

Issue 11.2 • Spring 2022

The Garden Statuary

The UBC Undergraduate Journal of English



ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The Garden Statuary is the official Undergraduate Journal of English at The University of British Columbia, operated and peer-reviewed by UBC undergraduate students. We publish twice a year (once at the end of each term) both on our website and in a digital issue.

The journal began as the idea of a group of writers, artists, and musicians from a second year English honours class and has published 19 issues since September 2011. As “English” is a field of remarkable interdisciplinary richness and UBC students work in remarkably diverse mediums, we welcome a wide range of genres and forms: academic essays in the field of English, poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, stage and screenplay, photography, visual art, music, and film. Our mission is to provide a place for UBC undergraduates to showcase, celebrate, and share their work within the university and beyond. In turn, we hope we leave our student audiences feeling inspired and connected to the incredible energy and talent found in the community around them.

If you are a UBC undergraduate and wish to see your work on your print and/or digital pages, please peruse our submissions guidelines on our website thegardenstatuary.com. You can also contact us at thegardenstatuary@gmail.com. We’re excited to see your work!

POETRY, PROSE, MULTIMEDIA AND ACADEMIC ESSAYS

BY

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A Note from the Editors-in-Chief

Hello!

Thank you for reading Issue 11.2 of The Garden Statuary. Overseeing the journal's production process this year has been an incredibly rewarding experience; the journal's continued success speaks to our unique position in the UBC community, publishing academic essays, prose, poetry, and multimedia works.

We would like to thank our editors, illustrators, and executive team for their all their work this year, and on Issue 11.2 in particular! We would especially like to thank Emma for tirelessly promoting the journal and Asya for organizing our many submissions. Thank you all - we could not have done it without you!

This year we received dozens of submissions in each category; we would like to thank all those writers and artists who submitted their work for consideration. We remain consistently amazed by the incredible work and creativity of the UBC community, and we hope that you will agree that this issue features a diverse and engaging array of prose, poetry, multimedia, and academic works.

For those who will be continuing as undergraduates in the future, please continue to submit your work! And for undergraduates and graduates alike, stay tuned for information on future issues.

The opportunity to work with so many wonderful students this year has truly been an honour; we would like to thank everyone who has engaged with the journal for their continued support.

Please enjoy Issue 11.2 of The Garden Statuary!

Best wishes,

Avani Dhunna and Colby Payne
Editors-in-Chief

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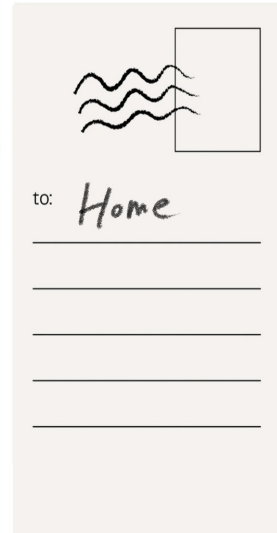
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Postcard from Vancouver to Home

Rachel Helwig-Henseleit



Vancouver is turning my skin porcelain.
There is sun here—between the rain spells
but, I spend most of my time at home.

Outside, the wind blows through holes
in my sweater—it's a kind of
intimacy, like the city itself is holding me.

Honestly, I miss your hugs the most.

Trees, Tripods and Trying Times

Forrest Berman-Hatch



I took this photo at Ada'itsx, or Fairy Creek, last August on the unceded territory of the Pacheedacht and Ditidaht Nations. It was taken after the heat dome and wildfires, but before the floods. Deeper in the Anthropocene than anyone truly knows, we are situated in time by disasters.

High in the air a land defender lays on a platform as an RCMP tactical officer scales a rope to extract her.

The form of the officer is backdropped by a cut-block— an area of forest

harvested and left bare. Green underbrush shows it was cut seasons before, but the relative lack of life where the stripped hillside meets the forest's edge furthers the story. The land defender's silhouette lies just above

the treeline, with treetops reaching up to touch her perch. The setting serves to visually illustrate the stakes of this blockade, where for over two years protesters have been blocking forestry roads that access one of the last intact old growth watersheds on Vancouver Island.

Below, supporting land defenders wait and watch. Despite their calls of support, the girl on the platform faces the state's

enforcement alone. With only her resolve and the view of her cause for company. The poet Gary Snyder once said, “I stand for what I stand on.”

The platform was built from discarded logging slash the night before. Protestors worked through the dark and into the dawn to get it up. Two tripods were erected and planks set between. What the RCMP does not know, is that all morning cement had been setting on that platform. The girl up there, twenty-year-old UBC forestry student Mia Gregg, has hand-cuffed her arm inside a hollow metal cylinder, called a “sleeping dragon”, which is in turn cemented into the platform below her. This won’t be an easy “extraction”, as the RCMP call it. In the end it takes over six hours before she is finally arrested and taken away to a waiting police transport. Six hours where the loggings machines stood silently on the roadside. Six hours where trees did not fall.

Below, the watching land defenders take up a haunting chant:

*“Tall Trees
Deep Water
Strong Wind
Warm Fire
I can feel it in my body
I can feel it in my soul.”*

The RCMP send the structure crashing over the ridge into another clear-cut below. They cheer, before turning to face the blockade. Several protestors have positioned themselves in trenches,

with their arms set in sleeping dragons. A line of defiant faces, some smiles and a whole lot of grim determination. Their backs are to the old growth stands they are defending. The police line had been creeping up the mountainside all day, but the sun is low in the sky now and the RCMP are tired. As golden light washes over the old-growth canopies and logging scars of Fairy Creek, they pack up and head out for the night, leaving only a few officers to keep watch.

In the photo, a white sheet hangs from the near edge of the platform. Earlier that day, I heard a young officer joke “Is that a white flag?” his partner turned, saw me listening and gave me a wry smile, “I’ll say this for them, I don’t think anyone will be surrendering anytime soon.”

Over one-thousand people have been arrested blocking old growth logging at Fairy Creek.

Deep winter left only a committed few on the frontlines, but as the snow melts and spring begins, the call has gone out for land defenders to return.

Conrad and Kincaid: Narratives of Dehumanization and Resistance

Carson Lamont



This essay concerns the representation of the colonized in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and the response of the colonized in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*. To what extent does Kincaid in her contemporary vision repel the antiquated settler colonial gaze of Conrad? We are to believe that Conrad has written a great classic of history and a testimony to the genocidal brutality of Leopold's Congo Free State, yet what emerges in the text,

in Marlow's attitudes and prejudices, is an unforgivably racist contraption which dehumanizes and flays Black bodies under a grim white supremacy conjoined to extractive economies of exploitation. Thus, the real motion of *Heart of Darkness* is towards a vague and unwieldy humanitarianism, one which repeatedly fails to find its footing because of that "monstrous" darkness—that epistemic failure to account for the land and its people. The result is that Conrad reincorporates racist tropes even when he is trying to underscore sympathy with the horrific and brutalized condition of colonialism's "helpers" (981). Where Conrad fantasizes, Kincaid disembowels fantasy. Conrad's preoccupation with Kurtz as a symbolic great man whom "all Europe contributed to the making of" (1098) or a great man who falters and commits evil deeds but nonetheless is assuredly great for his conviction in carrying them out (and in any case, there is that monstrous, undifferentiated Africa which forced his actions, compelled him to madness by its "darkness"), stands in stark relief to Kincaid, an Afro-Caribbean woman who candidly deconstructs the white colonizer as interchangeably naïve, flaccid, diseased, pathetically self-absorbed, and "human rubbish" (111).

Kincaid's standpoint opposes Conrad's, and her nostalgia regards a subversion of the colonist's vision of an Africa in prehistoric stasis, and that deeply racist imaginary of "monkeys in trees" (53). Kincaid writes: "even if I really came from people who were living like monkeys in trees, it was better to be that than what happened to me, what I became after I met you" (53). It is crucial to interpret Kincaid's assertion with the awareness of Conrad's racist visions of primitiveness and dehumanization as an antecedent—those natives who are "clapping [their] hands and stamping [their] feet on the bank" (Conrad 1052). Why would it be better to be that than to be Kincaid, the English-speaking scholar and writer, or the employed helmsman of a Congo steamboat during the fin-de-siecle? It is important to hear Kincaid's "I" for who that represents: a simultaneously personal and plural pronoun, one which is inclusive of all colonized African peoples subjected to "the business of empire . . . [and] the empire of business" (Said 23). This "I" regards not only the physical and mental trauma, the staggering death toll, and totalizing, systemic abjection of human life that characterized the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and involved those intermediate European colonies in the Caribbean—along with the genocide of indigenous Carib groups—but encompasses also the epistemological, linguistic, generational destruction of entire cultures of people whose precarity and displacement persists in the aftermath of colonial systems of coercion.

When Kincaid says, "it would be better than what I became" she is confounding Conrad's social Darwinian mythology of an "improved specimen" (1051). Clinging to the rationalized superiority of the European man, Conrad provokes us to disgust, whether our standpoint includes a contemporary experience of being racialized in society or not. The automatic response to antique tropes of this character comes more easily than the critical response, however. Although Scott's essay "Fantasy Echo" concerns the discourse surrounding feminism and its history, her definition of fantasy is relevant to Conrad's own dream-like narrative:

Fantasy is more or less synonymous with imagination, and it is taken to be subject to rational, intentional control; one directs one's imagination purposively to achieve a coherent aim, that of writing oneself or one's group into history, writing the history of individuals or groups . . . fantasy is the setting for desire . . . In the fantasized setting the fulfillment of desire and the consequences of this fulfillment are enacted. (49)

Scott's fantasy and its intertwined echo resound in the way genre inflicts disjunction on Conrad's aims to criticize the colonial situation. Conrad's linguistic, cultural, or temporal inability to theorize a post- or anti-colonial Congo in open solidarity with the oppressed Other is in fact endemic to his apparent desire to produce an adventure novella with "an exotic Immensity

ruled by an august Benevolence” (1100). Conrad, supplemented by his invented excerpts from Kurtz’s report, fashions a fantasy of the Congo whose capital-I imminence requires the land to be a monster inhabited by monsters. These are human beings, but not to Kurtz, Marlow, or Conrad. The racial binary of Black and white has another dichotomy as its counterpart: invisibility and visibility. The distinct and arresting visibility of the Black body in Kincaid’s writing, namely in the way she describes her AIDS-stricken brother in *My Brother* and in the way she exposes the criminality of English and the language and the English—the criminal—contrasts Conrad’s Blackness which is defined by its invisibility. This invisibility is menacing, foreboding, and miraculous to the settler gaze. Notably, I cannot make so great a distinction between Conrad, the author, and Marlow, his hero. Neither can I make so great a distinction between Marlow and Kurtz. All three share a kinship delineated by whiteness and by solidarity to their race and caste. The brutal conditions of the Congo Free State and the victimization of the Black Congolese natives are features of “the shackled form of a conquered monster” (1049), their existence “thrilling” because it amounts to a fantastical discovery by the white man. There is something libidinal therefore, and psychosexual, about this fantasy of Blackness and of Africa writ large. It is a problematic erotic fantasy because it superimposes the unrestrained physicality of “the native”—how

“they howled, leaped, and spun”—onto the suddenly unrestrained gaze of the settler. In other words, the settler is now allowed to gawk and stare, at near-naked bodies, at Kurtz’ Congolese bride in her exaltations of grief, at the “monstrous and free” (1049). Marlow admits an excitement at the Congolese natives’ “wild and passionate uproar” (1049), entering a stilted and ecstatic mode as he admits he wishes he too could “go ashore for a howl and a dance . . . [but he] had no time” (1051). Marlow here performs a lament that he must attend to his duties aboard the steamboat, with an air of superiority which asserts the necessity of his tasks for the “civilized” company, and the enlightened qualities, skills, and stoicism required to carry them out.

Where the undifferentiated mass of natives possesses an uproar, Marlow is certain to remind his shipmates that he has “a voice too, and for good or evil mine is speech which cannot be silenced” (1051). Here, it is as if Conrad recognizes an ambivalence in the narrative which Marlow orates. Marlow is, significantly, speaking, and the novella’s frame narrator recounts his speech syntactically in quotations. Marlow himself is not the narrator, nor is he the only voice onboard the ship which floats down the Thames. There are those grunts and protests which Marlow retorts against—certainly his speech concerns evil (nowhere do I find “good”) and is uncomfortable for his upper-class British audience—but Marlow is notably

the central speaking voice: a kind of displaced bard for this saga of settler colonial industry, a rugged hero and an adventurer who by his own boasts has survived “by hook or by crook” (1051). In *Heart of Darkness*, speech itself is a privilege of the white European. Conrad is careful to remind us that speech has its own power; in anthropological/anthropocentric terms intertwined with racialization, speech differentiates the intelligent from the instinctual, the white from the Black. Marlow’s fluency of speech mesmerizes the narrator, as “no more to us than a voice . . . that seemed to shape itself without human lips in the heavy night-air of the river” (1020). In a darkness of any kind—the heart of the Congo River, or the gloom of the Thames—what beacon there is besides light is sound, and speech privileged to be deemed human. Speech in Conrad’s novella is therefore inextricably linked to whiteness. To what extent, then, does the monopoly over speech and over language serve the criminal in his crime? The white colonizer (the capitalist and the vulture of ivory) asserts that the sounds which emerge from the human speech of the colonized Other—whose racial inferiority he has an economic as well as ideological stake in asserting—are only sounds, and not language. How can the Other communicate in the narrative of a “humanitarian” colonizer like Conrad, then, but by the appearance of their destitution and the emaciation of their bodies, by their uproar, and by their frown, as in the case of the

dying helmsman whose “frown gave to his black death-mask an inconceivably sombre, brooding, and menacing expression” (1087). The helmsman does not even have a face, much less a voice, but a “black death-mask” which implies that Blackness carries with it an implacable proximity to mortality. There is a kind of theatrical suggestion by the mask; certainly, the scene of his death is highly dramatized, but his silence adds to its unreality. Nowhere can Conrad’s Other have any way to speak, and without speech the Other cannot have narrative power or real political purchase in the estimation of the white settler. This problematic of speech and voicelessness is endemic to white abolitionist writings which lack the contribution of the oppressed group. The anti-slavery, anti-colonial, or anti-capitalist message of such writings is therefore diminished at the level of standpoint. Even though the impulse of Conrad in writing *Heart of Darkness* was testimony to colonialism’s horror, and even though he sincerely wishes that the “brutes” not be “exterminated” (1100), he nonetheless believes them to be brutes.

We must return finally to Kincaid’s ironic posture in *A Small Place*, and her indictment of white fantasy in the contemporary, neo-colonial, tourist economies of control in Antigua. Kincaid is explicit about the operation of language in its demoralizing and de-individuating effect on an oppressed colonized group, going so far as to force an uneasy claim to the racist imaginary of pre-colonial African cultures

and societies as “living like monkeys in trees . . . [because] it was better to be that than what happened to me, what became of me after I met you” (53). Implicit in this trope are all those associated racisms: physical, intellectual, phrenological—all those arising from scientific racism. However, the animality of the “monkey” is additionally pre- or non-verbal, consisting of the same “howls and dances” that Conrad imprints onto the “unearthly . . . [but] not inhuman” Congolese natives (1049). To Kincaid, to be without the morally alienating English language would appear to be a blessing of great proportion, even if she were to transform into that racist fantasy which Conrad depicts and became voiceless as a result. The Caliban-esque curse inflicted on Kincaid repeats the trauma of her upbringing in a British colony, and reminds her of her formative understanding of what is normal and what is goodness. Kincaid recalls her childhood experiences of racism, and turns the animal insult against the British when she writes:

[A] headmistress of a girls’ school, hired through the colonial office in England . . . told these girls to stop behaving as if they were monkeys just out of trees. No one ever dreamed that the word for any of this was racism. We thought these people were so ill-mannered . . . We thought they were un-Christian-like; we thought they were small-minded; we thought they were like animals, a bit below human standards as we understood those standards to be . . .

the English were supposed to be civilized, and this behaviour was so much like that of an animal, the thing that we were before the English rescued us, that maybe they weren’t from the real England at all but from another England, one we were not familiar with, not at all from the England we were told about, not at all from the England we could never be from . . . We felt superior . . . (40-42)

Here Kincaid does the argumentative work of toppling the fiction of British civilized society, simultaneously executing a semiotic dissolution of words at their meanings. Kincaid is unwaveringly scathing of the English and undermines the very name “England” through her repetition, reducing it to a sound which lacks purchase and meaning. This is her goal, because capital-E England, the England of Queen Victoria or any other monarch, means nothing as a signifier of nobility, uprightness, or divinely ordained dominion of the Earth and all its sunsets. England as it contains an expectation, a mythology, and a propagandizing to the Antiguan students is such a fiction that it serves only to confuse and dismay them with the manners and habits of the real English, whose empire has largely collapsed, and whose locus of control rests now in economic and cultural capital, and in regurgitating a fiction to hide a history of exploitation and brutality. After all, as Kincaid writes, England is supposed to be the nation of legendary monarchs and

rich history, of contributions to humanity, of etiquette, and of literary icons. Kincaid herself reads English authors as a child, including those narratives of Victorian romance consisting of supremely polite, sublime beings of light. For Kincaid to write, “we felt superior,” it is not only to assert the reality of the colonized experience, but to readmit the agency of the oppressed and her pride in being human, when the white settlers, in their racism and ostentation, lower themselves to something less than. How, crucially, could Kincaid and her ancestors have been “rescued” by such ignoble, degraded “human rubbish” (110)?

Kincaid speaks from her experience and leaves out nothing, the result being a blistering critique of the colonizer on an institutional and individual basis. Kincaid’s critique of the English language is necessarily from a standpoint of mourning for what has been lost: “no motherland, no fatherland, no gods, no mounds of earth for holy ground, no excess of love which might lead to the things that an excess of love sometimes brings, and worst and most painful of all, no tongue” (44). Kincaid gives way of her begrudged, ironic bargaining for a racist imaginary of prehistory, to grieve for the real history which she has lost, which is impossible for her among millions to reclaim, and whose absence suffocates her without recourse. This is a generations-spanning crime committed by European colonial powers, by the American slave state, whose humiliating legacy is a systematically impoverished is-

land nation overrun by tourists from those very same countries, spending that very same criminal wealth on alcohol, hotels, and private clubs, for the profit of a corrupt national bourgeoisie, in the vociferous appetite of neo-colonialism, which as Kwame Nkrumah writes, is “imperialism in its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage . . . the essence of neo-colonialism [being that] . . . its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from the outside” (ix). However, unlike in Ghana and elsewhere across continental Africa, neo-colonialism in Antigua attempts to completely circumscribe the language of the inflicted nation and thus the speech of its people. Kincaid writes:

For isn’t it odd that the only language I have in which to speak of this crime is the language of the criminal who committed the crime? And what can that really mean? For the language of the criminal can contain only the goodness of the criminal’s deed . . . It cannot contain the horror of the deed, the agony, the humiliation inflicted on me. (44-45)

This significant passage extends beyond a linguistic failure of English to account for the crime, and the failure of the English-speaking criminal to organize his deeds as “good” or as “bad” or as “very, very bad” (45), to Kincaid’s own decisions in her use of descriptive words in themselves—importantly, how her use differs from Conrad’s when he calls Black people “monstrous.” Monstrous would be better

used by Kincaid, among other words—“agony”, “humiliation”, “bitter”, “dyspeptic” (46)—to describe the crime and her feelings, not to insult the humanity of the crime’s victim as Conrad does. But English lacks distinction, and fashions frustrating binaries. It is contextual and amorphous, and is for Kincaid nearly impossible to speak in without the desperate awareness of its hold on her voice and its legitimation of itself to the exclusion of all other languages.

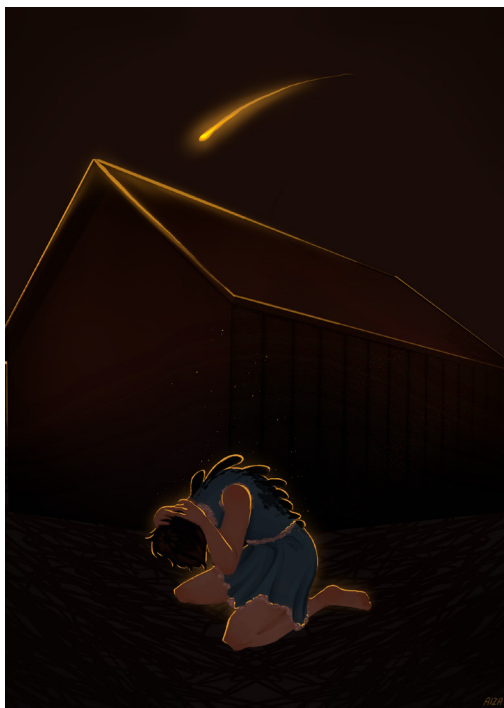
The responsibility, however, for Conrad’s failure of testimony in *Heart of Darkness* rests not only with English’s limitations but with Conrad, whose dehumanization of the racialized Other serves a desire to write sensationally about his subject matter. Kincaid resists the language’s grasp with creativity and honesty, and her message has a profound emotional impact as a result. English cannot truly hold Kincaid, nor can it prevent her from sharing the trauma of her experience and its immense weight on her future and the future of the African diaspora of the Middle Passage.

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Come and See

Luka Poljak



A boy and girl starving in a butchered
village
Digging up anything so he can
Feed me. Feed me.
The mutilated house they find with wood-
en hard hands
Their tongues molest an empty bowl
They can't do it
There's no food Here
Come and see
Come and see the boy's feet crawl out
through the deep

Mire outside and Boiling swamp
The girl with no hands will not let Go
But Feed me. Feed me.
It's here this way boy says
Digging with legs the mire swamp
Boiling sipping skin off
Feed me. Feed me.
Come and see come and see
She won't show him the shrapneled limbs
The stomachs the fingers strewn on walls
Outside a horrific pale pile emptied on a
doorstep
Afraid he will Eat them
And feed me. Feed me.
Come and see come and see
It's here it's here boy says
The boy's eyes won't stop digging
It's not here her throat cries
The girl points and cries
Fingers and cries
Fingers and stomachs torn on walls
Outside her legs now digging too
They're not here they're dead didn't you
see?
There's no food here she cries
Just Feed me. Feed me.
The mud cuts brown across both necks
The boy is deaf and girl can't Breathe
Didn't you see didn't you see? she bubbles
Sucking skin the swamp chocking up to
both necks
Boiling in a mire broth of fingers drowned
In swamp
It's sucking the mire is sucking it's licking
their feet are boiling

And Out he shoves the girl Out to her
knees
Finally Out and pleads
It's here you'll see you'll see
Come and see come and see
How his eyes are digging everything down
the path
He's led her into the bog now
He's Deaf he's Screaming
Just feed me. Feed me.
And here the birds scream too and girl
screams
Down the bog and into the woods
As yellow flares rip the sky above
Come and see come and see
The dancing man up ahead near a wood-
en barn
Not a man
What do you call a man who's burning?
But come and see come and see
How they greet the dancing man licking
bones
Skin broiled to black agony
There's no food here either says the man
But burning barn and bones
Didn't you hear the horses?
The sounds last night of bullets splitting
night
Plundering bodies
The horses the innocent horses
Dancing disfigured in the
Feed me. Feed me.
Yellow flares tear in the sky above
They butchered the horses in their pens
that night
The horses Apart The horses shot by
A bullet doesn't run through a body
It blows it Up
Didn't I tell you? they're not here they're
Not here.

There's no food here didn't I tell you not to
eat the horses?
Come and see come and see inside the
barn
The burning man still dancing
The girl still screaming at boy still digging
up eyes
He won't stop digging
He's found some bones to eat
And Eyes inside
Come and see come and
Feed me. Feed me.

Some Birds Sing at Night

Corey Morrell



Mrs. Adney lived on her own in a small farmhouse, not ten minutes down the road from us. In the spring she had become ill, and by the time summer came around she was mostly bedridden. Her pain was so bad we could hear it from the road up; at night the wind brushed through the cornstalks and carried her cries above the open fields all the way to my window. All Mama and I could do was ignore it the best we could. Eli, who I shared a bed with, always slept right

through it, and I sometimes hated him for that.

One morning that summer while sitting at the kitchen table, wolfing down my All Bran, I asked Mama why Mrs. Adney didn't bother to get help from a doctor. Mama was at the sink with her back to me. "Henry," she said, "there ain't a doctor in the three nearest counties who could help that woman. Nor is there one she'd let near her."

Mrs. Adney had always seemed to manage well enough on her own; her house was always kept and her fields were always worked and plowed. For as long as I'd known her, she'd never had help on the farm. I once asked Mama why she didn't have a husband to help her with things. She told me she had, but that he died drunk out in the field one evening before Eli and I were born.

"Fell off the tractor and ran him right over. Crushed his skull in," she had said. Other than that, the only thing she'd ever mention about him was that he was a cruel bastard and that the world was better off without him. "Since the day he died," she always reminded me, "I ain't seen a bruise on that woman."

But now, with her illness, I wondered how she was getting anything done at all. I asked Mama, regretting it as soon as the words left my lips.

“I don’t know how she does it,” Mama said. “She sure could use a hand, though. Wouldn’t hurt you to help her with the hoeing and such, would it?” I slurped the milk from my spoon. “I don’t think she’d want my help,” I mumbled. “I’d just slow her down, I really would.” I felt the sting of a palm on the back of my head and spit out a mouthful of cereal. “It wasn’t a question,” Mama said. “And don’t eat with your mouth full.”

#

Mama was right. As I peddled up to Mrs. Adney’s driveway that first day, I saw how bad it was: the grass was tall and wild; boards from the surrounding fence lay scattered about, blown off by a storm and forgotten; the crops were overgrown with weeds.

When she met me at the door I almost didn’t recognize her. She had a cane, and was older than I remembered—her face lined with sun spots, neck and shoulders bowed forward. Despite this, she still talked with the same reserved firmness I had always known her for.

“Did your mama put you up to this?”

“No ma’am.”

“You’re an awful liar, son.”

“Sorry ma’am.”

“Nothing to be sorry about,” she said.

“Just do it better if you’re gonna do it.”

“Okay,” I said, unsure if she was joking.

Behind her the kitchen counters were littered with dishes. Dust floated about in splintered rays of sunlight coming in from the windows. I gestured to the kitchen.

“Do you need some help with the dishes?” She turned slowly and looked behind her, then back to me. “You’ll want to work your way up to that. Start with the fence.” And that was that. Every day at 7:00 a.m., after tending the coops with Eli, I’d bike to Mrs. Adney’s house to help with her morning’s work. After the fencing it was mostly weed removal and hoeing until it got too hot out. Then I’d try to look busy sharpening the hoes and diggers before coming in to clean around the house.

Around noon she’d call me into her room and have me make us lunch—tomato soup, usually—then I’d help her out to the kitchen. We sat together at her little table. It was draped with a red and white checkered cloth. Over the months, my side became increasingly spotted with tomato paste. Her side was always spotless, and we always ate in silence with only the odd smile or utterance between us.

After lunch I’d rush home to help Mama with the fields where she’d be waiting for me, hoe in hand. The work went well into the evenings, with the hazy sun lingering on that faraway horizon for hours. I sometimes wandered off into the deep of the field, away from her and the work, and lay face up in the narrow stretch of dirt between the cornstalks. Always the skies were blue with lazy clouds floating on by. Every day on the hour the same airliner would pass above. I often wondered if it was heading to wherever my daddy was. I closed my eyes and listened to the jet engines streaming overhead, and daydreamed about one day flying one myself. With a plane like that, I thought, I could find my daddy anywhere.

#

It was a Sunday night in July when the crying stopped. I lay sprawled in bed, almost asleep, when my door creaked open.

"Henry," Mama said softly.

I turned over. "Yes, Mama?"

"Are you awake?"

"Yes, Mama."

"I need you to go check on her."

"But it stopped. I think she fell asleep."

"She don't usually stop like this in the middle of the night. It's been nearly an hour. I need you over there, okay?"

"Can't you call her?"

"No answer."

"Why do I have to?"

"Because I said so. Besides, it's a quicker bike ride for you than for me to get the car out of the barn. Up now, c'mon."

I got out of bed, shoulders slumped, head hung. Eli lay asleep, cuddled up to the wall, his blond hair lit by the moonlight.

Mama and I went out to the kitchen.

"Don't be too long." She sat down at the table by the window and pulled out her pack of menthols. She lit one and took a drag. The ashtray in front of her had a pile of half-smoked butts spilling over the sides. She crossed her arms, chewing on her thumbnail. "If you knock and she don't answer, just go right on in, okay? If something's wrong, you call me."

"I will." I slipped on my boots and opened the screen door, then went out to the porch. The lazy July breeze was cool against my skin.

"You might want a coat," Mama said from inside the doorway.

"I won't need one."

"Just in case."

She came out holding my daddy's coat, the one he'd left me. It had rips and tobacco stains and was far too big for me, but it was my daddy's coat, and I liked it better than mine.

"Fine," I said.

A scornful look washed over Mama's face.

"Don't you give me that."

"Yes, yes, sorry." I put it on. It smelled like motor oil and sour beer, the way I imagined my daddy smelled.

"Kay, hurry up now," Mama said.

She kissed me on the cheek and shoved me off. I wiped off the kiss then went down the steps and got on my bike. Mama went back in the house.

#

Mrs. Adney's kitchen light was on when I arrived. I got off my bike and leaned it against the apple tree near the driveway and went up the steps to her door. I slowly turned the handle and poked my head in.

"Mrs. Adney?" I said in a small voice.

Next to the table, a can of soup lay upended on the kitchen floor, thick tomato paste spilled out onto the linoleum. On the far side of the floor to the left was Mrs. Adney. She lay on her side with her arm bent behind her like a chicken wing. My mind couldn't make sense of it. Was she looking for something on the floor? Taking a nap? I crept up, wanting to say something, but my throat tightened. I slowly shuffled around her, not wanting to look. I couldn't help it. We locked eyes, and in a low voice, she said my name.

I jerked back.

“Henry,” she whispered, “don’t be affright.” I got down on my knees and put my hands out to help her. She shook her head and winced.

“What happened?” I asked.

“A setback.” Her voice was raspy, as if her throat was full of gravel.

“Mrs. Adney, I have to call Mama, or the ambulance... or something.” I got up to go to the phone.

“Get back here, boy,” she said. “Sit down.”

I hesitated then sat, cross-legged.

She had gotten worse since my last visit.

Her paper-thin skin sagged from her arms, her face sunken and pale. I wondered how she wasn’t screaming in pain then realized her voice must have given out from the hours of wailing and bawling. The cries I had heard earlier were not of her usual nightly routine but from the fall. She’d been on the floor all night screaming for someone—for me or Mama to help—but we’d heard it and only waited for it to go away.

I put my daddy’s coat over her.

“What are you doing?” she said.

“I don’t know, helping.”

“Boy, take this damn filthy thing off me.

I’m hot as a pancake on pavement.”

“Sorry.”

“Don’t be,” she said. “Go put it on the coat rack if you like.” After a moment, she continued, “I knew you’d come, Henry.”

I went and put the coat on the rack then came back and sat with her. “Mama was worried. I thought you were... you know.”

“Not yet, heavens. Only in a great deal of pain. Your mama was right to worry, though. You’re a good boy for listening to

her.”

“Can’t you move?”

“No. My legs gave out, and I fell; they don’t work none. Hit my head on the way down and knocked me out cold. I don’t know for how long. I think my arm’s broke.”

“What do I do?”

“Go into the living room and get me a pillow, will you? The purple one. My head hurts.”

I went and got the purple pillow and came back and slowly lifted Mrs. Adney’s head.

There was a small mess of blood under it, wet and matted in her weightless locks. I didn’t say anything; she knew. I placed the pillow down and gently lowered her head.

“Now what?”

“Stay here with me.”

“There has to be something else to do.”

She closed her eyes and let out a deep, laboured breath. A thin sheen of sweat coated her forehead. “No, this is what there is to do.”

“Mama said I should call her if something’s wrong.”

“Henry, there ain’t a hospital near for a hundred miles.” She said this sternly, the way only grown-ups talk to each other.

“Even if there was, all those doctors are going to do is pump me full of drugs so I can die the way they see fit.” She paused and looked straight at me. “I’m going to die on this floor tonight, and you’re going to sit here and stay with me until I do. Is that okay?”

I only wanted to leave, to bike home as fast as I could and go to bed, where Mama would be the next morning to tell me it was only a bad dream. “Mama said not to be too long,” I said.

"It's fine, dear. Your mama will understand." She closed her eyes, wheezing as her chest moved in irregular intervals. "I need you to tell her something for me."

"Okay."

"Promise me, boy."

"I promise."

"You tell your Mama this, and no one else." I let out an exhausted groan. "Yes, I promise."

"Bill's accident. Tell her—" she coughed, her throat hoarser now, "tell her, I wish it didn't have to happen like it did. But I've lived with it a long while now, long enough to know I don't regret it. Waited for it to seep in—the regret and the guilt—but it hasn't come, and looks like it won't get the chance. What pain he caused me, your mother... God knows he deserved it. But God has a way of making things right. He always does, and maybe this is His way of evening things out. And I think I'm okay with that. I don't regret it none, and it was the best thing I ever did for me. You tell her that, will you? That part's important." "What part?"

"I don't regret it, and it's the best thing I ever did for me."

"Regret what?"

"Just tell her, Henry. That's all."

"I will. Promise." I sat slouched with my fists under my chin.

"Can you fix my pillow?"

I adjusted the pillow. She clenched her teeth and winced.

"She's a good woman, your mama. Been through a lot. You treat her kindly, don't you?"

"When she's not mean."

Mrs. Adney almost laughed, but her dry,

pasty lips quivered as they worked to hold back the pain. "That's part of the whole thing, I suppose. Your mama has to be that way sometimes, to you and your brother, so you two don't grow up to be like your—"

I waited for her to finish.

"Henry," she said. Her gaze moved to the far wall, distant and confused. "I used to sing, you know. Did your mama ever tell you that?"

"She said you were a 'true talent.'"

"I was."

"Did it make you money?"

"Some."

I scooted closer.

"I was a soprano," she said, "like Maria Callas. Better looking too." She tried to clear her throat, unsuccessfully with only rough heaving. As much as she tried to mask the pain, every word betrayed her resilience. Yet she said more to me that night than she had the entire summer.

"There's maybe no greater feeling, Henry, than standing on stage in front of folks who come from all over the country to hear your voice. Not Maria Callas's but yours. It rivals love, I think."

"How come you stopped?" I asked. "Did you want to work in the fields? I wouldn't have stopped. If I could do something else, I would do it."

Mrs. Adney cleared her throat and tried to lift her voice above a whisper. "I was only a girl at the time. I fell in love. That's when the singing stopped. People do silly things when they fall in love, Henry. Things that go against every ounce of rationality in their body, but they do it anyway because that's what people do. I don't know why

this is, but it's the truest thing I know."
I nodded.

"You'll get it one day," she said. "It will be the most beautifully stupid decision of your life, to fall in love."

"It sounds hard."

"It's the easiest thing you'll ever do."

"So, you didn't love singing anymore?"

"When you fell in love?"

"Oh, no, dear. I loved it very much, and still do. I had to make a decision, though, and I chose to give up my career to buy this land here with Bill."

"But it's so boring here."

She moaned as she tried to move her arm.

"I don't think so. One day you'll move far away, to college, I hope, and it'll be gone, and you'll never get it back. Maybe in snippets of memories, but that's all. You'll miss the evenings playing in the fields with your brother; the April showers that stay for weeks to make all this land here thrive. The skies—bluer than all the oceans—the sparrows that come to the window in the morning to sing their songs... no stage can give you these things."

"Well, it sounds okay when you say it like that. Maybe you made a good choice."

Mrs. Adney stared blankly at the floor, almost drifting off. Her chest rattled with each breath.

"Almost forty years I've lived on this land."

She licked her dry lips. "About eleven of those years on my own. If you'd of asked me twelve years ago if I made the right decision, I'd of said no. But these past eleven, well, I think they may have been my best."

"So, I guess you did make a good choice."

"I guess I did. You can tell your mama that too."

The linoleum under me was cold. Mrs. Adney was trembling.

"Are you cold now, Mrs. Adney?"

"A little."

"Do you want me to get my coat for you?"

"Could you, please?"

I was about to get up when she asked another question.

"Henry," she said.

"Yes?"

"What would you do if you didn't have to work the fields for your mama?"

"What do you mean?"

"You said before, if there was something you could do besides fieldwork..." She paused and took a few deep breaths. Her eyes were desperate, longing, searching. "...what would it be?"

I got up from the floor. "Well," I said, "I guess I would be a pilot. Or maybe a wrestler. But probably a pilot."

"That sounds like a fine job. Not the wrestler."

"I think so too," I said as I went to the coat rack. "But not like a small plane pilot—like the crop dusters 'round here—one of those big ones that fly all over the world. I would fly to Egypt and see the pyramids, and go to Mount Everest, too, unless it was too big to fly over. Then I would just go somewhere like Philadelphia and see the crack in the bell. I heard it's bigger than Eli."

I grabbed the coat then went back to Mrs. Adney. I moved around her and plopped back down in my spot. "It wouldn't be too hard with a big plane like that."

Mrs. Adney didn't say anything. Her vacant eyes fixed toward the floor, her face halfway off the pillow, mouth sagging.

The kitchen was quiet except the constant

hum of the fridge. A chill swept over me. I shuffled back.

I wanted to say something but only waited. For what, I wasn't sure. Perhaps for her to speak first, for her to ask me to fix her pillow. Or maybe for Mama to call and tell me to come home so she could put me to bed. Instead it was only deafening silence, goading me to get up and run away. I gently placed my coat over her. That kitchen was the loneliest place in the world, and not even Mrs. Adney could tell me otherwise.

But I stayed. For a while at least. I sat with her in the quiet of the night, with only that soft hum and the whisper of a breeze swimming through the cornstalks outside. I'm not sure how long it was before I heard a knock at the front door.

I got up and crossed the kitchen. I opened the door. Eli stood on the porch—his hair ruffled and face sweaty. One of his blue pyjama leggings was tucked into his untied boot.

"Mama sent me," he said.

Without thinking about it, I gave him a hug. It was the only thing there was to do. A sense of overwhelming comfort came over me, the kind only a brother's embrace could offer. It was reassurance against the unknown.

"Is Mrs. Adney okay?" He tippy-toed, trying to peer over my shoulder.

"No, she ain't."

"Mama wants you back at the house."

"Yeah, I know. Hold on." I went back in, half-heartedly closing the door behind me, but Eli stuck his hand in the door jamb. I looked back and saw him peek his head in. His eyes widened, and he shrunk back out

the door.

I went to the sink and found a wet rag, then picked up the can of soup off the floor and used the rag to sweep the spilled contents into the can. I put it on the table then went out to meet Eli. He stood on the front lawn, a safe distance from the house. "Why's she like that?" he asked.

I didn't answer and only pointed to his bootlace. It had a habit of wandering away from its lace hooks. I went to him and got on one knee and tied it, slow enough for him to take note.

"See?" I said. "Did you see what I did this time?"

"Yeah."

I got up and tousled his hair. "No you didn't."

"Hey!"

As I went back up the stairs, Eli crossed to the apple tree where his bike leaned against mine. I was about to close the door.

"Aren't you getting your coat?" he said.

I took a last look at Mrs. Adney, Daddy's coat still draped over her, and turned away. I wondered if she had a brother or a sister somewhere out there who was thinking of her. Or a daughter, or a son. Maybe grandchildren. I thought about Mama. She'd be waiting for me when I got back home. She always did.

"I don't need it," I said.

A blanket of soft, morning-blue sky covered the wide land as the stars above sunk back one by one, disappearing with the fading moon. We got on our bikes and rode along that stretch of dirt road, inching ahead of each other as we went. Gravel spit up from under our tires. We

peddled hard and whizzed past rows of stalks lining the side of the road. I sped up. Sparrows flew about, diving in and out of the crops. I let Eli beat me to the house, only barely.

#

Eli went straight to bed, and Mama called 911 after I told her what had happened. We sat at the kitchen table and waited for the sirens to come. I could only recall one part of the promise I'd made to Mrs. Adney—the important part.

“She told me to tell you she doesn't regret it,” I said.

Mama took a drag of her menthol and pressed it into the ashtray. “Regret what?” Smoke seeped from her nostrils.

“I'm not sure what she meant. I think it was about her husband.”

Mama stared out the window and crossed a leg over the other. She smiled, only from the corner of her lip, and shook her head slightly.

“She was an old lady, Henry, and very sick. Who knows what she meant by it. Probably many things.”

The crest of the sun peeked over the horizon, and the blue tinge was now met with a dashing red and purple canvas cloaking the endless, open fields. Mrs. Adney's farmhouse was a small shadow alone in the distance. A chuckle escaped from Mama's lips.

“You should get to bed, honey,” she said, then forced a smile. “I'm gonna have to go over there soon to meet the medics.”

“I'm pretty tired.”

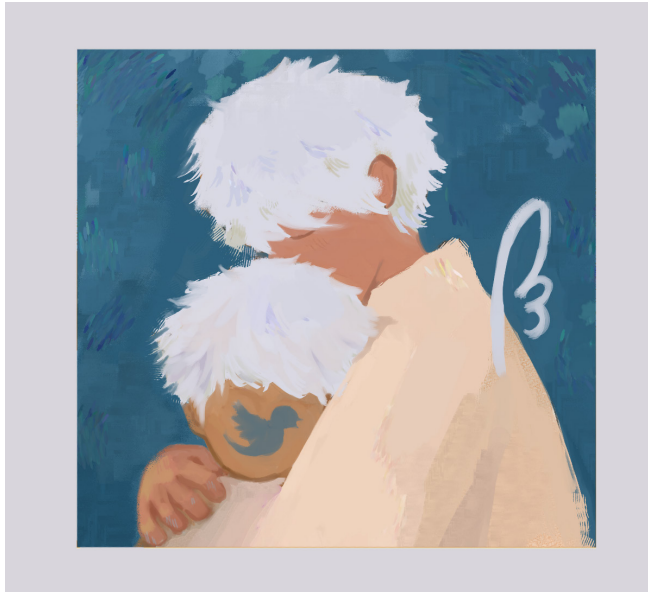
“You look it.”

I said goodnight, and Mama pulled me in and gave me a kiss. I wiped it off then went to my bedroom.

Eli was asleep. I got into bed and stole some of the flannel sheet from him then cozily tucked myself in. A few minutes later, the whirling sound of faraway sirens made their way down the road. Eli never flinched. A rooster crowed, then another. I closed my eyes. Outside my window the birds flapped about and sang their morning songs, and as I drifted away, I wondered how it ever took me so long to hear them.

The Consequences of Technologized Relationality in Klara and the Sun and "The Perfect Match"

Colby Ballingall



Human connection is defined as a “person’s subjective sense of having close and positively experienced relationships with others in the social world” (Seppala et al. 412). Psychologists argue that this connection is essential for health and survival (Seppala et al. 411), building on Maslow’s famous theories that a sense of affection and connection is a primary human need, next to basic physiological and safety requirements (Seppala et al.

413). However, technological developments have greatly altered the nature of social interaction (Antonucci et al. 3) since technology is no longer just a supplementary accessory; it is at “the very center of those forms and practices of communication” (Alhumaid 10). While there is discourse that technology has freed people from space and time limitations to allow for convenience, consequently generating what Tripathi and Bajpai call ‘omnipresence’ (2), technological

innovations have also fragmented the way humans are naturally adapted to connect; virtual connection juxtaposes human connectedness with relational dissociation and interactive detachment (Tripathi and Bajpai 2). The societies within Ken Liu's "The Perfect Match" and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* display a similar reliance on technological innovations that eventually replaces human connection, a vital component intrinsic to humans. In this paper, I will analyze how the privileging of advanced technology within these societies has negatively altered the way the human characters connect, and then explore the subsequent destructive effects this has to their relationships, health, and personal agency. Furthermore, I will argue that these texts expose a need for their societies to re-evaluate the mobilization of technology to be a medium that assists human-to-human connection, instead of the pervasive governing structure that prescribes relational potential in "The Perfect Match", and machinic socialization in *Klara and the Sun*, otherwise the characters risk losing an intrinsic aspect of humanity.

In the texts, the issue is not located in technology itself, but in how it is mobilized by the people within these societies. "The Perfect Match" highlights a reliance on technology that, ultimately, privileges a digital personal assistant over human connection. The characters sacrifice their privacy for convenience as they allow their "educational background, ShareAll profile, reviews by previous boyfriends/girlfriends, interests, likes, dislikes, and of course, pictures—dozens of

photos" (Liu 29) to be gathered by Tilly, an AI device, and shared on an online database called Centillion. The way they form relationships shows new norms have been developed – they have chosen to live in a dual reality where they have a physical existence, as well as a virtual one, thus creating omnipresence (Tripathi and Banjai 2). Their positionality is projected for everyone to see: "Why would I need to stalk you? Your phone automatically checks in and out of everywhere you go with a status message based on your mood" (Liu 33). This virtual presence allows them to keep tabs on one another, without feeling the need to physically check in or connect in the flesh. Their pursuit of love, an integral aspect of human connection, is even constructed through these online indexes: "The compatibility index is very high. I think you'll be in love for at least six months" (Liu 26). Algorithms make decisions for the characters so that they do not have to; this demonstrates that the 'perfect match' is truly the commodified relationship between the technological innovation that is Tilly, and her consumers, not a form of human connection.

Analogously, *Klara and the Sun* reveals a similar society where the greed for convenience of technological innovation is more significant than the need for physical human contact (Tripathi and Banjai 2). Human-to-human educational interactions are replaced by human-to-machine interfaces, as the youth learn through a device they call an "oblong" (Ishiguro 58). Alhumaid states that a dependence on technology for a classroom creates a lack of rapport be-

tween teachers and students, and among the students themselves, extinguishing the human connection involved in teaching (15). The dehumanization of the society's educational environment, ultimately, isolates and distances the characters from any form of social interaction with their teachers or peers. The children mature in an environment that promotes isolation and disconnection. Thus, they eventually internalize these systems, which affects the development of their communication and social skills. Artificial friends are another technologized element in their society that have been created to befriend the youth and prevent loneliness: "humans, in their wish to escape loneliness, made maneuvers that were very complex and hard to fathom" (Ishiguro 114). Loneliness is a feeling that surfaces because of the lack of social interaction in their lives, primarily due to their reliance on technology. The society's solution for loneliness is to ironically add more technology, which then replaces human relationships with artificial ones. Josie's relationship with Klara, her artificial friend, is arguably stronger than her connection to any of the human characters. Manheim and Kaplan have posited artificial intelligence as the most disruptive form of technology due to its permeability (qtd. in Tripathi & Bajpai 2). This is highlighted in the text, as the technology infiltrates their society, ultimately replacing human connection.

While a reliance on technology is the norm for both societies, there remain a few characters who differ, and accordingly, they are ostracized because of this. In "The Perfect Match," to be asocial means

to not participate in the new technological consumerism, and this is shown through the character Jenny. Jenny is described as a "Freak" (Liu 28), "nuts" (35), and someone who "somehow had missed the ethos of sharing" (27), because she does not conform to the conventional uses of technology. As Tripathi and Banjai state, false grounds of suspicion are built if a person refuses to let others in (4). Since it is custom to sacrifice privacy in their society, when Jenny does not, she is considered unusual, and is shunned, contributing to a further limitation in her human interaction. Alhumaid notes, the deepening of social inequalities between those who have status, and those who do not, is based on who can possess technology (13). In Klara and the Sun, Rick does not have access to the society's form of technologized education as he does not have the privilege of being "lifted", which implies he wasn't genetically modified as a child. As a result, he is essentially ostracized and left uncertain about his future, since not engaging in the society's technological norms means he fundamentally "doesn't have society" (Ishiguro 128). Social inequalities are deepened by a technological deficit that then extends to Rick's ability to connect, or even associate, with others in their society. The extreme deployment of technology in the texts is foregrounded by the portrayal of those who do not, or are unable, to adhere to it.

There is no doubt that technology is prevalent within these societies, but it is how the humans interact with one another that exposes the ways technology has changed their standards of human

connection. In “The Perfect Match,” the characters let technology dictate how they interact, which eventually leads to a complete loss of agency in their lives. Tilly not only finds Sai a date, but she also walks him through the conversation when he no longer can on his own: “As Sai’s mind wandered, there was a lull in the conversation... In that moment, Tilly’s voice burst into his earpiece. ‘You might want to ask her if she likes contemporary Japanese desserts’” (Liu 30). The characters lose their independence by relying on technology, and consequently lose their fundamental abilities to naturally connect with one another. This is emphasized by Ellen later in the date when Sai frustratingly turns Tilly off: “Ellen looked confused. ‘But you know that the more Tilly knows, the more helpful she can be. Don’t you want to be sure we don’t make silly mistakes on a first date?’” (Liu 31). Ellen is apprehensive to interact with another human devoid of Tilly’s involvement, highlighting the boundary technology has interposed in the characters’ ability to connect. Sai’s noncompliance to Tilly makes Ellen end their relationship, proving interacting without Tilly is unprecedented. This interaction is a perfect example of how the privileging of technology has resulted in a loss of human-to-human connection in their society.

While technology in “The Perfect Match” prescribes human relational capacity, in Klara and the Sun technology induces reduced intimacy. The socialization between the human characters is extremely disconnected and impersonal, whereupon they seem almost robotic. One

of the only times Josie and her mother interact is during a rushed moment in the mornings:

We would find the Mother sitting at the Island, staring at her oblong as she drank her coffee... There was often not much time for Josie and the Mother to converse, but I soon learned how important it was, nonetheless, for Josie to be able to sit with the Mother during the quick coffee. (Ishiguro 52)

Technology, in this case the oblong, interferes with the mother-daughter interaction and impedes conversation from occurring, creating a disconnected atmosphere that immobilizes human connection. Because of their extreme detachment, this moment of physically being in close proximity with one another is a naturalized form of ‘connecting’. However, being in close contact is not sufficient for human connection; it is the affective quality of a relationship that matters (Seppala et al. 417), thus further proving their interactive deficiencies. Moreover, a component of the youth’s education is, ironically, assessing their “social interaction scores” (Ishiguro 91). Objectively evaluating human interaction emphasizes the lack of understanding and the distortion of human connection in their society. The youth partake in ‘interaction meetings’ where they are instructed to converse and essentially practice human connectivity. Consequently, the interactions are extremely awkward and structured: “See Danny over there? First thing he comes in, he announces how he got detained by the police. No greeting, nothing. When we told him he had to greet correctly first, he still doesn’t get it”

(Ishiguro 75). The youth's capacity to connect is conditioned out of them from a young age because they are socialized in a society that does not entertain the importance of human connection, but instead fosters a dependence on AI technology. Josie and Rick's bubble drawings can be read as an attempt to acquire a form of human connection: "In each picture, Josie left an empty bubble hovering above one head or the other...for Rick to fill with written words" (Ishiguro 120). As the drawings continue, Rick's task begins to carry "some danger" (120), as unspoken feelings linger between them. The fact that they require this method to interact emphasizes the difficulties and barriers they experience in their struggle to communicate. The result of their reliance on technology is a society that has lost the capacity to connect and is now moving towards a machinic form of socialization.

The lack of human connection, which is a result of the technological innovation within these societies, creates further added layers of harm to their lives. Fromm-Reichmann expresses humans are "born with the need for contact and tenderness" (qtd. in Seppala et al. 413), suggesting social connection is an innate necessity for humans, and is also strongly correlated with physical and mental health (Wilkinson et al. 2). In *Klara and the Sun*, there are very few lasting relationships. Josie's mother and father constantly bicker, while Helen and Vance are bitter with each other and exchange harsh words. Despite their plans for a future, Josie and Rick

grow apart in the end and cannot repair their relationship: "we're no longer kids, we have to wish each other the best and go our different ways" (Ishiguro 288). Furthermore, Melania, who was Josie's housekeeper for many years, is quickly replaced without difficulty or concern. The changing nature of their society, attributable to constant technological innovation, is reflected within their relationships, as they are unable to hold onto any long-standing form of human connection. In addition, the youth who are exposed to genetic lifting become severely ill. There is never an explanation provided for their sickness, just that "there were better days" (Ishiguro 263), and days when "Josie grew worse" (264). Since social isolation can result in "a deterioration in well-being with negative consequences on health" (Wilkinson et al. 2), it is probable that this isolation is a key component in the children's sickness. While their society initially developed technological innovations to eliminate loneliness and to advance their population, it was over-prioritized, ensuing a loss in human connectivity, and multifaceted harms on their people.

In contrast, the harm for characters in "The Perfect Match" results in a loss of personal agency. They allow Tilly to command authority over their actions, creating a shift in human experience: "Without Tilly, you can't do your job, you can't remember your life, you can't even call your mother. We are now a race of cyborgs" (Liu 48). The manner in which they utilize technology has resulted in a transfer of ownership over to the technology; Tilly knows exactly what Sai wants, before he wants it. Furthermore, the separation between a physical and virtual

existence no longer exists for them: “We long ago began to spread our minds into the electronic realm, and it is no longer possible to squeeze all of ourselves back into our brains. The electronic copies of yourselves that you wanted to destroy are, in a literal sense, actually you” (Liu 48). Their society’s attempt to optimize existence by creating a virtual continuation has resulted in a loss of human connection, an intrinsic aspect of human existence. This degradation, ultimately, destroys their physical existence, so that they are only left with a cyber self. The cyber self denies human embodiment; thus, the characters’ loss of agency re-imagines them as robotic beings. Their society set out to employ technology to improve human connectivity, but they allowed it to replace it instead, ultimately surrendering a part of their humanity in the process.

Klara and the Sun and “The Perfect Match” illuminate societies that allow an over-prioritization of their relationship with technology that, ultimately, causes a degradation in human-to-human connection, as they both allow technology to replace socialization. The absence of connectivity ensues further harm on their societies, rendering a loss of relationships, agency, and even health. Technology is no longer a supplementary accessory that enhances the facilitation of human-to-human connection. It has acquired ownership and replaced the intrinsic functions of human connectivity, resulting in machinic forms of socialization. These texts argue against a demonization of technology,

but instead for a need to re-perceive their societies’ approach to the mobilization of it, in order to reassert control.

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Love is (unapologetically) love

Sally Elhennawy



If I could show the world my love for you,
I'd speak my truth a hundred thousand times.
My wary heart would start to love anew
And our passions would constitute no crimes.
If our tale of love was acceptable,
I'd sweep you away in the city streets;
We would no longer be susceptible
To stony gazes and hostile retreats.
If there was space for our love to exist,
I would compose an original score;
So we could hear how it feels to be kissed
Both in the moment, and forevermore.
If the world's gatekeepers could rise above,
They'd see the beauty of two girls in love.

Cyborgs, Simulacra, and the Male Gaze: Deconstructing the Female Body in Yukito Kishiro's *Battle Angel Alita*

Kaleena Ipema



The cyberpunk comic series *Battle Angel Alita* introduces its female protagonist in the form of a detached cyborg head, fractured and abandoned in the dystopian landscape of the Scrapyard. Although bodiless, her chipped facial features and fragmented torso deliberately reveal enough femininity to identify not just a humanoid form, but that of a young girl. As a visual medium, Yukito Kishiro's manga constantly signals gender through its vi-

sual depictions of Alita's body—no matter how broken or dismantled, long eyelashes or a partially intact breast always communicate femininity to the reader. Alita is fitted with several different bodies over the course of the narrative, each of which is obviously feminized by the shadows and curved lines of her breasts, hips, thighs, buttocks, and waistline. Feminist critics and cyberpunk authors have “[questioned] whether the bodily transgressions of the cyborg and the bodiless space of virtual reality present women with an emancipatory space where the traditional gender dichotomies are nonexistent, as it was suggested by the cyberfeminists of the early 1990s” (Ertung 77). Although she later becomes a fierce hunter-warrior, Alita is far from occupying an emancipatory space. Problematic constructions of the female body persist in Kishiro's *Battle Angel Alita* Vol. 1, restricting Alita's ability to transgress traditional gender dichotomies.

In her chapter “The Body and Reconstructions of Femininity,” Anne Bordo writes: “[the] body... is a powerful symbolic form, a surface on which the central rules, hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed and thus reinforced... The body may also

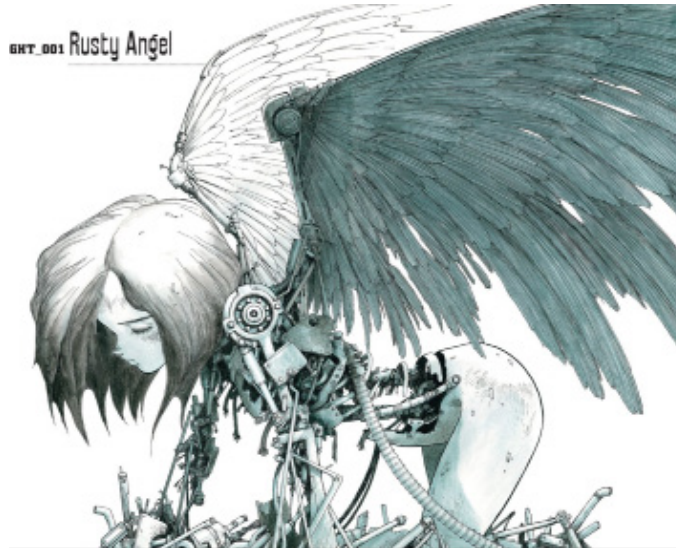
operate as a metaphor for culture ..., an imagination of body morphology [that] has provided a blueprint for diagnosis and/or vision of social and political life” (Bordo 165). In this essay, I argue that Alita’s body and its construction function as cultural metaphors for idealizing, sexualizing, and objectifying the female body; indeed, Alita’s cyborgian form is a “blueprint” onto which the male gaze projects its fantasies of perverse violence, sexual desire, and patriarchal control. I examine the manga’s visual depictions of Alita’s body, how she is constructed via the male gaze, and finally, how her body operates within male fantasies. My “diagnosis” for Kishiro’s text exposes “a mindset that is thoroughly and insidiously entrenched in the masculine” (Ertung 81), where even Alita’s brief moments of agency and resistance are incapable of achieving a significant shift in the comic’s masculinist construction of gender.

Alita’s character is instantly marked as female—even before we are shown her detached head—by a feminine name, as well as the feminine connotation behind ‘angel’ in the manga’s title. Perhaps the most obvious signifier of gender, however, are the visual representations of her body produced within the manga’s artistry. A notable example in Chapter 1, “Rusty Angel,” features an illustration of Alita with angel wings while positioned on all fours—her thighs and buttocks are filled in as if to represent “skin,” while her torso and arms expose partially constructed metal sinews and joints. Her position is both animalistic as well as sexual, and the nakedness of her bottom half implies the

presence of genitalia. The pairing of angel wings with her nakedness also invokes an angel-whore dichotomy—Alita is labeled as a “rusty” angel, associating impurity with her femininity—further soliciting not only sexualization, but also degradation of her figure. The image signals that Alita is not only female in shape, but sexual in nature. Alita’s body is constantly identifiable by her secondary sex characteristics—including breasts and rounded hips—traits that are highly redundant given her robotic nature. By constantly associating femininity with sexuality, the manga exemplifies how “[women] are tied to their bodies in ways that male characters are not” (Cadora 365). Whether through sexually suggestive full-body illustrations or simple sketches of her hourglass silhouette, Alita’s identity becomes inextricably defined by her body and its shape.

In addition to the highly sexualized connotations of the image, the viewing aspect of the manga’s visuality also communicates power—specifically, subordination of the female body. While the reader gazes upon Alita, the downward nature of her own gaze conveys submissiveness, alluding to an unspoken power dynamic in which Alita’s body is nonconsensually watched and admired. In “Straddling the Line: How Female Authors are Pushing the Boundaries of Gender Representation in Japanese Shonen Manga,” Daniel Flis observes how the male gaze operates as a power dynamic in visual representations of female bodies:

[Problems] of gender and power are hardly unique to Japan. Commenting



on the sexualisation of women through visual representation in European oil paintings, John Berger stated that “men act and women appear. Men look at women” (1972, 47; emphasis original). In describing the phenomenon of women in Western films being depicted as objects of male pleasure, Laura Mulvey noted that “pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly” (1975, 11). The “active/male” and “passive/female” elements of the male gaze are very common in shōnen manga. Anne Allison describes the male gaze in shōnen manga as containing three elements: “gender (men look, women are looked at), power (lookers are empowered subjects, the looked at are disempowered objects) and sexuality (looking produces

one’s own sexual pleasure, being looked at produces another’s sexual pleasure) (Flis 81).

Alita’s downward gaze positions her as the passive female, while the active reader is given non-consensual permission to gaze upon her body. Her sexual position, combined with the deliberate nakedness of her genital area, demonstrates that Alita is “styled accordingly” so that the “male gaze [may project] its fantasy on to the female figure” (Flis 81). The feminine and sexual overtones produced by the presence of angel wings further exposes how the female body is positioned as an aesthetic object for viewing—Alita is thus presented as a “disempowered subject” (Flis 81). The visual and artistic format of the manga genre itself has often been criticized for overtly sexualizing female bodies and encouraging non-consensual

viewing; Kishiro's text is no exception, and "operating in this way, a work that adopts the male gaze can be seen as assisting the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity" (Flis 78).

The artist's visual construction of Alita's body through drawings and illustrations is one of several facets through which the female body is constructed; the male gaze only continues to subvert female agency within the textual narrative of Kishiro's manga. After discovering Alita's head in the rubble, Ido ventures to find new parts and cyborg limbs to construct a body for her. Alita is positioned once again as the object being "looked at," where the "pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (Flis 81). On the operating table, Alita remains a passive female as her form is surgically transformed, examined, and adjusted by Ido's hands. While the male doctor looks, Alita is looked at, consent to which she cannot give in the form of an unresponsive head. As a visually constructed character, Alita's cyborg body embodies the male gaze within the male author's art, while the assemblage of her metal limbs by the disgraced cyber-doctor allows the male gaze within the actual plot of the story to build, in a literal sense, Alita's female body. As a result, Ido creates the 'perfect' woman, taking liberty with her feminine characteristics to shape what he imagines a female body should resemble. In essence, the male gaze defines what it means to be female—I do genders Alita through the contouring and arrangement of feminine features in the creation of her robotic physique. In addition, materially

constructing her body functions to gratify his imagination rather than provide true agency for her: "My dream is to make you a thing of beauty, Alita!" (Kishiro 24). Instead of asking Alita what sort of body she would like to have, she is objectified, a "thing" for Ido to make "beautiful" to satisfy his own vision for her body.

The cybernetic operation Ido performs to attach Alita's head to her body is further problematic. Ido manifests a Frankensteinian image, assuming the god-like role of creator reminiscent of Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein. The freedom of technology offers Ido complete control over the formation of Alita, and he kills other cyborgs to steal their parts in a kind of futuristic grave-robbing to complete the task. His insistence on making Alita "a thing of beauty" (Kishiro 24) also parallels Frankenstein's perverse obsession with perfecting his creature's body—in one panel, Ido mutters to himself, "I'll have you more and more beautiful with each extra part" (Kishiro 14). Ido revels in his role as savior-creator, undertaking Alita's body as his own special project—she becomes an objectified, mechanical challenge that validates Ido's own egotistical desire to build a "beautiful" cyborg. His fantasy only serves to expose a fallacy of problematic thinking: by emphasizing beauty as a feminine value, Ido prohibits the cyborg body from being "an emancipatory space where the traditional gender dichotomies are nonexistent" (Ertung 77). Instead, he directly projects feminine stereotypes and male ideals onto Alita's body. Although a synthetic being, Alita's body is confined by the same expectations of women within

our modern-day society, valued more if they are considered “beautiful” by male standards.

By fulfilling his own Frankensteinian fantasy, Ido exemplifies how the male gaze defines femininity; he demonstrates that “rather than doing away with unequal binarisms, [cyborgs] perpetuate if not aggravate gender inequalities” (Ertung 91). As a construction of the male gaze, Alita not only embodies female stereotypes as envisioned by the male mind, but she becomes a simulacrum for the actual, true woman. In her article “Bodies that [don’t] Matter: Feminist Cyberpunk and Transgressions of Bodily Boundaries,” Ertung cites this concept of simulacrum:

With the invention of the personal computer, the world wide web and the advancements made in the fields of reconstructive and cosmetic surgeries in the last decades of the twentieth century, the traditional boundaries between humans and machines have undergone a radical transformation. Jean Baudrillard, in his article “Simulacra and Simulations,” defines contemporary reality as “an age of the hyperreal” (1988, p. 167). According to Baudrillard, under the postmodern condition characterized by mass communication systems and a consumer society addicted to these systems, the western societies have undergone a precession of simulacra, whereby the simulacrum (simulation) of something real replaces the thing being represented. (Ertung 79)

Ertung’s invocation of Baudrillard’s simulacra in the context of female cyborgs

is a crucial way of understanding Alita as a construction of the male gaze. Ido’s obsession with female beauty and bodily perfection demonstrates that her artificially constructed body is “valued over the real; ... becoming not merely a copy of the real but...the real itself” (Ertung 79). Alita is no longer truly female, but rather a “hyperreal” creation of Ido’s idealized feminine body. As a simulacrum of what Ido imagines the female body to be, she becomes a “(simulation) of something real [that] replaces the thing being represented” (Ertung 79). Alita’s gender is not real, but a simulacrum, a false construction of femaleness created and perpetuated by the male gaze.

Alita’s identity formation parallels the material construction of her body—for example, even her name is determined by Ido. After Ido builds her limb for limb, he also dictates how he would like her to behave: “I did not dig you out of that heap of junk so that you could throw your life away like this. My dream is to make you a thing of beauty, Alita! And fighting is such an ugly thing... I am completely against you becoming a hunter, and that’s that!” Ido’s blatant objectification—“to make [Alita] a thing of beauty” (Kishiro 24, emphasis mine)—is exposed not only in his desire to design her body, but also to control how she wishes to use it. Alita quickly expresses frustration with the constraints placed on her: “I’m not your dress-up Doll!” (Kishiro 36) she exclaims in one panel when Ido insists she avoid becoming a hunter. Ido eventually relents to Alita’s wishes, and attaches her to the Berserker—a strong, powerful body that

better equips Alita to fight. However, this body still maintains the potential to be gendered: “The variable muscle structure means that I can configure it to be male, or female, or anything you want, just by inputting values on the keyboard. No need to be so big and chunky” (Kishiro 96). Once again, the male gaze defines femininity, as Ido “inputs values on the keyboard” to restructure the robotic build into what he considers a female body. He reminds Alita of his reluctance to do so well after the second operation is complete: “It might be uglier than your last body, but this one is fit for a warrior” (Kishiro 102), implying that Alita has less value in an “uglier body” while emphasizing his preference for delicate, feminine features.

Even after she regains some agency over her life choices, Alita’s identity remains confined to the limits of her female body. Although human women are largely absent from Kishiro’s dystopian future, female cyborgs take their place as the victims of gendered violence. Gonzu mentions early on that “[there’s] a serial killer on the loose—and all the sicko’s victims are women” (Kishiro 18), warning Alita to be careful whenever she leaves home. Cyborg women are also unexempted from gendered epithets and insults. Alita’s presence in male spaces is often met with cat calls, such as “Can I help you missy?” or “Why’d you decide to be a hunter, baby?” (Kishiro 34, 39). In a gendered body, Alita is bombarded with gendered language that connotes both condescension and sexualization. When she confronts male characters or beats male opponents, they

complain “What’s your problem, bitch?!” (Kishiro 122) or worse, threaten assault: “Listen, I don’t take insults like that from anyone—even a woman. I’ll remove your limbs and leave you out on the street...and maybe you’ll learn a lesson about hunter courtesy” (Kishiro 124). When Alita doesn’t respond the way male characters would like her to, she is met with aggression that often involves destroying her body. Men threaten the removal of her limbs and imagine her bodiless in the street, fantasizing Alita as helpless and disfigured. When the male gaze is threatened, the female body is erased until it no longer



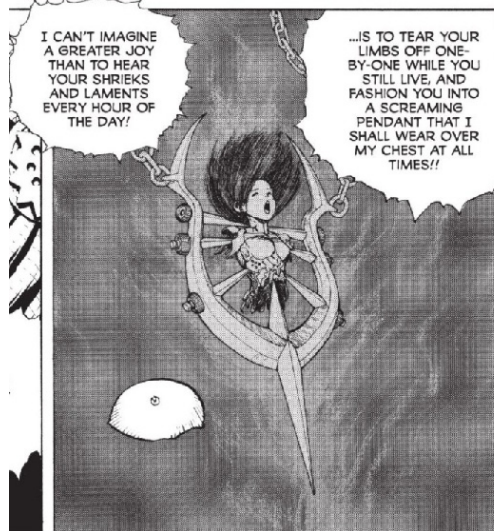
affects the male ego.

Alita's hyperfeminine cyborg physique continues to embody deeply misogynistic fantasies of violence. On page 13, a busty cyborg woman leans against the wall of a back alley. Like Alita, the manga genders the woman before any dialogue is spoken, visually emphasizing female traits through its art. Inhaling from a long, thin, quill-like cigarette, her arm extends to reveal an intricate pattern embedded within the metal of her elegantly shaped body. Her low-cut top and high-heeled pumps portray the vague suggestion of a prostitute, but before we can learn her name or anything about her identity, she is suddenly and violently beheaded in the next panel. Her death is quickly forgotten, however, as the next page depicts Alita flexing the same intricately designed arms, thanking Ido for giving her the "beautiful" new parts (Kishiro 14). The implications of this scene are extremely problematic. Not only does the text neglect to acknowledge the events that transpired—Alita never finds out, Ido never faces consequences, and we never know the murdered cyborg's name—but it positions Alita's body as a product of gendered violence. Ido's actions are alarmingly reminiscent of sexual assault—he selects his female victim based on her outward appearance, then decapitates and disassembles her body for his own personal use. Alita's cyborgian build originates in the destruction of another female body.

In addition to being a material product of gendered violence, Alita's body also functions as an object onto which the male gaze can project its violent desires.

Not only do the hunters threaten Alita with disembowelment when her skills intimidate their masculinity, but her nemesis, Makaku, also threatens to physically destroy her. Makaku is already constructed in opposition to Alita by extremely emphasized masculinity—his unnaturally pronounced abdomen muscles and inconceivably large size rivals, in both a literal and figurative sense, Alita's delicately proportioned feminine frame. Makaku's perverse masculinity is that much more threatened when defeated by a small female cyborg, and he swears revenge after she wounds him in a fight:

I want you, girl. I must have you. I am unable to ignore the pain of my crushed eye—but I shall not kill you. No! My wish, instead, is to tear your limbs off one-by-one while you still live, and fashion you into a screaming pendant that I shall wear over my chest at all times! I can't imagine a greater joy than to hear your shrieks and



Like Ido, Makaku also invokes the imagery of rape—he “wants” Alita and “must have her”—in a perverse form of sexualized aggression. Makaku repeatedly fantasizes about tearing “[Alita’s] limbs off one-by-one,” a fantasy that is not only spoken, but enhanced by a visual representation of Alita as said screaming pendent. What is perhaps even more disturbing than Makaku’s violent fantasy is Ido’s reaction to it. He says: “I noticed...something off about the way Makaku acts toward Alita. He appears to be tormenting the weak, but that’s not it! Is it possible? Is Makaku... in love with Alita?!” (Kishiro 144). That Ido could possibly associate such intense violence with affection signals an incredibly distorted concept of love, not to mention an alarming tolerance for abuse and toxic masculinity. The visual format of the manga once again functions to satisfy the male gaze, providing an outlet for male fantasies to express visions of violence. The visual representation of torturing Alita validates Makaku’s threatened male ego, bringing to life the destruction he wishes to inflict on her female body.

In this essay, I have established how Alita’s bodily construction within the manga’s artistic representation and Ido’s material operations conform to the male gaze, transforming her into an object onto which male fantasies project their desire to control and destroy. At first glance, Alita’s narrative arc from disembodied head to powerful hunter-warrior suggests that she gains agency through the acquisition of a body. However, as I have shown, her identity and choices continue to operate within the confines of the male gaze even after

she becomes a hunter. With the strength of the Berserker, Alita threatens male egos with her feminine presence, faces gendered violence, and remains identifiable by female sex characteristics. Her constructed body reflects a simulacrum, a simulation of femininity designed and adapted to satisfy male standards of beauty. The concept of replacing the real is not so futuristic, however, as Ertung points out in her article:

Anne Balsamo in her article “The Virtual Body in Cyberspace” convincingly argues that both cyberspace and the cyborg often function to recreate traditional identities. She says: If we look to those who are already participating in body reconstruction programs—for instance cosmetic surgery and bodybuilding—we would find that their reconstructed bodies display very traditional gender and race markers of beauty, strength, and sexuality. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that a reconstructed body does not guarantee a reconstructed cultural identity. Nor does “freedom from a body” imply that people will exercise the “freedom to be” any other kind of body than the one they already enjoy or desire (2000, p. 495). (Ertung 82)

Although Alita’s resistance toward Ido’s feminine vision for her body suggests female agency, the male doctor’s reconstruction of the Berserker body indeed “does not guarantee a reconstructed cultural identity” (Ertung 82). As Balsamo and Ertung point out, reconstructions are already replacing reality in the form

of cosmetic surgeries and other bodily enhancements. Simulacra are all around us—airbrushed celebrities bombard our television screens with skincare ads, and their photoshopped faces watch us from magazine displays at the grocery store. Reality is replaced with digitally edited female bodies, leaving women to scramble for better skin, bigger curves, and thinner waists to achieve this simulation of perfection.

Deconstructing Alita's cyborgian body has demonstrated that Battle Angel Alita is not only a missed opportunity to portray a protagonist who transcends gender stereotypes and oppression, but a reinforcement of the sexualization and objectification of the female body. The question is complicated, then, as to how female bodies can disengage from the male gaze, male beauty standards, and violent male fantasies: "How can... women discover themselves when any conception of who they might be has already been decided in advance? How can she speak without becoming the only speaking subject conceivable to man? How can she be active when activity is defined as male?" (Plant 327). Some authors such as Ertung and Flis have argued that female authors of manga and cyberpunk fiction have managed to "[create] spaces where female characters may be represented in new ways" (Flis 94). Yet, while feminist cyberpunk and female authors may be transforming the genre, an overwhelming majority of texts still perpetuate degrading representations of women in comics. As such, the answers to feminist questions are

unlikely to be found in Kishiro's manga, and until female bodies can break free from male constructions, female protagonists will continue to operate and identify themselves under the watchful eye of the male gaze.

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an elegy to gold

Grace Payne



I met you in the summer heat— forever
fated fever dream.
still with your love, I turn water to steam

slowly you seep into every rivet
trailing my lips for a fine sweet minute

the most sugary maple tree
could never compare to thee

such pleasure to behold, your bottled gold,
endless summer I forever hold

but once the fleeting moment passes
I feel the weight of all my classes

with sorrow I sink into numbing routine
my only hope, from you I glean

Biological-Soliloquies and Ascension to Canadian Canon

Kishoore Ramanathan



In her contemporary novel *Monkey Beach*, Eden Robinson employs a unique technique throughout the text in which the narrative voice changes and digresses to discuss biological processes - which I will refer to as biological-soliloquies. Biological-soliloquies are dramatic deviations from the regular voice and narrative style that speak directly to the reader and evade plot mechanisms through a discussion of human anatomy. These varied messages—denoted by the same wave passage breaks that are present within the novel—find themselves interspersed throughout the text. All together, biological-soliloquies are part of Robin-

son's unique style where these short passages that are universally experienced find themselves interwoven between a cultural tapestry of intergenerational trauma from residential schools, family dynamics, and the Indigenous Haisla people's experience.

Although there are a number of biological-soliloquies that depict the physical setting of the text through analysis of the ecology, biogeography, or general atmosphere of the text, this essay will trace the recurring trend of biological-soliloquies that speak anatomically of the human heart. In this essay, I will argue that Eden Robinson integrates biological-soliloquies that are distinct in form and voice, in order to immerse colonially-minded readers into the narrative of the Haisla people. Following the further definition of the technique of voice used by Robinson, each biological-soliloquy will be traced in chronological order, and conclude with an analysis on how this style of voice finds homage within Canadian canon.

Biological Soliloquy:

Often seen in the sphere of drama, a soliloquy is a passage in which characters express their thoughts and feelings in a solitary expression, while all other actors in the story freeze and are unable to hear the words uttered by the character.

Popularized by Shakespeare during the Elizabethan era, this device was often used to paint his characters for all members of the audience and drew all eyes upon a singular character who was better understood after the delivery of the soliloquy (Corcoran 11). Robinson's narrative voice throughout the text maintains the first-person perspective of Lisamarie Hall, however, there are breaks from the text that deviate to omniscient second-person narrators, who speak directly to the reader. Finding that all of these textual events dictate events relating to the human body or the ecological setting of the story, I termed them "biological-soliloquies". Similarly, to the theatrical soliloquy, these biological soliloquies draw readers into the text, for all readers have some understanding of the world around them and the organs within them. Like a fish drawn to bait, the average reader who may not have the best understanding of Haisla ways of life can connect with the universal experiences portrayed by biological soliloquies. This connection can deepen the reader's understanding of how indigenous families struggle to cope with intergenerational trauma. The biological-soliloquies are interspersed throughout the text and thus continue to play this role of drawing readers back to the important and meaningful content throughout the story.

Imagine Your Heart:

Throughout the novel, biological soliloquies occur in various forms. One of these forms is through connection to the audience through depictions of the body. Ma-ma-oo is an important character who

carries much weight on her shoulders and passes on qualms of generational knowledge of the land and the environment down to Lisa. Additionally, she is a survivor of trauma, having dealt with an abusive husband and lived with the guilt of surrendering two of her children to the residential school system. When Ma-ma-oo is struck by a heart attack we find the story littered with soliloquies of the heart. After Ma-ma-oo takes Lisa to pick blueberries, they spent time discussing Ma-ma-oo's sister's (Miyamus) death at the hands of a cyclone. Following their local escapade, the biological-soliloquy begins: Make your hand into a fist. This is roughly the size of your heart. If you could open up your own chest, you would find your heart behind your breastbone, nested between your lungs. Each lung has a notch, the cardiac impression, that the heart fits into. Your heart sits on a slant, leaning into your left lung so that it is slightly smaller than your right lung. Reach into your chest cavity and pull your lungs away from your heart to fully appreciate the complexity of this organ (163-164).

In the opening to this soliloquy, the narrator guides the reader to visualize and estimate the size of one's heart. In describing the exact bones that reside within our chest cavity, the imagery of our 'slanted heart' guides the reader through the physical path of locating the heart. Guided into the heart, the reader is encouraged to imagine their own physical heart, a biological machine that continues to work regardless of however much we may concentrate on it. This poetic solil-

oquy ends with the description of major human blood vessels:

The bottom of your heart rests on your diaphragm. The top of your heart sprouts a thick tangle of large tubes. Your heart is shrouded at the moment by a sac of tissue, a membrane called the pericardium, which acts like a bubble wrap by both protecting your heart and holding it in place. [...] Shooting down from the aorta—the large tube arching on top of your heart—are two large arteries that branch out like lightning forks over the heart muscle. Behold, your heart. Touch it. Run your fingers across this strong, pulsating organ. Your brain does not completely control your heart... (163-164).

Scientific terminology is used to illustrate internal organs, such as the diaphragm, pericardium, and aorta. This differs significantly from the Haisla vocabulary that is often passed on from Ma-ma-oo to Lisa. Instead of learning about the traditions, struggles, and plight of the characters from the speaker, we are taught about our own anatomical hearts. Although the reader can understand that Ma-ma-oo had struggled with heart issues near the end of her life, this is not directly reflected in the biological-soliloquies as there is no reference to her condition. Additionally, there were other situations in which medical professionals explained to Ma-ma-oo what was happening to her body, but this is conveyed through dialogue. The soliloquies parallel Ma-ma-oo's health, and may perhaps serve as foreshadowing to her struggles, however, they are perhaps false in depicting her demise

as Ma-ma-oo eventually perishes from the shock and burning of a house fire.

Lub-Dub Lub-Dub:

The next biological soliloquy occurs after Lisa's cat is introduced, and before Lisa remembers Ma-ma-oo teaching her about bear cubs, the Haisla language, and aunt Trudy's disdain for her own mother. The segway into this memory of Ma-ma-oo is an explanation of the body's method of pumping blood. The soliloquy begins with: "Pull your heart out of your chest. Cut away the tubes that sprout from the top. Place your heart on a table. Take a knife and divide it in half, lengthwise. Your heart is hollow" (191). This instructional procedure for examining one's heart is again a direct order and forces the reader to visualize their own physical internal organ emerging from their chest cavity. Furthermore, the soliloquy explains the process of blood oxygenation and how our pulse functions, both concepts that we learn through understanding our circulatory system (191-192). This short passage even includes a physical action to complete:

Put your heart back in your chest. Plug your ears with your fingers and listen carefully. You should be able to hear a rhythmic lub, dub, lub, dub. The sound you are hearing is not the heart muscle itself, but the four valves in your heart closing. At the beginning of systole, your heart goes lub. This is the sound of the two valves that let blood into the lower part of your heart slamming shut. As the end of systole, your heart goes dub. The

two valves that let blood out of your heart have shut. If your valves don't close properly, your heart murmurs (191-192).

Transported away from Haisla territory to a fictional life-sciences lab room, the reader is guided through an activity to hear the pumping of their heart and is allowed to enter their own headspace before returning back to the text. The narrative voice continues to 'teach' us about our cardiac system and serves as a non-tangential plot break. There is no inherent mechanism of the plot behind their occurrences, and therefore can be considered 'breaks' from the text.

Angina pectoris:

After the anniversary of Mick's death, when Lisa and Ma-ma-oo go out to the water by Kitlope, Lisa is found sleepwalking by Aunt Kate. After being examined by a doctor at the hospital, Lisa meets Pooch and eventually returns home. As a precursor to death, the next biological soliloquy follows and a passage occurs in which the details of a heart attack are detailed. Again second-person narration is used, warning "If you pinch off one of these arteries, your hand will tingle. You have blocked the artery and your muscles are starving for oxygen, giving you pins and needles. [...] These unpleasant pins and needles in your chest are episodes of angina pectoris, often shorted to angina" (268-269). A new technique of scientific writing is additionally introduced, as the Latin name of a medical condition is given, italicized and matched to the correct capitalization. And yet, the passage is

fear-invoking and vivid with imagery: If the plaque breaks off and blocks the arteries the send blood to your heart muscle, your heart will starve. This is a heart attack. All heart attacks cause damage to your heart muscle. The severity of the attack depends on where your artery is blocked. If one of the smaller branches is blocked, you will have a tiny heart attack. If a main branch is blocked, you will have a severe heart attack. (268-269).

Heart disease is incredibly common across the globalized world, and the struggles of dealing with one's cholesterol—such as Ma-ma-oo's love for natural salt—are common worries among healthy Canadians. Again, although Ma-ma-oo does not perish at the hand of this heart condition, it is one that many are familiar with, and may find sympathy for. As a novel that sets out to engage with the greater Canadian discourse, and make the general public aware of the various struggles and trauma Indigenous peoples have faced.

Lie Down and Never Get Up:

The final biological-soliloquy concludes the book with a description of the temporary passing of a body. After Lisa finds herself spilling blood to the voices she hears coming from the forests, the final soliloquy begins:

Remove yourself from the next sound you hear, the breathing that isn't your own. It glides beneath the bushes like someone's shadow, a creature with no bones, no arms or legs, a rolling, shifting wormshaped

thing that hugs the darkness. It wraps its pale body around yours and feeds. Push yourself away when your vision dims. Ignore the confused, painful contractions in your chest as your heart trip-hammers to life, struggles to pump blood. Ignore the tingling sensations and weakness in your arms and legs, which make you want to lie down and never get up. (366)

This final narrative passage displaces the reader, as it speaks of the failing of the body in the second person narrative to the reader. The text shows that Lisa's struggle to reach her parents on the rescue mission for Jimmy has failed and that Lisa's connection with the spirits has remained strong enough for her to continue to hear them intensely. But as the spirits call to her from monkey beach, the final biological-soliloquy demands us to consider the physical pain she is enduring. The diction and imagery are blatant and animal-like, allowing for easy visualization of the physical and mental pain Lisa faces. As the spirit "wraps its pale body around yours and feeds," we might imagine a great serpent or wisp clenching us in its grasp. We are told to "[ignore] the confused, painful contractions in your chest", again alluding to the relationship with our heart that the text has constructed through the first three biological soliloquies. Finally, we are commanded to imagine a pain that "make(s) you want to lie down and never get up". This dark ending before the final part of the book is viscerally gruesome and allows for the universality of experience. Regardless of our background or mental state, this style and voice grants all

readers access to the pain Lisa feels.

Conclusions:

Through a linear analysis of biological-soliloquies, it becomes clear that the voice and narrative style of the text have elements that draw in all human readers, regardless of their relations, beliefs, or experiences with Indigenous cultures and other heavy subjects present within the novel. Canadian literature, no matter how diverse our narratives may be, is comprised and existent within a system that directly benefitted and was established by the colonial authorities of our near-distant past. It is important to acknowledge and recognize this fact, as this text undoubtedly critiques this system, while also existing within it. As a narrative that is written by a minority author, about a marginalized culture- the story plays a role in conversing with the greater central voices of Canada. Due to the cultural nature of the book, there is a colonial anthropomorphic sense of othering generated due to the interspersed usage of the second-person narrative.

Canadian canon, in all its patchwork and with its multicultural glory, is deeply rooted in the imperial structures left by Canada's colonial past and perhaps it is the adoption of *Monkey Beach* into canon that may illuminate why universality in writing is important. As one of the six finalists in the 2000 Scotiabank Giller Prize competition, it is interesting to note that Robinson's novel stood out as the sole Indigenous narrative among five other novels detailing various topics ranging from responding to a natural disaster crisis

in the South Pacific (Burrige Unbound), the investigation of victims of the Sri Lankan civil war (Anil's Ghost), or historical rivalries during the Fur Trade (The Trade). As the finalist on a panel judged by three caucasian authors, *Monkey Beach* explored the complex topic of Indigenous history, and did so with culturally-gray areas that were left for Margaret Atwood, Alistar MacLeod, and Jane Urquhart to mull over (Scotiabank Giller Prize Page). Award-winning Indigenous works often rise to popularity through the interconnection to the main-stream reader, seen in examples such as Richard Wagamese's Canada Reads 2013 finalist *Indian Horse* about an Ojibway boy who is an astonishingly good hockey player, Tomson Highway's 1988 Governor General's Award for English-language drama nominee *Rez Sisters* about seven women who complete in "THE BIGGEST BINGO IN THE WORLD", or Michelle Good's Governor General's Literary Award for Fiction 2021 Winner *Five Little Indians* about children who escaped the residential school system but must face their childhood trauma through adolescence. Each of these texts are similarly well recognized and well-integrated into Canadian canon, and also share the same aspect of a running motif that blurs the line between distinct Indigenous cultures and Indigenous history, and that mainstream history of the dominant post-imperial society. Therefore, perhaps Canadian canon, which is regarded for its diversity and integration of global cultural diasporas, must be cognizant of this universality and ensure that publicized and awarded texts not only create connec-

tions with the reader, but also challenge, contain, and withhold such relations.

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I changed my name Here

Rehema Ivan



Two names live on my tongue
resting, twirling, clashing

Both call.
Speak one.
Swallow the Other.

Let her pierce my mouth as I draw lips closed--
Let me smile at you, red running down my chin--
Let me not cry bringing you and me together;
Nor sigh, driving me and me a part

Only recall

Rehema, they are not knowing us.

Autonomy in John William Waterhouse's Interpretation of "The Lady of Shalott"

Haylee Kopfensteiner



Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem "The Lady of Shalott" has inspired countless artistic interpretations. One such interpretation is John William Waterhouse's 1894 painting *The Lady of Shalott Looking at Lancelot*. While a popular way of reading Tennyson's poem is to view the Lady of Shalott as a symbol for the struggle of an artist to balance their lived experiences with their ability to create artwork, Waterhouse's painting advocates for the Lady's

own autonomy as more than a symbolic piece of art. This essay will look at the visual aspects of Waterhouse's painting to see how they are influenced by the "Lady of Shalott," as well as discourse on agency in the Victorian era and Tennyson's work as a whole. By doing so it is possible to see how *The Lady of Shalott Looking at Lancelot* advocates for a reading of "The Lady of Shalott" that highlights the Lady's wish for self-determination.

It is first important to understand how the Lady of Shalott is viewed as art within the poem. As the subject of both a poem and a painting the Lady is a female figure who is being described by a male poet, a male character, and a male painter. She is defined only by her aesthetic value, that is, her ability to be a beautiful symbol of an artist's struggle to participate fully in the outside world and dedicate themselves to creation. Within the poem, the Lady is constantly observed for what she creates. When the Lady sings, Tennyson's descriptions focus on the listener's experience of hearing the song instead of seeing her perform, he states that: "Only Reapers . . . / Hear a song that echoes cheerly" (Tennyson 69), "They heard her singing her last song" (Tennyson 74). The Lady becomes a disembodied voice, a song and piece of art instead of a person. And when the spectators see her dead body in Camelot "Lance-

lot mused a little space;/He said, "She has a lovely face;/God in his mercy lend her grace," (Tennyson 75). In focusing on her beauty, Lancelot values her based not on the fact that she is a person who has tragically lost her life, but as something to be looked at because of her "lovely" feminine face. When discussing definitions of femininity and masculinity in the Victorian era Shaw quotes John Berger in saying that "the spectator in front of the picture . . . is assumed to be a man"; nudes in paintings, like Tennyson's women, are 'offering up [their] femininity as the surveyed'" (qtd. in Shaw 227). Interestingly, the title of the painting, which says that the Lady of Shalott is looking at Lancelot, implies that Lancelot is standing on the outside of the painting, in the place of the viewer, looking back at the Lady. The audience becomes a symbol for the objectifying male gaze in much of the same way that the Lady becomes a symbol for an artist. Waterhouse's painting presents a Lady who is aware of this male objectification and actively challenges it.

The key to Waterhouse's representation of the Lady of Shalott's agency is her body language. Drawing inspiration from William Holman Hunt's illustration, Waterhouse's Lady is looking up from under her brow with stern gaze, a mouth turned down into a frown. But as opposed to looking up to the side of the frame, Waterhouse's Lady looks out of the painting directly at the viewer. This is both unsettling and highly effective. By looking at the painting's audience with such an intense and unwelcoming facial expression, the Lady makes clear her discomfort

at being stared at like an object. As well, the Lady of Shalott seems to walk toward the viewer, enacting the moment in the poem when she takes control of her life and takes "three paces thro' the room," (Tennyson 72) to look at Lancelot. It is as though she is protesting the invasion of her privacy by walking toward the viewer objectifying her to scold them, yet is still challenging them to continue looking. When discussing Hunt's illustration of the Lady of Shalott, Abigail Joseph refers to the Lady's fierce agency (Joseph 184) and describes her gaze as "defiant" (Joseph 189). These same descriptions of fierce agency fit Waterhouse's Lady, and when combined with her act of looking out of the painting at the viewer, only emphasizes and increases the intensity with which the Lady protests her objectification.

To further the sense of discomfort created by the painting, Waterhouse highlights how the Lady's surroundings show the effect being made into art has on her. The background of the painting is dark and dull to emulate the "Four gray walls, and four gray towers," (Tennyson 68) described in the poem. In "The Lady of Shalott" and *The Lady of Shalott Looking at Lancelot*, these colours create a dreary, desolate, and deeply unhappy environment in which the Lady is forced to stay. These colour choices also obscure much of the detail in the background, forcing one to look at the glowing Lady in white. The threads of the loom that are tangled around the Lady's legs are also dull colours that blend into her surroundings. They conflict with Tennyson's description of "A magic web with colours

gay,” (Tennyson 69) and highlight the way that being made to work at her loom and being constantly observed as a symbol for an artist traps her. The threads make her unable to escape the tower, along with the painting, and the male gaze placed on her. In describing other visual interpretations of Tennyson’s confined women, Perzyńska states that “the female figure dominates the picture” and says that Hunt’s interpretation of the Lady is “claustrophobic” (64) in a similar way. The same effect is seen in Waterhouse’s interpretation. Through the representation of the Lady taking up so much room in the painting that she is forced to hunch over. Much like the contrasting colours, her large, cramped presence forces the viewer to focus on the Lady’s protests. The audience is confronted by the fact that they are complicit in her imprisonment in the place where her privacy is being encroached upon and she cannot live the life she wishes.

Throughout the Victorian Era there were many ways in which autonomy could be achieved. In his article, Fessenbecker describes two popular but opposing views of autonomy. He first describes the professional model of agency wherein “people are only truly free of their private selves and therefore autonomous if they devote themselves to ends that are willed by the social organism” (Fessenbecker 521). This philosophy is seen in both Waterhouse’s painting and Tennyson’s poem through the act of making the Lady work tirelessly “by night and day,” (Tennyson 69) not for her own joy, but so that others may gaze upon her and try to discover the answer to the artist’s dilem-

ma. Fessenbecker goes on to explain how the aesthetic philosophy of autonomy is achieved through acting on desires equally. Doing so allows one to live their life as a work of art. When paraphrasing Sartre’s metaphor, which compares painting to a fulfilled autonomous life, Fessenbecker states: “the form that will give ‘coherence’ to the painting emerges over the course of the painting being created” (527). Under this view, a life of experiences is valued more than one of work for the greater good, which is exactly what the Lady seems to be after; the ability to choose where she can look and who she can love, instead of being trapped as an artwork.

It is possible to interpret Waterhouse’s painting as the public checking in on the Lady to make sure that she is functioning as the symbol she is supposed to be, coming face to face with the Lady’s miserable conditions and fierce gaze. In this way, the painting advocates for the aesthete’s philosophy of autonomy, and the Lady’s ability to turn her life into art on her own terms by leaving the tower. Because the Lady takes the form of a painting, Waterhouse plays directly into Sartre’s metaphor. Just as the Lady of Shalott’s body language and facial expressions gain their meaning through the build up of Waterhouse’s brush strokes, the Lady’s desired autonomy is built up through her experiences of leaving the loom and tower.

Commenting on the way that agency is presented for the Lady of Shalott in the painting, Joseph Chadwick notes that “Privacy. . . is the social equivalent of the aesthetic condition of autono-

my, as the association between femininity and art in ‘the Lady of Shalott’ demonstrates” (86). The Lady of Shalott is given no privacy from the male gaze that the audience of the painting adopts. It forces her to continue working for fear of losing the value she earns by being a beautiful piece of artwork that allows these viewers to puzzle out their questions. The constant gaze of the audience prevents her from making decisions. Chadwick writes that “When the Lady looks at Lancelot and sets the curse in motion, her privacy is publicized, her domesticity is dissolved, her femininity objectified.” (92). This is the exact moment that Waterhouse represents in his painting. His painting makes public the moment the Lady asserts herself by choosing not to work and be objectified. Stockstill argues that by choosing to leave the tower, the Lady of Shalott is refusing to participate in the objectification that keeps her working as an allegory for an artist (15). The Lady’s body language and determined facial expression show that she is attempting to walk out of both the tower and the painting where this form of the male gaze is forced upon her.

What’s more is that the Lady of Shalott succeeds in embodying the aesthetic philosophy of autonomy, albeit with a tragic ending. Her act choosing to look out the window down to Lancelot and Camelot set her death in motion. Both Stockstill and Chadwick equate her singing one last song as she sends her dead body into Camelot for its citizens to witness, to an artistic performance piece aimed at making the world aware of the

harm their objectification has caused (Stockstill 16, Chadwick 94). The Lady’s short life and fight for self-determination becomes art in itself, as it is immortalized by artists such as Waterhouse.

Waterhouse’s painting *The Lady of Shalott Looking at Lancelot* allows viewers to interpret Tennyson’s poem as the Lady of Shalott’s fight for autonomy and separation from her position as a symbol of the artist. Waterhouse’s choice to represent the Lady as fierce and assertive yet trapped in an unfulfilling place by the viewer, creates a type of protest against the of being continually made into an artwork. The medium and visual aspects address common theories of agency from the Victorian era and advocate for the Lady’s ability to create her own experiences. Waterhouse’s painting ultimately invites us to think of the Lady of Shalott as more than just the subject of a poem or a painting, but as a fully fleshed out character with complex emotions. Ultimately, the painting makes its viewers think about ways in which we as consumers of art and readers of poetry, are forcing characters into places they may not belong.

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