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Kelly Miller's Master's Portfolio

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A Final Portfolio

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the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the field of English
with a specialization in English Teaching

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Analytical Narrative

In 2013, I went back to college and earned a degree in English. At the time, I was a mother, wife, employee, and had one degree under my belt. Even though I was living a full life, I did not feel satisfied with my work. My degree in Intercultural Studies, while interesting, left much to be desired. My passion is writing and literature, and pursuing a degree in English allowed me to do both. While earning my undergrad degree, I wrote extensively on subjects ranging from African American studies, shifting masculinity during the Industrial Revolution, and young adult literature. I presented papers every semester at various conferences, and one of my senior capstone projects, "The Emergence of the New Man: Masculinity in *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell", was published in the National Undergraduate Literature Conference 30th Year Journal at Weber State University.

Upon graduating, I worked in the Writing Center at Georgia Gwinnett College. Assisting students in the writing process fulfilled my desire to help demystify academic writing and show students that they could be successful in areas they previously felt doomed. While I had numerous successful sessions with my students, I noticed a disconnect between what they were writing and the material they were writing about. Many of them expressed displeasure with their high school experience, especially in the area of language arts. My desire grew from the singular focus of writing about literature to concentrating on understanding the literature. When a job opened up at a local private high school, I took it. I taught language arts to students in 9-12th grade who struggled with dyslexia, dysgraphia, and anxiety. I knew I had finally found my purpose.

Teaching an array of literature best prepares students to dissect an ever-changing world. One of my areas of interest is presenting various types of literature, such as classical literature,

plays, memoirs, modern classics, and young adult literature, in ways that capture the attention of students who want information instantaneously. How can teachers make Shakespeare or Dickens come alive for students? How can teachers help students empathize with the people in Elie Wiesel's *Night*? The desire to learn new and innovative teaching techniques to assist students in these areas acted as the catalyst for my return to school to earn a Master's degree.

The two projects that I have chosen to revise for this portfolio show a sampling of the type of work that challenges me, and through the revisions, the projects show the growth that I have gained during my time at BGSU. The first project in the portfolio, "Creating Boundary Crossers: Teaching Genre Awareness in High School Language Arts Classrooms," originated from ENG 6200: Teaching of Writing with Dr. Ethan Jordan and serves as my teaching-based project. This work challenged me to think about the best ways to approach writing in secondary and postsecondary classrooms. I was somewhat apprehensive to write my thoughts on such an important topic. At the time, I had spent less than three years in a high school classroom and was a new graduate student. What did I know about best practices for teaching writing? The point of the project, however, was to think beyond your current knowledge and experience and imagine something more, something better. I thought back to my experiences with the students in the writing center and started thinking about ways of teaching writing that would excite their imaginations and encourage them to make personal connections in their writing.

The revisions for project one focused on making the work more balanced between the suggested teaching approaches. The project now offers four unconventional ways for teachers to approach writing in the classroom using genre awareness. I also edited the language in several places for better readability. The suggestions for revisions came from both my professor, Dr. Jordan, and student readers in the Master's Portfolio class, and I integrated most of those

suggestions into the work. Additionally, I revised the work based on what I have learned about writing and teaching since taking Teaching of Writing. Through creating and revising this project, I am challenged to approach teaching and learning in my classroom in ways that are exciting instead of the "it's always been done this way" approach.

The second project for the portfolio, "A New Salvation in Cyborgs?: The Problem with Female Cyborgs and the Pleasure of the Visual," originated in ENG 6070: Introduction to Critical Theory with Dr. Piya Pal-Lapinski and serves as the project that demonstrates substantive research and analysis on a focused topic. The thought of taking a graduate level literary theory class unnerved me. The ideas seemed so big and impenetrable that I worried my end of the term paper would fall flat. Much to my surprise, ENG 6070 ended up being one of my favorite classes and one that I saw the most growth in myself as a scholar. Two theories caught my interest: Laura Mulvey's theory of the male gaze in film and Donna Haraway's cyborg theory and the potential for cyborg's to eliminate gendered boundaries. Applying both theories, I analyzed the films *Ex Machina* and *Blade Runner 2049*. I considered the ways that the male gaze portrayed female characters and the ways it disrupts female autonomy, while also considering the role female AI's play and if they have the potential to disqualify the power of the male gaze on female bodies. Even though these ideas were analyzed at the graduate level, they are important ones to consider in any classroom. Working on this project helped me see the importance of discussing issues of female representation in film, books, and other types of media for learners at any level.

Considering revisions, Dr. Lapinski suggested I branch out to a written medium that has female AI characters and observe how Mulvey and Haraway's theories play out without the use of the visual. I selected Kazuo Ishiguro's novel, *Klara and the Sun*, for the written text. Through

the written text, Mulvey's theory weakens and Haraway's theory is ripe with potential. This outcome is opposite of my original analysis using film alone. Adding the observations from the written text in comparison to the visual showed me that different mediums present theories in different ways. Ideas and theories shift according to context, and this is an important thing to remember in a classroom with a captive audience. Other revisions include: added dialogue between characters in *Ex Machina*, added information to the summary for *Blade Runner 2049*, added analysis to the section, Limitations of the Study, specifically for *Blade Runner 2049*, and moving paragraphs around within the introduction. These changes add clarity to my argument and make for a clearer project overall.

My time spent pursuing the MA in English with a specialization in English Teaching has enriched my life as a teacher and a scholar. As a teacher, I feel well prepared to face challenges in the classroom. Moreover, I am equipped with the knowledge and courage to do things differently and pursue unconventional paths so that my students do more than pass a test. I want my students to feel connected to their work and feel that it matters– that they matter. The MA program in English at BGSU asks a lot from its students and because of it, my world is larger and I am more thoughtful in my approach to scholarship and teaching.

Creating Boundary Crossers: Teaching Genre Awareness in High School Language Arts

Classrooms

Introduction

Writing practices have gone through various shifts as research reveals new insights and strategies for best practices in the classroom. In the 1980s and 1990s, the style most employed in writing classrooms came to be known as argumentative writing. Twenty years later, the discipline of composition shifted again as other types of writing styles such as persuasive, narrative, expository, and analytical moved into the classroom and as Yancy et al. note in their book, *Writing across Contexts : Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing*, "the academic argumentative writing that so influenced the teaching of composition [became] regarded as only one variety of writing" (1). Presently, multimodal genres are gaining ground as viable vehicles for instruction. Regrettably, these changes seem stuck at the collegiate level; high school language arts curriculum still holds fast to older, more traditional methods of writing instruction. As a result, the writing skills that high school students gain rarely prepare them for writing beyond the classroom. Yancey et. al note that the type of writing high school students bring to college has been underscored by a school culture of teaching for the test. Students understand "test-based writing practice[s] keyed to creating texts with simple beginning-middle-end structures, a central claim, and some forms of evidence, producing what is often called the five-paragraph theme…" (Yancy et al. 13). Writing skills should encompass more than the ability to produce a five-paragraph essay. As Viriya and Wasanasomsithi point out: "Writing is not just a process of forming words into sentences and putting sentences into texts. Rather, it is a purposefully situation-based activity" (11). Unfortunately, once students leave the cocoon of high

school and enter college or their career, the ability to write a five-paragraph essay matters very little. The goal of writing classrooms does not rest in students producing a better form than the original; the goal of writing classrooms is not focused on mastering the genre by modeling proficiency in the "required conventions," but rather, as Amy Devitt notes in the chapter titled "Genre Pedagogies," "the goal is to learn to write any genre better through tackling it...as meaningful social action" (153).

Exposing students to various genres begins to tip the scales of accessibility to other acts of communication. Using genre awareness in the writing classroom can give students the flexibility to become what Reiff and Barwarshi call "*boundary crossers*" in future writing situations. According to Reiff and Barwarshi, a boundary crosser is someone who is "more likely to question their genre knowledge and to break this knowledge down into useful strategies and repurpose it" (qtd. in Yancey et al. 14). To create effective boundary crossers, educators should work towards genre awareness, making space for students to practice flexible writing practices. Giving students the opportunity to explore genres can "[increase] rhetorical flexibility, [allow students to write] more effectively within unfamiliar writing situations or within new technologies, [and develop] critical thinking [skills]…" (Devitt 157). Shifting the focus from traditional, formal writing assignments in the high school classroom allows for a richer learning environment. The best way to expedite this shift is by incorporating non-traditional genres into the writing classroom and moving away from traditional writing assignments like large research papers. Focusing on these elements, this paper will explore genre awareness in the secondary classroom and how multimodal genres assist with knowledge transfer when entering postsecondary education.

Literature Review

Students entering secondary education environments are well versed in the world of multimodality; everything from how students maintain relationships, purchase goods or acquire and send information has some component of multimodal communication. Sealey-Morris addresses the ways students communicate and produce communication in the real world in "The Rhetoric of the Paneled Page: Comics and Composition Pedagogy," as the author says: "The fields in which students do and will produce texts in their lives are nothing like the traditional models of production and publication that have shaped writers' habits for generations" (47). Students bring their various forms of communication into the classroom, yet, oftentimes, these exchanges are placed to the side in favor of more formal academic forms of communication. Communication encompasses more than the written form of literacy, and because of this, "the definition of literacy must be expanded to help facilitate meaningful academic examinations of diverse forms or modes of representation" (Lunsford qtd. in Vance 122). One way to expand literacies for greater meaning making and transfer of knowledge is by including different modes of access to learning. Part of teachers' roles in the classroom involves equipping students with the means of succeeding beyond the walls of the classroom. The goal, as Bremen Vance argues in his article, "Video Games and Multimodality in First-Year Composition," is to "[equip students] with tools for navigating unfamiliar terrain...so that each student is capable of gaining independence and autonomy in the writing process" (120). If the goal calls for creating autonomous learners, educators need to think outside of the standard assignments routinely assigned in the writing classroom, where the audience largely consists of a single teacher, and the standard genre is the five-paragraph essay model. The ways in which students communicate must be taken into account in their composition instruction.

Problems Within the Discipline

Convincing secondary educators and curriculum designers of the benefits of non traditional texts in the classroom can be daunting. A lack of training in new genres and shrinking instructional time due to state mandated assessments can add to resistance. Teachers may also feel that non-traditional texts fail to do the work of a traditional essay or other traditional writing forms. Sealey-Morris shows this hesitancy through an example of a teacher/student exchange. The teacher in question challenged the comic strip format, expressing that "the writing is not equivalent to an essay" (Sealey-Morris 38). Because hybrid forms are not the norm, teachers question "...how the characteristics of ...[hybrid] form[s] relate to [the] work in the classroom" (Sealey-Morris 31). The validity of multimodal texts are called into question while traditional texts continue to hold the golden standard of writing methods. Students also raise questions about the validity of non-traditional writing assignments. In "Re-Writing Interpersonal Communication," Mariaelena Bartesaghi notes a student's negative response to an assignment within the portfolio: "Still not convinced auto-ethnography is valid" as a form of classroom writing (qtd. in Cunningham et al. 386). Here, like the example above, the validity of the assignment is called into question because it does not fit the standard mold for writing practices or content. Holly Lawrence also raises the question of textual validity in her article, "Personal, Reflective Writing: A Pedagogical Strategy for Teaching Business Students to Write." Lawrence, a business writing professor, questions why the use of personal, reflective writing is almost non-existent in the curriculum. Business scholars shy away from this type of genre because the nature of business writing revolves around time-sensitive deadlines and bottom-line communication. However, Lawrence notes: "Personal, reflective writing--as a pedagogical strategy for teaching business students to write--is designed to help students learn about

themselves, take charge of their learning, generate ideas, reflect on experience, and connect with the work they are assigned to produce" (203). By using reflective writing, business students become more influential in their discourse community. This happens because students pause to consider the best practices within the business discourse community and how they can shape effective communication in their field.

Other problems surround the utilization of multimodal genres in the classroom, ranging from the ease of student access and, of course, the issue of assessment. When asking students to compose in genres other than traditional forms, questions of accessibility come into question. Arlene Archer says that "...multimodal texts in the curriculum raise fundamental questions about power and access" and argues for teacher preparedness in classrooms where multimodal genres are assigned (202). If teachers assign, for example, a project that requires a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation, the teacher is responsible for ensuring that all students have access to these platforms, or adequate time is given during instruction time for students to complete the assignment at school. With time constraints already an issue in secondary classrooms, teachers will often forgo an assignment that takes up additional class time in favor of traditional assignments that every student can accomplish at home. Another hurdle to cross is the issue of assessment, especially for genres that incorporate images. How should a document like a zine or comic strip be judged? Can these genres be judged with the same criteria as a research paper or five-paragraph essay? Instructors wishing to expand writing genres in their classrooms will not only have to get approval for the new genres, but they will also have to figure out assessments that meet school and state criteria. In recent years, the issue of assessment has been addressed by concerned teachers and scholars in the field. Out of this concern, the authentic assessment movement was born (Tanner 24). Advocates of authentic assessment claim that "conventional

measurement practices place too much emphasis on passing a test rather than learning what one

must know in order to adjust to the community beyond the school" (Tanner 25). When high

school English classrooms focus solely on mono-modal writing instruction, students are not

prepared when encountering a world full of genres that go beyond the boundaries of standardized

essays.

Next Steps

Although considerable attention has been paid to the standard research paper as the main

tool to use in expanding writing scholarship, less attention has been paid to genre awareness

despite indications that genre awareness aids in rhetorical analysis, critical thinking, creativity,

and writing processes such as prewriting, planning, outlining, drafting, proofreading, revising,

and editing (Sealy-Morris 40-41). Evidence suggests that genre pedagogies are ripe with

potential to facilitate the writing classroom.

The findings indicate a need to rethink some of the traditional writing practices high

school curriculum leans so heavily on and incorporate a variety of genres that students encounter

in the real world, specifically multimodal genres. This paper seeks to fill a gap in the literature

by exploring different modes of writing practices that allow "students [to] move their knowledge

beyond the writing classroom" (Devitt 159). The preliminary research shows that even though a

plethora of genres exist in the world students inhabit, they rarely make it to the writing

classroom. For students to succeed beyond the classroom, the models from which instruction

springs from must change. This project will look specifically at genre awareness as a mechanism

that gives high school students the tools to become flexible writers and transfer that knowledge

into other writing discourse communities. Genre awareness does not teach specific genres, but

rather focuses on how any genre can be broken down and reassembled in the user's hands. For purposes of this paper, I will focus on genres that rely on a cohesive relationship between words and images to derive meaning and genres that center around public spaces.

Considering other genres in the classroom provides teachers with options for delivering teaching objectives. Genre instruction can be adjusted according to the diverse makeup of particular classrooms or current trends because "...genres are not fixed structures that some great arbiter of writing and its forms has decreed long ago from on high...Instead, genres are living traditions- temporary, flexible agreements about how to get communicative jobs done" (Whitney et al. 526). Some questions instructors should ask themselves at the end of each school year are: Are the genres in my writing classroom giving my students the tools to open other genre forms outside of my classroom? Do the genres in my writing classroom mirror the ways my students communicate with their world? Do the genres in my classroom allow for student ownership over the work? The following section details several examples of multimodal genres teachers can take advantage of in the classroom to answer yes to all of the previous questions.

Text and Image Based Genres

The *Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition* composed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, or WPA, lists key writing skills that students completing first-year composition should acquire. Those key skills comprise the following: rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, knowledge of conventions, and knowledge of writing processes (see also Sealy-Morris). These skills are generally acquired through the practice and mastery of traditional writing genres such as research papers and the five-paragraph essay model. However, when students only practice the five-paragraph form, Suzanne Choo indicates in her article, "Writing

through Visual Acts of Reading: Incorporating Visual Aesthetics in Integrated Writing and Reading Tasks," they "merely [imitate] given forms rather than engaging in generative thinking or expressing themselves more creatively" (171). Visual literacy has the ability to facilitate critical writing skills. For example, when using comics in the classroom, Sealey-Morris says: "...the comics reader must interpret these two sets [image and text], as well as the relation between them, while also deciphering the relation of the whole panel (words and images) to the meta-panel of the page" (37). Beyond the rhetorical knowledge, students draft and revise versions of their comic strips according to the conventions of the genre. In this way, constructing the comic strip requires the same tool kit as a research paper. Additionally, because visual literacy addresses the increasingly visual culture of students' lives, students can feel more connected to the work they are producing. Visual literacy works to increase rhetorical knowledge while also challenging students to write well. As Sealey-Morris puts it, "This hybrid form may be at once a more complex, and more natural, form of literacy" (35). By incorporating genres that mix texts and images, students are asked to look beyond standard boundaries to derive meaning.

Asking students to think about rhetorical choices with words and images challenges critical thinking. Students also have to pay close attention to genre conventions, as words and images must work together to achieve the meaning the creator is trying to convey. Additionally, through genres like zines, comic strips, posters, and pamphlets, students achieve creative control over their own work "by placing them in the position of composers of texts" (Choo 172). Genres that pair words and images push students to think beyond traditional boundaries of rhetorical choice, conventions, and ownership.

The following assignments are examples of how teachers can use visual literacy in the classroom to inspire students to practice rhetorical knowledge, critical analysis, and knowledge of conventions and processes. The assignments are extremely flexible and can be used in a number of teaching modules.

Mock Assignment #1: Poetry Zines

Context

Piquing students' interest in poetry can be challenging. I believe that teaching poetry should be an interactive process, and one of the ways to accomplish this is having students write their own poetry. Unfortunately, many students will fall back on the mimicking process similar to when writing the five-paragraph essay. Having students create poetry zines positions them as the unique creator of the work. In her article, "Zine Objects and Orientations in/as Arts Research: Documenting Art Teacher Practices and Identities Through Zine Creation, Collection, and Criticism," Courtney Weida says that zines can be defined as "extensions of genres like artist sketchbooks, chapbooks...journals [or personal diaries]" (270-71). Most zines use a combination of text and image and are predominantly handmade. The creation of the zine rests in the maker, in this case, the student. Poetry zines are an easy and fun way to ease reluctant students into writing poetry.

Assignment Overview

Students will create a mini-zine (5 pages) with an original haiku. The zine will also have images, either hand-drawn or cut-outs, that enhance the haiku's meaning.

Purpose

Students will make text and image choices for their zine based on the rhetorical situation and the message they are trying to convey. Students will be challenged to match words and images to convey accurate meaning. Audience, rhetorical situation, and genre conventions will need to be considered in this assignment.

Process

- ❖ Students will practice writing haikus and select one for their zine.
- ❖ (after learning how to make the zine booklet) Students will write the haiku in the zine and then draw or paste images on the appropriate pages.

Assessing the Zine

The zine can be assessed by the following criteria: overall creativity, words/image relatability in each zine, correct haiku structure in each zine. This assignment can be turned into a portfolio assignment as well. Multiple zines can be created featuring various poetry forms. The zines, as well as drafting and revision samples, peer review, and reflective writing pieces can be a part of the portfolio assessment.

Poetry Zine Example

Mistaken: a haiku drama

I thought you were friends,
but I saw you watching her.
Cue tragic music.

Figure 1. Kelly Miller's teaching zine, 2017.

Mock Assignment #2: What's the Story?

Context

Students will often describe writing as boring or having nothing to do with their own lives. For much of academic writing, the above conclusions are more times than not, right. Allowing students the freedom to be creative with their writing can infuse the exercise with a bit of fun. Giving students the opportunity to practice creative writing allows them to pull from their experiences and knowledge to create something meaningful.

Assignment Overview

Students will write a narrative based on a photograph. The narrative will answer who, what, when, where, and why in relation to the photograph. Students are required to use sensory language (smell, touch, taste, see, hear, feel) in the narrative as well. Teachers can use this assignment as a quick write or have students develop the narrative into a longer, more developed, work.

Purpose

The purpose of this assignment is to encourage students to show, instead of tell, their work. This assignment also encourages students to pull from their own knowledge of the world and personal experiences to create the story.

Process

❖ Students will select two photographs from a magazine or newspaper and bring them to class.

❖ All of the photographs will go into a grab bag, and students will select two photographs different from the photos they brought in themselves.

❖ Students will select one of their chosen photographs for the narrative.

Assessing the Narrative

The narrative piece can be assessed on how well the student incorporated the story elements for their photograph. Did the student leave out an integral piece: The story tells who, what, where, when, but not why? Did the student leave out some sensory language? Teachers can

give a grade based on having all of the elements, earning the student an A, and then move down the grading scale according to how many elements are left out. The stories would also work well in a peer review setting. Teachers can also use this assignment to look at students' mastery over writing during the school year. Stories can be gathered and saved for a final portfolio. In that case, each piece can be assessed, or each piece can be a pass/fail with the final grade culminating in the body of the portfolio.

Genres Centered Around Public Spaces

As educators, how do we make our assignments more authentic? Writing the same genre over and over often turns out dull results with tiresome repetitions to formulaic standards. Students often "...write again and again, with much explicit teaching, in a genre that they encounter on tests while in school-the timed test essay- doing so mechanically and without attention to the origins of this genre or its connection to other genres they might find 'in the wild'..." (Whitney et al. 525). This mono-modal approach stifles students' ability to access other genres forms that they will encounter in the future. Instead, it forces students to "...write for unspecified audiences…" and often about subjects that have no connection to their experiences and with a language that is vastly different from the types of communication strategies by which students' navigate their world (Whitney et al. 525). Students are taught repeatedly how to write for one audience (teacher) and one discourse community (the high school classroom). Once students leave the high school classroom for college or the career world, the writing skills they transfer will be of singular focus and not particularly effective when encountering multiple discourse communities. In a study focusing on an adolescent's experience with writing on Fanfiction.net, Jayne Lammers and Valerie Marsh discuss how writing in public spaces make

students aware of audience and the parameters within discourse communities, stating that when writing in public spaces, "authors consider the context of that public and the constraints or norms" within that particular discourse community (278). Here, Lammers and Marsh show how students will need to consider more than just one audience member and one small, private discourse community when writing in public spaces. While adherence to standard writing practices such as grammar, spelling, and syntax are important in these spaces, they are not the top or only qualifiers for success. Teaching students investigative strategies to access discourse communities is a great tool students can take with them into future writing situations.

Another benefit students experience when writing for public spaces is the potential for personal connection and creativity. When students are asked to write about topics that hold no personal weight in their lives, they will "increasingly find writing tasks in schools utterly uninteresting and irrelevant" (Choo 171). My students have often lamented that they cannot write about a topic because it has nothing to do with them. Finding ways to connect student interest with writing assignments can help students find purpose in the writing activity. Lammers and Marsh suggest that "Tapping into students' interest and connecting them to networked publics serves as but one way to make classroom writing instruction more relevant to students' lives" (284). Writing for public spaces lets students write about issues that are important and relevant in their lives. It gives them opportunities to write for more than a test. Writing for public spaces "...immerse[s] students in a real discourse community rather than one just like [the] classroom and, in doing so, make available to them the generic tools others in that same community used" (Whitney et al. 527). Through investigating the mechanics of writing for public spaces, students can gain the necessary tools to write a variety of texts because they will have the knowledge of how to break down any genre, understand it, and write effectively in it.

In the following mock assignments, students are asked to create texts that rely on investigating audience and discourse communities outside of the high school classroom. The assignments also "position students as 'real' writer[s]" in an environment where they are generally writing to meet the required checkpoints of academic standards (Whitney et al. 527).

Mock Assignment #1: Writing for Publication

Context

Students are multifaceted beings with talents ranging far beyond academia. Using writing as a creative outlet allows students to connect to the writing assignment in meaningful ways. By giving students creative freedom over their work, the desire to mimic academic writing diminishes and purposeful writing can follow.

Assignment Overview

Students will be asked to research three online journals that accept young adult writing and work towards submitting and potential publication. Instructors can assign the types of writing genres based on the needs of the class. Creative nonfiction, personal essays, cultural criticism, and creative short stories all work well here.

Purpose

The purpose of this assignment is to encourage students to write for audiences outside of the "teacher" and have some creative control while doing so. This assignment also asks students to gain knowledge of the writing conventions and processes of the genre they chose. Drafting, revising, and general awareness of a submission deadline are also keys to success with this assignment.

Process

❖ Students will research three online journals and submit a typed evaluation for each journal. The evaluation will consist of: name of the journal, what type of writing the journal accepts, what type of writing the student will submit (based on types of writing determined in class), who the audience is for their piece, basic requirements for the submitted piece (page length, subject matter, deadline for submission, etc.).

❖ Once the journal's selected, students will prepare a rough draft and two subsequent revisions that will be workshopped in class.

❖ Students will submit a final draft for assessment, and they will also submit their piece to the journal for potential publication.

Assessment Options

This assignment grants flexibility to instructors. Here are some suggested ways to assess this assignment:

❖ Grade all the written elements separately (first-inquiry write up, first rough draft and both revisions, final draft).

❖ Grade all the written elements together as one portfolio project.

❖ Do either of the above and add a final presentation of the written pieces as the final assessment.

Mock Assignment #2: Writing for Change- Letter to Administration

Context

Students have strong opinions about events occurring in the communities they inhabit but often feel that they have no outlet outside of social media where they can express those opinions. The writing students are asked to produce in class and do not often ask for their opinions on current events. Usually, students have no control or say over the writing assignments they are asked to generate in the classroom. This assignment allows students to address an area of concern in their school community.

Assignment Overview

Students will be asked to craft a letter to the school administration about something they feel needs to improve or change at the school. The class can brainstorm ideas together and students will select an issue to write about from those options. After the final drafts are in, the teacher will turn in the letters to the administration. Students can decide whether they prefer to be anonymous or to sign the letter with their names.

Purpose

The main purpose of this exercise is to center the students as agents of change through their writing. Students will need to call on key writing skills, rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, knowledge of conventions, and knowledge of writing processes to be successful with this assignment.

Process

❖ After the class brainstorming session, students will select their topic and submit a one-paragraph write up as to why they chose a specific topic.

❖ Students will prepare a rough draft and two subsequent revisions that will be workshopped in class.

❖ Students will submit a final draft for assessment, and for submission to school administration.

❖ Students can opt to read their final piece aloud to the class.

Assessment Options

This assignment grants flexibility to instructors. Here are some suggested ways to assess this assignment:

❖ Grade all the written elements separately (first-inquiry write up, first rough draft and both revisions, final draft).

❖ Grade all the written elements together as one portfolio project.

❖ Grade the final draft only.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Incorporating various genres in the classroom enables teachers to partner with their students and give them autonomy over parts of the classroom and their learning experiences. Genre awareness can also help students read the world with its various discourses and allow students to feel comfortable moving among those discourses. Students entering our classrooms need the tools to access the diverse types of genres they will encounter in the future, and I believe this can happen through teaching genre awareness beginning at the high school level. Teaching genre awareness gives "students a process for understanding contextually any genre they might encounter" (Devitt 152). However, the efficacy of shifting the high school language arts classroom from traditional assessments to incorporating hybrid genres is uncertain. Complications often emerge when new ideas bump into old ones, and I am uncertain as to how much purchase these ideas will have in the classroom. Hurdles such as student access and questions of assessment can lead to pushback from teachers and students as well.

The way educators and the education system thinks about literacy needs to change. The variety of genres students will face in college and career go beyond the scope of what is presently being taught in the high school writing classroom. Yancy et al. pose the following question to educators: "...how [can we] help students develop writing knowledge and practices that they can draw upon, use, and repurpose for new writing tasks in new settings?" (2). Adding genre awareness to the high school curriculum helps students become boundary crossers by adding to their writing toolbox. In this way, students become owners of their writing and have the confidence to enter into the conversation of discourse communities in the future.

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A New Salvation in Cyborgs?: The Problem with Female Cyborgs and the Pleasure of the Visual

Introduction

Laura Mulvey's seminal work, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," still engages lively theoretical debate between visual pleasure and the male gaze in film and cinema, even forty years after its publication. The beauty of movie watching occurs when ideas come to life before our eyes on the big screen. Like books are meant for reading, movies are meant for watching, and the cinema provides a unique environment for watching. The darkness of the room grants a feeling of privacy for the viewer, even when in close proximity to others. This sense of privacy and darkness creates "an illusion of looking in on a private world" (Mulvey 2184). Within the darkness of the room, the brightly lit screen demands the attention of the spectator. The arrangement of the theater and the conventional elements of the film nudge the spectator from casual observer to active looker. This, Mulvey feels, is intentional: "...the mass of mainstream film, and the conventions within which it has consciously evolved, portray a hermetically sealed world which unwinds magically, indifferent to the presence of the audience, producing for them a sense of separation and playing on their voyeuristic fantasy" (2184). Mulvey's argument advances the idea that Hollywood narrative cinema gained power through its "manipulation of visual pleasure" (2183). Left unchallenged, "...mainstream film coded the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order" (Mulvey 2183). One does not need to be an academic to realize how androcentric film narratives can be; a casual movie-goer can discern that for himself.

Considering that the look of the spectator is often controlled by the male protagonist, female representations and agency is often at risk in visual representations by both the film

industry and those who watch movies. In standard Hollywood movies, "the women displayed [function] on two levels: as erotic object for the character's within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium" (Mulvey 2186-87). Here, female bodies are subjected to a double objectification. The problem, as Mulvey sees it, is the proliferation of certain types of visual pleasures in film, namely sexualized female bodies, because men desire it. She believes that the "unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film" (2182). This becomes clear when looking at the way women are displayed on screen, the roles they play, and the way spectators approve or disapprove of their performances based on the way women actors look and behave on screen. The sexualization and objectification of female bodies on screen is not limited to human females. Lola (Angelina Jolie), the sexy lionfish in *Shark's Tale* (2004), Looney Tunes character, Lola Bunny, Bugs Bunny's love interest (1996), who features a curvy waist and breasts, and Rouge the Bat, the anthropomorphic bat and jewel thief in the Sonic the Hedgehog series (2003-2006), that does her thieving in high heels and bold shades of eyeshadow are just some examples of the way all female forms are sexaulized on visual media platforms. It seems as though film, and other forms of visual media, need an entirely new way of seeing women, one that does not base its foundation in hegemonic ideology. Donna Haraway's vision of the cyborg seemed to hold the key.

Donna Haraway's renowned essay, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," opened the door to new narratives around gender and gender performance. Haraway believes the cyborg to be a "creature in a post-gender world," a creature whose origins are free from the messy tangle of the quintessential Western origin story (2270). Because the cyborg is an amalgam of machine and organism, "a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction," truth and imagination can be written into the hardware of the cyborg

(Haraway 2269). In her article, "Rereading Cyborg(?) Women: The Visual Rhetoric of Images of Cyborg (and Cyber) Bodies on the World Wide Web," Danielle DeVoss calls the cyborg's territory of hybridity "a zone where "postgenderedness is a possibility" (836). The possibilities of what the cyborg can bring is appealing. Haraway's theory excites the mind with the potential of moving towards equal representations among all forms of gender expressions.

One way the cyborg has come to life in mainstream culture is through the power of the cinema. The potential of film to advance the idea of the "Other" as an equal partner through the image of the cyborg cannot be understated. Filmmakers have the ability to create a cyborg that is untethered to society's rules of gender conformity; they can change the narrative of who is looking at whom. They can skip the worn out backstories of human origins and boring misogynistic tropes of boy saves girl because cyborg embodiment is "outside salvation history" (Haraway 2270). A cyborg narrative provides a clean slate for gender representation. Unfortunately, when given the opportunity to create something new from the fluidity of these ideas, film often fails to imagine the possibilities and reverts back to heteronormative representations of gender. DeVoss agrees. In looking at cyber bodies on the internet, she notes that "...visual representations of cyborg bodies are actually representations of 'cyber' bodies, which reinforce contemporary notions of masculinity, femininity, heterosexuality, and power" (835). Cinema, too, plays into these images by allowing the patriarchal desires to influence gaze: "Cinema builds the way [female] is to be looked at into the spectacle itself" (Mulvey 2191-92). Even with a new framework that creates cyborgs, AIs, and other science fiction creations, cinematic conventions fall back on old tropes of femininity and determine what females should look like, whether flesh and blood or machine, on the screen.

Opportunities to rewrite gender normative scripts abound in the world of filmmaking, especially within the genre of science fiction. The scope of science fiction films and other media that feature robots, AIs, and cyborgs allows the boundaries of reality to be challenged, and often broken, giving audiences the chance to escape their everyday lives and imagine the possibilities of a fantasy-like future. Mechanized depictions of humans are not a new phenomenon in TV and film. The problem lies in the way the narrative of the visual grossly overemphasizes male desire and presents stock depictions of masculinity and femininity. Sennah Yee discusses the imbalance of gender representations in film in her article, "You bet she can fuck- Trends in Female AI Narratives within Mainstream Cineam: *Ex Machina* and *Her*." Male AIs are often the "strong and silent" type, their mechanized bodies are strong and sturdy, able to withstand any number of violent scenarios. Yee states that "Male AIs are often authoritative figures who represent inner conflicts of what it means to be a human versus what it means to be a machine" (86). Not only are male AI bodies presented as indestructible, they often carry the narrative of boundary crosser between machine and human thought. Audiences witness the strength of T-800 in *The Terminator* and ponder the challenging questions Roy Batty poses about life and death in *Blade Runner* (1982) (Yee 86). They are written as strong and capable. Male AIs comprise more than just their physical attributes. Just as male cyborgs stick to a heteronormative narrative, female cyborgs do too. The classic submissive role for women plays out from Rosie, the lovable and quirky robotic maid on the *Jetsons* (1962-1987) to Kyoko, the domestic servant/sex slave for Nathan in *Ex Machina*. Lisa's (Kelly LeBrock) picture-perfect body is on display in *Weird Science* (1985) and in Tim Miller's animated sci-fi anthology series, *Love, Death & Robots*, Yan, a female human drugged and surgically turned into a cyborg for sexual pleasure, shows off her perfectly formed naked feminine cyborg body. Along with Yee, DeVoss also notes the

discrepancy between male and female representations in the cyborg universe with visual descriptions of both in her article. All of DeVoss's examples of female cyborgs are stylized in a sexual manner, all are presented in a way that pleases the male gaze and ego: partially covered and fully exposed breasts, high heels, sexually suggestive clothing, removable limbs and extra limbs for convenience (839-40). Male cyborgs, on the other hand, are presented as strong, strapping specimens of male dominance: "large metal muscles, gigantic chest, and shoulders;" the male cyborg carries a large weapon and some have missiles attached to their bodies (DeVoss 842). Haraway's theory "create[s] a space for post gendered possibilities" so why the proliferation of static representations of gender? (DeVoss 837). The potential for salvation in cyborgs is there, as Haraway states, however, a machine, "while offering liberation from gender, usually serves merely to reinforce the gender dynamics currently at play" (DeVoss 837). In this gap lies the dilemma between visual representations of feminized cyborg bodies and the cyborg as a new narrative. This gap, DeVoss argues, "between theoretical constructions of cyborg possibilities and actual visual representations of the cyborg" must be resolved (838).

The body of work dedicated to Laura Mulvey's theory of Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema and Donna Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto commands attention. However, material on how these two theories affect one another in the world of film is lacking. DeVoss asks, "Is the visual dangerous to the notion of the cyborg?" (836). The intention of this paper is to answer DeVoss's question by looking at cyborganic representations in modern films. This paper will explore how the dominance of the male gaze and androcentric visual pleasure in films hinders the possibility of gender neutrality and agency for women as envisioned in Donna Haraway's cyborg manifesto. I will use Ava, the AI in *Ex Machina*, and Joi, the holographic love interest of K in *Blade Runner 2049* for my analysis.

Ex Machina: **Cyborg on Display**

Garland's *Ex Machina* unfolds in seven parts or "sessions," the bulk of the sessions centering around the developing relationship between Caleb and Ava. Caleb (Domnhall Gleeson), a computer programmer, wins a contest to spend a week at his boss's house, Nathan, the CEO of the tech company, BlueBook (Oscar Issac). Nathan lives and works in a remote part of Alaska, secluding him from the outside world. Apart from himself, Nathan's only company is Ava (Alicia Vikander), his most recent female cyborg, and Kyoko (Sonoyo Mizno), a female cyborg in service as a domestic servant/sex partner. Once Caleb arrives, he joins the party as the human segment of the Turing Test, a test that determines whether an AI is capable of gaining consciousness. Caleb has one week to study Ava and determine whether or not she passes the Turing Test. Unbeknownst to Caleb, however, Nathan is actually testing Caleb. His goal is to determine if Ava has the capability of manipulating Caleb into rebelling against him to help Ava escape. During their time together, Ava causes minor power failures which disable the cameras. With Nathan's view cut off, Ava discloses to Caleb that Nathan cannot be trusted. Caleb, having grown to feel affection for the cyborg, becomes protective of Ava and hatches a plan to rescue her from Nathan's wilderness compound. In the end, the plan only partially works–Ava goes free and Nathan, Kyoko, and Caleb die.

Ex Machina's potential for fulfilling the cyborg fantasies laid out in Haraway's essay is enormous, however, the male gaze that saturates the film drowns most possibilities. For my analysis, I will focus on the objectification and sexualization of the female cyborg and the push for male visual pleasure in two ways. Firstly, the objectification of Ava through Caleb's

unlimited access to her via the closed circuit cameras. And secondly, the sexualization of Ava's female body when Ava first appears on screen and in session three when Ava dresses for Caleb.

Through the extensive use of a point of view (POV) shot (subjective camera) from Caleb's perspective, the viewer sees Nathan's home, lab, and Ava through his eyes. Caleb's limitless looking privileges his narrative over Ava's. In this way, the male perspective in *Ex Machina* represents the power narrative, suggesting to the viewer that the male's story demands more attention; it suggests that the male's story should be the spectator's story too. Mulvey explains it like this: "The man controls the film fantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look of the spectator…" (2187). This is accomplished through the "processes set in motion by structuring the film around a main controlling figure with whom the spectator can identify" (Mulvey 2187). And Caleb is someone an audience can identify with. He's smart, clean-cut, well-spoken, and unthreatening in his masculinity. His eyes are soft when he watches Ava on the camera; they sparkle when they are together. He appears altogether trustworthy, someone the viewer would be friends with. Because of this, the audience can feel okay with acting out their voyeuristic fantasies behind Caleb's eyes.

Through the closed circuit cameras, Caleb (and the spectator) can watch Ava at any time. Over time, Caleb's voyeuristic desires grow because of this unlimited access to Ava through the cameras. Because he cannot physically touch her, he can only gain a sense of satisfaction through the act of unlimited looking. Mulvey describes this as scopophilia: "taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze" (2184). Freud describes it as: "watching, in an active controlling sense, an objectified other" (qtd. in Mulvey 2184). When Caleb watches Ava, she loses any autonomy and becomes an object for Caleb, and through Caleb, the spectator, to ogle at any time. Through this double gaze, Ava becomes an objectified

"Other." The cyborg myth of power and autonomy dies here. Ava's origins might not be embedded in classical Western ideology, but the belief in how to treat her and what to do with her is fixed within that construct. Ava exists for male pleasure, to be studied, talked about, and judged: "The narrative forces the audience into viewing Ava as an object of study whose interiority and 'truth' must be revealed and tested through conversation and interrogation, conducted by men" (Yee 92). Even in her escape, Ava cannot break free from male evaluation. Her original purpose was programmed into her body by her male creator, Nathan. Consequently, where some agency could be granted to Ava in the last scene where she kills Nathan and leaves Caleb to die, the narrative reads her actions as those pre-programmed by Nathan, with the objectified Ava performing the will of her master.

The fact that Ava is a cyborg and not an actual human female does not lessen the hunger of the male gaze. If anything, it appears to enhance it. The first time Ava appears on the screen her femaleness jumps out at the viewer. She steps in front of a brightly lit window, making her breasts and buttocks, which are covered in a dark mesh material, exaggerated. Her arms and legs are transparent, and the viewer can clearly see the machinery that makes the AI move. The transparency of her limbs make the mesh covered areas stand out even further. Ava's arms, legs, and face are afterthoughts here. Caleb's eyes are drawn to her and so, too, are the eyes of the spectator. Mulvey posits that this is the work of film: "...film reflects, reveals and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretaions of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle" (2181-82). The established forms of sexual differences put humans into two boxes: men and women. Inside the fixed representations of men and women, men are represented in masculine form, they appear on screen trim and fit, muscular, handsome in various ways–rugged or clean cut, etc. Men's bodies are rarely a main feature. Audiences

seldom look at men's bodies to fulfill desire. Usually, spectators are curious about what the male protagonist does for a living. Is he trustworthy? Will he protect the female on the screen? Is he capable? On the other hand, women are represented in feminine form. To be taken seriously, they need to be thin but curvy in the right spots. Women's bodies are almost always the main feature. And much more often than men, their bodies, or parts of their bodies, are shown without clothing for visual pleasure. No one really cares what the woman on screen does for a living. If she does something that steps outside a normal feminine role (choosing a career over motherhood), she is often brushed aside as silly or not in her right mind. No one cares if she is trustworthy. A woman's value on screen is tied up in her body. Her body determines whether she is worth saving and loving.

Female AIs in science fiction fall under the harsh socially acceptable interpretations of sexual representations too. Yee notes that "...female AIs are often hyper-sexualized and exist in spaces dominated by men" (86). These hyper-sexualized forms spring from a culture dedicated to a misogynistic gaze. Mulvey suggests that the film industry helps push that narrative along by "focus[ing] attention on the human form" (2184-85). By focusing exclusively on the human form, other ways of being seen are diminished. A cyborg fashioned in the likeness of human form becomes all the more enticing to the spectator. It arouses curiosity because it is simultaneously familiar and different. *Ex Machina* highlights this curiosity in session three when Ava dresses for Caleb. During the session, Ava tells Caleb she wants to show him something and asks him to close his eyes. Ava goes to her room and begins to dress for Caleb. Caleb, of course, does not grant Ava her one request of keeping his eyes closed, so as Ava begins to dress herself, the spectator can fully watch her, against her request, because Caleb is also "watching" through his imagination. She choses with care one of three dresses for Caleb's pleasure. All of the articles

she can choose from are stock feminine garb: the dress, sweater, a wig to cover her baldness, and stockings to leave the male imagination wondering where they end under the dress. As Ava slides the dress over her body and seductively pulls the stockings over her legs, the spectator is granted a spectacle: a strip-tease in reverse. Because of this, Sonja Georgi notes in her article, "Female Cyborgs, Gender Performance, and Utopian Gaze in Alex Garland's *Ex Machina*," how "Caleb's and the audiences' attention is thus quickly drawn to the gender identity that Ava seems to emphasize in her interactions with Caleb…" (42). This is the first time Ava performs her gendered body for Caleb and by proxy, the spectator. As she leaves her room and returns to Caleb, she shyly peeks around the corner and grips the bottom edges of her sweater, a move indicative of feminine shyness. Ava commands Caleb to open his eyes and slowly spins around so Caleb and the viewer can see all of her. She submits to his gaze because she understands that is what he desires. Desire is written plainly on Caleb's face. Ava asked Caleb if he is attracted to her. He laughs it off, but Ava presses on telling him that he gives her indications that this is the truth. It is Caleb's gaze, even though guarded, that gives him away. Ava explains:

> Ava: Micro-expressions.
>
> Caleb: Micro-expressions?
>
> Ava: The way your eyes fix on my eyes and lips…the way you hold my gaze.
>
> (00:44:12 - 00:44-22)

After the session, Caleb returns to his room and watches Ava on the camera. Ava slowly strips off her stockings and dress, but this time does not ask Caleb to close his eyes. In fact, after she pulls off her stockings, she looks directly at the camera before removing her dress knowing Caleb is watching her. The camera then switches to a close up of Caleb's eyes, reminding the audience that Ava's sexuality is not for her pleasure but for Caleb's.

A cyborg body entices, not because it has the potential to push past gendered boundaries as Haraway describes; a cyborg body entices because it has the ability to magnify the desires of the male gaze. A cyborg body is able to be designed to exact specifications for desire; the "construction of the cyborg body reduces the feminine to fetishized and fragmented parts designed to be looked at" (Yee 89). The mechanicity of the female cyborg makes it *more* sexually appealing and accessible than if it had flesh and blood. Yee feels that "The mechanization of women has become a fetish, a new branch of voyeuristic gaze…In inscribing the body with technology, and technology with sexuality, mechanized women are a convergence of ideological implications, sexual fantasies, and myth-making" (86). The mechanized body reaches to the far end of the "Other," a machine that embodies the best representations of male desire. Its oddity makes it appealing and grows the spectator's desire to look to enormous proportions.

The last scene of the movie shows a free Ava but not an Ava standing free. She is seen through a window instead of fully in the light. In the end, Ava never truly breaks free, "she is ultimately trapped within the male gaze of the camera, the male characters in the narrative, as well as the spectators watching the film" (Yee 87). One could argue *Ex Machina* supports a feminist reading through Ava's feminine gaze and eventual freedom from Nathan and Caleb, however, just because a female character looks or acts does not qualify the gaze as feminine or a subversion of the male gaze.

Blade Runner 2049: **Joi(!) for Any Occasion**

Blade Runner 2049, the sequel to the 1982 movie, *Blade Runner*, was released on the big screen in 2017 with expectations of amazing graphics and cleaner plot lines than its predecessor. While the plot of *2049* still lacks clean lines and satisfying conclusions, the colorful, eye-catching graphics against dark and dreary backdrops enhance the audiences' viewing experiences. *Blade Runner 2049* takes place in the year 2049 in the city of Los Angeles. The city is dark and dismal; it is a city continuously at dusk. The gigantic cotton-candy colored billboards, mostly featuring women, are the only pops of color in the city. Here, humans and replicants (cyborgs) navigate a bleak world ruled by big tech. KD6-3.7 (Ryan Gosling), or K for short, assumes the task of rounding up rogue replicants for retirement, a nice way to say K, as a blade runner, kills for a living. K, a replicant himself, begins to gain awareness of his actions as the story progresses. The story fans out from here with a handful of interesting characters and plot lines that are a goldmine for theoretical analysis. For the purposes of my analysis, however, I will narrow my focus on Joi (Ana de Armas) and her relationship with K.

Joi, an AI designed by the Wallace Corporation, provides customers with the pleasure they crave. She is a product designed to cater to the specific desires of her owner. For K, he desires companionship and because K is a replicant himself, he desires companionship with something like himself. Even though Joi appears as a beautiful, happy woman, she is a product made for distribution. Throughout the movie, K summons Joi whenever he wants her to be in his presence, and she always looks great. The first time Joi appears on screen, she materializes before the viewer's eyes as a 1950s housewife serving K his dinner. Her mannerisms and appearance are modeled to please: nicely dressed, make-up on, smiling, submissive, serving. The viewer has an instant connection to Joi, even though she is a projection of female only, because

she is recognizable. Here again, we see the conventions of mainstream film at work–the focus on the body to manifest the thing desired. As K looks at Joi as the exact manifestation of his desires, the spectator looks too. Joi has no control over her representation on screen; she is an exact replica of K's desire. As K's mood shifts during dinner, Joi's appearance and wishes shift to accommodate his pleasure:

> Joi: (In the 1950s housewife uniform, staring into K's eyes) What a day.
>
> K: It was a day.
>
> Joi: (sensing K's exhaustion, morphs into a girl next door look, black, slightly suggestive sweater, hair cute, inviting) Would you read to me? It would make you feel better.
>
> K: You hate that book.
>
> Joi: (tossing the book aside) I don't want to read either. (Joi changes uniforms again–blond wig, and a short, tight sparkly dress) Let's dance.
>
> K: Do you want to dance, or do you want to open your present?
>
> Joi: (morphs back into the innocent girl next door sweater) What present?
>
> (00:18:50-00:19:11)

Joi's shifting image plays into male hegemonic masculinity concerning the way men view the female body. To be a woman, the body needs to be moldable to the vision of male desires, and in this scene, Joi represents a perfect model of this type of thought. This exchange speaks to Mulvey's thoughts on the male gaze and how it affects representations of women in film. Mulvey says, "The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly" (2186). Because Joi is a type of hologram, K's desires are directly projected onto Joi's body. There is no new dawn for the cyborg in this world. If anything, Joi's representation feels more uncertain than Ava's in *Ex Machina*. *Blade Runner 2049* presents this woman who

has no autonomy, no power over her representation to others, a literal object owned by someone else, and only existing in a holographic state as the perfect manifestation of the male desire.

Feminine personality traits are also consumed by the male gaze. Joi's personality is programmed for happiness and accommodation and she performs splendidly, even in light of the fact that she is a prisoner in K's home. Joi comes as a standard home model, and if a customer wishes to make Joi portable, he must purchase an Emanator, a device that acts like a cell phone; she is now able to travel with her owner on the Emanator. K gives Joi the gift of movement through the Emanator telling her, "Honey, you can anywhere you want in the world now" (00:20:24-00:20:28). He grants her "freedom" by pushing a button on the device. Gratitude floods her face, in turn, pleasing K. She does not balk at the notion of being controlled, she gushes with thankfulness, all the while K stands in front of her, watching her reaction, pleased with the dominance he has over Joi. The male gaze concerns itself with the female form, yes, but it is more than that. Mulvey's theory only addresses the pleasure of looking at the physical; however, male gaze consumes both the physical aspects of femininity and the actions femininity performs. For a woman to act too masculine would be a turn-off for the heterosexual male so it is not a narrative that is often represented in film.

Joi expires at the two hour mark indicating her dispensability. By this time, K locates Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford), the original blade runner, and now K's attentions are turned elsewhere. K no longer needs her validation because bigger issues are at play: man's work. After the fight scene where Joi dies by the Emanator being crushed, a rogue group of replicants whisk K away. He's exhausted and raw from being shot and beaten. He stands outside in the rain, contemplative. A larger than life Joi, represented here as a billboard advertisement, walks off the jumbotron and towards K. Her body is shown in ridiculously large fragments, first her legs, then

legs and torso from the side, a quick shot of her breasts, face, then back to her breasts for a longer shot. Fully nude, Joi towers over K, speaking to him in seductive tones, turning her body to bare her breasts to him and to the viewer. In a world of blackness and smoke, Joi's holographic image shines brightly. Her hair, an alluring purple, her skin, creamy white. Interestingly, her eyes are completely black. Her sight no longer matters (not that it ever did) because only her body on display for others matters here. Joi acts out the heterosexual male's fantasies: I'm here when you want me; I'll be waiting close by when you don't." Whatever redemption Joi might have had vanishes; the close-up shots of her body allows the spectator to throw out any other meaning besides male desire and female subjection. Mulvey agrees: "...conventional close-ups of legs or a face integrate into the narrative a different mode of eroticism" Instead of giving audiences the "illusion of depth demanded by the narrative; it gives flatness, the quality of a cut-on or icon, rather than verisimilitude, to the screen" (2187). Femaleness breaks down into neat parts, a visual smorgasbord for male eyes. The view of the heteropatriarchy through cinematic representations blots out whatever possibilities Haraway imagined for cyborgs. In his article, "Dystopia Fatigue Doesn't Cut It, or *Blade Runner 2049*'s Utopian Longings," Sean Guynes studies the balance of power between men and women in *2049* and laments: "What is emancipatory in all of this; what thin vapors cling to the hopes for something better?" (143). Indeed, what is emancipatory about a movie where females are only meant to fulfill the sexual fantasties of heterosexual men? What's more, these sexual fantasies are made perfect by female mechanized bodies that are able to be contructed in whole or in parts for the delights and preferences of the viewing audience.

Limitations of the Study

Both *Ex Machina* and *Blade Runner 2049* show the effects of the male gaze on the

construction of female bodies, particularly on feminized cyborg bodies. However, both theories

are limited in their assertions. In her essay, Mulvey only discusses the male gaze while leaving

out the female gaze entirely. She also pinpoints the loss of female autonomy squarely on the look

of the male protagonist. This leads one to assume that the female gaze can never have power and

females can never be constructed as anything but objects of male desire. We see a deviation in

Mulvey's theory through the actions of the AI, Ava. Nathan's purpose in creating Ava was to test

whether or not she could manipulate Caleb enough to convince him to help her escape. Ava is so

successful in her manipulation that she is the *only* one who leaves the compound. Ava did not

gain her freedom because she begged Caleb to set her free; rather, she slowly stroked his desire

throughout the movie with her look alone. Because they are always separated by glass, Ava can

only communicate her desires through her eyes. Several times throughout the movie, Ava gazes

directly into the camera, her gaze steady even though she cannot see Caleb looking back at her.

Her gaze, lessened because of the lack of reciprocity, motivates Caleb enough to fall into a state

of false love and fulfill Ava's wishes. The male gaze dominates the entire movie but in the end,

the female gaze wields a power of its own. I cannot go so far as to say *Ex Machina* eradicates the

male gaze because I do not think enough evidence exists to support such a reading.

Blade Runner 2049 besieges viewers with visions of desirable women, however, there are

moments when the power of gaze belongs to the female holographic AI, Joi. The most powerful

example of the female gaze in *2049* is the scene where Joi inhabits the body of the replicant,

Mariette. To bring K pleasure, Joi inhabits Mariette's body, replacing Mariette's face with her

own. Now, K can touch a physical representation of the AI he loves. Before Joi (Mariette) and K

have sex, Joi manipulates Mariette's body to undress in front of K. Joi never breaks eye contact with K. Once she is naked, she moves purposefully towards K, her gaze hungry. The scene is shot exclusively focused on the female gaze, not the male's, a rare feature in film. Instead of giving male spectators a character to identify with, Joi gives female spectators permission to look, and to look with desire. Viewers last look at K's holographic Joi is immediately before Luv (Sylvia Hoeks) crushes the Emanator that allows Joi to travel with K. Her last words to K are, "I love you" (2:01:06). Telling someone you love them is one of the most human of statements. On top of Joi's verbal declaration, her gaze fixates on K's face; it does not waver. Joi's purposeful gaze and statement could be read as an AI gaining some modicum of autonomy, moving from machine to animal. This would fall in line with Haraway's vision of cyborgs extending the reality of the human experience beyond the skin and into a machine (Haraway 2296).

The problem with Haraway runs along the same vein as Mulvey: the exclusion of certain elements from her assertions. Haraway alleges an incredible opportunity exists with the creation of a cyborg, especially for females and the feminine body. However, her analysis disregards how a female cyborg would represent any differently from stereotypical female expressions of the body that are embedded in our culture today. Her vision does not speak of the debilitating power of the male gaze on female bodies in TV, film, comic books, and online gaming. Haraway speaks of cyborgs that have the power to do away with constructed models of origin and gender, yet, most of the representations of female cyborgs in films focus specifically on the visual desires of men.

Limitations of Film

Perhaps film, and other forms of visual media, is too entrenched in the art of visual pleasure, and a very particular visual pleasure at that, to ever allow feminine representations to be both powerful and different than the standard feminine form. To bring Haraway's vision to life, female AI's may need to switch artistic platforms and live only in the written word. The visual representation of a character matters less in a novel, depending on the plot, than in film. Novels can put visual representations on the backburner and advance the storyline in other ways. They can also focus on other elements to draw readers in such as setting, mood, or conflict. Films can do this as well, however, film can never separate its success from the visual pleasure it brings audiences. An example of this is Klara, the Artificial Friend (AF) for the human girl, Josie, in *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro. Klara is purchased by Josie and her mother to be a friend to Josie and assist her when she feels ill. Ishiguro gives little description as to what Klara looks like. Readers know she is a female AI because a fellow AI refers to her as a girl on page four. On page eighteen, Josie asks Klara, "Are you French…You look kind of French." Josie bases this observation on a previous meeting she had with two French girls who wore their hair neat and short. From this exchange, readers know that Klara's hair is short and probably straight. From the text, readers can also glean that Klara is not child-sized; her stature falls more in line with that of an adult woman because Josie, a young girl when Klara first comes to live with her, grows taller than Klara by the end of the book. Outside of these few details, readers are left to their own imaginations as to what Klara looks like. Because of this, Klara's body and her femininity are not dictated by what pleases the male gaze. Ishiguro's novel draws the gaze of the reader away from the physical body and turns it towards Klara as a machine that shows the capability of independent thought. Klara presses up against the boundary between human and

machine, asking the question: What does it mean to be human? Ava, and in some ways, Joi, asks this same question, however, their greater purpose is swallowed up in stock representations of their gender on the screen. Klara's worth does not depend on the visual, therefore, her potential to cross gendered boundaries is greater than either Ava or Joi can hope to achieve.

Conclusion

Ex Machina and *Blade Runner 2049* leave much to be desired in regard to female bodies and the way we look at them. In both films, "...women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*" (Mulvey 2186). How can films write the female to enhance qualities other than her visual appeal? Is it even possible to have a female coded with traditional feminine characteristics and be seen for more than the visual pleasure her body gives spectators? Can films featuring female AIs give rise to alternative cinema that breaks with conventional narratives? Both films answer these questions in a positive way, but only to a small degree. In *Ex Machina*, Ava's gaze cannot be easily dismissed. Even though the narrative is told almost exclusively from Caleb's point of view, Ava's narrative shines through too. She does not look at Caleb as an objectified "Other," or even necessarily as a man. Her gaze is "not one of the machine-turned-human but the utopian gaze of a cyborg that thinks and operates outside of the human-machine binary" (Georgi 48). She does not cave to the romance trope of forbidden love at the end of the movie; she gains her freedom and walks out of Nathan's compound leaving Caleb to die. Ava's last interaction with Caleb is looking at him stuck behind the glass door. Through her actions, Ava embodies Haraway's model cyborg: "Instead of subjugating to the status quo, cyborgs as the symbol of social, ethnic, and gender imbalances in high tech industries…seek to

re-define the global capitalist order by making use of the tools and technologies around them"

(Georgi 46). Ava makes use of not only the technology embedded within her body, but also the

technology installed throughout the house. But ultimately, her most powerful tool proved to be

her feminine gaze aimed at Caleb.

Joi, *in Blade Runner 2049* falls terribly short of Haraway's vision. Joi lacks a basic body

and only exists as a projection of K's desires. Unlike Ava who has some power in the form of

choosing things, her dress for Caleb as an example, Joi has power over nothing. Fortunately, not

all of the female narratives in *2049* are as bleak as Joi's. Dr. Ana Stelline (Carla Juri), the

daughter of Rick Deckard and the replicant Rachael (Sean Young), holds promise for a cyborg

Messiah. She, unlike many of the other females in *2049*, does not die by the end of the movie.

Her appearance is not overly feminine or sexualized. Dr. Stelline is smart, capable, and single.

Through Ana, there is a wisp of Haraway's vision on the screen. It is only a wisp, however,

because Ana can only exist in her current state alone and behind glass. And, she only carries the

mark of messianic promises because she is the offspring of both human and replicant. To be the

daughter of replicants alone would disqualify her (this is not even possible for female replicants

in the *Blade Runner 2049* world). Her character's potential is swallowed up in the last scene as

Deckard wins the last look, gazing in at Ana.

For now, it looks as if new expressions of female bodies in films bear the traditional

mantle of the unconscious projections of male desires. Film has not created something new with

its use of cyborg bodies; if anything, cyborg bodies on film intensifies the desires of the voyeur.

Linda Mulvey suggests a way to move forward, past the debilitating power of the male gaze and

towards something that Haraway had in mind in her cyborg manifesto. To move into that space,

Mulvey says film and the old ways of visually displaying pleasure must be challenged,

Not in favor of a reconstructed new pleasure, which cannot exist in the abstract, nor of

intellectualized unpleasure, but to make way for a total negation of the ease and plenitude

of the narrative fiction film. The alternative is the thrill that comes from leaving the past

behind without simply rejecting it, transcending outworn or oppressive forms, and daring

to break with normal pleasurable expectations in order to conceive a new language of

desire (Mulvey 2183-84).

The cyborg can bring that new language of desire to film. Haraway declares that "Cyborg

imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies

and our tools to ourselves" (2299). Film and visual media does not need to crucify outdated

forms of expression, it only needs to show something new. It should work to show something

that gives any expression of individuality legitimacy within the narrative.

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