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Table of Contents

Feature Article		
Ember Days: Writing on the Dark Side: An Interview with Holly Phillips, the Award-Winning Author of the Story Collection, <i>In the Palace of Repose</i> (2005)	by Dr. Gyllie Phillips	4
<div style="text-align: center;">Global Issues</div>		
Technology, Globalization, and the Mini Cyborgs	by Amy Pyne and Lindsay Smith	7
Texting Travesties	by Christine Clarke	9
<div style="text-align: center;">Academic Life</div>		
Fine Arts: Technologically Speaking...	by Rebecca Sullivan	11
<div style="text-align: center;">Academic Contributions</div>		
The Cybernetic Deconstruction of Gender: <i>He, She and It</i> as a Transgender Critique	by Amy Pyne	14
From Mass Education to Mass Communication: Communications Technology, Society, and the Student	by Alayna Becker	18
<div style="text-align: center;">Creative Contributions: Prose</div>		
The New Ecology	by Holly Phillips	26
The Droid	by Maggie Moor	42
<div style="text-align: center;">Creative Contributions: Poetry</div>		
The Machine	by Lindsay Smith	45
<div style="text-align: center;">Reviews</div>		
Review of <i>Who the #\$% Is Jackson Pollock?</i> By Harry Moses	by Rebecca Sullivan	46
<div style="text-align: center;">Community Profile</div>		
Technology and the Art World	by Rebecca Sullivan	48

Feature Article

Dr. Gyllie Phillips, “Ember Days: Writing on the Dark Side”: An Interview with Holly Phillips, the Award-Winning Author of the Story Collection, *In the Palace of Repose* (2005)

- 1. Your writing explores the dark side of humanity, but also sheds a new light on the fantasy genre. What is it about this genre that you find intriguing?**

HP: Mostly it's the room for the play of the imagination - literally the playfulness. But I also love the way fantasy can stretch a metaphor, making it tangible, not merely a descriptive tool but a force in my characters' lives. It's fun, but it's also poetic, even dreamlike, hiding meaning within the play.

- 2. Is there a certain quality that most of your characters share?**

HP: They tend to be outsiders. They tend to be young. Mostly they're iconoclasts, shit-disturbers, people who are more likely to try to make the world conform to *them* rather than to conform to their world.

- 3. Is there a character that you absolutely loathe?**

HP: No. Bad guys are too much fun to write, and you have to love your protagonists, or how can you champion them? And if I tried to write about someone I did loathe, I'd end up loving them, in the weird way writers have. There can be no fiction without empathy.

- 4. How do you go about fleshing out your characters? Where do you begin?
How/When is the individual character born?**

HP: Some things are impossible to pinpoint. It's a bit like the formation of the solar system: a whole lot of vague and dusty ideas swirl around until they reach critical mass and suddenly there's the story idea, character, situation, setting, and all. I guess the character fully comes to life for me as I figure out how they got into this situation and how - and why - they're going to get out of it, or change it for the better. I also really need to know what they're afraid of, and how they're brave.

5. Do you think fantasy fiction provides a much-needed respite from the increasing impact of contemporary technology?

HP: That's an interesting question. I don't know if I write it for a respite, but I certainly write from an attitude that the technologies that take up so much of our time these days are largely irrelevant to the human condition. The problem is, I just don't *care* about cell phones and iPads and Kindles and Tweets and blogs and whatever the hell else is out there. My computer is a writing tool, my phone is a poor second to a face-to-face conversation. I don't escape into fantasy worlds; I write about worlds where such things are as irrelevant to my characters as they are to me. Maybe I'm just a grumpy luddite at heart.

6. Let's discuss your writerly beginnings. When did you start writing? Was there an 'aha' moment when you simply realized that you wanted to become a full-time writer?

HP: I played at writing even when I was in elementary school. I can remember a running stream-of-consciousness absurdist story I wrote in brief installments in class - mostly when I'd finished the reading assignment ahead of everyone else. But for some reason it never occurred to me that I could actually Be A Writer When I Grew Up until I was in my twenties. I had to quit university for health reasons before I finished my degree, and faced with a severe case of *Oh crap now what am I going to do?* I realized that reading, and writing, were really the skills and passions that I had to fall back on.

7. Could you describe your writing process? Where does the idea for a story or a novel begin? How does it unfold? Some writers swear by writing at least 5 hours a day. Do you have a particular routine that you follow on a daily basis or do you write in spurts?

HP: Ideas come from all kinds of places, and in all kinds of ways, but if I'm honest it really comes down to daydreaming. I might get interested in a minor character in a novel I'm reading, or there's a situation that gets overshadowed by the main plot, or I might even have a cool dream, and I'll ponder it awhile, trying it on next to other idea fragments, playing out scenes in my head until something clicks. To me the basics of a new story are character, setting, and a dramatic situation - the start of a plot. If I'm tackling a novel I'm going to do a lot more pondering, playing out possibilities and scenarios in my notebook until I'm sure I've got enough material to sustain the novel's long haul, but a short story I'll often just start writing and see where it takes me.

As for how I work, that also depends on whether I'm working on a novel or on stories. They're very different animals. A novel demands a day-to-day commitment, and once

I'm well launched I'll generally spend 4 or 5 hours a day at the computer. I think my last couple of novels I figured I was writing about 20 hours a week - not counting daydreaming, notebooking, and complaining to friends. Short stories obviously go a lot faster, but because each one needs to be different from the last - every project has its own qualities or identity -I don't seem able to string together one after another, day after day. One or two a month, maybe, when I'm in the swing. But always playing with new ideas and coming back to old ones to see if they're ripe.

8. What kind of advice would you give to aspiring writers?

HP: Read what you hate and write what you love, which is to say, whether you're writing literary fiction or mysteries or crazy experimental stage plays, you can't confine yourself to reading only the kind of thing you write. If you do you end up developing a very narrow vision and understanding of the craft. Also, after a lifetime of reading science fiction, fantasy, and horror, I am often frankly embarrassed for literary authors who think they're being all risky and cutting edge by re-inventing SF ideas that were old in the 1980s. On the other hand, you have to write what you love the very best, however weirdly uncommercial or unrespectably commercial it might be, simply because writing is hard. It keeps you locked in a room with yourself for hours and days and months and years; it takes years of work to learn the basic skills; and usually it takes more years of persistent knocking on doors before you have a chance at professional recognition. So if you're not doing what you absolutely love, you'll either be miserable, or not doing it at all. Read what you hate, and write what you love.



***Holly Phillips is an Award-winning fantasy writer. Her short story collections include *The Palace of Repose*, *The Burning Girl*, and *The Engine's Child*.**

***Dr. Gyllie Phillips is an Associate Professor in the Department of English Studies at Nipissing University.**

Global Issues

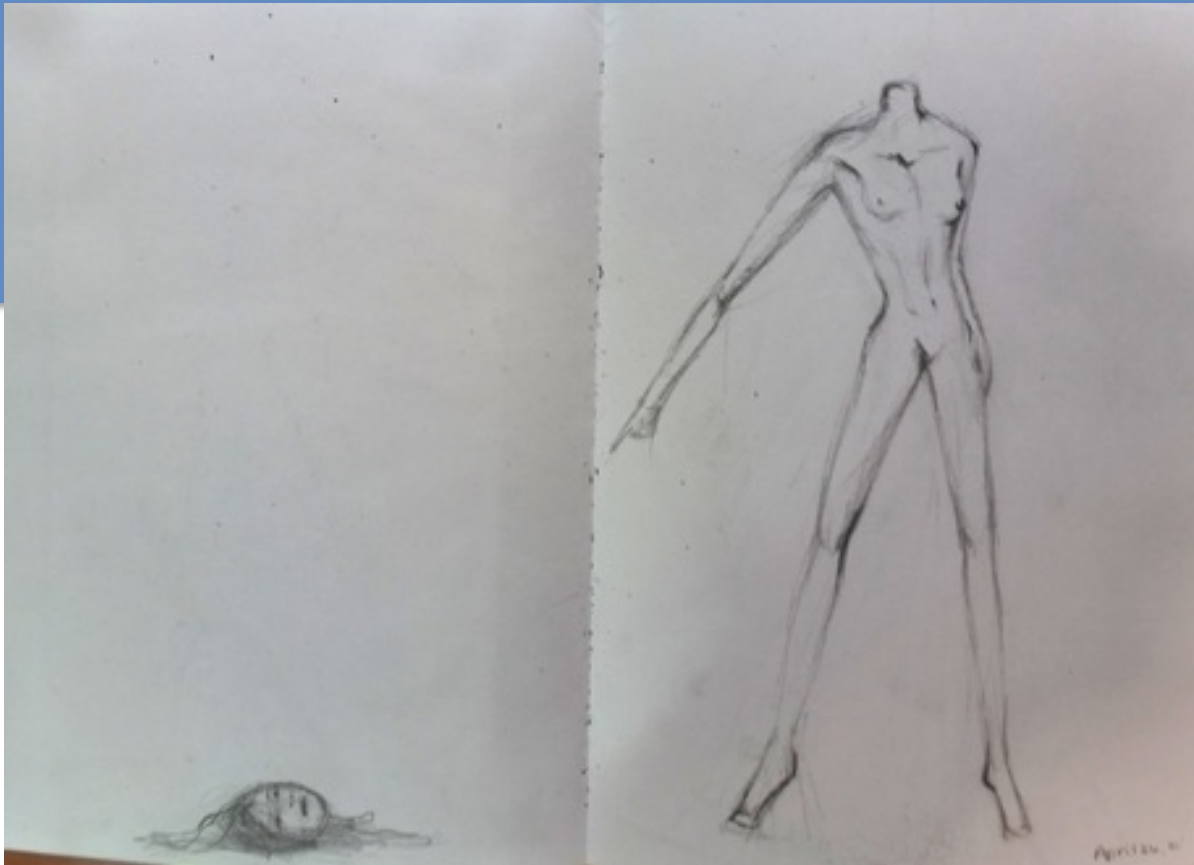
Amy Pyne and Lindsay Smith, “Technology, Globalization, and the Mini Cyborgs”

Who does not have an affair with technology these days? We are a cyborg generation—Donna Haraway’s dream come true. We may not be a physical hybridization of flesh and wires (yet), but we certainly are connected and immersed in our hi-tech havens and cellular culture. In today’s society, we see a merging of human and machine that transcends the generations. Grandparents, parents, and children alike are engaging with and becoming one with their technological devices - human beings are breeding cyborgs.

Ellen Seiter’s theory of lingua franca details the widely shared culture present in childhood. Through technology, images become the predominant method of communicating ideologies stemming from contemporary culture; therefore, regardless of language, location, culture, or race, these messages are successfully (and oftentimes unconsciously) transferred. With the rise of globalization, transnational media, and global values, particularly those that normalize Western ideals and middle-class lifestyles, images transcend words. It is through these images that the commodity market breeds cyborgs – from birth children, are brought up, ultimately programmed, in a technological society.

Children are constantly surrounded by toys that are meant to be deconstructed and put back together. Not only are children being exposed to the concept of the cyborg from an early age, they are participating in the act themselves. Through the constant bombardment of media images that convey a disassembling of the human body, it becomes easier to manipulate the body of the consumer to the position of the consumed. The varying modes of new media have made it much easier to create a parasitic relationship with the company of its consumer. The consumer is becoming like a machine that consistently engages in consuming, even to the point of self-destruction. From an early age, we are taught to consume at rapid rates, and, with the increasing prevalence of advertising that promotes self-altering procedures, we as consumers are easily being fed the notion, from a younger and younger age, that just as toys can be assembled, so too can the human body.

Soon youth might not be asking for breast implants for their sweet sixteen birthdays,



Where Is My Mind? (2010)
Brittany Lamers

but rather for the silicon chips, atomic infused blood cells, and laser-powered eyesight – but who is to say which one is really better? Is our growing dependency on technology of great concern because with technological reliance comes a lack of independence, personal choice, and individuality? Has technology taken over basic human intuition? The reality is that we are controlled by the very devices that we believe to be in charge of. In giving up ourselves to technology, we are inevitably sacrificing an essential part of our identities and individuality. While these concerns are all legitimate, the question is: ARE WE?

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Christine Clarke, “Texting Travesties”

I do not wish to dispute the benefits of various social media such as blogging, Facebook, email, or even texting. The benefits are obvious, and we reap them every day. I have a simpler concern: one that does not involve the clicking of keys or the pressing of a send button. My concern is with the increasing lack of a face-to-face conversation.

Now more than a half way through the Bachelor of Education program, I have noticed a few interesting features of the so-called texting generation to which I allegedly belong. I was teaching a grade eleven class with only fourteen students. While teaching, I was persistently interrupted by flashes of shiny screens and students staring intently into their laps, laughing. I have not been a teenager for a few years now, but I cannot recall ever finding my lap particularly hilarious. I spoke to a few teachers at the school about the issue of phones. They all had different ways of dealing with it. While I was learning how to manage that problem, I also learned that students were texting their friends in the same class, in different classes, or, most impressive of all, their parents. They would not verbally speak in class, but they felt comfortable digitally passing notes.

Here is my question: has texting become a habit? Or is it a source of comfort in uncomfortable situations? Have we gotten to a point where we need the constant reassurance of a familiar presence tucked away in our pockets? Are we that afraid of meeting new people, of expressing our thoughts, without the veil that technology so graciously affords us? Is it now acceptable to walk into a classroom as a teacher, ask a question, and not receive an answer because the students are shy or afraid of what others will think of them? If that is the case, will in-class questions be submitted via text message and instantaneously received and answered by the teacher? What has made face to face interaction so difficult, so distasteful? Where has our confidence in our own knowledge and beliefs gone?

Texting for comfort seems to apply to those who are not completely at ease with themselves, especially young (or soon-to-be) adults who have not developed their beliefs and public speaking skills enough to speak up even if they do have the confidence.

I used to work in a restaurant. It had a lovely atmosphere. It was reasonably quiet. It was private, but I would still walk by tables and see cellphones out. At a table of two, one, if not both of the diners were texting or researching this or that. I sometimes wondered if they were texting each other. How sad would that be? Apart from being a worker in a restaurant, I have been a diner. I have been the girl sitting across the table from a date or a friend who was typing away on their phone. One word: unimpressed.



Texting Travesties (2012) by Christine Clarke

Call me egocentric if need be, but when I am out with a friend, I expect a good conversation. By 'good', I mean a face-to-face conversation, uninterrupted by the sound of another text message arriving.... What is it that we are really saying by texting when we are supposedly communicating with others? *You* are not important enough to merit my full attention? I am having so much fun with you that I am already planning my tomorrow? You are so interesting that I found this hilarious video of a cat trying to climb a slide? You are not in on this joke, but if you were, you would think it was really funny? In the end, I am left wondering what texting really does for us as a society.

We are missing out on opportunities to make actual connections with each other rather than impersonal digital connections. I can tell more about a person from the way they look at me when I am talking than I can from their syntax. Texting is about characters, not character. To feel connected with the world while being disconnected from our present realities only begs the question whether by having more, we are actually gaining less.

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Academic Life

Rebecca Sullivan, "Fine Arts: Technologically Speaking..."

I am sitting in one of the work rooms at the Monastery. I notice a glaring contrast between the calm, woodsy, winter scene outside and the blurred, somewhat unsettling and mysterious painting placed in front of me. **Carissa MacIntosh, a fourth-year BFA student at Nipissing University**, sits beside her painting waiting patiently to answer my questions. I tell her to talk about her work freely.

“Well,” she says, “my painting is about personal memory. I am interested in depicting the solidification of memory while, simultaneously, portraying how impossible that task is.” Carissa then continues to tell me that the concept of the painting derives directly from her personal experience of driving along a highway in a car, hence the title of the work: **17B**. “When I try to remember something specific, I can only envision details like colour, textures, features, contrasting elements...nothing is ever concrete.” I understand what she means. Memories cannot be envisioned clearly like in a photograph or film. “That’s why I choose not to use photography,” she says. “Photographs create memories, they can’t record them.”



17B (2012) by
Carissa MacIntosh

What does all of this have to do with technology? Carissa and I start talking about how her painting can comment on the speediness of contemporary society. Because of seemingly endless technological advancements, such as the Internet and all of the devices that allow people to access it, we expect endless amounts of information to be at our finger tips. The fast motion of the car makes it even more difficult to solidify a memory because the original experience is already blurred. We become symbolic of the car driving on the highway – moving through life so quickly that we can't focus on what surrounds us. *I7B* raises a specific anxiety – is the speediness of today's society affecting our ability to store memories?



Near North Locavore Ring (2012)
by Peter Sloan

Peter Sloan, another fourth-year BFA student at Nipissing, has a slightly different opinion about technology. After spreading the word that I wanted to write an article about how students' art work relates to the theme of technology, Peter approached me and said that he wanted to talk about the machine he uses to make jewellery. Lunching at Twiggs, we began the conversation about the jewellery pieces that he has made, some with the help of his machine and some without.

“The machine I use is called a CNC (Computer Numerical Control) milling machine. It allows me to depict fine detail that would be impossible to replicate with human hands.” Peter refers to his pieces as small sculptures rather than jewellery. These pieces are tiny works of art. Some of them are sculpted by hand. Peter then continues to explain the differences between machine-made and human-made sculptures.

On one hand, the technology is beneficial because it creates detail that humans simply cannot. On the other hand, Peter wonders whether the value of the pieces is higher when they are made purely by the artist. “Is the artist’s soul present in the machine-made sculpture just as much as it is present in the handmade one?” This is a good question. Peter also points out that flaws sometimes make the work better. “If everything looks the same, where can you find the individual?” Does the personal value of the work diminish when advanced technologies are used to create it? How much work is done by the machine and how much by the artist?

Some may argue that a paint brush can be considered a technology just as much as a CNC milling machine can. At what point does technology separate from humanity? The question whether technology contributes to artistic originality or takes away from it is a matter of opinion. Art is, after all, about free expression.

***Rebecca Sullivan is in her 5th year of the English Studies Program at Nipissing University. Her minor is in Fine Arts.**

Academic Contributions

Amy Pyne, “The Cybernetic Deconstruction of Gender: *He, She and It* as a Transgender Critique”

Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti both explore and establish conceptualizations of posthumanist feminism. In her theoretical article, “Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” Haraway suggests the metaphor of the cyborg frees women from socially constructed gender binaries in a postfeminist framework.

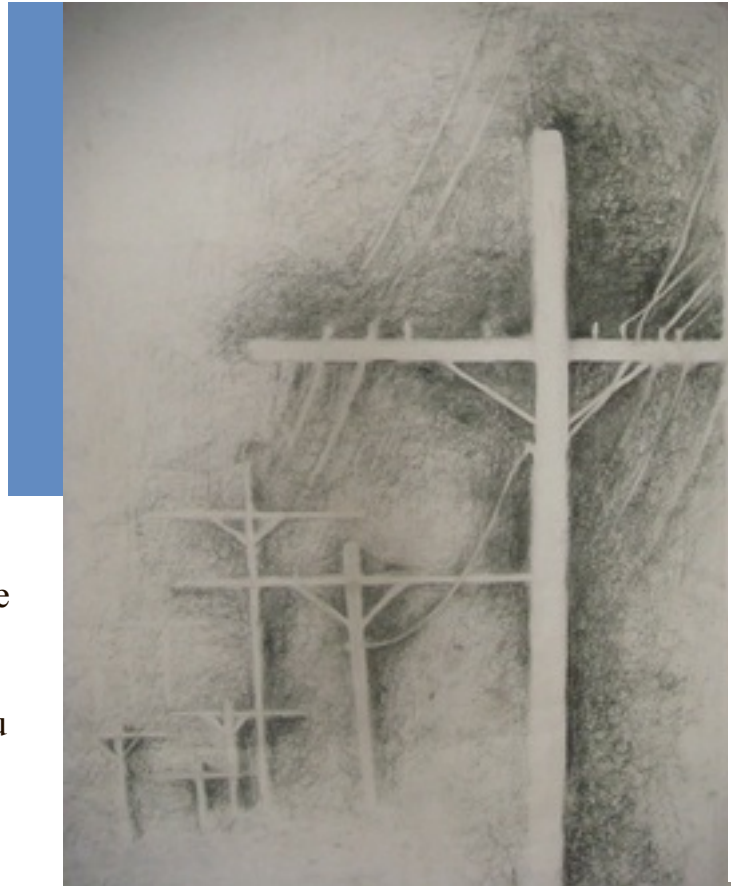
Braidotti’s “Cyberfeminism with a Difference” extends the posthumanist faction to a post-gendered view, focusing on marginalized characters to illustrate the blurring of feminine and masculine gender boundaries. Braidotti challenges the constraints of feminism with an extended post-gendered view – a transgendered critique. Cyborgs are creatures of social reality, just as gender is a perceived social construction. To be born, or created, man or woman, male or female, goes beyond the logical to include social implications. Gender is the reformulation of what begins with nature and transforms in society. In her novel, *He, She and It*, Marge Piercy explores traditional gender codes in a post-humanist society. Through her collapse of literary boundaries, Piercy establishes a critique of patriarchy, a deformation of ideological systems, and the culmination of a postfeminist dystopia. At the same time, however, the characters in the novel, with particular focus on Yod, integrate themselves within, and distance themselves from, mainstream feminist ideals. Reflecting a transgendered context, the experiences of Yod are idealized outside “normal” gender constraints. While feminist literature emphasizes the experiences of women, or feminine circumstances, transgender critiques are not limited by, or to, gender utopias. Piercy uses society’s preconceived notions of gender to parity a post-feminist deconstruction of gender.

The prefix “post” implies the movement, the growth, and the proliferation. The postindustrial society has created an “alliance between technology and culture” (Braidotti). This developing relationship transgresses into a posthumanist realm. Posthumanism moves beyond the limits of the familiar human form. As presented in *He, She and It*, the body is portrayed as a “post human body, that is to say an artificially reconstructed body. The body in question here is far from a biological essence: it is a crossroad of intensive forces; it is a surface of inscriptions of social codes”(Braidotti). The socially constructed intersection of postfeminism, postmodernism, and posthumanism results in cyberfeminism and transgendered critiques: this juncture is synonymous with the cyborg figure.

A cyborg is defined as a “cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (Haraway 149). This “natural” – as a result of social evolution – and crafted image is used to question and redefine social notions of masculinity and femininity: “the cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world” (Haraway 150). Piercy, closely reflecting the theories of Braidotti, expands this further to encompass a progressive post-gender experience. Piercy uses a feminized male cyborg as her protagonist to push the boundaries, and to critique the feminist to postfeminist transgression, resulting in a fiction commenting on the post-gender framework.

Piercy’s novel is rooted in a globalized framework of ideological conventions, removing Western social ideas, and creating a post-gender, or transgendered, view. Yod possessing biologically male sex organs– as he says, “I am anatomically male” (Piercy 70-71) – results in the application of assumed gender roles; however, being anatomically male does not automatically result in Yod as masculine in the sense the West has shaped ideals of masculinity. When Shira first meets Yod, she notices Avram’s use of masculine pronouns: “you call the cyborg ‘he,’ I notice. Isn’t that anthropomorphizing?” (Piercy 70). Yod’s response is rooted in posthumanism: “referring to me as ‘him’ is correct. I am not a robot...I’m a fusion of machine and lab created biological components – much as humans frequently are fusions of flesh and machine” (Piercy 70). Yod is a post-human vessel for postfeminism.

A cyborg is used to show socially constructed notions of individuals, evident in the portrayal of bodies, parallel to Haraway’s belief of women often being reduced to bodily objects. She views the cyborg as “a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self” (Haraway 163). The physical descriptions of Yod are often quite objectified and frequently characterized in a more feminine manner: “sleek,” “warm,” “sensitive,” “exquisite,” and beautiful” (Piercy 182). The other prominent cyborg figure in the text, Nili, is socially contrasted with Yod. Her physical abilities are viewed as masculine, as reflected in her descriptions: full of “power,” “intense,” and “primitive” (Piercy 189, 222, 224). Nili comes from an all-female community: “we have no men. We clone and engineer genes. After birth we undergo additional alteration. We have created ourselves to



Electrical Wires (2009) by Brittany Lammers

endure, to survive, to hold our land” (Piercy 198). Piercy uses the archetype of the absent referent, feminine and masculine, to illustrate the social affects of that which is not present. Yod’s socialization is a social setting containing both genders, but with female dominance, and Nili’s removal from all things male illustrates how the dominant and absent factors affect socialization. The transgendered figure is the ultimate cyborg – postmodern identities as predicated on the acceptance of partiality of selves and perspectives. Piercy does this to comment on and investigate gender constructions: she is establishing a transgendered critique in a progressing post-gendered world.

The genesis of Yod furthers Piercy’s exploration of and comment on gender roles in the post-humanist society. Patriarchal commentary is present in the role of fathers, or the lack thereof. The relationship of Avram and his biological son, Gadi, is characterized as a disappointment. Yod establishes the initial discussion of their failed relationship: “I am the first who can carry out the tasks of my father” (Piercy 73). In this statement, Yod establishes himself not only as Avram’s son, but also his more adept son. Avram is put on the spot: “I did make him, after all, and I did a better job with him than Gadi, I have to say” (Piercy 73). Piercy illustrates a distorted mirroring of the creation story, reflected in Haraway’s manifesto: “the cyborg does not expect its father to save it through a restoration of the garden; that is, through the fabrication of a heterosexual male... the cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden” (151). The primary distortion, from a gendered perspective, with Piercy’s creation story is the role of man as the “biological” creator.

Posthumanism results in experiments of new social forms of fatherhood: the idea of fatherhood as a scientific creation rather than a biological conception. Avram counteracts gender norms with his creation, his birthing, of Yod – a postmodern representation of the Frankenstein story. Braidotti’s observation of male anxiety in regards to the absent father parallels Avram’s removal from Yod’s social programming. Avram supplies Yod his life task – militant protector and weapon – however, Yod’s socialization is provided by two women. Malkah creates the majority of Yod’s internal programming and coding, and Shira acts as his outer social teacher. On many occasions Piercy reminds her audience of Yod’s feminized roots: “remember, a woman helped program me” (182). Yod’s purpose is inherently masculine, while his demeanor is characteristically female.

By the end of the novel, Piercy does not articulate any set-in-stone responses to gender conventions in posthumanist society, but rather she questions, critiques, and parodies the transgression to postfeminism. Avram’s ability to control Yod’s life, in combination with the control of Malkah’s programming and Shira’s socialization, reflects a feminine position of the father controlling his offspring’s fate. However, Piercy undercuts this with the simultaneous explosion and death of Yod and Avram: “I have died and taken with me Avram, my creator, and his lab, all the records of his experiment” (Piercy 415). Yod has shifted from calling Avram his father to denouncing him as his creator. The patriarchal loses control; however, the postgendered, or transgendered, figure cannot survive.

The struggle of Yod reflects a postgender identity. Using a cyborg, a human hybrid, creates the ideal platform to critique transgender identities, commenting on the pathos of

encounters in the postmodern and posthuman era. Piercy goes beyond the “post” gender boundaries to explore the limitations, possibilities, and experiences across the genders. She illustrates a transgendered critique as an extension of the postgendered accounts framed by Haraway and Braidotti. Reflecting Haraway’s postfeminist framework and Braidotti’s push for a postgendered view, Piercy critiques the gender binary convention through the creation, programming, and socialization of a cyborg, an essentially transgendered identity, ultimately resulting in its destruction and the overall deconstruction of gender ideologies.

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***Amy Pyne is in her 4th year of the English Studies Program at Nipissing University. A version of this essay was submitted to the 2011 Honours Seminar (ENGL4537) directed by Dr. Pavlina Radia. It was also presented at the English Studies Symposium held on March 9, 2012. The online version has been revised for the purposes of NuSense.**

Alayna Becker, “From Mass Education to Mass Communication: Communications Technology, Society, and the Student”

As the Baby Boomer generation slowly ages and dissipates, the ‘Net Generation’ becomes the new group of social dominance. Technology has influenced society since the first use of assistive tools; however, never before has technology advanced so quickly and become so engrained in everyday social activity. Even the Internet is no longer titled ‘new’; the most state-of-the-art gadgets are out of date by the time consumers purchase them (Leu et al., 2011). These devices essentially create a form of cyborg adolescents (Shilling, 2005), who are connected constantly to each other through technology (Turkle, 2011). This drastically influences relationships and identities, to the extent that modern technology affects the mental functions of the current population, especially adolescents (Healy, 1998). The prominence and dominance of communications technologies in the home have altered face-to-face social interactions, technological communication, and family structure and dynamics. The ‘digital divide’ has now come to mean a generational gap in technological expertise and comfort (Trierweiler Hudson, 2011), as opposed to the previous division of opportunity caused by socioeconomic status. This lack of competence within the adult population affects the education system; teachers are wary of using technology in the classroom due



Jaws of Concrete (2012) by Geoff Mayne

to a lack of confidence and the perception that they must continue teaching using the mass education method that rose from the industrial economy (Tapscott, 2009). However, the teacher role cannot remain static while society shifts at an ever-increasing pace; a shift towards teaching students of all ages to learn, as opposed to know, has justifiably become a focus for some educators. Recent research demonstrates that the education system must undergo a paradigm shift towards individualized, experiential and student-centered education that promotes critical thinking and collaboration.

Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels were two of the first modern socialists to examine the ways in which humanity uses technology to interact with its environment (Shilling, 2005). Taking this a step further, Lewis J. Perelman argues that technology is “the driving force of society”(1992, p. 25). The definition and application of technology also varies among cultures (Bauchspies, Croissant, & Restivo, 2006). According to Internet World Stats from 2010, approximately two billion individuals use the Internet (Leu et al., 2011, p. 5). Further, “the average teen sends over three thousand text messages a month” (Turkle, 2011, p. xiv). These are just a few examples of the extent to which society, especially Western society, is immersed in inescapable interactions with modern technology on a daily basis. In fact, Western society has become inseparable from technology. The relationship between society and technology is reciprocal; technology changes as society evolves, but it also causes change and socializes individuals.

Beginning in the 1990s, sociologists and psychologists began to examine the ways in which virtual lives and real lives permeate each other (Turkle, 2011). It has been argued that technology actually has power and control over society (Bauchspies et al, 2006); constant access to ‘the network’ of communications technologies alters and determines social and cultural structure (Shilling, 2005). These changes are paramount, particularly in the cognitive and personal development of youth. The current young generation has been appropriately titled the ‘Net Generation,’ as the Internet has taken on a significant role in the lives of children from the initial stages of their cognitive development. The tools which humans regularly use shape their ideologies and interactions; the result is what some title a ‘life mix’ – the interweaving of online and offline lives (Turkle, 2011). Thus, technology does not only control the macrocosmic society, but also pervades and reconstructs the microcosmic individual (Shilling, 2005).

The prevalence of technology in North America’s current “media-saturated children” (Healy, 1998, p. 41) has drastically altered their mental processes and functions in comparison with their predecessors. Jane Healy studied the effects of technology on young minds in the late 1990s. Although slightly out of date, her findings remain relevant in the current state of technological prevalence. Healy argues that the malleability of the young mind is particularly susceptible to the features of technology (1998). She expresses concern regarding the experimental process of exposing children to new technologies without first examining how these may affect development, and observes that “[t]echnologies have a disconcerting habit of changing the mental skills and even the brain organization of people using them” (p. 32). Technology has resulted in an increase in multitasking (Turkle, 2011). At any given time, a child may be on Facebook, shopping, listening to music, playing games online, receiving

and answering texts, watching videos, and instant messaging. This does not necessarily mean that youth are more efficient; in most cases it means that children complete each task less successfully as they would by performing each task separately.

This multitasking also filters into the personal relationships of ‘wired’ youth in the Net Generation. Despite the increase in convenience of the Internet and other communications technologies, they can actually disconnect individuals (Bauchspies et al., 2006; Shilling, 2005). Individuals feel more connected because they can contact more people, fulfilling a human need for relationships with others; yet, the physical distance and divided attention of multitasking creates a sense of confused aloneness (Turkle, 2011). While networks such as Facebook and devices such as cell phones allow people to communicate with more people, it can also result in more fragmented and incomplete relationships and friendships with each individual. Consequently, for many, there is an increase in quantity of connections, but a decrease in quality (Shilling, 2005; Turkle, 2011).

The result of this confusion is insecurity and anxiety surrounding relationships, which in turn causes a further dependence on technology as a safe and impersonal venue for communication (Turkle, 2011). This allows a degree of protection, since visual cues will not reveal the emotions and thoughts of those involved. Most adolescents prefer texting their peers to talking out of a fear that even talking on a phone may reveal too much of their selves or emotions (Turkle, 2011). This also influences the situations in which it has become acceptable to physically interact with another person. Sherry Turkle (2011) tells of two roommates who text each other while in different rooms to update them on the goings on of the apartment because they believe that knocking on each other’s bedroom doors would be too intrusive. These technologies allow for communication without physically ‘disturbing’ each other, but also isolate the individuals.

This ability and tendency of technology to cut humans off from one another extends into the family structure and dynamic. While many parents gain reassurance by providing their children with cell phones for constant contact, technology also tends to quarantine family members, even if they share physical space. Recent statistics show that almost sixty percent of American families own two or more computers, the majority of which also have Internet connection (Williams, 2011). This drastically affects familial interaction. In a recent article from *The New York Times* (Williams, 2011), the mother of a family reflects on an evening in which she was in the same room as her husband, eight year old son and ten year old daughter. Each family member was using a different piece of technology, completely oblivious to the actions of the other three people in the room. Each family member was essentially in a completely different reality. This type of situation is increasingly common in American society (Turkle, 2011; Williams, 2011). In a condition that *Times* reporter Alex Williams (2011) titles ‘iDistraction,’ families have redefined the traditional notion of ‘quality time.’ Now, even a standard family movie night is no longer ‘standard,’ but is interspersed with texting and Internet browsing.

The change in parental communication, interaction and affection influences children at a very young age and is not limited to the home environment. With Internet-capable cell phones,

parents are able to check their email while pushing strollers, make calls while their children play in the park, or text during family dinners (Turkle, 2011). Children do notice this mental absence; Turkle (2011) reports teenage complaints that parents overuse their phones at dinner and are distracted by their phones at sporting events. Many adults admit that they feel overwhelmed by their dependence on technology (Bauchspies et al., 2006). The demarcations between work and leisure have become blurred, as businesses give Blackberries and cell phones to their employees so they can be contacted, and are expected to reply, twenty-four hours of the day. Many adults even choose their travel destinations based on whether or not they will have cell phone reception – more and more are slowly selecting locations in which they *cannot* be contacted (Turkle, 2011). Adults and children are both affected by the ‘always on’ syndrome of communications technology.

Many argue that providing a child with a cell phone increases the sense of security of both the parent and the child. While this may be true, it is also argued that this inhibits the ability of a child to develop true autonomy from its parents and, consequently, a true sense of identity (Turkle, 2011). The child has less freedom, as the parent has a constant mode of contact, and most parents give the cell phone on the condition that the child always answers the calls of his or her parents (Turkle, 2011). This freedom, yet constraint, to develop an identity pervades the theoretical and psychological discourse on the subject. The Internet simultaneously creates an environment in which children can explore innumerable identities, and one in which their identities and self-concepts are perpetually fragmented (Bauchspies et al., 2006; Shilling, 2005). The Internet also creates a venue in which children can be free of the control of their parents to create their own identities (Healy, 1998). Essentially, the combination of profiles on social networking sites, browsing history on search engines, and online contact merge to form an avatar of sorts – an online identity. This sense of self may or may not be congruent with the offline self-concept of the individual, but when combined the two create a ‘life mix’ identity.

Ultimately, these social, structural and developmental changes have altered the current student in the education system. One such change in students is the method of bullying. Todd A. DeMitchell (2011) explains that cyberbullying usually occurs away from school, where teachers have no control. He also argues that the Internet allows a degree of anonymity, which children feel permits them to say things through a keyboard that they would not say face-to-face. It also allows twenty-four-hour access to the victim without location restrictions. Bullying thrives on bystanders. With over two billion people currently using the Internet globally, bullies are given an endless supply of bystanders (Tapscott, 2009). Cyberbullying, arguably, is also heightened because of the disconnect that students feel with others when communicating via the Internet. The redefinition of relationships caused by communications technologies, as discussed earlier, has created many lesser-quality relationships and excludes anger and sadness cues. It has also left children unable to effectively and empathetically communicate via the Internet and texting.

Bullying is not the only area in which students have cognitively changed since the onset of communications technologies; it has also created an internalized reliance on technology

and mental functioning in the classroom. Indeed, this was the focus of many studies once technology became increasingly prominent. Many pointed to a decrease in attention span, listening, and even problem-solving skills (Healy, 1998; Tapscott, 2009). However, many teachers are reluctant to adapt their teaching styles, and the average classroom teaching approach remains unchanged from fifty years ago (Trierweiler Hudson, 2011). There are many causes of this lack of structural change. The introduction of computers and other technology altered the power structure in the vast majority of classrooms with a generational digital divide; teachers were no longer the experts on everything and students could work with technology more effectively and efficiently than teachers (Healy, 1998). A group of educators studied the reluctance of teachers to implement technology in their classroom (Wood, Mueller, Willoughby, Specht, & Deyoung, 2005), and found that a large contributor was lack of comfort with the technology. They also note the need for increased support, access, hardware and software. There is no time for teachers to learn how to implement technology if they must learn to do so through trial and error, and a disconnect remains between technological professional development and relevant classroom implementation (Ou-Hingwan, 2007). Teachers fear losing control by introducing something about which a student has more experience and information. Further, there is noted concern about students who have extensive experience with computers hacking the school's system (Wood et al., 2005).

Some teachers also avoid using technology in the classroom, and specifically the Internet, because they feel students do not know how to focus their searches (Wood et al., 2005). However, this should be a reason *to* include technology in the current education system, for “[a] critical component of successful Internet reading is the ability to read and locate information that meets one's needs”(Leu et al., 2011, p. 7). Power in current society is very much connected to technological competence (Ou-Hingwan, 2007), and teachers should strive to provide the most opportunities for future adult success as possible. There are also many benefits to using technology if the teacher is confident enough to implement the technology and also to learn from his or her students. Studies have shown that proper and effective use of technology like the iPad allows students to create work that develops their higher order thinking skills (Tapscott, 2009).

Further, the use of technology in the classroom can create both a more individualized education and a more inclusive teaching environment. This allows all students to fully participate and feel as though they belong in the classroom, as there is much assistive technology that can be made available for all students to use, including programs such as Kurzweil. Certain forms of technology also appeal to various intelligences from Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. By providing choice in activities and options geared towards various learning styles, teachers create more individualized instruction, which is crucial to the modern technology-influenced learner (Tapscott, 2009). Teachers can easily integrate teaching methods that incorporate musical and visual intelligences through technology such as projectors and Smartboards. Overall, technology in the classroom can essentially appeal to each of the intelligences in some form, allowing all students to gain confidence and competence in

the classroom. This is not a replacement for good teaching, but part of an effective teacher in current North American society.

However, this individualized learning does not imply that students should be forced to learn individually. Lev Vygotsky theorized in his socio-cultural theory of learning that students learn through culturally-specific social interactions. In fact, with the environmental mediation that youth experience through communications technologies, the emphasis in classrooms should shift towards collaborative learning (Leu et. al, 2011; Tapscott, 2009). The social aspects of learning must take the forefront in the classroom, as “[t]he individual learning model is foreign territory for most Net Geners, who have grown up collaborating, sharing, and creating together online” (Tapscott, 2009, p. 137). Teachers need to abandon the mass education model that was developed in the industrial age, in which students learn through silent memorization and rote work.

Along a similar vein, this collaborative education should be at least partly experiential and based in critical inquiry. John Dewey was the first to promote experiential education as a more progressive form of education. In the context of technology, students need the opportunity to use the Internet and other technologies in an educational context and environment. This provides students with hands-on experience with life experience and the opportunity to reflect on this experience in a teacher-facilitated environment. The teacher must prompt critical thinking about the use of technologies, helping students learn how to critically evaluate the accuracy, reliability and bias of online information (Leu et al., 2011). This will help students learn how to effectively use the technology for educational purposes, as opposed to just the social aspects.

Ultimately, the above practices will create a more student-centered learning environment within schools. Don Tapscott (2009) argues that technology cannot simply be used as a method through which teachers deliver content to students. A more effective method is a form of reciprocal teaching, in which the teacher mentors and demonstrates many of the skills initially, but the students also teach each other and the teacher. Studies show that students want to be asked about technology and to be used as an information resource in the classroom (Trierweiler Hudson, 2011). If teachers can embrace their students’ technological knowledge, this will develop a more lasting experience and education for the students (Tapscott, 2009), increase their confidence, and increase the technological confidence of the teacher.

The prominence of various forms of technology has had a significant impact on the ‘Net Generation’ in terms of cognitive development, social interactions, and relationships. All of these aspects are mediated through the context of technology, such as the Internet. Communications technologies have taken on an increasingly dominant role in the lives of North American youth. The Net Generation is also affected by frequent parental use of cell phones and connection to work. Both because of, and in spite of, this constant connection to others, North Americans feel increasingly isolated. The increase in connections does not necessitate an increase in true human connection. The result of the attempted combination of real and online lives is a confused and fragmented identity. This self-concept is also affected by cyberbullying,

which is prominent in part because of the ability to remove oneself from the emotional effects of face-to-face bullying, as well as an endless bystander audience. The ramifications for educators include the need to change teaching practice to reflect a change in cognitive processes and the generational gap in technological competence. The most effective teaching methods incorporate technology not simply as a teacher tool to give information to students, but a tool which students are able to experience within an educational context. Encouraging students to think critically about their use of and experience with technology helps them learn how to use the Internet effectively and how their actions on the Internet affect others. The social aspects of communications technology have created social learners and, as such, students should be encouraged to collaborate in the classroom; however, they should also have an individualized educational experience. Teachers are meant to help students develop the skills necessary to excel in society; in current culture, this means swallowing the fear of change in the educational system.

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Creative Contributions

Prose

Holly Phillips, “The New Ecology”

It was almost quitting time when Millennium saw the Nerd again, lurking outside the donut shop in his car. She went straight home to the boarding house and packed her bags.

Sonia from down the hall leaned in the doorway, a newspaper in her hands. “So, what is it? Cops? Debt collectors? Ex-boyfriend?”

Jeans, underwear, T-shirts. “More like Lectroids from Planet Ten.” Bike shorts and helmet.

“Huh?”

“Forget it.” She tossed the duffel to land with a thump on Sonia’s bare feet.

“Hey, watch it.”

“Sorry.” She zipped up the sleeping bag on the bed, folded it in half and started to roll.

“Well, I don’t blame you for leaving, whatever it is,” Sonia said, rattling the newspaper. “It’s getting pretty weird around here. Did you hear about this thing at the park by the aquatic center? Seems some crazy welder or someone turned the jungle gym into kind of a real jungle – or anyway, a plant, like the one of those fly-eating plants, what are they called, Venus flytraps? They say some kid went to play on it and almost got trapped inside. Serves her right if you ask me, you got to be pretty dumb to play around on a thing like that, but can you imagine the amount of work – ”

Millennium stopped listening. The sleeping bag’s frayed strings were too short, and anyway, she already knew more than the paper did about the kid-eating jungle gym. It wasn’t until she heard from Sonia say something about their landlord that she tuned back in.

“What?”

“I said, does Mr. Chang know you’re leaving?”

Shit. She tossed the bed roll by her duffel bag and looked around the room to see if she’d forgotten anything. “Not yet,” she said. “I’ll call him from the bus station.”

*

Once she'd bought her ticket she used a pay phone to make two calls. The first one was to Mr. Chang.

"Moving out? You mean October first, right?"

"No, I mean five minutes ago." He started to sputter. "Hey, be glad I'm paid up to the end of September."

"One month's notice, or one month's rent!"

"Kiss my ass."

The second call was to her folks, collect.

Press one to accept the charges.

Beep.

"Millie?" Half worry, half hope. "Where are you?"

"Kelowna, mom." A beat to let the relief/disappointment set in. Then, "But I'm moving to Vancouver."

"Oh, Millie."

"It's Em, mom, remember?"

"I thought you liked it there."

"Yeah, well, not really."

"You said you didn't want to back to the coast after what happened in Victoria."

"I'm kinda running out of places to go, mom." She never knew it was a mistake even as she said it.

"You could always come home, Em."

She winced. "You don't want that, mom. Trust me. You really don't want me home."

"Oh, honey, of course –"

"It's getting worse, mom." She hadn't meant to say that either. Her throat started to close. "They're getting stronger. And there's some guy following me around."

Hiss of a long distance line. Finally, "Millie. Come home. We can always find a way to manage."

"You know I can't." She pressed her knuckles hard against her mouth, pain to kill the betraying quaver. "It's better if I keep moving, mom. I'll be fine. I'll call you when I have a place to stay." Before she hung up, she added, "Give my love to dad."

*

What with the Ones getting themselves into the paper again, she'd already been thinking about leaving, even before she saw the Nerd. She had picked Kelowna to begin with because it was a new city with a fast urban sprawl gulping up the farms and sage bush that has once filled the Okanagan Valley. A city too new to have awoken to its power of creation yet – that's what she's hoped for. Instead it seemed to be working the other way around. The city Ones were far livelier than she'd anticipated, adapting with an ingenuity that was half thrilling, half terrifying:

witness the jungle gym. Still, she might have stuck it out at least until winter, when things usually quieted down, if He hadn't found her again.

The Nerd.

A bulky shape behind the wheel of a rusted-out Civic, a face red and shiny in the heat, a plump hand pushing heavy glasses up his nose as he sat reading a book and waiting for her to show.

Nemesis in coke-bottle lenses.

She had to laugh, even as the fear tightened its coil in her gut.

*

Vancouver,

September was a good time for finding work. She moved into a cheap room in a house off Commercial Drive, and by the end of her second day she had a job riding for a courier service downtown. It was an Indian Summer time, warm sunshine with a cool wind off the harbour. Even with the smog trapped by the mountains east of the city the riding was a pleasure, especially after the baked heat of August in Kelowna, and the Vancouver traffic was a thrill, pure distraction from the 9 to 5. The rest of the time she waited for the city Ones to know she was there.

She didn't have to wait for long.

The Small Ones found her first, as they usually did. Her fourth night in the attic room that smelled of curry and mold, she heard the scratching of metal claws on the walls outside. Lying on the sagging bed, sleeping bag open across her waist, she turned her head toward the small winder across the room. Her skin tightened, trying to lift the hairs on her arms. Her breath came short. She'd never get used to it. Scritch, scrabble, scratch. Never. A moving gleam showed in the window, a leggy shadow against the streetlight. There was no curtain or blind. Scritch – tap tap tap.

Bold fucker. She sat up.

Flash, swirls of legs and out of sight. Scrabble scritch and the patter of stucco on the rhododendron two stories below. Not that bold.

Yet.

*

By her second weekend in the town she knew it was a mistake to live so near Commercial Drive. Though it was showing signs of the money creeping east through the city, the Drive was still a funky blend of radicals and free spirits, granola and grunge: city life growing wild outside the sober structure of the business center. Too lively in every sense of the word.

NuSense – Issue 2

By Saturday night, she was unable to sit quietly waiting at home. The air was warm and dry, the smell of summer pavements still strong under the smells of coffee and garbage. Trolley buses whirred by, their cables snapping sparks like the city's neural network for anyone to read if they could. It was more than Millennium could do – more than she wanted to. But she had other senses and she knew the city was aware of her, watching her as surely as the shaved boy on the corner with steel piercing his lip.

“Spare a quarter? Spare a loon?”

Millennium shook her head and walked on. At least out here with the people and the streetlights all around her the Small Ones could only watch from hiding. But she had to go home eventually, and when she did, they were waiting.

The house was dark, the other inhabitants either asleep or still out. Oversized rhododendrons made black heaps at the edges of the shaggy lawn. A windless night, but leaves and dry grass rustled as she walked to the front door. More than that, there was the sense of eyes, many eyes, down low and watching.

She meant to go in, daring them to risk the inhabited house, but they came out before she could even get the key in the lock. Rustle and the patter of tiny feet. She spun, put her back to the door. A streetlight lit the lawn like a three-in-the-morning stage.

First came a creature the size of a pug dog, a thing of segmented legs that threw themselves over as much as they scuttles forward, like a spider caught in surf. A junkyard spider: the dim light gleamed off the twisted tin of its limbs, the tarry rags of its joints. It



The River (2012) by Geoff Mayne

scuttle-tumbled to the edge of the walk between the street and the house and stopped with its legs bunched under, ready to pounce. A pause, in with Millennium heard her heart beating loud. Then another came, and then a handful more.

Scrapyard, trash heap, back alley beings. There was, despite the aggravation, something touching in their shyness. They were like children left too soon along, town between vengeful pranks and the desire to please, wanting attention and fearing it. A cautious slither of wire and springs to the left, a hesitant leap-frog bound of old shock absorbers and bicycle tires to the right, the eerie two-legged stalk of stick figures made from rebar and broken cement: the detritus of the city, gathered on Millennium's lawn. After a pause, they began to dance.

Young, half-formed and awkward, the Small Ones danced like marionettes with half their strings cut – and resented their own clumsiness, or so it seemed. One of the rebar stickmen fell over the tumble spider, and when it climbed to its feet it sent the spider rolling with a stiff-legged kick. The shock absorber frog didn't understand the figure at all and bounced about at random until the others shoved it to the periphery. In fact, the whole mood of the dance was more determined than celebratory, as if they were fulfilling an order to dance even though they weren't good at it, and knew they weren't, and would rather be doing something else. Of course, they had no music beyond the throb of car speakers and the whine of buses on the Drive.

Millennium put her chin in her hands and asked them wearily, pointlessly, "What do you want from me?"

She had never known why they chose her, nor what they needed her for. Maybe for an idol, if it was a kind of worship to drive her half mad with irritation and fear, or maybe a model of how to live in the world – but sometimes she thought she was no more, and no less, than their audience, the observer that proved their existence was real.

And sometimes – more and more often in recent years – she just plain didn't care.

Her question was ignored of course. Two of the rebar stickmen collided and began to fight, stiff arms and legs beating against each other with a racket of steel bars banging. The tumble spider tried to intervene and was kicked into the wire snake, which tangled its legs. The shock absorber bounced excitedly in place. A voice from the sidewalk said, "Wha' the fuck?"

Like cockroaches surprised by light, the Small Ones leapt up and were gone.

The owner of the voice, one of Millennium's housemates, said, "*What the fuck* –"

Caught out and thinking fast, Millennium cleared her throat and said, "Raccoons. Baby raccoons. Playing. You scared them away."

Her housemate shambled hesitantly up the walk. He was tall, thin, named Dave, and, luckily, drunk. "Raccoons? They didn't look – Is that Paula?"

"No, Em."

"Oh, hi, Em. I don't think those were raccoons."

"Sure," she said flatly. "I've been sitting here half an hour watching them. What else would they be?"

"Hum," he said, thoughtful. He stood swaying there a moment, then yawned. "Shit am I bagged."

Millennium got up and pulled out her key.

*

Tired, she nevertheless stayed awake staring at the lines of streetlight on her ceiling. The Small Ones would be angry at the interruption. If they were angry enough, they might wake one of the Larger Ones. She lay in a cold sweat, waiting, but the rest of the night was as quiet as it ever was that near the Drive. When she went down at noon, she found the rest of the household speculating about the vandals that had taken all the doors and the front hood off of Paula's car and left them lying neatly on the lawn. The neighbours to either side had suffered similarly. Someone called the cops. On Monday, an opinion piece about imaginative hooliganism on the Drive appeared in the Providence.

Two days later, Millennium, riding home from the supermarket on Broadway, saw the Nerd sitting in a cafe window, scribbling in a book.

*

She spent the night in a seething tangle of fury and fear. Bad enough to be stalked by a geek, but at a level she couldn't articulate, she knew that what he wanted from her was not her body, not *her* being, but the beings that gathered to her wherever she went. When she went to get her bike from the back porch in the morning, she found they had garlanded it with a tangle of unspooled audio tape. Gift, prank, or commentary on her situation – who knew? She stripped the shiny black stuff away and said between her teeth, "Enough." She knew of no way to get the Small Ones to leave her alone.

But the Nerd – the Nerd was something else.

*

Of course, when she wanted to see him, he was nowhere to be found. Three times over the course of the week she thought she glimpsed his soft pear shape waddling down the Drive or overflowing a coffee shop chair, but every time it turned out to be a stranger. His absence began to seem as irritating as his presence had been. And the Small Ones were active as well, almost as active as the Ones in Kelowna. Maybe, she was starting to think, maybe that activity hadn't been so much the place as the time. Maybe the Ones everywhere were coming more alive, creating more of their own. How long, she thought one night, before her secret was no longer hers alone to keep, or even a secret at all?

When she saw him at last the next evening, staring myopically at the posters on the Chinese theatre's door, she jumped her bike onto the sidewalk and braked at his back.

"Hey, asshole."

He spun. Off balance, and gasped. Blue eyes made huge by the glasses, a little nose, a rosebud of a mouth. Thinning hair, though he couldn't have been much older than she.

“You have something to say to me?” Millennium asked him, voice hard.

“Do I know you?” he said. His voice was right, but he spoiled it by shoving at his glasses while his magnified eyes blinked.

“No you don’t,” Millennium replied, showing her teeth.

“Which is why I wonder how come I keep seeing you. First Edmonton, then Kelowna, now here. So what’s up?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said, and squeezed past her onto the sidewalk.

She spun her bike and pushed off at his side. “Oh, come on. You’ve got my attention, isn’t that what you wanted? Of did you really think I hadn’t noticed?”

He ducked his head, clutched his notebook, and scurried, jiggling “I think you think I’m someone else. I’ve never seen you before. Leave me alone!”

Other pedestrians were glaring at her for having her bike on the sidewalk.

“Aw, come on. Aren’t you even going to ask me out?”

The Broadway skytrain station was in sight. He gulped, shoved at his glasses and broke into a run. The sight of his fat bum bobbing down the sidewalk made her laugh. A knot of people waiting for a bus cut her off. She deked out into the street, pissed off a bus driver, jumped the curb again at his side.

“Hey, asshole,” she said.

He stared at her, blinking. For a split second she thought she had it wrong, that he was the wrong guy, or it was all some weird coincidence. But past his thick lenses and flickering eyelids, the blue eyes watched. Watched. Yeah, he knew who she was, all right.

“Well, if you’re not gonna give me a date,” she said softly, grinning with rage, “how about a present?”

Before he could react, she snatched the notebook from under his arm and dove into the traffic. Rush hour on Broadway. He didn’t have a chance.

*

Guilt almost caught up with her as she wound her way home. But once in her room, still sticky with sweat, she opened his notebook and the guilt blew off her like dust. Outside, a blue spiral-bound book, the cover bent, peeling, and stained by coffee cup rings. Inside, Millennium’s life.

A yellowing newspaper article was taped to the first page. *Agricultural Vandalism* said the headline. It was a short column from the back page of a small town Ontario paper. She knew the town, and the story, and the events of which it spoke.

London, ON. A new kind of vandalism has struck London’s farming communities this week, resulting in thousands of dollars in damage.

One sentence, and memory cast her back. It had been a strange, restless night and she had awoken early in her room across the hall from her parents. Her window looked out through the branches of an old pear tree to the green expanse of the canola humped earth like a mole’s burrow magnified a thousand-fold, leading to a huge black mound in the far corner of the field.

She heard her father stirring in his room as she slipped out of the house and ran barefoot across the soft young growth.

For the last several nights someone has been turning farmers' agricultural equipment into works of "art", doing irreparable damage in the process. "I'm actually kind of impressed," said John Goodman, the farmed the most affected. "Whoever's doing this is very creative." Goodman's neighbours are not so philosophical.

Millennium could remember how he laughed when he saw the spiky hedgehog-hole creature his harrow had become. He hadn't understood – and she couldn't explain – either her terror or her guilt. The pranksters, the invisible friends who'd been transforming her toys and playing jokes on her since childhood, were getting out of hand. Way, way out of hand.

Written in blue ink underneath the article, in a tiny exacting script: *Millie (Millennium!) Goodman, 16 yrs old. First occurrence on record, but probably not really the first.*

*

It was nearly dark. She put the light on, got a drink of water, paced. All she wanted to do was burn to book and flush the ashes down the john. But eventually she sat down and turned the page.

Agricultural Vandals Turn Dangerous. Pranksters who have been vandalizing farmers' agricultural equipment are prime suspects in an assault case, police said today. Last night local farmer John Goodman, whose farm has been the main target of the vandals, was seriously injured in a bizarre attack.

The memories came, vivid and confused. Her father's steps, late, on the stairs. Creeping after hi in her pajamas; listening at the kitchen door to the snick-snapping and the metallic groans from beyond the barn. Hearing her father's shout – then his scream – then running, running –

Mr. Goodman interrupted his assailants and they attacked his with the harvester they were vandalizing, police said. His youngest daughter heard the assault and scared them off.

There was no "them" no one there at all except for Millennium and her father. No one, unless you counted the combine harvester, alive, deranged, tying itself in knots, a being trying to birth itself out of its own inanimate body. It scarcely even knew her father was there, but it knew her. It knew her.

Millie Goodman, 16, was too upset to talk to police, Constable Griffin said. "We hope when she calms down she'll be able to give us a description of the perpetrators. This was a very serious assault."

And on the facing, with her high school photograph at the side:

Local Girl Missing. Local girl Millie (Millennium) Goodman, 16, has been listed as a missing person. She was last seen three days ago in the London hospital where her father, local farmer John Goodman, is recovering from an assault suffered on his farm outside of London.

When asked whether Ms. Goodman's disappearance could indicate involvement in her father's assault, an Ontario Provincial Police spokesperson said, "That's one possibility that must be considered." Ms. Goodman is a key witness in the case.

*

And it went on from there. Headlines from the back pages of newspapers in Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa, and then progressively west: Winnipeg, Calgary, Victoria. Edmonton, Kelowna, and finally Vancouver. Some of the articles were grainy photocopies, as though the Nerd had found them in libraries; some of them were on glossy fax paper; some had nothing to do with the Ones. But most of their acts were documented in the Nerd's book, the times their play had come to public attention: the car snares on the 401 outside of Toronto, the park bench alligators in the Rideau Canal, and on, and on.

And although Millennium's name never appeared in the news after London, in city after city that tiny blue writing made note of her address, where she worked, how long she stayed. There was a blurry Polaroid taped on the same page as the Winnipeg incident, her on her bike in a yellow slicker. That was when he must have found her, the thought. That was when the addresses started to appear, and other pictures. Her on her bike. Her shopping for groceries. Her drinking coffee by the kitchen window of her apartment in Edmonton.

Her stomach heaved.

She barely made it to the bathroom in time.

*

Midnight, and the Small Ones were dancing on the roof.

She heard them, their hard feet like hail beneath the rain that had finally come, and somewhere in the dark spaces between that awareness and her rage a plan had begun to form. She showered and dresses, and switched off the light.

And then she opened the dormer window. Heart beating hard enough to shake her bones, she called softly into the night, "Hello? Hey, you guys. Come down here for a second."

Silence fell with the rain.

"Hello? I need – " A breath. "I need to ask a favor."

A deeper silence yet.

Then the scrape of metal claws in the eaves.

*

The misty night rain cleaned the air and cooled Millennium's face as she jogged down the alley on the Small One's trail. She could feel every block of that day's ride burning in her thighs, but she didn't want to lose the tumble spider leading her on this chase. It was hard enough to see already, half a block ahead and looking like so much trash blown by a non-existent wind. She

almost missed it when it scabbled up a wooden fence and fell into someone's backyard. She hesitated, wondering if this was just another prank. It was crazy to try this, crazy to think the Ones could ever be anything but a nuisance and a terror.

But then, her whole life was crazy. And what if – she couldn't help the lance of excitement in her gut – what if it worked? What if they learned to take her commands?

She put her hands on the top of the fence, jumped with legs strong from riding, and hopped over. The Small One was waiting on the other side.

Through a side yard, across an empty street, through a gap in a plywood fence that tore her jeans but let her through. Around the edge of a construction pit black with a shadow where *something* stirred. The Small One skittered lightly by, a tin can tumbleweed in the dark. Millennium followed on her toes, breath locked in her throat. The *something* was big, one of the Largest Ones, but only half awake. She wished it sleep and crept by, silently cursing her guide. Under the fence through a ditch of wet weeds, across the street, another side yard. The Small One disappeared into the shadow of a house, and didn't come out again.

Millennium hunkered down in the damp shelter of a hydrangea, "Hey," she whispered. There was no streetlight near, but a window on the second floor showed a glow behind a thin blue blind. Otherwise the darkness was almost perfect. Rain hushed in the leaves, a car hissed by on the street. Then something moved on the lighted window's sill. The Small One raised a twisted limb and knocked on the glass.

A minute passed. Millennium realized she was clutching handfuls of wet grass in her tension. She let go, wiped her hands on her jeans. The Small One tapped again. This time, a shadow moved behind the blind. A hand appeared, then the blue paper scrolled up to reveal a familiar bulbous bulk. The tumble spider slipped aside to cling to the wall. Millennium wiped her hands again and stepped into the light from the Nerd's window.

Another minute. The tumble spider waved a few legs in the air like a sea anemone groping after a meal. It was eerie even to Millennium, who had sent it. The Nerd pulled up the window's sash and bent to stick his head out into the rain. The Small One reached two legs pincher-like within a few inches of his ear. He stared down at Millennium.

"What do you want?" he whispered like a shrill hiss of steam.

"I want to talk to you," Millennium said. She spoke aloud, calmly, admitting no doubts.

The Small One reached an inch closer. "I don't know you," the Nerd hissed, oblivious. "Leave me alone."

"That's a good one," Millennium replied. "I bet cops'll get a laugh out of that when I show them your book. What do you think? A guy who stalks somebody across half the country. You think I should go to the Vancouver cops or the RCMP?"

From the Nerd, nothing. The tumble spider deftly twirled to bring another leg into range. Let him turn his head, Millennium thought, and grinned into the dark. Finally he cleared his throat.

"Wait there," he said, muffled but no longer whispering. "I'll come down." He closed the window and pulled down the blind.

Millennium shoved her hands in her pockets and smiled up at the Small One spinning a crazy course down the wall of the house. It was well hidden by the time the Nerd appeared, but as Millennium led him to an all-night coffee place on the Drive she knew the tumble spider was following. For once the knowledge didn't make her skin crawl. Maybe it was too busy crawling at the proximity of the Nerd.

*

"All right," he said, leaning over the small table at her. "So you found me out, So we're even. What are you going to do about it? And don't give me any nonsense about going to the police. We both know that's the last thing you're going to do."

If she'd hated him lurking on the edges of her life, she detested him out here in the open, blinking at her with a nervous triumph. She said through clenched teeth, "Really. Why's that?"

"Because," he said, oozing smugness, "of the small matter of a warrant for your arrest back in London."

"You are such an asshole," she said, wonder in her voice. A pause to let his smugness solidify, then: "There is no warrant for my arrest. There never was a warrant for my arrest. I'm not even a missing person, you dumb fuck, I called my parents when I got to Toronto."

Smugness fell away, leaving him blinking and pale. He shoved his glasses back up his little nose. "Yeah? Well – If you were going to you would have called the cops by now."

"Yeah? Well – " she mocked him. "I can always change my mind."

"You won't." The smugness wasn't back, but the sneer he put on was just as objectionable. "You tell them I've been following you, you have to tell them why."

She put on a smile every bit as obnoxious as his sneer. "You mean to tell them about how you're so hung up on me you've been following me around the country, committing bizarre acts of vandalism to get my attention and then putting the newspaper articles about them in your pathetic little scrapbook?" She put her head on one side and added sweetly, "You know, I think you're right. I guess I should talk to them after all."

He gaped, blue eyes bulging behind their lenses. "You can't tell them that. It wasn't me. You know it wasn't me! It was them!"

"Who? The cops? Man, you're even crazier than I thought." She pushed her chair back as if to go.

"*Them!*" He slapped the table, slopping coffee. "You know goddamn well what I mean. The Little People. The Fair Folk. The Deeny Shee. Don't you try to put it off on me!" He actually shook his finger at her. "Don't you dare!"

What the fuck were the Deeny Shee? Millennium shrugged and stood.

The nerd gulped. "There are other who know," he said, voice wobbling. It was obviously his last card. "I'm not the only one. If anything happens to me, someone else will carry on with the mission. You won't get away with this." The last few words disappeared into a squeak under her glare.

"Mission! Are you completely insane?"

But she didn't leave, and by the look in his eyes he knew he had her. She dropped angrily back into her chair.

She shoved his glasses into place and said firmly, "We have a right to know."

"Bull *shit*."

"It is not bullshit." The obscenity was odd coming from his prim little mouth. "What is bullshit is people like you using Them for your own secret ends."

"Using – " But she bit it off. Because she had, hadn't she, that very night. Instead she said, "What do you mean, 'people like me?' What am I, a conspiracy of one? Man you been watching too many reruns of *The X-Files*."

"Oh, please. You think we don't know about Lucy Woo in Los Angeles, or Peter Legrange in Atlanta? I'm telling you, we've been onto you for years!"

A thousand questions crowded into Millennium's brain. Los Angeles? Atlanta? But the only one that made it out was, "Why?"

The Nerd blinked at her, "Why?"

"Why are you onto – us?" Us?! "Why have you followed me around all these years? What does any of this have to do with you?"

"It – we – it isn't right."

Looking into his confused, magnified eyes, she felt fatigue sweep over her. "What isn't right exactly?"

"That you have this, this secret power and – "

"Power?" Millennium gave a short laugh and spread her arms. "Do I look powerful to you?"

Blink, blink, blink. "I just mean – We all know there's more to the world than what most of us can see, but you actually get to live there. Inside the mystery." He looked down at the table, his voice dying to a sad mumble. "That's all we want. We just want to see inside the mystery too."

Millennium said nothing for a moment. This silence filled with the buzz of conversation, the hiss of steam, Dave Matthews singing *Halloween*. Then she said softly, "Your wanting doesn't give you the right to anything in my life. Do you understand that? Take a look at yourself. You're a stalker. Just because you're not after sex doesn't make you any more righteous, or any more sane."

A tide of red swept up under his fair skin. "I'm not – " He gulped for breath. "I just – It isn't fair! Don't you realize how desperate the world is for a little magic, how badly it needs a miracle? You're keeping it all to yourself and it isn't fair!"

"Fair. Jesus. How old are you?" She propped her elbows on the table and leaned forward. "Listen. I don't owe you a damn thing, but I'll tell you this much. It isn't magic, and my life is not a goddamn fairy tale. For Christ's sake, you think I like living on the road, moving on every time the Large Ones start to wake up? They aren't my friends, and they sure as hell aren't anyone else's."

He looked up with a frown that pushed his glasses down his nose. He shoved them up again. "I don't understand. How can you say they aren't magic?"

“Look, it isn’t – ” She’d never had to put her years of thinking into words before. “It’s not an invasion from Fairyland of the Eighth Dimension or whatever you pretend for your little game. This thing that’s been happening around me since I was a kid – and don’t ask me why they picked me, ‘cause I don’t fucking know – it belongs to this world. Maybe it *is* the world, even. Maybe it’s the life we’ve been squeezing out that has nowhere else to go. Do you get me?” By his face, definitely not. “Think about it. We’ve been trashing the environment for centuries, right? Cutting down forests, putting up farms and cities and dumps and all the rest of that human crap. Whole ecologies wrecked, hundred of species gone, nothing standing in our way. Well –

“In grade ten biology they taught us about evolution, about how species evolve out of other species to fill in the ecological niches, keep the whole thing going. But these days we’re running out of *time*. Evolution takes forever, but the new ecology, the urban ecology, has gaps that need to be filled now. You understand what I’m saying? I mean Christ, it’s in every newspaper you read these days, biological diversity, critical density of ecologies, interdependency, blah blah blah. All it means is there has to be enough life on the planet, doing all the different things living things do to keep themselves and each other going, or everything dies. *Everything* dies.

“And the world *knows*. It knows that plan old animals and plants don’t stand a chance against us humans. I mean, they tried, right? Rats and pigeons tried invading the cities, coyotes, raccoons – pests, we call them, but it’s just the world trying to mix it up, keep us from taking over and burying everything under concrete. But they aren’t enough. It’s too slow. So – ” She shrugged and leaned back in her chair, more tired than before. “So the world’s trying something new. Something tough enough to survive the new ecology. Something so tough it’ll maybe even be able to slow us down a little, keep us in check.” She drank the last of her coffee. Cold.

The Nerd was staring, his eyelids almost still. “Show me,” he said at last.

Millennium stared back. “Excuse me?”

“Show me.” He leaned toward her, something inside him taking fire. “Show me what you know, let me inside the mystery. Let me *see*.”

The anger that had dissipated when she talked leapt back into her veins. The asshole hadn’t heard a thing she’d said. Fine. *Fine*. She’d show the fucker his mystery and see how much he liked it up close and personal. She smiled a thin, hard smile and stood. “All right. I’ll show you. And then you leave me the fuck alone. Deal?”

He gulped and shoved up his glasses. “Deal.”

*

After the bright cafe, the construction site was a pit of blackness ringed by a plywood fence. Without the Small One to guide her, Millennium had to grope to find the gap that would let them in. Inside the mystery, she thought vindictively, listening to the Nerd squeeze his bulk through the splintery hole. As her eyes adjusted she could make out the pale blur of his face, the

hand that pushed at his glasses, but the evacuation remained a sinkhole of absolute darkness spined with rusty rebar. And inside, *something* lightly slumbered.

Largest One.

“What – ” the Nerd began, but she hushed him.

“Wait,” she whispered. “And whatever happens – Don’t. Move.”

Largest One. In Victoria, it had been One from the harbour that had awoken one night, drawn by her presence. A shambling monster of barnacle-crusts planks, bones, anchor chains bleeding rust, it had created havoc along the harborfront, terrifying sailors and whores and Millennium alike. She hadn’t even tried to deal with it. She just ran, like she always did, hoping it would go back to sleep without her around. They always had, up till now. She’d never deliberately tried to wake one – up till now.

“Hello,” she said softly into the dark. “Great One, Mighty One, awake!” Putting on a show for the Nerd. “Tonight is your night to rise. Come on. I know you can hear me. Wake Up!”

The Largest One stirred. Millennium was peripherally aware of the Nerd’s adenoidal breathing, and even of the more delicate presence of the Small Ones creeping over the fence, but the core of her attention was on the great being half awake and half formed at the bottom of its pit.

“Wake up, you beauty, you darling. It’s time to come out, now. It’s time to walk in the night.”

The Nerd’s breathing stopped: he’d finally seen the Small Ones edging into the scant light around the rim of the pit. Millennium ignored him, and them. The Largest One was waking. A slow, deep scraping sound came from the pit.

The Nerd gasped. “What – ”

“Shhh!” Her heart was pounding, exhilaration and fear.

Scrape, scra-a-ape, rattle boom.

The Nerd whimpered in his throat. The Small Ones stirred, fell still. The rain glowed with the city’s ambient light.

The Largest One rose from its nest.

A damp gleaming angularity of leg. Another. A third. The domed, folded bulk of its core. The muffles fall of earth, the scrape and boom of steel. It rose, unfolding its legs. And rose some more.

Deep in the blood-thrumming moment, a tiny door in Millennium’s mind opened on a glimpse of her past: eight years old, folding paper on the top of a scarred wooden desk. Origami. If some vast hand could take half a dozen dumpsters and fold them into a nightmare crab – too many legs with scissor-hinged joints and a body of eye-twisting folds – and if it could be incubated at the bottom of a muddy, garbage-strewn pit, and then wakened on a black wet three a.m. –. That might begin to hint at what the Largest One was, climbing up into the city night.

The Nerd whimpered again. Millennium didn’t have the breath to shush him. The Largest One paused. One long jointed limb stretched towards them with a faint gritty squeak. Dirty

water pattered from the knife point at its end. It groped, delicately feeling the air. Wet mud spattered Millennium's face. Frozen with fear, she could not even flinch. But the Nerd –

The Nerd screamed and turned to run.

Rattle snap boom.

He hung soft and small between two pincer legs, squeaking, before Millennium even registered the cold wind of the Largest One's move. That fast. But then it fell still again, as if it didn't know what to do with its prey now that it had him. The Small Ones could have been so much trash. Another door opened in Millennium's mind: her father, pinned within the harvester's writhing frame. She gulped for air.

"Easy – "

The Largest One didn't move, but she felt its attention land on her like a blow.

"Easy, now." The words drifted out of her, gentle as the rain.

"Soft little one, he hasn't done you any harm. No threat, no harm. Just a sad little squeaker. You can let him go. There's more to the city than him. There's buses and bicycles and cars. Park benches. Bus stops. Traffic lights and street signs and hot dog carts. You don't need him. You can just let him go. Can't you? You beauty, you marvel. You can just let him go."

The Largest One shifted with a slow hollow grating of joints. The Herd hung silent and limp. God knew what damage those steel pincers had done.

"Please," she breathed, to the One, to God. "I'm sorry. Let him go." The rain on her lips tasted of salt. "Please."

There was a stir among the Small Ones. The tumble spider crept into the Largest One's shadow, tin can limbs like a tiny reflection of the other's steel. Then another moved, and another – the rebar stickmen, the dumb shock absorber frog – in a creeping, supplicating dance, a little eddy of movement that drew away from Millennium to the far side of the site. The Largest One shifted again, still holding the Nerd but its attention following the dance. Millennium loved them for that moment, those crazy lost little beings doing what they could to help.

She wiped her face on her sleeve, still afraid, but suddenly no longer frozen by it.

"Okay," she said aloud. "Just let him down and off you go."

The Largest One paused, attention wavering between her and its small cousins. Then, as quickly as it had snapped him up, it let the Nerd drop. His body hit the edge of the excavation and slid to the bottom in a shower of earth. The Largest One, no longer interested, scissor-scrambled up the other side. It stepped delicately over the plywood fence and was gone, Small Ones scurrying around its feet.

In the silence of the city's hum, Millennium could hear them on the street outside, a rapid pitter-patter and an echoing rattle boom. She took a breath, and another one, and then dashed to the edge of the pit and down.

*

After she'd bought her ticket, she used a phone in the bus station to make two calls. The first one to 911, telling them there was a very dazed and somewhat battered fellow sitting in the middle of a construction site just off of Commercial Drive.

The other was to her folks.

Press one to accept the charges.

Beep.

"Em? Where are you, sweetheart?"

"Hi, dad. Um, the Vancouver bus station."

Sigh. "What happened this time?"

"Well, you know – Things."

"Are you alright?"

"Yeah. Actually – yeah. I'm okay. Only it's raining like a bitch. So I thought maybe this time I'd go south."

"Like how far south?"

She took a breath, and realized she was grinning.

"Well, I thought maybe I'd give Los Angeles a try. There's somebody down there I want to meet."

***Holly Phillips is an Award-winning fantasy writer. Her short story collections include *The Palace of Repose*, *The Burning Girl*, and *The Engine's Child*. "The New Ecology" was originally published in *In the Palace of Repose* (2005) by Prime Books.**

Maggie Moor, “The Droid”

“Have a seat, Mr. Gowan.”

The office was musty with the stale air of disuse; this was thinly disguised by a fake potted plant and an automatic aroma dispenser installed in the ceiling. It spewed an indecipherable chemical smell that reminded me of laundry detergent and was probably labelled “Mountain Stream” or something equally vague and incomparable. I think my favourite of these dispensers was installed in the lobby of a synthetic paper mill; it sprayed each visitor with a hefty dose of “Pine Forest.” This was a clever marketing ploy on both the scent company and the paper mill’s parts because the visitors who actually remembered or ever really knew what pine trees smelled like were few and far between. For all we knew, it could have been the alluring scent of sea slugs.

My interviewer seated himself across the desk from me and introduced himself as Michael Harcourt, but not as though he thought his name would mean anything to me. He fidgeted spastically with his hands, but his posture was held stiff by a crisp, new suit. He began to prattle on with the same speech I had heard a dozen times.

“You must realize sir... how uncommon this situation ...”

The suit was expertly calibrated to fit his paunchy figure. I found myself distracted as I imagined the process by which it made its way to this stuffy little office in the middle of the biggest city on the planet. The fabric was brought into existence by enormous industrial looms pumping out five hundred square meters of fabric per minute. And they saw that it was good. Razor-sharp blades held by bionic arms sliced pre-programmed shapes into the material at a rate that could slice apart a human body in seconds.

“... first interview of this nature since ...”

The slices of fabric were then gathered by rented worker droids, each one instructed to fulfill a specific order transmitted over the wireless network. They sewed the garments based on data from the sensor arrays installed in closets around the world, creating a garment that is designed to fit the customer with exact precision.

“... and since a man of your esteem must certainly own a fully sufficient worker droid, which would easily be capable of ...”

Probably one, maybe two days after being ordered, the garment would arrive, freshly pressed, at the customer’s door. Given the sheer size of most customers, myself and Mr. Harcourt included, I imagine the same amount of fabric found in one suit could once have been used to fashion the sail for a small boat. Gone are the days of inefficient slave labour on cotton plantations.

“Which leads me to wonder... why *do* you want to work here, Mr. Gowan?”

“I want to know how laminate flooring is made.”

“Well certainly you don’t need to *work* here to learn that!” He forces himself to laugh, but I don’t buy it. “Can’t you just watch some ‘how it’s made’ vids on the web?”

“I want to learn first-hand.”

“You must realize that it is a federal offense to take on manual labour while simultaneously renting out your worker droid for a second income. Both you and our company would be at risk in this situation. You aren’t in a third-world neighbourhood and you don’t need to endanger your body this way; why don’t you just rent your droid to us and be satisfied with that?”

“I haven’t used or rented out my droid for three years now, as I’m sure you know from my resume. Just because my family is financially sound does not mean that I cannot work for myself. What it comes down to is this: are you willing to hire me on, or are you just wasting my time?” I spoke with borrowed confidence. This was my fifth interview this month, and I’d lost count since I started trying to find work other than the demeaning landscaping jobs allotted to the poor who cannot afford the maintenance of their personal working droids. If companies could legally purchase droids, everyone in the world would be out of the job - so the government keeps everything in order. Each person only has the license to own one droid at a time - although those who can afford to will upgrade theirs with the best hardware - and all companies must rent the droids from civilian owners. I have to admit, the system works, unlike the 99% of the population whose livings are now made for them.

I wish I knew why I wanted so badly to get a job. On my sixteenth birthday, my dad bought me a top-of-the-line Apple Iserf designed to work in engineering just like his. At the time, I was ecstatic! But as years went by I felt a growing nausea with the whole situation - no, I was not at all concerned about droid rights to choose their work, or human rights to own a worker droid, I just wanted something different. Something better.

My parents used to joke about me living in the dark ages until they realized that I was serious. Working is *dangerous* for human beings. It isn’t healthy. It hasn’t been done in civilized society for over one hundred years! When I deactivated my Iserf my mom cried and my dad sat me down for a stern conversation, but nothing could make me change my mind. I don’t know, maybe I just wanted my fifteen minutes of fame; I would be The Rich Man That Worked.

“You’re hired.” I nearly jumped out of my skin.

“Really?!”

“Yes, Mr. Gowan. The media will certainly want to cover this, and that might be the boost in advertising that this company needs. However you must

understand that this work is dangerous and we will require that you sign a waiver in case of injury or death.

“Yes, of course, I’d be happy to! Thank you!”

Son of Billionaire Insists on Working at Flooring Company; Dies Two Weeks Later

August 15, 2140

Medical sensors reveal that 24-year old John Gowan died from complications following a heart attack at Techtonic Flooring Company this afternoon. Cause of heart attack was over-strenuous labour in a hot environment. Toshiba Doctor a1700bh12 recommends that citizens avoid manual tasks to ensure the maintenance of good health.

a1700bh12 also recommends the new Toshiba Xmodel Housekeeper to take care of all of your chores and household needs, now available for less than \$1595 monthly at Future Shop.

***Maggie Moor is a fourth-year English Major, completing her B.A. Honours degree at Nipissing University.**

Poetry

Lindsay Smith, “The Machine”

My body, a machine--
The machinery that operates
The complex systems--
Quickly running out of oil
The rusting joints
Creaking, groaning

Aching–F.a.i.l.i.ng.
The sign of an ending -
Quickly approaching
Technology
Something newer
More advanced.
I am nothing
more--
a worn out machine.

Approaching expiry date
Branded to the soul
Lungs that rattle,
With laboured movement
To feed my body--
Empty...
I spend
Every moment
Waiting,
To hear if the parts have come in –
The machine
Final sputter
A deafening boom.



C&C Milling Machine (2012) by
Peter Sloan

My body, an assembly line
Old, weary,
And out-dated.
Consume
Life expectancy
More products consumed-
Machine revolting,
No longer in control –
Only rust and decay

Emerson promised
But Nature
Yields
No answer,
No reason or cure--
Failed guarantee--
Lifetime warranty
Only lies.

My body, the machine
Old, weary--
Outdated.
Useless.
Replaced.

***Lindsay Smith is in her 4th year of the Concurrent Education Program at Nipissing University, majoring in English Studies with teachables in French and Biology.**

Reviews

Rebecca Sullivan, “Review of *Who the #\$% Is Jackson Pollock?* By Harry Moses”

Who the #\$% is Jackson Pollock? (2006) is a hilarious and eye-opening documentary about how Terri Horton, a trash-talking truck driver from California, comes across a genuine Jackson Pollock painting in a thrift shop. Having no background knowledge of Pollock, she spends a mere five dollars to obtain the painting with the intention of giving it to her friend in need of cheering up. Soon afterwards, a local art teacher spots the painting and tells Horton that it looks like a Pollock, explaining who he was and how much his work is worth in the art world (millions of dollars). Upon learning about the painting’s potential worth, Horton sets out to try to find someone to accept and represent it.

In Contemplation (2012)
by Sara Grainger



The film sets up a comedic juxtaposition between the “insiders” and “outsiders” of the art world, effectively exposing many issues that are involved in attributing value to art. Because of Horton’s “outsider” status, she is continuously dismissed and deemed

ignorant by people involved in art (such as curators, art auctioneers and critics). To the art world, Jackson Pollock's work is an example of American artistic genius. To Horton, the Pollock painting is ugly and she cannot imagine why it would be worth so much.

Horton's pursuit of the painting's acceptance and authentication was not as easy as she imagined. We see the painting continually being shut down, especially by art connoisseurs. A combination of science and technology is what eventually proves the painting's authenticity. Fed up with the subjective art world, Horton contacts Montreal-based forensic art scientist Peter Paul Biro to do his own investigation of the painting. After finding some convincing evidence, including one of Jackson's own fingerprints on the back of the canvas, the painting takes on a whole new meaning. This film grapples with the tensions between the art world and the world of science and new technology – something definitely worth seeing for any person interested in the way in which technology increasingly shapes how we perceive the art world.

Community Profile

Profile: Geoffrey Sullivan

Age: 17

High School: Widdifield Secondary School

Rebecca Sullivan, “Technology and the Art World”

Appropriation continues to be a touchy subject in the art world. Is it okay for artists to use other artist’s images and ideas in their work? After looking at Geoffrey Sullivan’s *Listen*, I would say it is. Geoffrey is currently in grade twelve at Widdifield Secondary School and his favourite subject is visual arts. He tends to gravitate toward street and tattoo art, but he has a soft spot for Van Gogh. “*Starry Night* is one of my all-time favourites,” he says.

The inspiration for *Listen* comes from street artist Shepard Fairey’s *Hope* posters for the Obama campaign. “I like his simple but effective use of colour,” Geoffrey says, “but I wanted to add my own spin to the meaning of my work.” Whereas Fairey’s posters exist for political purposes, Geoffrey’s painting comments on his experience of being part of a technology-savvy generation. “It’s odd for a high school student not to own a laptop, cell phone and iPod,” he says. “Everyone is always plugged in.” I tell him that, a mere five years ago, it was rare for students to have laptops in class. Times have changed.



I ask him why he chose to paint a skeleton. “I thought I could play with the idea of death and how it relates to technology. I used the example of an iPod because I find that people get so consumed to the point that they stop listening to the people around them. People have relationships with their devices instead of their friends. If our human relationships continue to diminish, we might as well be dead.”

After this I ask, “But isn’t the whole point of technology to keep people more connected than ever before?”

“I think face-to-face conversations are a lot different than conversations through technology,” he answers. “There’s only so much you can say in a text message.” On the surface, it seems that the title of the work encourages people to listen to their iPods. A deeper understanding suggests, however, that we should instead be listening to the people around us if we want to stay alive.