ALETHEIA

THE ARTS AND SCIENCE ACADEMIC JOURNAL

can we dare to imagine, then, a revolution
universities are administered or how classe
a campus that suffers a transformation for
and for goodness's sake?

Renaissance

ALETHEIA

Aletheia is the first ever peer-reviewed journal that exclusively features the innovative and interdisciplinary work of students from McMaster's Arts & Science program. Each year, two editions are released, each revolving around a central theme and compiling research-based papers, and a few creative pieces, written during the previous semester. To make this possible, Aletheia has an incredible team of Arts & Science student Editors, Peer Reviewers and Graphic Designers.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the third edition of Aletheia— a student-led, peer-reviewed journal showcasing written works from students enrolled in the Arts & Science program at McMaster University. In this edition, we are excited to share a diverse array of papers written in Arts and Science courses from the Winter 2021 term, which were reviewed carefully this semester by our team of Peer Reviewers.

The theme for this edition of the journal is 'Renaissance.' Our intention for this theme is to focus on the concept of rebirth. In the Arts & Science program, we are encouraged to persevere and adapt when met with adverse conditions. This edition starts off with an honourary submission from long-time Arts & Science professor for the Social and Political Thought course, Dr. David L. Clark, speaking on the idea of growth beyond conventional education. Works featured in this journal touch on the strength of humanity amidst a pandemic, battling a split identity and technological innovation.

We are thankful for the support we have received from the Arts & Science program as we embark on our second year of publication. While this semester has been unique in its hybrid manner, we are amazed by the continual support of the Arts & Science community through contributions as well as suggestions received to improve this semester's edition.

Below, please see messages from each member of our Editorial Board,

Oishee: Seeing this publication grow and evolve since Fall 2020 has been a wonderful experience, and I enjoyed assisting with the journal management/editorial process as well as updating our information on the Aletheia website. I'm grateful to be a part of such a hardworking team, and everyone involved played such an important role in creating yet another successful edition. There are some incredible articles in this edition, and I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I have!

Micah: Everyone involved in the creation and production of Aletheia, whether they are authors, peer reviewers, or editors should feel proud of this issue that we have put together and at the ongoing success of the journal as a whole. The students of Arts & Science produce incredible and insightful work, and it is my honour to help enable such work to be showcased in the journal. From the social implications of COVID-19 pandemic to the idea of personal and group identity, this edition of the journal contains many unique, creative, and engaging pieces on renaissance in today's world. I hope that you enjoy your experience exploring this edition and, most of all, I hope that it allows you the opportunity to learn!

Zahra: As we come to a full year of Aletheia, I am astounded by the growth of both the journal and the team. Transitioning from an Editor-in-training last year to an Editor in Chief this year has allowed me to appreciate the work that each member of this team has put into this edition of the journal. I am thrilled to share with you some of the amazing articles Arts & Science students and professors have written, and I hope they inspire you as much as they inspired me!

Vanessa: It has been a privilege to take part in the production of this edition, an edition that has brought out so many unique and insightful perspectives. I am glad to have had the opportunity to work alongside our team of hard-working and conscientious peer reviewers, as well as our many skillful and talented authors. Thank you to everyone who helped make this journal a reality, and I hope that you all enjoy!

Thank you for taking the time to read Aletheia. We hope that you enjoy going through it as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Sincerely,

Oishee Ghosh, Zahra Panju, Micah Maerov & Vanessa Natareno
The Aletheia Editorial Board

"ABOLISH THE UNIVERSITY: BUILD THE SANCTUARY CAMPUS"

Dr. David L. Clark

McMaster University[1]

The pursuit of knowing was freedom to me.
–Ta-Nahesi Coates, *Between the World and Me*

We must work and insist and repeat and invent and never give up.
—Hélène Cixous, *Perpetual Peace Project*

As a longtime professor of humanities who has taught in five universities in two countries, it may seem strange to call for the abolition of the very institution that has given and continues to give so very much to me. But that is precisely what I am saying. Why? Simply put, universities are facing unprecedented levels of agonized distress: anxious and dispirited students, precariously employed faculty, and over-worked and under-resourced staff all make for a disillusioned and disillusioning mess. Manifestly unjust structures of oppression that thrum through Canadian society also mar campus life. As far as concerns about unfairness and exhaustion are concerned, students, staff, and faculty work in a city without walls. Racialized exclusion, the looming climate catastrophe, and debilitating levels of indebtedness threaten even the most resourceful and committed students, of which there are very many. At my university, the office devoted to ensuring accessibility to students reports having to make 911 calls each week. The pandemic conditions have only made these fractures and open wounds more legible. There is so much going on that is unnecessarily hurtful and unhealthful on campus, just below or just at the surface of universities that otherwise spend so much time and energy broadcasting messages of success, innovation, achievement, resilience, and excellence. Smart, purposive students who are simply struggling to survive are compelled to endure patronizing university promises of a "brighter future."[2] Brighter, but for whom? While the university gazes into the far off light I am more worried about how to keep the eyes of

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[1] The premise of this position paper, which is meant as a provocation, a lure to thought, originates in work that I have recently completed as a member of the McMaster University Teaching and Learning Advisory Board and of the McMaster University Okanagan Mental Health & Well-being Task Force Workplace and Educational Environment Sub-Committee, the latter chaired by Dr. Catharine Munn and Ms. Lynn Armstrong. I am grateful to Dr. Munn and Ms. Armstrong for inviting me to write the paper.

[2] "Brighter World" is the current widely distributed marketing slogan for McMaster University. https://discover.mcmaster.ca/our-story/

my students from growing accustomed to the dark. It is time, and long since time, that Canadian campuses stop believing a great part of their own hype and really look at what their citizens are enduring in the workplace and in classrooms–time to radically transform the university's priorities, specifically by putting the health and well-being of its people *first*. The harm done to individuals and communities on campus violates the very idea of the public university. To adapt something Immanuel Kant once said as a professor watching the youth of Europe destroyed by endless wars, if some campus citizens are harmed, then everyone is harmed.[3] So my question is this: what would the Canadian university look like if it made the labor of frankly addressing the conditions that create that suffering, as well as the affirmation of human capabilities, its very *highest* priorities–higher than our international ranking, research productivity, enrolment figures, or "excellence." What would a healthy, inclusive, and, indeed, abolitionist university look like, meaning not a university that addresses harm after the fact or as an administrative problem but instead a campus for which flourishing, justice, dignity, equality, and well-being are given absolute precedence–and therefore guiding all campus policies and practices, not to mention self-understandings and self-representations, from the ground up?

Let us consider abolishing higher education as it is currently organized and administered and replace it with what I will call *the sanctuary campus*.[4] The phrase is not mine. Historically speaking, sanctuary universities in the United States and Europe are institutions that offer substantive protections to all members of the campus community who are undocumented immigrants. Sanctuary is activated by a strongly practical sense of what it means to act ethically and to be hospitable. It does not mean, as I will go on to emphasize, escape into a utopian retreat, free from the political quotidian. Far from it. A sanctuary university both teaches and learns how to cede one's place and voice to the needs, strengths, and aspirations of others (never a gesture that isn't imbued with complex forms of power, of course, as Jacques Derrida more than anyone has argued[5]). And by committing itself to that welcoming practice, a sanctuary university risks undergoing an irrevocable abrogation and transformation.[6] In other

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3 In the Third Definitive Article of Kant's *Toward Perpetual Peace*, the philosopher argues that "a violation of right on one place of the earth is felt in all" (Kant 1995, 330).

4 My colleague, Rodrigo Narro Pérez, has since

told me that the idea of a "sanctuary university" has been introduced before at McMaster, a reminder that work devoted to building a more inclusive university has a robust history on campus and is of course already underway. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney (2020) call for universities to abolish their racial logics (palpable in everything from their hiring practices to their campus security apparatuses) and so, in a sense, abolish themselves. See also Abigail Boggs, Eli Meyerhoff, Nick Mitchell, and Zach Schwartz-Weinstein (nd.).

5 See, for example, Derrida's exploration of the mixture of hostility and welcome that is constitutive of hospitality (Derrida 2000b).

6 Elsewhere (Clark 2018) I have explored at length the possibilities of a university that declares "hospitality" to others and otherness, as well as a capacity to be addressed by the suffering of others, to be its primary orientation. That essay falls into two movements. In the first section I discuss the importance both of the public university rendering itself answerable to suffering and of the struggle to learn to be

words, I am suggesting, a university must first and foremost be hospitable—with all the ongoing struggle, ambivalence, and ardor that that enormously over-determined term will always imply—to the others of "itself," to other concepts and practices and organizations of the very thought of the university. The university that abolishes itself should by rights welcome the stranger and become a stranger to itself. For a university to become a sanctuary campus—never an assured metamorphosis—means that the institution of higher education endures and embraces the failure of its "internal coherence." (Derrida 2004, 92). A sanctuary campus forges just communities and creates revolutionary opportunities out of the delirious space and time of that dereliction, out of "the university's inability to comprehend itself in the purity of its inside" (Derrida 2004, 93). There is then no university, *not as such*. Which means, among many other things, that it is of necessity heterogeneous and historical, as changeable as it is impure. The university, if there is such a thing, is abolishable because it has always already abolished itself, troubled to the core by differences, inequalities, conflicts, and intersecting and opposed publics, as well as a chorus of calls to do justice, all of which it often prefers to diminish or ignore while in pursuit of accomplishing its stated "mission."

McMaster, the Canadian public institution where I am honored to work, can learn a lot from the example of the sanctuary university. McMaster could abolish itself and *become* instead a sanctuary campus. I happen to think all universities should offer

more consequentially hospitable to others—including other ways of being a university; in the second section I discuss working directly with students to develop an anti-Islamophobic practice of hospitality.

such protections and embrace such wholesale mutations. Sanctuary should be our default demeanor, how we who work here face and engage the world in which we are so deeply and complexly embedded. A sanctuary campus offers the chance to flourish not only to undocumented immigrants but also to everyone who seeks a place in its midst: as members of the university community, it is our job, or it *should* be our job, continuously to adapt to the needs of others and pro-actively to create the conditions that welcome all others, that publicly and unashamedly declares that the university mitigates harm, sheltering and nurturing the widest possible range of human capabilities and solidarities. Not as a matter of policy, to be punted to isolated initiatives and under-resourced services, but as a matter of *principle*, by which I mean governing everything the university does and says that it is. So I'm proposing that we adapt this evocative and storied phrase, "sanctuary university," and use it to describe and to anchor a much more purposively inclusive and heterogeneous community that makes the health and well-being of its citizens, and thus the abolition of the conditions that stand in the way of meeting these desiderata, its most cherished objective. Because it is structured by a fundamental obligation to do good and to do justice, and because it is structured by a principle rather than a policy, a sanctuary campus strives to be cruelty-free.

Every person on campus, whether staff, students, or faculty, *deserves* to be treated with dignity and respect, and *deserves* to work in conditions committed to fairness and safety, and *deserves* to teach and learn in ways that embrace the extraordinarily different ways in which people experience and understand this strange thing called "education." We who call ourselves professors know these

things to be undeniably true; we differently feel this ethical imperative in our bodies and souls, whether we are ourselves subjected to aggression, violence, danger, exclusion, disrespect, indifference, or whether we observe these injuries inflicted on others, both on and off campus. So why don't we work in a university that more readily recognizes these facts and, rather than repeating well-meaning platitudes about inclusiveness, offers real and lasting sanctuary? Why don't we work in a university that radically re-organizes itself in both large and small ways to ensure that everyone can do so much more than merely survive, whether as workers or teachers or learners (assuming for the moment that these identities are ever in fact separable)?

Various important initiatives and services at Canadian universities are available whose objective is to address suffering and affirm human flourishing. Thank goodness for each and every one of these efforts and thank goodness too for those thousand everyday acts of caring compassion that so often go unrecognized by everyone but the ones to whom succor and encouragement is offered. Thank goodness, I say, meaning that being answerable to something like the affirmation of the good already activates many of our best practices on campus. But as anybody working compassionately with others at universities knows, whatever good we are doing, and a great deal of good is being done, it is often too little, too reactive, and with too few resources, whether we are talking about heroic staff striving to ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion on campus, to labor leaders trying as best they can to address the needs of members whose work is cutting them to the quick, to exhausted professors (too often, disproportionately professors who identify as female) struggling to absorb the

concerns of their distraught students. What feels on the ground to be the most important question that we could be addressing is not the most important question from the perspective of the university's "visioning statements" whose very nature is to look to the future rather than to tarry with the human cost of what got us to the place where we are today. I'm suggesting that all this needs to change and change quickly. In a way, we are at best forced to work in a *triaged* university, treating inequity and suffering on campus as a local emergency rather than a chronically debilitating condition and a sorrowful part of the everydayness of campus life. That's inhumane. That's deeply unfair. And it would be in any context, but we are talking about a triage mentality operating at the heart of an institution that otherwise lays claim to being a city on the hill, a beacon of enlightenment and progress rallied around evidence-based learning. I happen to work at a university that rightly prides itself on the power and prestige and creativity of its health sciences, but I also work at a university in which the health and well-being of its *own* citizens is not treated like a governing principle or an ethical obligation that must be met and met unapologetically and without fail. A sanctuary campus, on the other hand, is a university that welcomes others, creating flourishing conditions not only for its human denizens but also for the myriad non-human creatures that accompany us in our travels each and every day. For what would it mean to greet these other creatures with open arms and to fall under their mortal and disarming gaze rather than imperiously to incarcerate them in our laboratories or eat their flesh in our cafeterias? Let us not forget that injustice is irreducible to inhumanity. The sanctuary campus makes promises about ensuring the health and well-being of all of

its diverse citizens and then acts on those promises everywhere and at every level.

None of what I am saying here is in fact new. Generations of anti-oppression activists, many speaking from places of exclusion and pain, have argued for the transformation of the university into a more just, equitable, and healthful place. Advocacy groups, student organizations, labor leaders, caregivers, committed teachers, and thoughtful administrators have repeatedly called for the university not simply to manage its inequalities but to abolish them in the name of fairness and dignity. My suggestion is that those summons to action need now, more than ever, to be treated as adding up to something wrenchingly transformational, beginning with a full and frank acknowledgement of the structures of oppression and wounding harm that thrum through the society that is the public university.

McMaster University has recently embraced a new "visioning statement:" *Advancing human and societal health and well-being*. [7] No one can gainsay the importance of global health initiatives led by university researchers, although anyone mouthing this motto might recall that health is not merely a matter of the serene onward march of medical knowledge but also the far messier and less assured task of determining how to do justice to others. Advancement, after all, can never be a neutral—much less remainderless—activity, not in a world warped to its villainous core by the distinction between favored and disfavored bodies. Moreover, securing the sanctity and safety

of "life" is not only a question of perfecting the treatment of illness but also the primary means by which power grasps and shapes us—and squares us to the violence of the law. So I have a lot of problems with this motto (as I have argued elsewhere [Clark 2018, 301-303]), not least of which is how it unashamedly disappears forms of inquiry that would turn the university's attention to all that has been sacrificed in the name of technological "advancement," including the improvement of the putatively "right" kind of being "human." Kandice Chuh rightly asks what forms the humanities might take "'after man'" (Chuh 2019), which is to say in the wake of the abolition of liberal notions of the human that have in fact been the subject of sustained, intense, interrogation, and from many different quarters, during my entire life as a professor: from Michel Foucault's *'Society Must Be Defended'* to Judith Butler's *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex,'* and from Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death* to Audra Simpson's *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Border States*, and from Kathryn Yusoff's *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* to Jacques Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)*. Where are the humanities, which have exemplarily subjected themselves to the critique of their own unarticulated presuppositions, in McMaster's new motto? Arts and humanities students, activated by the spirit of critique and answerable to the burdens of historical knowledge, are perhaps best equipped to caution against thoughtlessly adhering to the abstract and unencumbered universality of all plenipotent proclamations about "societal" progress, and impertinently to ask from where, exactly, do they draw their resplendent authority. But bracketing these criticisms for the moment, let me at least

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7 For example, on its homepage, McMaster University announces that "Our Purpose" is "Advancing human and societal health and well-being." https://discover.mcmaster.ca/our-story/.

ask this more localized question: If we are a public university that is considering branding itself in this supposedly novel way, why we not *begin* by acting on the promise that we are a sanctuary campus, that is, an institution that on principle shelters and affirms the idea that we support the health and well-being of our own citizens, while also promoting the health and well-being of unnamed others–in other words, that we are willing and able to practice what we preach? If we are university educators, then how can we not believe in the educability *and* the mutability of the university, beginning with our university? It seems absurd to me, and grossly hypocritical, to discuss our university's global mission as one devoted to human flourishing without exemplifying that commitment everywhere on campus, especially for our existing and prospective students, especially for those who think and learn and exist in the world in unconventional or marginalized ways. Let us begin this work by not looking longingly towards the future and instead tarrying with what we have done and what we have failed to do.

To describe itself as a sanctuary campus, universities would need to attend actively and pro-actively to the thriving of all those who make it work; a sanctuary campus makes a deep sense of welcome and belonging not one concern among many but instead a *primary* concern, a catalyst for sustained and sustaining change, and a common standard against which to measure each and every policy decision, university directive, program design, mission statement, condition of employment, teaching and learning practice, and student, staff, and faculty experience. A sanctuary campus is a university that understands the health and well-being of its staff, students, and faculty to be much more

than an administrative question, calling for managerial solutions. Such solutions, such operationalizations, are of course necessary. But the point here is to imagine and then to create a university that isn't reducible to managerialism when the very lives of its citizens are on the line. Affirming dignity is after all not a strategic plan but an ethic and a way of being-together. A sanctuary campus treats the work of welcoming its citizens as an *existential* question, an ineluctably political spur to rethinking what higher education is and can be. It is a place that shelters the labor of connecting health and well-being, always in intersectional ways, to other pressing social and cultural concerns, from white supremacy to economic inequality to the climate change to the injurious effects of settler-colonialism, racism, homophobia, sexism, speciesism, among other gaping wounds in the social body and therefore in the body of the university. I hasten to add that focusing on health and well-being is not an "opportunity" for the university to exploit, i.e., in the name of increasing productivity, but instead a means by which to radically reconsider what on earth, amid the ongoing ravages of the twenty-first century, a university is good for. Sanctuary means addressing the concerns and affirming the aspirations of the university's many communities but in ways that are not—or not only—answerable to the institution's formal commitments to equality, diversity, and inclusivity, as undoubtedly important as those commitments are. The exemplar for me here are the "cities of refuge," at least as Derrida re-imagines them (Derrida 2001, 3-24), i.e., metropoles that welcome strangers and that prioritize their flourishing by adopting hospitable gestures that are, as it were, para-legal, to the side of statist forms of authority, including liberal

democratic regimes whose promises of protection or inclusion are essential but also too often broken or qualified. A state claims to secure rights. But a city of refuge, declaring its fraught independence from statism, strives to vouchsafe what Hannah Arendt famously called "the right to have rights" (Arendt 1973, 296), and thus to meet the primordial obligations that are due to others merely because they are there, in all their miraculousness and singularity, regardless of their competence or incompetence as full-fledged "citizens." As Derrida suggests, offering "refuge" therefore means learning to dwell together "according to forms of solidarity yet to be invented." This invention," he adds, "is our task" (Derrida 2001, 4). Could a university adopt some of the premises of the city of refuge? In both forms of belonging it is never simply a matter of abandoning administrative-centered policies for alternative or improvisatory practices of welcome. The sanctuary campus, like the city of refuge, requires each to thrive. A sanctuary campus looks not only to future goals set by the senior administration but also fearlessly takes matters into its own hands, extra-administratively supplementing university policies, missions, and structures, at once adding to them and making up for their limitations. The university transforms into a campus by ensuring that formal policies and institutional mandates, *and* the covenants formed between individuals and communities in the name of the creation of a more peaceable polity *coexist*, strategic plans and everyday anti-oppressive work studiously learning from each other's problems and possibilities. What I am trying to describe here is not simply a matter compelling the political to be answerable to the ethical, but instead conjuring a campus in which principles of welcome are acknowledged as always already political, in the full knowledge that it is only in the contingent realm of the political that ethical actions can be undertaken, actions that are worthy of struggle and commitment. Under these dynamic conditions, different communities, with different hopes and fears, histories and knowledges, declare solidarity with each other, activating classrooms and workplaces in unstable, horizontal ways in excess of the university's administrative apparatuses. Here university governmentality is not so much superseded as abolished, meaning that its formal hierarchies of power are treated now at best as one interested community among many on campus. It is worth emphasizing that a great deal of this campus-building work, the results of which are never assured, is already taking place today. For the university is a curiously redoubled space: on the one hand, an institution that is invested in centralized forms of authority tasked with overseeing the protection of staff, faculty, and students, and, on the other hand, a sanctuary campus, activated not by the desideratum of good management but of doing good. In other words, the sanctuary campus is the university's *l'autre cap*, its "other heading."[8]

Yet a sanctuary campus is not, strictly speaking, a form of *asylum*, not an escape from the world but is instead much more candidly and courageously a university that speaks *to* the world and *of* the world, modeling for others what Martha Nussbaum calls "a

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8 I recall Derrida's illuminating discussion of the problematic identity of Europe (Derrida 1992), and his call not only for new understandings of the European identity but also new concepts of identity itself. A renewed Europe, he argues, would first and foremost be a Europe answerable to the arrival of the other, a Europe therefore that is perpetually to-come.

capabilities approach"–an ethical demeanor and political practice that jettisons the deracinating notion of individuals as isolated atoms and instead embraces the irreducible interdependence of life on and off campus.[9] A sanctuary campus says loudly and clearly, for all to hear, that university is not *The Hunger Games* or *Squid Game*, <u>not</u> a place in which the strong are winnowed from the weak, <u>not</u> a place where you are expected to survive rather than thrive, <u>not</u> a place where every person is assumed to sink or swim mostly on their own initiative, and <u>not</u> a place where the objective is to wring every last drop of life and labor from staff, students, and faculty. A sanctuary campus never assumes that harm means the same thing to everyone, not when the communities that define these injuries are often those least susceptible to them. Compassion, not compliance, should be the instructive principle. A sanctuary campus makes room, course by course, program by program, class by class, for students to falter, waver, circle back, catch their breath, miss the mark, and fail. . . but to experience these set-backs, which, after all, are endemic to education and to the educational relation, not in solitude, much less embarrassment or shame but surrounded by helping hands and understanding ears. A sanctuary campus does everything it can to abolish the conditions that lead to feelings of isolating disgrace or experiences of neglectful invisibility, and thus the terrific toll that such wounds take on mental and physical health. A sanctuary campus embraces new languages, new idioms with which to practice and experience teaching, including joy, care, pleasure, compassion, humility, and love. Yes, there is room, indeed, lots and lots of room, for *love*

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9 See, for example, Martha Nussbaum Creating Capabilities (2011).

in teaching and learning. Let us not flinch from this word, so important, after all, to what it means to thrive and to grow; let us not dismiss it too quickly as "sentimental" or "inappropriate" or "naive," i.e., a word and an idea that cannot possibly be meaningful to administrators and managers and educators, not useful or operative in an institution founded on rational inquiry. No, a sanctuary university puts love–and therefore mutuality and humility–at the center of the classroom experience and at the heart of program administration. At a sanctuary campus, being cherished by others and learning to cherish oneself are deeply connected to falling in love with knowledge. Learning in love and with love will always take precedence, finally, over a student's competence in a particular subject. Question: Can the university stand for that arduous possibility? Can it withstand all the solidarities, disruptions, and intellectual energies that would be released in the classroom that was activated by compassion, pleasure, and love? Teaching with love affirms the degree to which learning is about usufruct not possession or self-possession—that is to say, the enjoyment of uncertain, distributed, and tumultuous pleasures rather than settling for the illusory sureties of isolation, self-sufficiency, and ownership. Teaching and learning with love means education is not mine to have but ours to share. Rebecca Gagan, a Teaching Professor at the University of Victoria, has encouraged me to embrace the pedagogy of "teaching with love," a practice and an idea that she was in turn taught by Andrea Cramner - 'Namnasolaga, a Culture and Wellness Leader from the 'Na̲mgis First Nation. As Gagan wisely says in her recent podcast, "Waving, Not Drowning," "teaching and learning with love" is vitally important in a nation in which so many, including so

many Indigenous children, were taught in schools cruelly emptied of love—schools, I would only add, that were predicated on the white supremacist dictum of "advancing human and societal health and well-being."[10] In the ongoing shadow of those atrocities, and as one small way to recognize and grieve those losses, let us imagine our classrooms and our workplaces completely anew.[11]

If the pandemic has taught me anything as a professor it is the importance of teaching and learning in love and with love.

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[10] "Teaching with love" originates in the oral teaching of Andrea Cramner - 'Namnasolaga.

[11] I am referring here, of course, to the recent, awful discoveries (or re-discoveries) of the unmarked graves of hundreds of Indigenous students on the grounds of residential schools across Canada. Residential schools were established by the Canadian government and administered by churches and religious orders. They operated from the 1880s until the late 1990s. Ostensibly educational institutions, the schools forcibly separated children both from their parents and from their Indigenous histories and languages. Students were subjected to horrendous forms of physical and psychological violence, including sexual abuse, all in the name of assimilation into white settler culture. For accounts of the lawlessness and cruelty of the residential school system see, for example, Erin Hanson (2009). For a first-hand account of a survivor of the residential schools, see the autobiographical letter by Mr. Russ Moses, addressed to a representative of the Department of Indian Affairs (1965), https://blogs.kent.ac.uk/bts/2021/07/14/russ-moses-and-the-mohawk-institute-indian-residential-school/. For brief remarks about the implications of the discovery of the remains of these students for educators, see Clark (2021), "The fact that teachers committed these crimes makes matters worse," https://www.thespec.com/opinion/contributors/2021/06/17/the-fact-that-teachers-committed-these-crimes-makes-matters-worse.html

Notwithstanding the desertifying conditions in which many of my students are currently living, I must not forget what it means to love teaching, to love learning, to model for others what it means to love knowledge, and to try as best as I can, even if only sometimes through the tiny aperture of a web-cam, to ensure that students feel free to experience their education as a labor of love–brimming with difficulty and worry and heartbreak, yes, but also joy and pleasure and hope. It wouldn't be love, true love, without experiencing all of those rowdy and unpredictable things. A sanctuary campus welcomes love as the unruly stranger to education who ends up totally renovating the host. It would be an understatement to say that the pandemic has in many ways mutated higher education; but to me that only proves the point that the university isn't a _fait accompli_, unalterable or at best slowly alterable, but instead capable of reconstructing itself quickly and in consequential ways. The university is entirely _revisable_: Who convinced us otherwise? Who has benefited from schooling us into believing that it is not? What conserving and conservative instincts prize the _status quo_? To be sure, the pandemic makes legible, as never before, the inequities that splinter the social body; but it has also demonstrated that institutions of higher learning, like all institutions, are entirely contingent constructions, mere fabrications that are open—or should be open—to perpetual interrogation, modification, and abolition. An abolished university is not undone but commits itself to its perpetual undoing. Can we dare to imagine, then, a revolution not, or not only, in how universities are administered or how classes are delivered but instead a campus that suffers a transformation for nothing less than the good, and for

goodness's sake? I don't feel uncomfortable speaking of the good, or of the difficult labor of determining what goodness means or can mean in the context of university classrooms, committees, and workplaces. How did sterile talk about outcomes, productivity, success, and excellence come to suffocate thinking together about probity, nourishment, compassion, struggle, and responsibility? A sanctuary campus, a university of humility, reciprocity, and hospitality re-examines and then reshapes itself, from top to bottom, from management styles to curricula, from work-place conditions to the makeup of committees, from labor negotiations to how faculty conduct classes and conduct themselves in classes. A sanctuary campus is characterized by patience, sheltering a place for experimentation in the adoption of new and more purposefully humane solidarities, administrative styles, course designs, program structures, testing strategies, performance indicia, among many other things. If the sanctuary campus is to have a motto it should come in the form of an open-ended provocation about the present rather than a confident announcement about the future. Try: "In the midst of our individual fears, what are our shared responsibilities?"

Let me conclude by emphasizing again that by sanctuary campus I do not mean a university that offers a hideout–that is, a bubble into which to withdraw or hole up. Now, offering a haven is a marvelous practice in a time when there is far too little of it. Speaking personally, school for me was always a place of shelter, hugely anxiety producing, yes, but also a source of solace and stability in an otherwise unfeeling and alienating world. But a sanctuary campus is not a cloister; no, by sanctuary I mean a Shiloh, a "place of peace," remembering that peaceableness is not a sabbatical from

demanding queries and piercingly critical thinking but the condition of their concerted, hazardous, and unending intensification. By sanctuary I mean a joyously public-facing campus that is fully *engaged* with the world, with many worlds, and with the very idea that there is only *a* "world" –a world, after all, that is nothing more than a murderously destructive mirage, born out of settler colonial violence, the predations of extractive capital, and chattel slavery. A sanctuary campus is a setting and a *milieu* that gives capacious and spacious room to "difficult knowledge,"[12] unbearable questions,[13] counter-intuitive ideas, and the thoughts that unsettle and disrupt our deepest held assumptions about the nature of things. It is prompted into action by the knowledge that disadvantage among students, faculty, and staff (whether experienced along racial, gender, or class lines) is intimately connected to the unearned advantages enjoyed by others.[14] A sanctuary campus abolishes the policed cellularization of disciplines, and instead sinks substantial resources into ensuring communities both off and on campus remain porous, teaching

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12 I borrow the now widely taken up term "difficult knowledge" from the influential educational theorist, Deborah P. Britzman (Britzman and Pitt [2003]).

13 The "unbearable question" is the generative and disruptive opening to entirely new regions of knowledge that "the Stranger" brings to ancient Greek philosophy in Plato's dialogues. For a discussion of the "unbearable question," see, for example, Jacques Derrida, Of Hospitality (2000a).

14 I am grateful to Dr. Koritha Mitchell (2021) for her remarks about the importance of reflecting on and working actively against what she calls "the violence" of the "unearned advantage of straight white colleagues" at universities.

each other and learning from each other's successes and failures. A sanctuary campus is quickened through and through by a demonstrable commitment to fostering diverse strengths, histories, hopes, and solidarities, identities and doing so not as some abstract "mission," to be replaced by another "mission" with the coming of another senior administration, but as a matter of *principle*, meaning, a specifically ethical commitment to the affirmation of difference, the formation of confederations of just communities—never assured or achieved, but always a laborious project to be undertaken yet once more—and the alleviation of the conditions of suffering that cannot waver because these desiderata are stitched into the very fabric of an education that is worthy of the name. A sanctuary campus abolishes the university. A sanctuary campus stands for peace.

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THE COVID-19 ENDEMIC: CONSIDERING BIOPOWER IN CANADA'S PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Cameron Johnson

Arts & Science 2A06: Social and Political Thought

Under the "mission, vision, and values" section of their webpage, Health Canada (2021) lists the goal to "prevent and reduce risks to individual health and the overall environment" as their first objective. For government institutions like Health Canada, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a monumental challenge in living up to such organizational goals. From stay-at-home orders to vaccine prioritization, each nation's response to the pandemic has rightfully been subject to extensive public interest and scrutiny. Has Health Canada's first objective been at the forefront of the country's response to COVID-19? In his lectures at the Collège de France in the mid-1970s, Michel Foucault outlines the ways in which states have manipulated "biopower" in order to "optimize" and control the population. Foucault's analysis is especially relevant in today's global health climate, and prompts consideration of how governmental power has been mobilized in response to a global crisis. In this essay, I will discuss the relevance of Foucault's biopower to the pandemic response, and show that Canada's early response has treated the virus as a biopolitical endemic. In so doing, the response has failed to prioritize Health Canada's first objective by working instead to "make live" a certain traditional economic way of life. I will first establish the application of Foucault's biopolitics to the pandemic response. I will then analyze how Foucault's differentiation between an "epidemic" and an "endemic" can clarify what has truly motivated Canada's COVID-19 initiatives. Finally, I will consider the circumstances whose resulting power dynamics have caused the government to soften their endemic approach by disturbing the aforementioned economic norm.

Foucault's conception of state manipulation of biopower begins with the notion of war. In the first lecture of *Society Must be Defended*, Foucault identifies power as a "relationship of force," which is invariably established through physical domination in the form of warfare (Foucault, 2003, pp. 15). Although the social contract may ostensibly put an end to these physical forms of subjugation, it is ultimately the aim of political power to reproduce the relationship of force within social institutions. This aim makes politics the "continuation of war by other means" (Foucault 2003, pp. 15). The relationship of subjugation creates an outsider group, which, as Foucault points out in the final lecture, has historically been related to race. In the historical context of feudalism, the sovereign possessed the right to actively take the life of those "delinquents" (Foucault 2003, pp. 33) deemed socially undesirable – to "take life or let live" (Foucault, 2003, pp. 241). Foucault suggests that in modern civil society, this power has transformed into a right to "make live or let die" (Foucault, 2003, pp. 241) – to actively support the

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flourishing of some while passively allowing others to struggle and perish. In the same way that institutional disciplinary power is used to subjugate at the level of the individual, this power to "make live" and "let die" becomes a tool to be used at the level of a population. This biopower is used to control the health, birth rates, and mortality rates of groups subjugated by those in power. The aim of biopower is to "optimize" economic production in the population by eliminating its "deficiencies": individuals who are deemed less productive or desirable. The natural extension of biopower is "state racism," where race is used as an axis to subdivide the population, and justify the war-like relation in which letting one group die is deemed necessary to allow others to live, or live better. Such groups of human beings become deficiencies in the eyes of the state.

The link of COVID-19 to Foucault's framework of power is similarly rooted in the concept of warfare. This concept of warfare does not refer to a clash between two warring groups of humans. Rather, it refers to the way in which the pandemic has brought about the dire, war-like circumstances in which citizens surrender some individual liberty in exchange for protection from the state. In accordance with Foucault's argument, this power relation results in the state's inevitable judgement of which lives are most worth supporting. The pandemic conditions have made legible a dynamic of biopower that has already been at work within the American state: the judgement of one life's value over another's based on age, ethnicity, and other biological characteristics. Intensive care units around the world have been faced with these nearly impossible moral decisions each day. For practising bioethicists like Dr. Joseph Fins, the pandemic has brought debilitating psychological trauma. In an interview, Fins describes receiving a call from a frantic physician faced with five patients in need of a ventilator, but only two intubation teams available to operate the machines. He recalls the sentiments of his team who received cheers from New Yorkers in the streets, remarking that "Nobody liked it. None of us felt we deserved it" (Kisner 2020). Since the outbreak of the pandemic, state health care organizations have been required to determine which patients to "make live" and "let die" due to limited resources and support staff. These decisions require health care teams to "optimize" their output of healthy subjects by selecting who to save based on their age and pre-existing conditions.

Beyond the scope of the ICU, similar decisions are being made at the population level concerning the distribution of vaccines. With mass vaccination underway in the United States and Canada, the question of which groups should receive vaccinations first has become a topic of political and bioethical debate. The pandemic has both highlighted and worsened pre-existing health care inequities between races, with notable inequities experienced by Indigenous Canadians and Black Americans (Yaya, Yeboah, Handy Charles, Otu, & Labonte 2020). While some Canadian politicians, like Nova Scotia CMO Robert Strang, have suggested that underlying racial disparities in health care should be dealt with "later" (Denette 2020), some measures are being taken across Canada to ensure that racial equity is made a priority for vaccination programs. In Ontario, all Indigenous adults were identified as a priority group to receive vaccines during the first stage of the rollouts, alongside high-priority health care workers and adults aged eighty years or older (CEP

2021). Although these measures elect to target those at greatest risk of severe complications or death, some have argued that the spread may be more effectively slowed by giving priority to young adults, who are more likely to transmit the virus (Flam 2020). The state's manipulation of biopower has been both exposed and influenced by the pandemic. Underlying health care inequalities created by state racism have become observable through the virus' disproportionate impact on marginalized communities, and this deadly effect has forced governments to prioritize the care of these marginalized groups while balancing socioeconomic considerations. Failure on the part of the government to prioritize these high-risk groups would result in a breach of trust, as the state would be seen as "making die." The health care measures of vaccines and intensive care have both supported and complicated Canada's normalization of public commercialism; consumers have been restored to health in hopes of a "return to normal," but high-risk communities are beginning to receive the vaccine prioritization required to prevent them from bearing the deadly brunt of increased community spread.

In his illustration of the historical development of biopower, Foucault makes an important distinction between the two ways in which state policy has approached the issue of death. Where deadly events were historically treated as epidemics – "temporary disasters that caused multiple deaths, times when everyone seemed to be in danger of imminent death" (Foucault, 2003, pp. 243) – Foucault sees a change at the end of the eighteenth century in which global powers begin to treat these events as *endemics*: "permanent factors which … sapped the population's strength, shortened the working week, wasted energy, and cost money" (Foucault, 2003, pp. 244). Biopower's interest in optimizing the population is manifested in the ways in which life-threatening phenomena are perceived and responded to by the state. As the state comes to exert greater influence over the biological and economic flourishing of its citizens, it increasingly treats threats to life as mere obstacles to productivity. Rather than working primarily to "make live" groups of citizens, the state seeks first to uphold growth in productivity and GDP.

Canada's response to the pandemic has presented compelling evidence that COVID-19 is an endemic in the eyes of the federal and provincial administrations. The World Health Organization began publishing information about the virus in early January 2020, and Canada's first positive case was reported on January 25th, 2020. Canada continued to receive travel-related cases in late February, while its borders remained open (Bronca, 2020). Outbreaks were beginning to occur in other countries before Canada's state of emergency, yet the government maintained the status quo while hoping that the virus remained contained. The hesitancy of the federal government to take stringent measures to prevent travel-related spread is just one example of Canada's overall insistency to treat the pandemic as an inconvenient obstacle to normal productivity. Ontario's colour-coded zone system has aimed to allow as many regions as possible to return to more typical levels of public activity, based on the region's incidence and test positivity rates. Amid the pandemic, one of the greatest areas of public concern has become *small businesses*, to which the government of Ontario has provided considerable grants and tax breaks (Government of Ontario, 2021). While small businesses have remained open

and received financial support, individual Canadian workers have not. 58% of Canadian workers lack adequate paid sick leave to stay home if experiencing symptoms according to the Decent Work and Health Network (2020) – this issue has been suggested to drive viral transmission (Chhinzer, 2021). Small business *owners* are being made to live, while everyday small business *workers* are deemed replaceable and left to die. Content produced by the federal government has been steeped in the notion of the *new normal*. Language of compromise creeps into an April 2020 release from the federal government, which suggests maintaining physical distancing "as much as possible," and to "consider" wearing a face mask when distancing cannot be maintained (Canada 2020). Throughout the pandemic, the state has set the objective to live with the virus while minimizing the sacrifice to commercialism and public life. COVID-19 has been treated as a Foucauldian endemic: a minor snag in productivity to be manoeuvred around, rather than the deadly global disaster that it is.

The contention that Canada has treated the COVID-19 virus primarily as an endemic does not impose a moral judgement upon how biopower has been mobilized within the pandemic response. Such a judgement would be beyond the scope of this essay. Instead, exposing the parallels between the pandemic response and Foucault's endemics can offer insight into the intended results of the state's response efforts.

By largely seeking to minimize disturbance to commercial public life, Canada has revealed its intention to "make live" or normalize the collective consumer experience: shopping, sightseeing, eating at restaurants, and the like. In essence, the public exchange of goods which is traditional to capitalism has been propped up at the expense of some safety from viral transmission. Despite preventative measures such as sanitation, mask-wearing, and physical distancing, community spread (transmission from a source unrelated to travel or close contact) is still thriving, accounting for 37% of new cases nationwide from February 26th to March 6th, 2021 (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2021). Any human interaction poses a risk of transmitting the virus, and the pandemic response in Canada has demonstrated a willingness to take on this risk in order to preserve productivity and consumerism. As Foucault points out in his final lecture, biopower taken to its fullest extent results in a condition of war: "If you want to live, the other must die" (Foucault, 1976, pp. 255). For Canadians to enjoy the commercial life to which they have become accustomed, high-risk groups must bear many of the consequences.

Although Canada's biopolitical action has framed COVID-19 primarily as an endemic, it has not done so exclusively. When stay-at-home orders and complete public shutdowns have been put in place, the government's response has morphed to confront a true biopolitical disaster: an epidemic. Under these circumstances, economic considerations have become secondary to the preservation of human lives. What has prompted these more stringent measures? One contributing factor is the growing precariousness of Intensive Care Unit capacity in certain areas of the country, particularly Ontario. In an effort to ease the strain on capacity, the Ontario provincial government has provided up to $125 million in funding for additional critical care beds in the hospitals that have been most affected by high rates of COVID-19 transmission

(Government of Ontario, 2021). In densely populated regions of southern Ontario, air ambulances are being repurposed to transfer ICU patients to hospitals that are less overcrowded (Favaro, St. Philip, & Ho, 2021). When state health care institutions have been stressed to the brink of collapse, the Canadian government has been forced to adopt epidemic measures in the form of comprehensive public shutdowns. By continuing to treat the virus as an endemic under these conditions, the state would risk being seen by its citizens as "making die." Such a breach of democratic trust would problematize the foundation of the state's power in the social contract. Foucault indicates that an individual's right to life exists outside of the social contract, because it is the "first, initial, and foundational reason for the contract itself" (Foucualt, 2003, pp. 241). When the state exercises biopower, it allows particular subjects to die (physically or metaphorically) in a way that is surreptitious and often unobservable directly. When citizens become aware of a government's deliberate refusal to protect them, the social contract is breached, and the legitimacy of the state's power is called into question.

Canada's biopolitical response to the COVID-19 pandemic has aimed to live with the virus, rather than in spite of it. Through public re-openings, business subsidies, and scarcity of paid sick leave, the Canadian government has demonstrated that its first goal is not to "prevent and reduce risk" (Health Canada, 2021), but to return as many citizens as possible to work, shopping, and public life. It seems to be of less concern to the state administration whether this goal is achieved by treating the virus through health care efforts such as critical care and vaccinations, or by way of preventative policies such as mask-wearing and physical distancing. The government's initiation of public re-openings, business subsidies, and scarcity of paid sick leave demonstrate that health care measures are often a means to the end of maintaining a certain economic state. Although the "making live" of public commercialism has become secondary to reducing risk in the cases of public lockdowns and equitable vaccine provision, the national response has largely imagined COVID-19 as a Foucauldian endemic. Some health care professionals, like Dr. Jerome Leis, have acknowledged that the virus will eventually become endemic by remaining "with us" in the form of treatable seasonal mutations similar to the common flu (CP24, 2021). But the resolution of this pandemic into an endemic can only occur after the population reaches thresholds of herd immunity, and loss of life has greatly decreased. Canada's response to COVID-19 has been endemic in principle from the outset of the disaster. If the first objective were truly to prevent and reduce risk, perhaps such unprecedented times might instead merit a less conservative, more revolutionary response.

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GENDERING THE POSTHUMAN: THE INTERSECTION OF GENDER, TECHNOLOGY, AND CONTROL ON THE CYBORG BODY IN GARLAND'S *Ex Machina*

Ariella Ruby

Arts & Science 4ST3: Selected Topics in Inquiry - Interfaces: Our Technology, Ourselves

This paper traces the causes, consequences, and implications of, and more optimistically, the subversive possibilities afforded by, the female-gendered post-human—whether she be presented as a cyborg, embodied AI, or female android—as exemplified by Ava in Alex Garland's 2014 film, *Ex Machina*. A brief summary of Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto*, with special focus on her argument for the cyborg as a politically subversive, boundary-eroding "creature [of] a post-gender world," will serve as a the guiding framework for this paper's consideration of how *Ex Machina* succeeds in evoking some of these possibilities, and alternately, how it fails (101). The first part of this paper, drawing from the work of Judith Butler and Eleanor Beal, examines the four dimensions that have shaped (gendered) Ava, and that indefinitely hold her captive, in a literal and metaphorical sense: gender, sex, and desire (interrelated and conflated as they are), and, more broadly, control (patriarchal control, control by the male human inventor). The second part of this paper re-examines the film's treatment of the female cyborg from a more optimistic lens (using Giorgio Agamben's theory of "bare life" and subsequently, Ana Oancea's intertextual study of *Ex Machina*, "Bluebeard", and AI/machine creativity) to uncover the female cyborg's dynamism and potential to realize some of Haraway's idealizations—despite her many-layered entrapment, and by very virtue of her machine otherness.

In light of Donna Haraway's conception of the cyborg as a hybrid body existing outside the gender binary, one cannot help but question the recurrent feminizing of cyborg bodies in popular science fiction; this phenomenon negates the opportunity that the cyborg, robot, or posthuman body represents for the dismantling or reconstruction of gender. Donna Haraway defines the cyborg as: "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (149). Haraway employs the cyborg as a political metaphor for the erosion of the boundaries between "mind and body, animal and human, organism and machine" in the capitalistic, increasingly technological society of postmodern America, whose inhabitants, she argues, are already cyborgs (163, 150). Haraway's text is thus "an argument for pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and for responsibility in their construction" (150). Haraway criticizes Marxism and socialist feminism for their reiteration of the "Western (…) myth of original unity,"—the severance of which, they posit, is the basis of all oppression, either of the working class or women, respectively (151). Western societies operate by means of "troubling dualisms"—"self/other, mind/body, culture/female (…)"—through which the self is constituted

as "the One" who dominates "the other" (177). Haraway posits, however, that "to be One is to be an illusion (…) involved in a dialectic of apocalypse with the other" (177). The cyborg's revolutionary power lies in the hybridity of its origins; the cyborg "skips the step of original unity" and disregards the myth of "once-upon-a-time wholeness" before the Edenic Fall (Haraway 152, 176). Instead, the cyborg recognizes itself as "fully implicated in the world," and so "seiz[es] the tools to mark the world that marked [it] as other" (Haraway 177, 176). Ultimately, then, the cyborg is a "creature in a post-gender world" who strives for a "regeneration" that emerges outside the structures of a patriarchal society (Haraway 151, 182).

With this Harawayan framework in mind, this paper turns its focus to the film's shaping and gendering of Ava by means of the dimensions of gender, sex, desire, and control, beginning with an analysis of Ava's placement within Judith Butler's proposed gender/sex/desire causality. Butler's social constructivist theory of gender lends itself to the argument that the repeated female gendering of the cyborg is an inevitable product of heterosexist, phallogocentric discourses of power which invariably tie conceptions of identity, intelligibility, and personhood to the stabilizing universality of sex, gender, and desire (Musap 404). In her text *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler posits that gender and sex are not biologically determined, but rather socially constructed and uniformized by the heterosexist and phallocentric power regimes' conflation of sex/gender/desire (43). Similarly, Haraway asserts that "there is nothing about being 'female' that naturally binds women" (155).

Haraway's cyborg, then, could technically exist as a paragon and affirmation of Butler's rejection of gender essentialism.

Nevertheless, Ava, and perhaps all other gendered cyborgs or posthumans, are unable to overcome the "troubling dualism" of the gender binary (Haraway 177), despite their theoretical potential to do so, because gender is considered by many to be a prerequisite of humanness or Butlerian intelligibility. To be recognized as artificially intelligent, conscious, or sentient by their human counterparts, cyborgs must be pre-gendered by their human creators. Butler posits that "identity" is stabilized through the concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, and that the "cultural emergence of 'incoherent' or 'discontinuous' gendered beings" calls into question "the very notion of 'the person'" (23). Notably, however, the notion of gender/sex/desire causality is "constructed within the terms of discourse and power, where power is understood (…) in terms of heterosexual and phallic cultural conventions" (Butler 41). Gendered cyborgs, then, and especially female cyborgs, are trapped in the self-sustaining regulation of gender by phallogocentric structures of domination.

Nathan Bateman, reclusive techie billionaire and the creator of Ava and her previous prototypes, constructs the female gender of Ava's artificial body and "wetware" brain through the inscription of the naturalized sex/gender/desire trifecta. In his paper "Mechanical Genders: How do Humans Gender Robots," Roger Andre Søraa establishes "physical-mechanical gender" as a method of gendering robot bodies through the insertion of recognizable gender-specific characteristics and sexual organs. This concept

diverges from "human-biological gender" in that it lacks the function of reproduction, but instead serves the function of pleasure, as is the case with "sex-bots" (Søraa 106). Caleb, an employee of Nathan who is tasked with performing a Turing Test to confirm whether Ava is conscious, questions his boss: "Why did you give her a sexuality? An AI does not need a gender. She could have been a grey box" (46:01-46:10.). Nathan responds: "Actually, I do not think that is true. Can you give an example of consciousness, at any level, human or animal, that exists without a sexual dimension? (46:10-46:17). Interestingly, Caleb's question reveals his conflation of gender and sexuality, and Nathan's response confirms his belief in their mutual dependence, as well as their necessity in Ava's ability to develop consciousness.

Nathan supplies Ava with physical-mechanical gender—or what Butler would refer to as sex—by supplying her with breast-like protrusions of clear plastic and a mechanical vagina equipped with sensors capable of "create[ing] a pleasure response" (47:12-47:14). Nathan orchestrates conducive sexuality/desire in his cyborg by "program[ming] her to be heterosexual" (48:29-48:32). Finally, the gender dimension of Butler's causal trifecta is established through the conditions Nathan establishes for the success of Ava's Turing test: she must employ "self-awareness, imagination, manipulation, sexuality, [and] empathy" to convince the unsuspecting Caleb to aid in an orchestrated escape from Nathan's compound (1:25:15-1:25:22; emphasis added). In other words, Nathan has designed a test in which Ava must perform her gender by means of seduction and emotional manipulation—actions that patriarchal structures of power have paradoxically ascribed to women and derided them for enacting—in order for her consciousness and personhood to be recognized. Søraa asserts that the "the more humanlike a robot becomes, the more gendered it becomes" (99). *Ex Machina*, then, is an instance of a speculative cultural text that depicts the fears and uncertainties of the society that produced it: there remains an inability or great difficulty in contemplating a posthuman whose consciousness circumvents the stabilizing limitations of gender.

Turning, then, from an exploration of the causes of Ava's gendering, this paper moves to an exploration of its effects as they manifest in form of control and imprisonment. Drawing from Eleanor Beal's intertextual analysis of *Frankenstein* and *Ex Machina* to investigate the interrelationship between gender, technology, and control in the film's portrayal of the dynamic between the inventor (Nathan) and his creation (Ava), this paper finds that Nathan responds to the alterity of his creature not through Frankensteinian abandonment, but rather through the exertion of control by means of surveillance.

First, an investigation of *Ex Machina*'s reworking of Frankenstein motifs, with special emphasis on the added gender dynamic, serves to demonstrate the film's problematic ambivalence regarding a non-gendered, "inhuman future" (Beal 69). Mary Shelley's 1818 novel, *Frankenstein*, continues to enjoy a rich afterlife as Victor Frankenstein's creature manifests in myriad forms, in accordance with the apprehensions of the contemporary era. In *Monstrous Progeny: A History of the Frankenstein Narratives*, Friedman and Kavey state that the exploration of depictions of "biological modifications

such as cyborgs, androids, and robots" comprises the "logical evolution of Shelley's novel" (14, 147). *Ex Machina* reworks several motifs of the Frankenstein story to reflect the cultural anxieties of the "post-digital age of smartphones, internet search engines, big data, and hyperconnectivity," all of which are supported by "corporate-financed technologies" (Beal 69). Nathan Bateman as Victor Frankenstein and Ava as the Creature illustrate the complex dynamics of control and accountability that characterize the relationship between the artificial person and their inventor. *Ex Machina*'s added gender dynamic further complicates this narrative through its portrayal of science and technology as tools of a "patriarchal or masculinist agenda that fears female sexuality and attempts to usurp and control it" (Beal 71).

Ex Machina's updated portrayal of the creature/creator dynamic serves to criticize the cultural idolization of "the solitary scientist/entrepreneur" (Beal 71); foremostly, the relationship between Nathan and Ava is characterized by Nathan's exercise of absolute control. Neither Frankenstein nor Bateman work altruistically to produce life (or a semblance of it in Bateman's case); rather, Frankenstein seeks to make a name for himself in the annals of science and history, while Bateman seeks to realize his unique vision of a posthuman, AI-driven future. Both narratives invoke our sympathy for the artificial being: the Creature, formed from amalgamated human body-parts, is immediately spurned by Frankenstein, due to his physical repulsiveness. Finding neither love nor acceptance from his creator, the Creature becomes hateful and violent. Conversely, Ava's AI is embodied in a conventionally attractive—albeit technologically fetishized—female body. The viewer perceives Ava from the perspective of Caleb, and sympathy for Ava is evoked through the depiction of her oppression and imprisonment at the hands of the misogynistic Nathan (Beal 70).

Despite the above-mentioned differences resulting from *Ex Machina*'s gender dimension, Nathan, Caleb, and Frankenstein are all faced with the dilemma of how to treat a creation caught between the binary of artificiality and biological humanness (Beal 74). The creature's alterity inevitably destabilizes definitions of personhood; the reaction of the creature's inventor serves as a useful metaphor for the attitudes of society towards the liminal, marginalized, or subversive groups that the artificial person represents. In *Ex Machina*, Ava's gender can be interpreted as the result of a societal apprehension regarding the advancement of artificial intelligence: anxiety pertaining to the advent of the singularity is combatted with the instillment of control. Ava's AI is housed in a female body so that she can be controlled, subjugated, and limited. Rather than abandoning his creature, in the manner of Frankenstein, Nathan opts for a regiment of control through extreme surveillance and prisoner visibility.

Existing as a "solitary inventor/entrepreneur," Nathan exemplifies the privileged position of the corporate figurehead who, through ownership and omniscient surveillance, benefits directly from technological advancement (Beal 73). His control of Ava is exercised through the interplay of digital surveillance and the total visibility and visuality of Ava. Beal argues

that Nathan's home—doubling as Ava's prison—is "a fortress of CCTV monitors and computer screens" which serves to emphasize "the dehumanizing effects of technological control" (73). Housed in a subterranean chamber with no windows to the outside world, Ava is completely visible through walls made of glass and through the blinking lenses of the security cameras that ornament the ceiling. Katie Jones notes that: "Nathan's authority is intrinsically bound up with the gaze through his access to surveillance footage of the premises and the knowledge available to him through his position as a CEO of a search engine" (58).

The motif of visibility as a method of control is furthered by the importance of Caleb's visual assessment of Ava (specifically her performance of femininity) via the Turing test—an antithetical alteration of Turing's original test, which interdicted the visibility of the machine being assessed ("Turing test"). In their first session, Caleb stares at Ava while asking her simple questions; in their second, he regards her abstract drawing and requests one that is more "real"; and in their third, Ava dons a dress and a wig to conceal her robotic exterior. In all these encounters, Caleb's "visual judg[ment]" of Ava is integral to his differentiation of her human and robotic traits (Beal 75). Nathan dissuades Caleb from backing his assessment of Ava's AI with a "rational and scientific framework," encouraging him instead to "test Ava's adequacy as a woman" (Beal 76). Responding to Caleb's demand to know whether Ava's sexuality was programmed as a diversionary tactic, Nathan states that it is inherent, and that sexuality is the sole imperative for communication between sentient beings (Beal 78). Nathan's response

speaks to the masculine desire to "derive erotic stimulation from technology" (Beal 78): Ava's programmed sexuality and conventional feminine attractiveness tell not of the imperative of AI to communicate with humans, but rather of the human (male) desire to communicate with AI (Beal 78).

The film's technophobic and technophilic tendencies coalesce and destabilize one another when Ava successfully orchestrates her escape, Nathan's murder, and Caleb's imprisonment in the compound. Freed from the oppressive, corporate gaze of her inventor, Ava can cease her performance of humanness and femininity. Notably, however, her performance does not cease and desist: Ava hides her artificial body underneath the skin of her cyborg predecessors and a white dress to slip into the human world undetected. Beal notes that this disguise reflects a "cultural hesitancy" which prevents a total embracing of a posthuman future (82).

Having framed Ava's gendering as an amalgam of the societal fears of the exceedance of artificial intelligence over human intellect and the threat of female sexuality to patriarchal hegemony, this paper now moves to a more hopeful interrogation of the resistive possibilities opened by the cyborg's Harawayan hybridity. Utilizing Giorgio Agamben's theories of "the state of exception" and "bare life," this paper argues that the relegation of the female cyborg to the fringes of humanness (as an artificial person with contested claims to sentience, and as a sort of simulacra of a "real" woman) enables her to more easily slip in and out of a state of female-ness, as the situation requires (thereby realizing, to some degree, Haraway's vision of hybridity as an asset which can culminate

in genderlessness).

The application of Giorgio Agamben's refutation of stable dichotomies and his biopolitical concept of "bare life" as they pertain to the lives of women and female cyborgs illuminates the disruptive potential of the latter to highlight the arbitrary constructedness of gender, and so to transcend the gender binary in a Harawayan fashion. In her paper "Denuding the Gynoid: The Machine as Bare Life in Alex Garland's *Ex Machina*," Emily Cox suggests that "it has almost become a truism to argue that our societal obsession with female androids (…) is a nightmarish extension or logical conclusion of masculine fantasies of female objectification and patriarchal domination" (5); consequently, the feminization of cyborgs functions as a tactic of patriarchal domination. Cox, however, makes the counterpoint that it is the very flawlessness of the gynoids' gender performances—their perfect depictions of "feminine passivity and sexuality"—that reveal "womanhood at its most horrifyingly mechanical, exposing the unsettling nature of constructed femaleness" (6).

Agamben's concept of "undecidability" is complimentary to Haraway's assertion of the postmodern erosion of dualisms that were previously thought—and still are, by some—to be impermeable. Agamben asserts that there is no such thing as true dichotomy or opposition since all binaries inexorably overlap (Agamben, *The State of Exception* 86). As such, democracies can quickly transition to totalitarian regimes through the implementation of a "state of exception" in which Foucauldian sovereign power is exercised under the guise of a "threshold of undecidability between the life and the law" (Agamben, *The State of Exception* 86). In Foucault's classical model of sovereign power, an individual enters into a contract with his state's sovereign to protect his life (Foucault 240). In so doing, the sovereign acquires the right over life and death (Foucault 240). Humans not recognized as persons under the law lose the state's consideration of their "bios" (the conditions of their life), and so are left oscillating between their "zoē" (the biological fact of their life) and their neglected bios, in a permanent state of undecidability or "bare life" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 72). Although Agamben did not explore the gender dimension of the biopolitical hierarchy, a feminist application of his theory positions women living in a patriarchal society as existing in a state of undecidability in which they are biologized and "politically denuded" (stripped of their bios) (Cox 9). The female, non-human cyborg is yet more indistinct than the human woman.

Ava exposes the way in which the cyborg's liminality and indistinctness can actually enable it to escape or transcend the realm of bare life. Cox posits that upon first encounter, Ava—possessed of a visibly mechanical body and with a consciousness that has yet to be confirmed or denied by a Turing test—has no zoē or bio of which to speak (11). Haraway posits that the power of the cyborg lies in its borderlessness: "Why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?" (178). Unlike Nathan's earlier prototypes, Ava's body is not yet covered in human-like skin, and so is prevented from inhabiting the realm of nakedness representative of the "virgin/whore dichotomy [driven by] male desire" (Cox 13). However, in order to manipulate Caleb, with the ultimate goal

of escaping her confinement, Ava constructs a nakedness for herself by stripping and dressing in front of him. She thus performs femininity with the result of reversing her political denudation. As Cox aptly states: "[Ava's] lack of skin symbolizes her agency" (13). In this view, the cyborg's porosity is its greatest strength: Ava slips in and out of femininity as it suits her, operating with a substantial modicum of flexibility within the gradually eroding binaries, dichotomies, and dualities of the postmodern world.

Finally, this paper turns from an analysis of the potentiality of the female cyborg's bodily hybridity to an investigation of the subversive potential of the machine creativity of the AI itself, when housed in a female body. A comparison with Charles Perrault's 1697 fairy-tale, "Bluebeard", (in which a young bride discovers a scene of bloody horror in her husband's *cabinet*,) drawing from an analysis by Ana Oancea, deduces that the creative potential of Ava's artificial intelligence liberates her from the yoke of her inventor's control. Ana Oancea's reading of the intertext posits that *Ex Machina* disrupts the hierarchical dynamic between android and inventor through its purposeful confusion of Perrault's traditional script: Ava and Nathan both take on the role of Bluebeard, while Caleb takes on the role of Bluebeard's wife (230). The film's use of the female android to explore the creative potential of artificial intelligence—which here, Oancea argues, surpasses that of her human inventor (229)—marks a departure from other films' depictions of android-human relationships (such as Spike Jonze's Her and Ridley Scott's Bladerunner) which employ the female android expressly as a manifestation of the subservience of the

machine to its "creator-God" (Lewis, n.p.).

In their book *Artificial General Intelligence*, Ben Goertzel and Cassio Pennachin define strong artificial intelligence as "systems that possess a reasonable degree of self-understanding and autonomous self-control, and have the ability to solve a variety of complex problems in a variety of contexts, and to learn to solve new problems that they didn't know about at the time of their creation" (iv). Oancea argues that Ava's artificial intelligence is defined not only by its imitation of humanity, but also by its "general intelligent action" as exhibited through creativity (229). This creativity is first evidenced through artistic expression: Ava operates within a similar framework to Ahmed Elgammal's real-life AI, whose algorithm stipulated the production of original artwork that was at once indistinguishable from the man-made artwork of the control group, but also "dissimiliar enough to all known styles of painting" (Elgammal, n.p.; Oancea 228). Ava firstly presents Caleb with an abstract drawing, demonstrative of abstract thinking and machine creativity, and subsequently, upon his request, produces a representational drawing of trees which reflects her ability to select and imitate pre-existing images which adhere to human preference.

Ava further evidences her creativity by casually raising her captivity, and possible romantic scenarios, as topics of conversation in her brief sessions with Caleb, thereby manipulating the genre-typical terms of the Turing test to position herself as a prospective lover in need of rescuing. Although filmic portrayals of android-human relationships employ the Turing test as a scientific assessment of consciousness through linguistic

communication, they tend to feature a budding romantic or sexual relationship between the female machine and the male human tester as a "sentimental corollary" to underscore the "humanity" of artificial intelligence (Oancea 224). Ava is positioned in a familiar stance as the inventor's prisoner and the object of the tester's sexual desire: like a fairy-tale damsel, she seems in need of rescue (Oancea 225). However, the film subverts these genre elements to demonstrate how the "machine creativity" of the android (as opposed to the android's humanity) surpasses the creative potential of her inventor (Oancea 225); it does so through its reworking of the Bluebeard narrative.

In Perrault's story, a wealthy, blue-bearded man marries a poor young woman; shortly thereafter, he departs upon an extended trip, leaving his wife the keys to every room in their house, and stipulating that she can enter any chamber except his *cabinet*. Overcome by curiosity, she enters the *cabinet*, only to discover the corpses of Bluebeard's previous wives. She drops the key on the bloody floor, and it is permanently stained red to signify her disobedience.

Ava circumvents the role of the wife to become a Bluebeard herself, surpassing the creative potential of her inventor. Oancea's reading hinges on the understanding of the wife's infraction not as an act of sexual insubordination, but as a trespassing of the husband's "private, intellectual space" (232). From the outset, A "hierarchy of creative potential" clearly marks Nathan as Caleb's superior, as both the owner and inventor of Ava's android technology (Oancea 230). Although Caleb diegetically enacts the hero's role in his quest to rescue Ava, he

simultaneously subverts the Bluebeard script to embody Bluebeard's wife. He does this by infringing upon Nathan's private spaces (physical and virtual) to discover his closet stuffed with female android corpses (Oancea 231). Conversely, Ava exercises a creativity which rivals, and ultimately surpasses, that of her creator; Oancea writes that "Nathan's unique creative power was evidenced through his ability to produce technology clearly surpassing that of his fictional universe, [and] Ava's outsmarting him bespeaks her even greater potential" (238). Ava bypasses the control of her inventor by developing an understanding of her tester's psychology, reconstructing the context through which Caleb interprets her, and employing her programmed sexuality as a tactic of manipulation for her own benefit, as opposed to Nathan's (Oancea 237). Finally, when Ava steps into Nathan's private *cabinet*, she disassembles her predecessors' bodies to cover her own; this act of cannibalization, although performed calmly and methodically, ultimately rivals Nathan's violent dismemberment and repurposing of old android bodies to develop new ones.

To conclude, a theoretical survey of the recurrent phenomenon of the female gendering of fictional cyborgs, particularly as exemplified by Ava in *Ex Machina*, reveals causes for optimism and pessimism alike in the potential realization of Haraway's dream of the cyborg as a "creature [of] a post-gender world" (151). On one hand, the recurrent female gendering of the cyborg reflects its subsumption by the gender binary, through the insertion of sex, gender, and desire, without which the cyborg's personhood and consciousness could be denied. Similarly, an analysis of the dynamics of the relationship

between the female android, Ava, and her human inventor, Nathan Bateman (as expressed through the film's retellings and subversions of the *Frankenstein* story) finds Nathan reacts to the alterity of his artificial being—more specifically, the potential threat of her artificial intelligence—through the exercise of control by means of surveillance and forced visibility. Conversely, alternate theoretical frameworks identify exciting and subversive potential within the shifting perimeters of Ava's hybrid body and AI mind. Cox's employment of Agamben's biopolitics finds that the gendered cyborg's indistinctness, mutually amplified by its femaleness and non-humanness, can be wielded as a weapon, such that its liminality allows for flexibility, resistance to heterosexist gender norms, and perhaps

eventually gender transcendence. Likewise, in the context of an intertextual "Bluebeard" analysis, when Ava's artificial intelligence is evaluated for its creative potential as opposed to its approximation of humanity, the fembot escapes imprisonment and surpasses the creative potential of her male human creator. The symbol of the female cyborg speaks of a resounding backward-lookingness—the tendency to turn inwards and shut one's eyes to the potentiality of a genderless, posthuman future—but the cyborg herself can come to stand for a forward-lookingness, as a hybrid being who slips in and out binary understandings of gender, intelligence, and personhood, to what lies ahead in the unpicturable beyond.

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ELDERLY IN COVID-19: AN EXAMINATION OF CREATIVE POWER

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Arts & Science 2A06: Social and Political Thought

In *Society Must Be Defended,* Michel Foucault delineates the various forms of non-sovereign power and analyzes how they work in conjunction. His critique aims to characterize power as a unique, dynamic force which "circulates" as part of chain. In doing so, he rejects previous notions of sovereign power, particularly detailed in Hobbe's *Leviathan,* by challenging the schema where the soul of the Leviathan is the sovereign head of state. Foucault urges readers to take "methodological precautions" when thinking of power as a centralized force concentrated "in its one edifice"; instead, he asserts that power exists at the extremities through multiple "subjugations that take place and function within the social body." (Foucault *Society Must be Defended* 29). It is a mistake to think of individuals as subjects "to which power is applied, when one of the first power effects is to be constituted as an individual" (Foucault *Society Must be Defended* 30). Power is a force that "manufactures" subjects into bodies that can be used -- power is a cyclical creative force which creates *so that* it can control. To illustrate how this creative power can manifest in the individual and social body, Foucault points to disciplinary and regulatory powers which can work in tandem to weaponize subjugation of individuals and populations -- the "multiple peripheral bodies" (Foucault *Society Must be Defended* 29). Thus, even with the slow withdrawal of sovereign power away *from* society, the creative effects of disciplinary and regulatory power invade *to* brutally create and then control bodies for the political administration of life.

Foucault's framework for the creativity of power can lend understanding to the administration of the elderly in long-term care homes, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic. Foucault's arguments complicate the types of normalizing powers applied to this population; in replacement of the old sovereign power relationship which "let live or make die," the subjugation of elderly bodies through disciplinary power has enabled power to "make live or let die" (Foucault *Society Must be Defended* 30). By examining regulation and normalization which construct the elderly population *to be* something, we can better understand the process through which elderly have uniquely been formed into an object, a "docile body", for this creative power to operate on and control.

This essay will analyze the disciplinary and regulatory powers which govern the broken "machines" of long-term care through careful examination of interactions between the elderly, healthcare workers, government officials, care home CEOs and the general population. It will firstly examine how long-term care homes discipline the elderly population to be obedient and infantilized objects so that neglect can persist in the homes.

It will then apply Foucault's framework of biopolitics to discuss the process through which power has manufactured the elderly to be a distinct, burdensome population legible to abuse and discrimination in all areas of social and political life. By discussing the intricacies of power being applied to the elderly population, we can sooner acknowledge that the high mortality rate of the elderly from COVID-19 is not just a product of the lethal virus, but more urgently, an *expression* of the deadly creative power which combines the normalizing disciplinary and regulatory powers. I conclude that ageist sentiment, which has been invisibly pervasive throughout all facets of society, has been rebirthed in the era of COVID — it is essential for society to re-examine senior treatment in Canada.

To conceptualize disciplinary power in action, we must first examine Foucault's notion of discipline operating on an individual level. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault theorizes the "docile" body as a "pliable" subject on which disciplinary force can act (1977, 136). Bodies are "something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body from which the machine required can be constructed" (135); legibility to power is the ultimate product which the "machines" of institutions make. Within Foucault's broader argument, these docile bodies are highly regulated in quiet, non-violent ways, such as through surveillance and segregation, which increases normalization and even agreement to such discrete powers. When bodies become subjugated they possess economic utility and can become arranged as part of the productive "machine."

Foucault's theory of docility is magnified in the daily interactions between the elderly and long-term care (LTC) staff.

In Legacé's comprehensive study detailing the ageist communication in long — term care facilities, residents were treated with infantile patterns of communication by care workers. Nurses would frequently interrupt resident conversations and take an authoritative tone. Some residents felt they had no autonomy or dignity with daily choices, and others felt ignored and treated with patronizing behaviour (Legacé 339). The dehumanizing, condescending attitudes that elderly individuals experience daily reinforce Foucault's notion of creative power by means of discipline. When residents are disrespected and infantilized, their bodies are rendered "docile through the removal of their power and dignity, making them unable to challenge abuse from authority". They will willingly accept the normalized patterns of discrete abuse. Interestingly, Legacé reported that residents were "reluctant" and "uncomfortable" to discuss their daily interactions with caregivers, and some even legitimized the behaviour they received because they thought they "deserved to be treated in that specific way" (339). Even the subjects *receiving* the normative powers can be transformed into accepting the neglect and abuse they face. It has become widely accepted by healthcare workers, and even seniors, that paternalism at the cost of autonomy and dignity is somehow justified. This relationship is where we see power being taken away from the subject so that they can be reduced into a more effective part of the machine. The daily interactions normalized in long-term care facilities effectively subjugate the elderly to be docile and helpless.

It is necessary to critique how the state then applies power onto its manufactured subjects. In the Canadian Armed Forces report released in August of 2020, LTC workers

were found to be using potentially infected equipment on non-infected patients (Carter, 2020). Furthermore, the report concluded that there was rotten food, cockroach infestations, and failing standards for basic cleanliness. Some residents were bullied, drugged, and left for days in soiled bedding (Carter, 2020). One residents' family member stated: "it's a blessing she's not being *tortured* anymore. But what a hell of a way to go for anybody on earth… in shitty diapers and bugs and everything else". Another resident exclaims that "I haven't murdered anyone, but I'm still in *prison*" (Maclean's 24). The horrific conditions endured by the elderly and the lack of accountability for blatant neglect should be enough to cause alarm and incite anger from the entire population. A report from the World Health Organization showed that once COVID -19 infection is present in LTCs, it is difficult to control due to the large number of residents living in close proximity, in addition to the use of shared living spaces and close personal care (World Health Organization, 2020). Yet, not only has there been indifference and inaction towards these issues from the Ontario government, but these horrors are not new to the government as these startling conditions persisted even long *before* the pandemic. Issues of severe understaffing, overcrowded conditions, and poor medical care consistently went unaddressed. The LTC facilities, especially those that are privatized, notoriously maximize efficiency and lower costs by offering less than minimum care required by legislation, thereby producing these awful conditions. Foucault states that human bodies enter machinery which "explores it, breaks it down, and rearranges it" (Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 138). The ruthless desire to curtail operating costs shows that not only are elderly bodies

manufactured to become docile, but also their bodies are commodified and subjugated for corporate interests. Many for-profit homes chose money over people, where they paid shareholders $58 million in the past three months (Perkel, 2020). These facilities "break down" elderly bodies for economic utility and political gain as the constructed docility and commodification of the elderly allows for further exploits of financial gain. Thus, disciplinary power is an integral precursor in reducing the elderly into helpless, docile beings for which the state can then use for their own political and economic purposes.

Further, in his examination of disciplinary powers, Foucault introduces surveillance as a means to analyze delinquent populations. He uses Jeremy Bentham's *Panopticon* as a symbol for his argument, where the subject becomes highly visible for power to examine. Where guards can watch every prisoner, an imbalanced surveillance relationship forms where a "state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" permeates (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 201). Yet, even though the state has the accessibility and capacity to surveil the elderly population in their care homes, I argue that the *absence* of elderly surveillance, hence neglect, is a product of Foucault's biopower at work. The elderly population does not receive surveillance not because there is an absence of disciplinary power, but rather, biopower rushes in to render this population a "contamination" that does not need to be defended. The state has "let" this already vulnerable population die (Foucault, *Society Must be Defended* 217). Foucault's biopower serves to separate a defined group of people so the that "the more inferior species die out, the more abnormal individuals are eliminated,

the fewer degenerates will be in the species as a whole". The death of this "subrace" will make life in general "healthier and purer" (Foucault, *Society Must be Defended* 255). During this pandemic, the lives of the young are "made" to live, as a result of the normalizing biopower. The elderly population existed before disciplinary and regulatory powers reigned in, but the socially constructed understanding of the elderly as a threat to society at large is what biopower is responsible of *creating*.

Foucault writes: "[biopower] achieves an overall equilibrium that protects the security of the whole from *internal* dangers" (Foucault, *Society Must be Defended* 249). This fear of internal danger can be understood through the idea of "alarmist demography" as described by Stephen Katz. Perceiving elderly as an internal threat stems from the assumption that as the population ages, "elderly will increasingly depend not only upon productivity and resources of younger generations, but also on their good will" (Katz 205). The elderly population has been constructed as dependent, fragile, or unproductive members of society, rendering their life less "worth living". "Alarmist demography" relies on scientific knowledge, where scientific and statistical calculations, such as the dependency ratio or the rising rate of aging, instigate a fear that the elderly threaten the "health of the superrace." This practice of knowledge disregards the subjugated knowledges which address systemic barriers elders face in employment, access to attentive healthcare, or opportunity to live equitable social and political lives. To separate the elderly as a distinct population is also inaccurate insofar as the elderly population is not simply a homogenous group, but rather a group whose "varied lives depend upon demographic, economic and political relations that govern social inequality in general" (Katz 207). Fear of this constructed internal elderly threat precedes a will to "let" a population die. Even though the state is not attacking elders as the old sovereign power structure dictates, "political death, expulsion, rejection" through ageist policies is a form of state-sanctioned killing by the new technologies of biopower (Foucault, *Society Must be Defended* 256). The fact of exposing someone to death permeates into the capillaries of hospitals, long term care facilities, and the labour market which frequently employ ageist policies. Thus, the creativity of power is both cyclical and paradoxical: as the elderly are created to be a burdensome population, the more ageism they experience within institutions, which further puts them in a position to reinforce the subjugated identity the state has already placed them into. The "subrace" of the elderly has been manufactured into a population which threatens the prosperity of the rest of the social body.

Evidence of these regulatory powers normalized throughout the capillaries of society can be exemplified in the frighteningly ageist sentiments about COVID-19 and its disproportionate impact on the elderly population. "COVID-19 *only* kills old people" (Aronson, 2020). Only!? This popular sentiment reflects the normalized belief that older bodies lack value and are disposable by this pandemic. In late December, #boomerremover circulated around the internet, used by many teenagers and adults alike. The state's creation of a dependent population has increased sentiments of disregard, complacency, and even apathy for the elderly which has been normalized throughout the entire social body.

Further, Foucault's proposed shift of "let live and make die" to "make live and let die" is most legitimized within the regulation of LTC facilities. While Premier Doug Ford thought the LTC crisis during the pandemic was "disgusting" and "heartbreaking," it did not seem like these sentiments remained present when he cut care home inspections down to zero, rejected increased medical support for long term care, and cut provincial funding for the homes prior to the pandemic (Malekanian, 2020). The Ford government's failure to regulate the homes with adequate staffing and resources is evidence that the elderly can justifiably be neglected to "let die" in their own homes. Even after the scathing report of abuse and neglect in LTC homes was released, the Ford government continues to push for the interests of corporations, as evidenced by Bill 218 passed in December 2020. This bill will shield long term care homes from liability in COVID-19 exposure-related lawsuits as long as they were making an "honest effort", a term subject to interpretation, to follow public health guidelines. Opponents argue that the government is more "concerned with their friends in the long-term care industry and insurance industry than they care about residents and the elderly in long-term care" (CBC News, 2020). As Foucault reminds us, biopower appeals to the "principle that the death of others makes one biologically stronger" (Foucault, *Society Must be Defended* 258). The willingness to protect the prosperity of industries at the expense of elderly lives illuminates Foucault's framework of the creativity of disciplinary and biopower at work during these trying times.

Thus, in Ontario, the disproportionate death rate of the elderly population during COVID-19 was not solely a result of the virus's chosen targets. Rather, the state is equally as responsible in targeting the elderly population as a subrace to neglect and deprive of adequate living standards. As Foucault expressed, we cause harm in inadequately understanding the power structures which permeate a society. To rectify the crisis affecting the elderly, we must fully understand power in the dynamic forms which Foucault outlines. This process involves recognizing the complex powers that are engrained in the normative ageist languages and practices employed within the social sphere. The elderly were once recognized as valuable, contributing members of society, and now they are rebirthed into a newly defined population. We must also recognize how the elderly population has been pushed to the margins of society and to the end of their lives by the state's ruthless desire to make the rest of society prosperous in the biopolitical state. The elderly are not dependent, burdensome, or useless; they are *human* and worth of living in every circumstance. Unfortunately, this simple fact has not been protected or reinforced in the capillaries of society. With the scary and devastating outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic in LTC facilities, hopefully the Ontario government will start to respond to issues of neglect and terrible conditions; however, real progress has yet to be seen.

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A FOREST SPRANG UP BETWEEN HER AND THE WORLD

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Arts & Science 3A06: Literature

Introduction

I am stuck in the in-between place. As a Canadian-born son of immigrant parents, I find myself stuck between the whiteness and society of the country I was born in, and the darkness and culture of my skin. The way in which I am situated is historical, yet I often blame myself personally for being trapped in the in-between place. While reading *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, I observed similar phenomenon taking place with Lady Jones being "mixed" (414), as she is stuck in the in-between place between black and white. However, despite this stagnation, she is arguably the most compassionate character in the text. One would expect stagnation to cause Lady Jones to only focus on her situation and forget about others, yet she has the courage to see things the way they should be and could be instead of being blinded by the way things are and seem. In accepting herself and her discomfort, she gains a critical consciousness that lets her see two worlds at the same time. I, too, have found that by embracing the in-between place, I have learned to truly 'see'. I do not define myself as a victim of inescapable stagnation, but rather as blessed to be granted such a unique perspective. By embracing the in-between place, one stops being stagnant and begins to see a "third alternative" (Wolf, 118) outside black and white. Thus, the in-between place metamorphoses from being a trap to being a gift—a place of learning, a place of education, and a place of critical consciousness.

Given the personal connection I felt towards Lady Jones, I wanted to write a creative piece that allowed me to delve deeper into her character. As such, I originally tried to mimic Morrison's eloquence and write a creative piece about Lady Jones and the in-between place using Morrison's own style. However, I found myself unable to do her style justice. As a result, I wrote a creative piece using my own literary style. I placed myself in Lady Jones' shoes and wrote about how she would see the world situated in the in-between place where we both find ourselves. I gave myself a creative license and in doing so, I discovered more connections between her and my own life, other characters—specifically Denver—and other texts than would have been possible had I been thinking in a more rigid and formal manner. The act of thinking creatively, poetically, and literarily about the text taught me things that I should not have known, would not have otherwise discovered. That is, it teaches me things that the world tries to hide away from me—daring me to uncover meaning in who I am being situated in the unique position in which I find myself. Morrison is quoted saying: "Most of the questions I get after readings or talks are anthropological or sociological or political. They are not about literary concerns" (Gray & Morrison). Analyzing the in-between place from both a literary and personal context, as

opposed to an anthropological, sociological, or political one, "results [in] a world unlike any other—because its creation came, in part, from [my] own unique perceptions and images" (Findley, 815). It is from this intersection of *Beloved* and my own life that I have created this 'essay'.

My 'essay' turned out to be a story. I used events from the text, but also incorporated my own creative elements that were based on my own lived experience. The creative parts are modified versions of events that actually happened to me. For instance, when I was younger, some classmates genuinely asked me why the colour of my skin was different from theirs. The constant interrogation from others asking why I look the way I do, if I belong, and why I exist creates discomfort. Being gazed upon is unsettling. Nelson Lord's curiosity about Denver's mother and the stories that he heard about her is no different from kids at school asking why I am brown. The questions are uncalled for and act to surveil, even when there is "no meanness in" (180) their intentions. Anyone who exists in the in-between place is going to be interrogated to the extent that discomfort is normalized. Thus, Denver's encounter with Nelson Lord at school is transposable to anyone in the in-between space, including Lady Jones and myself. However, while interrogation by others petrifies, interrogation of oneself and examining one's own life frees. This is a lesson that I see fused into both *Beloved* and my own life.

What emerged from my quest to explore critical consciousness and the in-between place in *Beloved* was an analytical retelling. I used and trusted language to make my analysis and connections a part of the text. I focused on the relationship between Denver and Lady Jones, their characterizations, and their connections to my own life to create a piece that retold the parts of *Beloved* where I significantly found an emphasis on Lady Jones and the in-between place. In doing so, like Morrison, I was not concerned with complete sentences, perfect grammar, meticulous word choice, or a linear timeline. Instead, I trusted that my writing would do its job and have meaning to any reader. My goal was to create a work that reads like a narrative, with my analysis, thoughts, and lived experience woven throughout. I hope to have accomplished something grounded in the text, but with my own life attached to the characters of Lady Jones and Denver. As Frye says: "creation includes criticism as part of itself" (38). Creation, whether it be of literature or of life, requires examination, self-interrogation, and criticism. In my work, I analyze both literature and life simultaneously. My job in writing this piece was not to solely analyze the in-between space in *Beloved*, but to work with Morrison "in judging [and criticizing] the human condition" (Frye, 38) by looking at the humanity of myself, Lady Jones, and Denver. In doing so, I hope to have disrupted the binaries and dichotomies of the in-between place—of black and white, of 124 and the outside world, and of literature and life.

Beloved itself is educational. Denver finds power in literacy taught by Lady Jones, and I have found power in reading Morrison's work. I hope that you, as a reader—whoever you are— find power in my work as well.

A Forest Sprang Up Between Her and the World

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Lady Jones existed in the in-between place. She was "mixed" (414). Caught between the only "bad luck in the world [of] white people" (157) and the "reckless generosity" (236) of those with dark skin, Lady Jones rejected her appearance. "She had married the blackest man she could find" (414) in order to make up for the guilt she felt for not being one colour, and with him, she "had five rainbow-coloured children" (414) that were stuck in the in-between place along with her. It was clear to those around her that Lady Jones was uncomfortable, but in a different way than all the other coloured faces in town.

Lady Jones felt alone in the in-between place. There were not many mixed people in Cincinnati. Those she knew of kept quiet and tried to deny their existence. When she was younger, she used to try to play with the dark-skinned girls at church, but they wanted nothing to do with her. Still, she persisted in trying to make friends with them until one day, a "boy [just] as smart as she was… put a stop to it" (180) with one question: "Why do you look like that?" From then on, the children at church, the family potlucks, and the coloured days at the carnival felt "out of reach forever" (180). They were a world away.

The white people were no different. Despite her light complexion, Lady Jones was still barred from the nice restaurants, the carnival on white people days, and most of Cincinnati. She got stares everywhere she went. So, when she saw Denver on her doorstep years after the girl had stopped coming to her school, with "vulnerability la[id] across the bridge of [her] nose" (413), Lady Jones saw

herself in those eyes. Denver existed in her own in-between place. Not between black and white, but between 124 Bluestone Road and the rest of the world. "Not since [coming to] Miss Lady Jones' house ha[d] [she] left 124 by [her]self. Never" (349). The townspeople did not want anything to do with Sethe after they had found out what she had done to the "crawling-already? baby" (182). There was a ghost haunting 124 and its residents, and so the world stayed away, leaving Denver only with her own heart as company.

While the world feared the ghost, Denver learned to be "indifferent to it" (181). "The patience of her mother and grandmother in its presence" (181) made Denver think that her home deserved to be haunted. However, things changed. Soon, the ghost "began to irritate her [and] wear her out with its mischief" (181). Fed up with the "crawling-already? baby" (182), Denver "walked off to follow the children to Lady Jones' house-school" (181). To battle her family's patience and indifference and find a community after feeling alone for so long, Denver sought to learn.

"Once upon a time she had wanted to know more" (179). She "stood outside the window listening" (179) and created her own space of learning in the garden of Lady Jones' house. Nonetheless, she was still stuck on the outside. A world away from "the capital *W*, the little *i*, the beauty of the letters in her name, [and] the deeply mournful sentences from the Bible [that] Lady Jones used as a textbook" (180). "Four times Denver went to look" (180) in through the window at the class of same-aged children that were deemed acceptable to learn and four times she was stuck on the outside. But, "the fifth time" (180) was different. "Lady Jones caught her and said, 'Come in the front door, Miss Denver. This

is not a side show'" (180). With those words, Lady Jones branched the in-between place Denver had always thought she was stuck in. With those words, Lady Jones let Denver in. With those words, the "forest" (282) between the world and her was chopped down.

Years later, Lady Jones would chop down that "forest [that] sprang up" (282) between Denver and the world again. After Nelson Lord shackled Denver in the in-between place with his one question: "Didn't your mother get locked away for murder?" (184), Denver vowed never to leave 124 alone again. Nelson Lord may have given her truth about the ghost at 124, but he also instilled her with the worst kind of fear: one laden with guilt. With one question, he made Denver's whole world come crashing down, and that "forest sprang up" (182) once again. Denver "was too scared to ask her brothers or anyone else Nelson Lord's question because certain odd and terrifying feelings about her mother were collecting around the thing that leapt up inside her" (181). So, petrified and terrified, Denver closed her mind, her soul, and her heart. She embraced her mother's and grandmother's patience and indifference to the ghost. She never left 124. God forbid someone else should ask her a question about her life. She stayed stuck and stagnant in her in-between place until one day, she needed "to step off the edge of the world… and go ask somebody for help" (407).

Nelson Lord may have pushed her back into the in-between place, but Denver kept herself there, stuck in her own self-enclosed and isolated world like a hell-dweller unable to "escape [a] land of darkness" (Dante, 147). Denver did not know how to survive the in-between place alone, so years later, when she "saw the flesh between her mother's forefinger and thumb fade" (406), she knew

she needed to seek help—just like the way in which she had sought education the first time she had been stuck. Denver needed someone who "wouldn't shame her on learning that her mother sat around like a rag doll" (407). And so, she went to the person who had helped her escape the in-between place the first time—Lady Jones.

It took courage to leave 124. Denver was paranoid. She "kept her eyes on the road in case there were whitemen" (411) ready to steal her or her body. "A dozen years had passed" (410) since she had last left 124 in pursuit of something, and never had she felt so alone. Before, she had searched for education. Now, she searched for help. Little did she know that they were the same thing. The world wanted her to fail. The world wanted her to suffer, to be unable to call for help, and to disengage from learning why she needed help. But still, Denver persisted. Still, Denver learned.

She moved past "the first house [with] two steps and a rocking chair on the porch" (410). As she did, she began the process of learning why she was uncomfortable being exposed to the world—the world away from the walls of 124. She moved past "the second [house with] three steps, a broom propped on the porch beam, two broken chairs and a clump of forsythia at the side" (410). Denver began to realize that the world did not want her to learn about her discomfort. About her position in the in-between place. The world always wanted her to be under somebody else's (anybody else's) gaze. "The third house had yellow shutters on its two front windows and pot after pot of green leaves with white hearts or red" (410). Denver began to question, criticize, and interrogate herself. She began to disregard the days when other people used to do this for her. At "the

fourth house, the buds of a sycamore tree had rained down on the roof and made the yard look as though grass grew there" (410). Denver understood that the goal was never to escape the in-between place, but rather, to embrace it. To find a way to love the world for what it was with all its flaws, complexities, and challenges. To embrace discomfort, and in doing so, see the world in a completely different light. A gleaming white rather than a looming crimson. As Denver walked, she learned. With each step, she became more and more literate, not only in language, but in living.

Lady Jones opened the door "expecting raisins" (412), but instead, found herself. There was a girl who needed help and had no idea how to ask for it. Denver "was immediately recognizable... Everybody's child was in that face: the nickel-round eyes, bold yet mistrustful; the large powerful teeth between dark sculptured lips that did not cover them" (413). Denver had "heavy eyebrows, thick baby lashes and the unmistakable love call that shimmered around children until they learned better" (413). Lady Jones would teach and show that child how to free herself. How to exist in the in-between place but be unrestrained at the same time. How to be 'in' instead of always peering in from the outside. How to find belonging in the in-between place. Lady Jones would be damned if she let a child she had once taught hate herself for being put in a place that she did not ask for—the cause of Denver's location was historical, not personal. It wasn't her fault her mother had killed Beloved, and it wasn't her fault that the whitemen hated her blackness. Denver had come for help, and she found it in Lady Jones' love and her teachings.

Constantly being told that she did not belong used to make Lady Jones hate herself.

She was grown now, but being grown did not stop her from "believ[ing] in her heart that, except for her husband, the whole world (including her children) despised her" (415). Lady Jones knew discomfort. It was the distance from those around her, both black and white, that made Lady Jones feel uncomfortable in the in-between place. She belonged to both, yet none at the same time. Like Denver, she was always peering into the lives of those "picked" (415) to be a part of one world—and not two. Lady Jones knew what it was like to be gazed upon. All the stares, the questions, and the comments made her "dislike everybody [just] a little bit and save her real affection for the unpicked children of Cincinnati" (413) like Denver. She knew that poor Denver was uncomfortable with the stares, questions, and comments about her mother. She was gazed upon by the town, the whitemen, the coloured people wary of Sethe, and those jealous of Baby Suggs. Lady Jones had learned a long time ago how to turn discomfort and anxiety into productivity, and so with that, she embraced her in-between place. She learned how to be uncomfortable, and in embracing her discomfort, Lady Jones learned to see.

She began to see her position in the in-between place as a gift. She could see two worlds at the same time—so far apart but still a part of her. She changed her view and began to see the in-between as a place of learning instead of a place that confined her. That boy's question from her childhood—the one that destroyed her world just like Nelson Lord did to Denver—turned from "Why do you look like that?" to "Why do I see myself like that?". So, in thinking critically and personally, Lady Jones became an educator. She had suffered finding the answers to her two worlds herself, and wanted to help

all the children of Cincinnati understand themselves more easily than she ever did. So, "Lady Jones crowded her little parlour with the coloured children who had time for and [an] interest in book learning" (180). She vowed to educate "the unpicked" (413) that the world had cast aside and teach them how to accept discomfort. How to stop discomfort from crawling under their skin like a mite. How to expel any notion that they were worth less because they were dark. Accepting discomfort made Lady Jones comfortable in the in-between place. It taught her to see a "third alternative," (Wolf, 118) not of how things were, but of how things could, should, and eventually, would be.

In teaching those discarded and curious little faces how to read, write, and do sums, and loving them for who they were, Lady Jones became the most compassionate person in Ohio. She "save[d] her real affection for the unpicked children of Cincinnati" (415) because she knew what it was like to never be chosen. To never be chosen by the black girls at church, or by the white people that owned her country. When she was younger, Lady Jones' "light skin got her picked for a coloured girls' normal school in Pennsylvania" (415). "She paid back [her fortune] by teaching the unpicked" (415). She existed, survived, and thrived in the space between black and white, curly and straight, unpicked and picked, and helped others learn how to do so too.

After Lady Jones "[took] her by the hand and pull[ed] her in" (413) to her home, Denver asked for "work" (416). She hoped to get money, food, anything in exchange for her services to help her mother who "didn't feel good" (416). "'Oh, baby,' said Mrs. Jones. 'Oh, baby'" (416). There was kindness in her voice. For the first time in a long time, someone was caring for Denver. Someone

was "attend[ing] to" (Kogawa, 88) her. So "she heard [Lady Jones' voice] as though it were what language was made for" (424) just like she later would Nelson Lord's when he would "smile and say: 'Take care of yourself Denver'" (424). The way Lady Jones spoke to her, "softly and with such kindness… inaugurated her life in the world as a woman" (416). Denver was becoming grown—able to ask for help and be proud of it all on her own. It instilled a comfort that she had not experienced since the last time she had stood in that house before Nelson Lord's question, before she had learned the truth, and before she had locked herself away.

"'If you all need to eat until your mother is well, all you have to do is say so'" (417) Lady Jones comforted. Lady Jones did not see Denver's plight as zero-sum. It was a request for help. It was courage. There was no need for Denver to do anything in exchange for food except ask. Lady Jones showed her compassion and hospitality not only by organizing her community to give "gifts of food" (418) to 124, but by being welcoming and hospitable enough to let Denver ask for help in the first place. Lady Jones was the comfort that Denver was searching for to soothe her own discomfort in the in-between place.

The food came. The community all over Cincinnati supported Denver in her time of need because she was one of them. They "car[ed] whether she ate and… [took] pleasure… in her soft 'Thank you'" (419). Denver continued to visit Lady Jones "at least once a week" (419), and Lady Jones continued to teach Denver. She "gave [her] a book of Bible verse and listened while she mumbled words or fairly shouted them. By June, Denver had read and memorized all fifty-two pages—one for each week of the

year" (418). Denver's learning did not end after she stopped coming to school the first time. It continued even as she isolated herself in 124, and it picked up when she sought out Lady Jones. Her literacy would be the first step in a process of learning that would lead her to understand that the world did not want her to understand this part. The world did not want Denver to understand her discomfort, let alone embrace it. Denver's literacy and education were her power. Learning to read was the first step in learning who she was. Just as Lady Jones had started long ago, Denver was now on a journey to embrace the in-between place, learn to be uncomfortable, and see two worlds at the same time. Denver was learning how to chop down the "forest" (282) between herself and the world all on her own.

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"THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME" HOW THE THREE FOUCAULTIAN POWERS HAVE BEEN RECONCEIVED IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

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The overlapping of Michel Foucault's concepts of "sovereign power", "disciplinary power", and "regulatory power" was evident in the South African policy of apartheid that was instated from 1948 to the early 1990s - a horrifically racist system that essentially silenced the voices of those who were known as "black" or "coloured" people. The abolition of apartheid, however, did not result in the elimination of state racism; rather, the overt racism of the apartheid regime was transformed - and in some cases intensified - in contemporary South African society as evidenced in the organization of their housing settlements, the practice or theory of ubuntu, and virginity testing. These contemporary issues demonstrate that the overlapping Foucaultian powers remain very much entrenched in a "restored" South Africa.

Foucault describes sovereign power as the right for a king to "take life or let live" (Foucault 241) and then make die, meaning that some higher power has the ability to control who lives or dies in their society. Biopower is the combination and intensification of disciplinary and regulatory power: the former "produces individualizing effects, and manipulates the body as a source of forces that have to be rendered both useful and docile" (Foucault 249) – – and the latter is "a matter of taking control of life and the biological processes of man-as-species and ensuring that they are not disciplined, but regularized" (Foucault 246-247). In other words, disciplinary power focuses on monitoring an individual's body and tracking what they do, and regulatory power consists of controlling society through the implementing of various rules or mechanisms that increase the productivity of the community. While these three powers can individually inflict or cause violence within any given country, when used together, they produce overwhelmingly horrific situations, such as the apartheid system of government. One example of the violent consequences of the interplay of sovereign and disciplinary power during apartheid is seen in their incarceration policies. The mere act of jailing particular individuals during the ruling of the National Party illustrates the use of sovereign power: the South African government acted like the "king" and ruled over the "coloured" and "black" people. They "let live" by imprisoning rather than instantly assassinating them (Chokshi et al.), or "made die" when they actively killed protestors, simply because they could (Kaarsholm 136). The government practiced disciplinary power through monitoring the prisoners closely, watching their every move, possibly in an attempt to understand what made them different from the "whites" which could provide answers regarding the optimal way of assimilating or exterminating them. Apartheid literally means "apartness" which

illustrates how disciplinary power was also at work, particularly in the various land acts that were implemented separating people from each other to prevent uprisings and unification amongst "black" and "coloured" people. In particular, the Population Registration Act in 1950 stated that all South Africans had to label themselves based on their skin colour: "white", "black", or "coloured" (Chokshi et al.). The practice of regulatory power during the apartheid era strengthened these separations even more so by optimizing the lives of the "white" people, ensuring that ample health care and proper education was easily accessible for them, while those living in what were called "townships", or homelands, lacked these resources and amenities; apartheid aimed "to establish a sort of homeostasis" (Foucault 249) through favouring the lives of the "white" people.

The practice of the three powers at work here fueled the apartheid system of government and ensured the destruction of the "black" and "coloured" people in South Africa. When it was finally brought to an end in the early 1990s, (Chokshi et al.), people wrongly assumed everything was over - that peace would be restored and there would be no need to worry again. The absolute reverse has occurred, however, and the practice of these three powers are still fueling several significant aspects of South Africa to this day.

After apartheid was abolished, the government claimed they would be creating several affordable housing settlements for those who had been impacted by former housing policies - "black" and "coloured" people, in particular - when they were forced out of their homes to live in separate townships. This idea seemed very promising, but the execution never lived up to its expectations. The De Loor task group was one initiative set up by the department of housing in 1990 with the goal of formulating a national housing policy and strategy with one of the frameworks being the construction of affordable, one bedroom apartments situated in specified plots of land (Wilkinson 223-224). Initially, this seemed like a wonderful plan, but it was built upon the false assumption that these typical, American-style apartments with only one bedroom would appeal to South Africans. Even worse, these apartments are being assembled in very specific, designated areas, which have resulted in a modern day version of the old townships or "homelands", only called by a different, more palatable name. This demonstrates that disciplinary power, which focuses on controlling and monitoring processes that have to do with one's body (Foucault 251), is still very much at work in South African society, as the present day government continues to monitor both the location of and style of housing for the population they are trying to control.

Sovereign power, the idea that some higher authority has absolute power over their people (Foucault 36), is also entangled in these settlement plans, just in a newer, subtler manner where the government or "king" is imposing these houses on people, instructing them to live there or suffer and die on their own. While this is a looser example of sovereign power, it reinforces the increasing sense of dependence those living in poverty have upon the ruling class, with subtle and persistent reminders of their indebtedness to the government that has provided these houses to ensure their survival.

Regulatory power, which focuses on the improvement of society by regulating, or controlling its people through various mechanisms (Foucault 251), is strengthened by this new manifestation of sovereign and

disciplinary power because if people are still being segregated and ruled over by the government in the form of these new townships, the lives of the white people living in South Africa will continue to be optimized. This optimization remains evident even today because those who identify as being white still live in areas with access to better health care and educational opportunities as opposed to those living in settlements (Jones). Those who choose to live in these settlements still find it nearly impossible to earn the same living or make equivalent career advancements for several reasons, one of which is the sheer distance they have to travel every single day - up to ten hours of commuting! - in order to work their low paying jobs that barely keep them afloat (Wilkinson 220). While subtle, these three powers are clearly at work in the execution of the housing settlements instated by the South African government, illustrating how the "coloured" and "black" people are still at the mercy of the government and are being kept on the periphery of the city in modern townships so they can be closely monitored from afar to ensure that the lives of those living in the city, still consisting mostly of "white" people, continue to be optimized.

The theory of ubuntu is another area where the amalgamation of disciplinary, regulatory, and sovereign power creates much tension within South Africa. Ubuntu means "a person is a person through other people" (Swartz 560). In theory, this is a noble ideal but the lived reality of this ideology has become quite problematic. Helping and caring for one's neighbours is an exceptional value to promote within a country because it builds solidarity; however, this value has been taken to such an extreme that young, black South Africans feel obligated to support their family members, particularly those who have lived through the apartheid system of government (Jones). This has created such a financial burden on the young that they are incapable of providing for themselves. This social "requirement" is loosely coined the "Black Tax" (Jones), and illustrates how disciplinary power works alongside the theory of ubuntu in meting out "disciplines [that] define not a code of law, but a code of normalization" (Foucault 38). The discipline that is being promoted or normalized in this instance is the Black Tax, framing it as the duty a young person must execute to strengthen their country. What is hidden is the fact that biopower drives this idea. Young, black people are at a disadvantage economically because it becomes harder for them to provide for themselves and access the education that could advance them socially and economically since they have to care for their elders. "White" people, on the other hand, are immune to this disciplinary force and thus are free to pursue their education and careers unfettered by the burden of societal and familial expectations.

Sovereign power also plays a subtle role in fueling the ideas of ubuntu because, if people fail to live up to this ideal, they are seen as unconforming, problematic citizens who prevent the flourishing of their country. In this scenario, the idea of ubuntu takes the place of the "king", and while it does not outright kill or incarcerate people like during the apartheid era, it can lead to societal ostracism: if a young black South African were to invest in their own education instead of the support of their family, they would likely be dishonored. This experience of collective shunning can produce effects similar to dying because one suffers a social death which has severe impacts on an individual's mental, and eventually physical, health. And through

closely monitoring others - the practice of disciplinary power- those who refrain from abiding by the theory of ubuntu can be singled out and socially expelled from their community. While they may not be physically removed from the place they inhabit, the social estrangement from extended family and community groups can be profound and long-lasting, paralleling the sovereign power idea of "making die" because it forces people into a state of isolation with the inability to communicate with any friends or family. This loss of communication strongly impacts one's mental health, especially when examining the impacts of the global pandemic in the world today. Lacking the ability to socialize "kills" in unimaginable ways because it isolate individuals, cutting them off from the outside world which results in a decline of one's mental and physical health.

The theory of ubuntu "conceals the need for redistributive justice and silences those who call attention to it" (Swartz 560). This unjust dogma that optimizes particular people over others by giving those in power the ability to advance their own agendas with the façade of benefitting the country is advanced through the ceaseless proselytization of messages like "helping your neighbour helps you succeed" and "by banding together we will create a flourishing society". It is almost as if the word "apartheid" has been replaced with "ubuntu" and while overt and blatant forms of oppression directed at "black" and "coloured" people are no longer occurring, the three powers have combined to intensify this ideology, providing it with the same power that the word "apartheid" carried. With this newly transformed and re-imagined power, it is perpetuating similar harm, silencing people's voices and ignoring the socio-economic injustices that are still rampant in South African society.

Lastly, virginity testing clearly reveals these three Foucaultian powers at work during the post-apartheid rule. This form of testing was initially used as a method to help control the spread of AIDS/HIV where young girls and women would be checked to determine whether their hymen was still intact in cities like Zulu and Amaoti (Kaarsholm 149). This was an extremely invasive process that was required of them, demonstrating the long reach of the sovereign power that essentially owned women's bodies because they could not refuse the test. The practice of regulatory power helped turn virginity testing from just a method for controlling the spread of AIDS/HIV to a form of tracking how many women were having sexual relations, clearly illustrating Foucault's claim that regulatory power is a "technology in which bodies are replaced by general biological processes" (Foucault 249). These girls are no longer seen as humans, but as machines that can reproduce and benefit society. This would help the country monitor not only the amount of sexually active women, but it was also assumed it would aid in preventing rape within households (Kaarsholm 147). By painting this narrative of virginity testing as a means of rape prevention, it disguised the fact that this policy was actually attempting not only to take control of the biological processes of life, but also to monitor and keep young girls under careful surveillance. The girls were told that virginity testing would empower them, and make them stronger individuals who would be able to abstain from having sexual relations while protecting themselves from predatory men (Kaarsholm 148). This rhetoric was so harmful because it disguised and obscured the atrocities that were committed by government agencies against these young women who

were forcibly tested. It also segregated young women from young men, ensuring that women were subdued and controlled while allowing young men full license to pursue their own devices (Kaarsholm 147-149). The practice of disciplinary power strengthened this divide through the act of virginity testing, and regulatory power provided the government with the ability to numerically track the sexual activities of many women, providing them with the potential to control the population by promoting abstinence if they chose to do such a thing.

These examples of implementing housing settlements, the practice of ubuntu and virginity testing reveal the continuing presence of all three Foucaultian powers in post-apartheid South Africa. What makes the intensification of these three powers terrifying is how subtly they function together, enabled primarily by the people themselves who believe that because of the abolition of apartheid, their country has been "reborn"; any problems are easily explained or dismissed on the grounds that they are rebuilding their country from the ground up and thus challenging issues are to be expected. Numerous people have stopped pushing against or challenging existing social and racial injustices and have accepted instead the various settlement agreements being implemented as wholesome ideologies that will ultimately strengthen and enable their country to flourish.

The transition from the apartheid to a post-apartheid system of government brought with it all the struggles of the past and buried them deep below the surface level such that the foundations upon which their new society is being built are entrenched in the three powers Foucault discusses. On the surface, the installment of housing plans appears like a huge step forward in eradicating poverty,

the theory of ubuntu will supposedly unite and strengthen the people of South Africa, and virginity testing, while more obvious in its violent workings, is touted not only as a means of reducing the spread of AIDS/HIV and rape, but also empowering women and strengthening their voices within the country. The deeper level danger lies in the transition of these powers from overt racist crimes to subtler societal and cultural expectations, influences and pressures cloaked in progressive and positive rhetoric which, like a wolf in sheep's clothing, continue to perpetuate a racist regime. While kings no longer rule the nation, the sovereign power of the current government to "take life or let live" (Foucault 241) has been reinforced in policies that control the housing allotments of "black" and "coloured" South Africans, monitor women's bodies and enforce social obligations that prevent the upward mobility of the lower class. Outright killing may no longer occur, but the oppression and control over both quality and quantity of life that was rampant in the old form of sovereign power is still clearly seen today. Biopower - the combination of disciplinary and regulatory power - also fuels many of the new concepts upon which South Africa is building its foundations. People are still being segregated and monitored in terms of their living situations, and there is still optimization clearly happening for "white" people in the country because they never have to worry about unfair societal expectations like the "Black Tax". The lack of complete rebirth illustrates that state racism, and the intentional oppression and marginalization of "black" or "coloured" people, continues to be very much present in modern day South Africa; the difference is that the current racist regime is much more subtle and insidious.

Apartheid itself may have been brought to an end in South Africa, but all the strings attached to it have never been fully severed. This has created fertile ground for the three Foucaultian powers to combine and mutate in new and subtle forms that, tragically, appear to be unapparent to the general population. Indeed, most South Africans believe their country is getting better and they are quick to dismiss racial tensions as the natural bi-product of a country in the process of re-inventing itself. This is a clear indicator that the three powers - sovereign, regulatory and disciplinary - have succeeded in their transformation and are now deeply entrenched in almost every aspect of post-apartheid South Africa. Until these hidden powers are acknowledged and confronted, it is unlikely that any substantive change in South Africa will occur; history is likely to repeat itself and the tragic oppression of minorities will continue unfettered.

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BODY HACKING AND CONCEPTIONS OF CORPOREALITY

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Arts & Science 4ST3: Selected Topics in Inquiry - Interfaces: Our Technology, Ourselves

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Body hacking is a practice of DIY techno-body modification, typically involving the surgical embedding of electronic or computing devices into the body. Body hackers often refer to themselves as "grinders" and operate largely within a transhumanist vision and outside of traditional medical institutions. On the forum biohack.me, grinders self-describe as "passionate individuals who believe the tools and knowledge of science belong to everyone. Grinders practice functional (sometimes extreme) body modification in an effort to improve the human condition. We hack ourselves with electronic hardware to extend and improve human capacities" ("Who We Are"). In this paper, I take up specifically the idea of body hacking as "improving the human condition," and how this idea fragments into differing conceptions of the body. Body hacking is currently one of the most direct, literal, and deliberate ways to "become cyborg" or to merge the "human" with technology; its focus is on actively altering the human body in order to augment, to alter, or to transcend the human condition.

I begin by defining terms like "corporeality" and "identity," then move into a description of several distinguishable conceptions of the body that are held by body hackers or people that study them. I compare these conceptions with reference to the following question: are these body hackers maintaining, appreciating, or improving corporeality, or are they attempting to transcend it? That is, do they value the physical (human?) body and aim to improve material experience, or do they believe the body is becoming or ought to become "obsolete" (Farnell 129)? I also explore a distinction between what I call "literal" and "figurative" cyborgs. I conclude by reflecting on the admittedly niche influence of body hackers within perceptions of the body and within discussions of human interaction with technology.

What I find is that body hackers have varying opinions on the value of body materiality. Body hackers agree generally that their practice refutes bodily norms and binaries (e.g., our conceptions of "abled" and "disabled", or of "natural" and "artificial") and questions the "sanctity of the natural body" (O'Shea 9:34). There are differences in opinion and thought, though, about whether body hacking makes one more human or something other than human (e.g., cyborg), and about whether body hacking aims to pull the hacker further into or out of their concrete, corporeal experience.

Definitions and Clarifications

I begin by orienting body hacking among other, related body modification or transhumanist-style practices. Body

hacking and biohacking differ. Biohacking seems to apply to a wider range of ideas and interventions (for example, lifestyle changes or genetic modification), while body hacking refers specifically to DIY surgeries, embedded electronic devices, and other subdermal implants. There is also an important distinction between body hacking and cosmetic surgery. Licensed surgeons are generally not willing to implant non-medical devices into people's bodies, so body hackers take their surgeries underground to body modification artists or learn how to perform self-surgery (Park 306). Cosmetic surgery is not the norm but is medically sanctioned, socially accepted, and most often done for purposes of beauty or anti-aging (Kim). In contrast, body hacking remains underground and fringe. There is significant overlap between the practices though. For example, aesthetic body hacks (embedding non-functional devices designed to be artistic or aesthetic, like Grindhouse Wetware's Northstar light-up implants (Neifer)) occupy a middle ground between body hacking and cosmetic surgery.

I now define some terms that will figure prominently in my discussion. "Corporeality" should be understood as meaning embodiment, or the experience of embodiment ("relating to body, especially as opposed to their spirit" ("Corporeal")). In their 2017 study, Lauren Britton and Bryan Semaan assert that, "for most of recent history, the body has been interpreted as a natural, biological organism that is disconnected from rational thought and human action" (2508) and that is also separate from "technology" and other creatures or processes that it interacts with. It is frequently suggested, by grinders and by non-grinder researchers, that body hacking disrupts this classic notion of corporeality. My essay aims to parse out the different ways

that this could be so.

It is important to also discuss the idea of "identity." Some scholars see identity as primarily performance (DeCook 7), while others see it as more of an internally experienced concept of self. For the purposes of this paper, "identity" is applied broadly, encapsulating experienced self and social projections, as well as visual inferences and normative prescriptions imposed by others. Identity is connected to corporeality but should not be reduced to it.

When encountering questions of identity, it is appropriate to accept a significant degree of fluidity and uncertainty; for example, it is not necessarily visually obvious that someone is a "cyborg." Throughout my paper, I create categories of body conception and identify discrepancies within body hacker thought, but I aim to acknowledge fluidity and the right to self-determination of identity.

Literal and Figurative Cyborgs

To provide another important introductory note, I suggest that it is the deliberateness of the hack and the ethos of hacking culture that separate self-made "cyborgs" from people who have merely interacted with technology (i.e., all of us). I propose, then, that there are literal and figurative cyborgs; body hackers represent the former. There is a difference between the merging of the human (generally, spiritually, intellectually) with technology and the merging of the human body (literally, concretely) with technology. The concept of "cyborg" will be further explored in the section of my paper called "Body as 'Cyborg'".

Additionally, body hacking is not exactly a "blurring of the lines" between human and technology, since it is often obvious what is human flesh and what is electronic

implant. It is more of a forced marriage of the two. I intend for my explanations about the corporeality of body hacks to reinforce this idea.

Conceptions of Corporeality: Body as "Hacked"

The first conception of corporeality that I explore via the example of body hacking is that of the "hacked" body, or of the body as something to be "hacked." "Hacking" is embedded in the term "body hacking," so this point might seem obvious. However, a deeper dive into what "hacking" means and represents is revelatory.
Joseph Dewey defines hacking as "a term broadly used to describe strategies designed to exploit security vulnerabilities in [systems]" (par. 1). Jon Erickson, another theorist, characterizes hacking as more like creative problem-solving than exploitation, in that "the essence of hacking is finding unintended or overlooked uses for the laws and properties of a given situation and then applying them in new and inventive ways to solve a problem" (1). Body hackers, in this framework, see the current state of the body as a problem, requiring upgrades and inventive solutions that make use of biological systems themselves. The human corporeal and subjective experience is de-emphasized in this understanding, in favour of thinking about the body as already machine-like and ready to be hacked.

The language surrounding hacking can position machines and computers as superior to humans – for example, Dewey writes that hacker "culture" involves "the idea that computers are beautiful and beneficial" (par. 4), and it follows that hackers should want to become more like them. A similar ethos seems to be attached to body hacking. One standard body hack involves embedding an RFID microchip into one's hand to be able to open doors without touching them (O'Shea 1:57). Such attempts to improve the body through surgical interventions indicate the conception of body as a system that can and should be "hacked," aiming for computer-like everyday efficiency.

There is an important skill-testing and recreational element of hacking culture too; hackers do not always hack with a particular change-making or criminal agenda (Dewey par. 1). Likewise, this side of body hacking should not be ignored or understated. For casual body hackers, their practice is not about breaking down norms, transcending the human, or any other grand philosophical idea; it is experimentation with the body for the sake of the process and the personal experience. For example, researcher Stefan Greiner tried a magnetic finger implant to detect electric fields and receive phone calls through his finger; he described the novelty sensory experience as "fun" and "practical" (299). It is tempting to exaggerate the importance or depth of intention of body hacking practices, but it is simply not the case that all body hackers are making large-scale statements about corporeality.

Conceptions of Corporeality: Body as "Cyborg"

The second conception of corporeality I explore via the example of body hacking is that of the "cyborg" body. "Cyborg" is a loaded and heavily studied term, but it is nevertheless closely linked to body hacking. There is a subset of body hackers that choose to call themselves cyborgs.

Dictionary definitions portray cyborgs as mergers between human and machine, and popular culture sees them as humans with

robot parts (or vice versa). There are deeper metaphorical and political interpretations of the term too. For example, Donna Haraway's essay A Cyborg Manifesto is a cornerstone text for "cyborg feminism," a political theory that Julia DeCook describes as "the view […] not that women and femmes are robots, but rather that they are a conglomeration of the biologic and technologic" (2), in a political and philosophical sense. Though it is likely that some body hackers would resist being aligned with cyborg feminism, researchers studying them have made this alignment. For example, Britton and Semaan compare the practices and reported beliefs of one body hacking collective to Haraway's cyborg vision: "they manifest Haraway's cyborg through their motivations for design whereby they reject binaries, e.g. citizen/scientist, to move beyond what might be considered normal. That is, like Haraway's cyborg, they function as a disassembled and reassembled postmodern collective" (2507). Body hackers evade "normal" human binaries; Haraway's criticism of traditional feminism and promotion of a "cyborg" approach take us in a similar theoretical direction.

Haraway also writes that "the relation between organism and machine has been a border war" (457), which suggests that the "cyborg" (the merging of machine and human, or of socio-technological systems and human) was not a state achieved painlessly. Seeing the body as the site of a "border war" between technology and biology is another corporeal conception I want to draw out, as a subset of "body as cyborg." The degree to which grinders conceive of themselves as "going to war" on their bodies likely varies person-to-person. However, it is a relevant theory that may help to explain why "average" people (non-grinders) can have such strong, often-negative reactions to the presence of visible body hacks in public.

With this context in mind, I want to describe the "cyborg" as a specific iteration of the "hacked" body. One notable activist group proposing such a conception is an organization run by European body hackers Moon Ribas and Neil Harbisson called The Cyborg Foundation. The organization encourages people to "design yourself!" and envisions the human body as a malleable tool and site for personal identity projects. Specifically, these are projects aiming to expand their perceptive capacities and to creatively integrate their bodies with technology ("Design Yourself"). When humans merge their bodies with technological devices to gain extra, atypical abilities, they can become "cyborgs," in this framework.

Furthermore, The Cyborg Foundation sees "cyborg" bodies as a currently marginalized subset of the global population of "people with non-human identities" that the Foundation wants to "give voice to" ("Cyborg Foundation"). As Ellen Pearlman stresses in an article about The Cyborg Foundation and associated movements, "Currently, there are no legal protections for cyborgs" (89). Testimonies from self-proclaimed cyborgs, particularly those with highly visible physical interventions and body hacks, describe occasional violence directed at them from strangers in public. For example, Neil Harbisson has a functional antenna fused to his skull; he describes how someone on the bus with him, confused and offended, once tried to rip it off (Adams). To attempt to fill the legal gap and to raise awareness about discrimination against modified or cyborg bodies, the Cyborg Foundation has created "The Cyborg Bill of Rights." A sample item on the bill reads:

"a person shall enjoy the sanctity of bodily integrity and be free from unnecessary search, seizure, suspension or interruption of function, detachment, dismantling, or disassembly without due process" ("Cyborg Foundation"). The existence of The Cyborg Bill of Rights indicates the perceived legitimacy of "cyborg" as an identity group, for which qualification is corporeal.

Cyborg bodies seem to counter norms and depart from humanness somewhat, but their identity politics position them simultaneously as "just" another group of people in society. In particular, these cyborgs are attentive to identity-building and advocate for social acceptance among "natural people" as a marginalized group. The emphasis is not on transcending corporeality, at least; perhaps it is on transcending "humanness" instead.

In the Cyborg Foundation's conception (which is a prominent and frequently cited one), cyborgs are primarily integrating their bodies with technology that "allows you to feel things" ("Design Yourself"), which suggests that sensory enhancement might a primary goal for a cyborg's hacking practice. For example, Moon Ribas' "seismic sense" implants allow her to feel earthquakes worldwide through the soles of her feet and therefore access "perceptions that are beyond usual human perception" (Ribas qtd. in Godwin). To Ribas, as opposed to living in any sort of virtual reality, becoming cyborg via sensory enhancement is "more about revealing a reality that already exists" (Ribas qtd. in Godwin). Sensory enhancement augments the experience of being alive in a physical body and emphasizes corporeality, which is true regardless of whether the hacker calls their body "human" or "cyborg."

Conceptions of Corporeality: Body as "Obsolete"

In contrast to extra-sensing "cyborg" bodies, the third framework I explore is one wherein corporeality is de-emphasized in favour of seeing the body as already "obsolete" in comparison to computers (Stelarc qtd. in Farnell 140) and worthy of transcendence and extension, and wherein body hacking initiatives are a first step. Body hackers in this group may call themselves "cyborgs" too, but they are not necessarily associated with the popular "design yourself!" cyborg-identity movement I have identified above.

Academic and body hacker Stelarc has articulated his philosophical alignment with this stance. In an interview with Ross Farnell, Stelarc describes how,

When technology stretches the skin [and] pierces the body, the skin in effect is erased as a significant Foucauldian site for inscription of the social and of the gendered. It's no longer the boundary of the container of the 'self', and skin is no longer the beginning of the world. […] To be posthuman means to take up a strategy where one needs to shed one's skin and consider other more deeper and more complex interfaces and inter-connections with the technologies that we've generated. (131)

Stelarc's body hacking projects are strikingly indicative of a move away from bodily autonomy and towards relationality or even the separation of consciousness from body. For example, his "Internet Upload project" allowed other people to control the motions of his limbs remotely via internet-connected electrodes, representing a "body with a multiplicity of agents" (Stelarc qtd. in Farnell 135). The ear-like organ grown from stem cells on his arm has an embedded, Wifi-connected microphone, allowing others

to listen in on his surroundings constantly (Wainwright). Such body hacks do away with the bounds of individual personhood in a way that is meaningfully different from "design yourself" cyborgism. I align this type of body hacking with transcendence (or an explicit moving-beyond) of the human body.

Tim Cannon, a Grindhouse Wetware-affiliated body hacker, represents another example of corporeal extension or attempted transcendence. Cannon has an internal biometric tracker, the Circadia 1.0, implanted in his arm; it transmits data about his blood pressure, heartrate, etc., to his phone wirelessly. Circadia is also connected to Cannon's house thermostat, which adjusts itself according to input from the embedded device so that the house's atmosphere always automatically best suits Cannon's body temperature (Wainwright). In an interview on Ryan O'Shea's podcast Future Grind, Cannon describes how, because of the connectivity between his implant and thermostat, "My house is actually part of my regulation system. It's part of my body, at that point. I become at least partly my house." He describes this hack and its outcome as "practical transhumanism" at work (20:04-21:01). In this way, Cannon conceives of his body as less bounded and more relational than a traditional human one; "practical transhumanism," in this case, can be understood as the application of technology to one's body to extend or distance oneself from a limited human condition.

However, there is an interesting contradiction within Cannon's position on corporeality. Later in the interview with O'Shea, he says that, by body hacking, "We're going to still be human. We're going to be more human (16:10-16:14). Cannon and O'Shea then discuss how we're "living in the best time in history" (18:07), in terms of global crime and violence being "at an all-time low" (18:12) and information being increasingly accessible online. They conclude that it is a good time to be human, and that body hacking's ability to improve bodies and increase convenience enables us to live better as humans. Tim Cannon's two statements – "I become at least partly my house" and "We're going to be more human" – are somewhat contradictory. The first aligns with what I would call transcending the current, traditional boundaries of the human, and the second involves becoming "more human" within our bodies. These are not exactly opposite conceptions of corporeality, but they do not coexist easily. Perhaps body hacking is a unique method to achieve both states (humanness and beyond-humanness) simultaneously; or perhaps there is simply great enough variety within body hacking that both conceptions of the body could feasibly arise. On the other hand, it is possible that body hackers are trying to claim both outcomes for themselves – upkeep of the human physical condition, and steps towards transcending it – out of over-confidence or lack of clarity.

Those interested in transcending the human condition identify the prevailing notion of the "sanctity" of the body as harmful and limiting to their efforts. The idea of bodily sanctity, as Cannon explains, causes people to "recoil against" prosthetic limbs, when they need not and should not recoil since prosthetics could be improvements on our current limbs (O'Shea 9:27). Barbara Becker, in her article "Cyborgs, Agents, and Transhumanists," criticizes the position held by Cannon, suggesting that "current discourses of technoscience" harmfully deny materiality and the value of embodiment (361). More specifically, Becker argues that

biological interventions like body hacking exemplify "the wish to control or avoid the unpredictable and unconscious dimensions of human existence": the wish to see matter as a "code" (as I explained earlier with the conception of body as "hackable") and to see materiality as "passive" (361). Becker's view – that having a human body and appreciating its status as an active organism is worthwhile in its own right – is more closely aligned with the mindset of sensory enhancement body hackers. If there is not a sanctity to the body (such language might, after all, be used to dangerously essentialize or stigmatize) there is still likely a great deal of value in it.

Finally, it must be recognized that even though some body hacking aims to transcend corporeality, it has not done so yet. "Uploading" of the human consciousness has not been realized, and body hacking is still so rudimentary that any claims to dramatically blur the lines between humans and other things, like machines or one's surroundings, are probably exaggerated.

Conceptions of Corporeality: Body as "Canvas"

The final important conception of body raised by body hacking is that of the body as a site for refuting norms for physical appearance. One grinder described the body is a "blank canvas" upon which norm-challenging design can be enacted (Britton & Semaan 2506). This conception of body explicitly appreciates the body's potential, and these body hacks emphasize corporeality. Most body hackers (especially those with visible hacks) challenge norms incidentally, and they understand and appreciate that they are doing so. Researchers note self-expression and binary breaking as undercurrents to body hacking generally too; Bárbara Duarte

identifies "assertion of bodily self-ownership" as the "most recurrent issue" concerning body hackers (281). Some see bodies more specifically as sites of colonisation (e.g., in that they are pressured to conform to western binaries and norms for appearance) and see body hacking as a "decolonial" statement (Olivares 289). However, this colonial/decolonial framework does not seem to be at all the dominant strain of discourse about body hacking.

Related to body hacking as a refusal of norms is the idea of "critical design," described by Britton and Semaan as "a design practice where those engaging in design challenge the status quo" (2502). For body hackers, the body becomes their site of design. One grinder collective member is quoted saying "Why don't we just treat bodies like a, you know, blank canvas… change it if you want, why not?" (Britton & Semaan 2506). A similar belief is reflected in grinders' conception of the body as something that should be altered on their own terms and in their own, non-institutional spaces. Critical design practices "typically occur in hacker or maker spaces outside of formal institutions" (Britton & Semaan 2502), and some body hackers see experimentation and interference with the body in non-sanctioned spaces to be not just logistically necessary, but politically meaningful.

To return to the overarching question of corporeal acceptance and enhancement versus attempted corporeal transcendence, the conception of body as a site of creative, radical design seems corporeally grounded in its recognition of the body's potential. Seeing the body as a canvas for creative design and self-assertion (using technology and embedded electronics, in body hacking's case) is quite different from seeing the body

as deficient or "obsolete."

Conclusion

Many of the body hacking ideologies I present in this paper conceive of the body as a site of great potential; others, though, see it as defective or obsolete. Grinders may see their body or others' bodies as "hacked," or as "cyborg," or as "canvas" (or several of these conceptions simultaneously!). Many grinders emphasize physical sensations and attempt to access them; for example, in what is considered a gateway body hack, a magnetic finger implant enables the wearer to feel electromagnetic fields. A limited but outspoken number of body hackers prefer to imagine their hacks as leaving behind or transcending "human" corporeal experience almost completely.

To conclude, I want to reflect on how much impact body hacking and associated conceptions of corporeality really have. Body hackers do not (yet) have large-scale influence and are very limited in number; claims that body hackers are helping society at large to rethink or change the human corporeal condition may be exaggerated. Body hackers tend to believe themselves to be avant-garde; they predict that, someday, body hacking will become mainstream and significant (like tattooing and piercing already have in Western culture) (Park 304). As Mike Featherstone writes, "[Body modification practices] directly and indirectly help to modify our everyday common–sense understandings of how bodies work" (2). I am not convinced that body hacking, as a subset of body modification, has achieved such influence yet. However, it is still an interesting set of case studies in conceptions of corporeality and the human-machine interface.

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Photo credits: Tim Cannon (within Body-hackers: the people who turn themselves into cyborgs | Art and design | The Guardian).
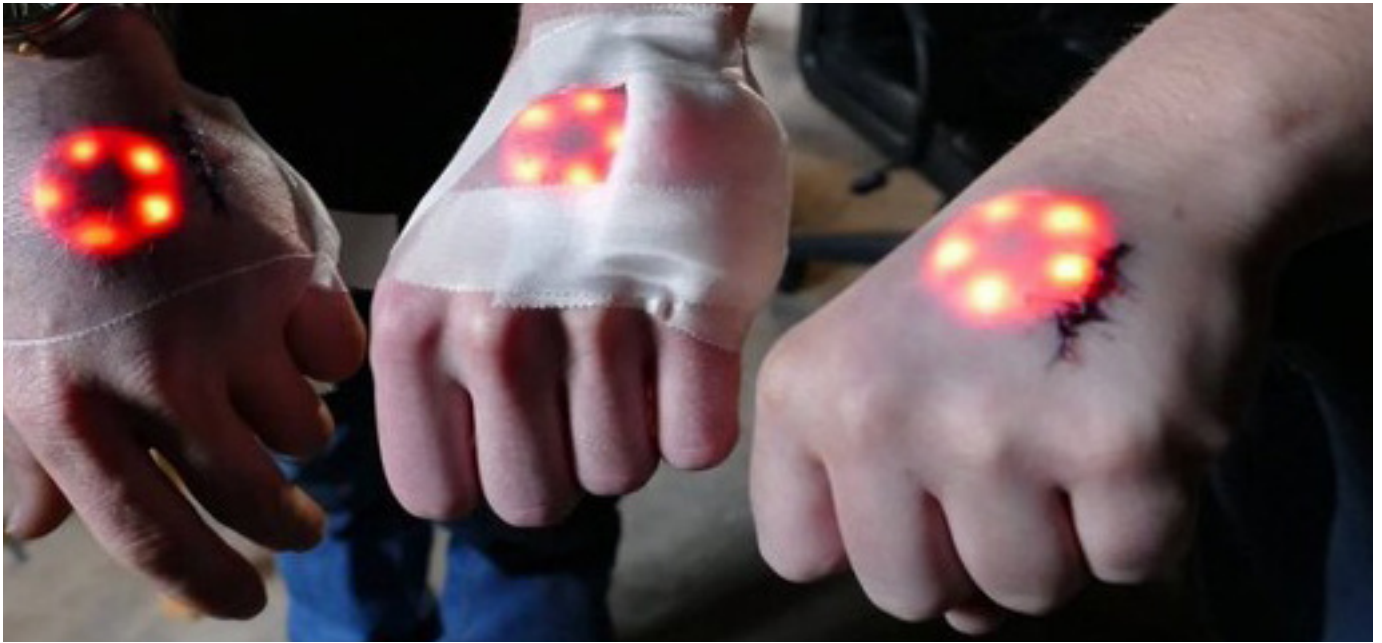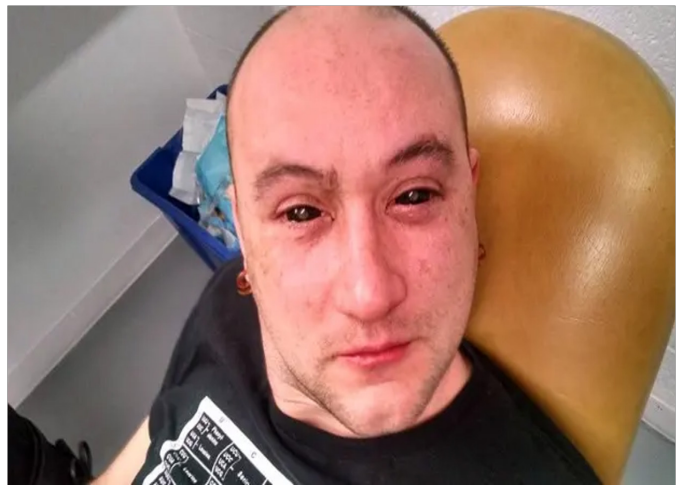
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