nor represent his morals. Much of Snowman's flashbacks illustrate his nonparticipant and onlooker behaviour; despite being a Problematics graduate and humanities advocate, Snowman had no choice but to abide by Crake's scientific prospects since he was "among the scant handful of Jimmy's friends" (83). Ironically, he was the singular constant that shielded him from the artificial world. When Snowman finally "punched in the door code for the last time [...] and led the Crakers out of Paradise" (418), he did so out of mutual respect for Crake but also to escape the confinements of his scientific influence. However, he eventually realizes that the "Crakers were like blank pages [whom] he could write whatever he wanted" (415), devoid of the affection Snowman pursued since his parental dissociation. It is Snowman's turn to instill morals and feelings into the Crakers, taking the role of a parent he never had the opportunity to appreciate. Everything from his childhood retreats from Snowman's mind as he cherishes the final "scrap from the burning scrapbook in his head" (13) and grows increasingly irritable and hopeless about the future, realizing that "although the Crakers weren't his business, they were now his responsibility" (416). Snowman's resignation to this fate, hence his loss of identity, is integral to the

novel's theme, where human connections remain threatened by Crake's mission to cultivate a mechanical worldview in light of scientific progress.

Snowman's identity crisis also stems from a childhood devoid of parental affection and future guidance. Jimmy (pre-apocalypse Snowman) must persevere to replenish the void Sharon unveiled when she left the family in retaliation against his father's support towards the growing scientific presence. She, who Jimmy always looked up to as a child, argues that his father's HelthWyzer organization "is wrong, it's a moral cesspool" (66) before leaving Jimmy to face the uncertainties of his family and future. Her final words, "Don't let me down" (313), affirm Jimmy's ideals of scientific opposition he ought to uphold since his mother's departure. However, her conjecture does not fare well for Jimmy as Crake's backing for artificial beings and a do-it-all "BlyssPluss Pill" designed to increase "sexual prowess" (355) and "prolong youth" (355) continues to threaten his humanitarian ideals. Jimmy consequently befriends several females to seek mental relief and describes to them "his scandalous mother" (232) while letting his "ill winds blow far and find a ready welcome." (232). By expressing his tortuous "ill winds" (232) and thoughts to his listeners, Jimmy falls victim to the sensual, instant gratification of female comradery before "he'd lost interest [...], stopped answering their e-messages" (314) and fell into a deep depression. The predicament between scientific progress and its ability to destroy human connections remains a critical refrain throughout the novel, where science and big pharma hold an economic and social monopoly over its victims that prevents them from discovering real, mutual fellowship. This further prevents Jimmy from finding his purpose, pressing him to take refuge with Crake in a final attempt to seek consolation from the uncertain future that awaits him.

Later, Jimmy realizes that in Crake's company lies the real threat of insurmountable intelligence and advocacy for the sciences, leaving Jimmy ostracized and doubtful of Crake. Jimmy's strong ties to the arts and humanities deviate from Crake's plan to expedite his genetically-engineered Crakerian empire, and much of the novel focuses on Jimmy's search for identity and Crake's countering objectives to mechanize civilization. Regardless, Jimmy still finds companionship through Crake despite his corrupt intentions, owing to Jimmy's desperation that eventually plagues him when Crake introduces the

ChickieNobs project. These artificial chickens bred only for consumption causes Jimmy to feel as if “some line has been crossed, some boundary transgressed” (250), indicating his epiphany that, despite his inability to defend the inevitable, technology was not the way forward for the human race. As the world turns toward science, Jimmy struggles to manage his emotional disconnect with Crake, his only friend, and conjures false remedies to cope with his contempt and lower societal status. He argues to himself that he was “a student at the Martha Graham Academy, so he felt some need to defend the art-and-creativity turf” (203), attempting to assert his importance in a world that threatens to kill anything to do with art and human presence. Unfortunately, Crake does not “believe in nature” (205), breeding the tensions between the two and their ideologies.

What is identity? Jimmy struggles to answer that question under the influence of scientific progress that threatens to destroy the natural balance of humanity. This predicament is often the mere outcome of one’s fundamental worldview, as per people like Jimmy, whose naturalistic ideals misalign with the world’s push for scientific and corporate domination. When he sinks into Crake’s technological haven, Jimmy realizes that the clash between artificial and natural prohibits the fostering of mental accord.

Works Cited

Atwood, Margaret Eleanor. *Oryx and Crake*. Random House of Canada Limited, 2004.