

# THE FOOLSCAP

## *ESCAPE & RESISTANCE*

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# MASTHEAD

## EDITORS

MEGAN BREARLEY

OANA CALIN

AMANDA CHEUNG

DRISHTI JALAN

LOIS LEE

TSITSI MACHERERA

MARGARET NG

# Dear Readers,

We created this year's journal under stranger circumstances than usual. However, despite pandemic-related challenges, The Foolscape team remained fortunate enough to work with talented contributors. I begin this letter by thanking them for their time and efforts under trying circumstances. I would also like to thank the editorial team, whose diligent and dedicated work made this edition possible.

The theme of this year's journal is escape and resistance. When deciding on a theme, we wanted to emphasize the complex and often paradoxical role media occupies in our lives. We use media as a means of understanding and participating in the world. To a similar extent, the messages we receive through our media can sometimes undermine our's and other's experiences and visions for the future. This year's contributors explore this tension.

In addition to papers, this year's edition contains a bonus section dedicated to non-scholarly pieces. We thank our contributors once again for offering their creative work to the journal.

We hope you enjoy reading!

Kind Regards,  
Tsitsi Macherera  
Editor-in-Chief, The Foolscape (2020-2021)

# How Dystopian Fiction Encourages Political Activism for Young Adult Readers

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*Lois Lee*

Through recent studies on civic responsibility among teenagers and young adults, there has been an overwhelming misconception that younger generations are politically apathetic (Ames 4). American reports have shown that the youngest voters are the least likely to show up to voting booths during presidential elections and many have claimed they would even sell their right to vote (4). Additionally, there has been criticism of young people's civic literacy, as incomplete surveys and low-test scores imply that this generation lacks knowledge and interest in political affairs (5). Despite what statistics have shown, the reading preferences of young adults, particularly dystopian fiction, could be a contradiction to these numbers.

Dystopian novels have become a massive cultural phenomenon among young adult audiences, especially in the face of current political events. After the 2016 American federal election and the inauguration of President Donald Trump, classic dystopian texts such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* rapidly climbed the bestseller lists (Neoman). The recent popularity spike in dystopian literature suggests that the genre presents topics that are relevant and intriguing to today's youth. The futuristic depictions in these texts tend to address and mimic many of the issues we see in the real world — from rapid technological advances to social injustices.

This essay argues that dystopian novels challenge the notion that young adults are apathetic about political affairs and civic duties. Rather, adolescents are confiding in the dystopian genre because it mirrors and explains the political climate they witness.. This will be investigated through the scope of renowned best-seller, Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*. *The Hunger Games* depicts a futuristic North America in which twelve boys and twelve girls are selected from a pool of names to participate in a nationally televised competition that forces them to fight each other to the death. This essay will explore how dystopian novels guide young adult readers through the following: the portrayal of empowering young characters that readers can empathize with and relate to, themes and storylines that draw parallels to real-life situations, and an underlying moral that inspires the youth to become politically conscious.

Dystopian fiction influences readers' perception of political events and institutions by putting characters that are like them in age, life situation or some other relatable factor into dystopian settings. Dystopian novels present the concept of a *similarity bias*, which is the idea that someone is more likely to empathize with people who are more like themselves, rather than with people who are different from them (Mallan 21-22). The characters in young adult (YA) dystopian fiction almost always fall into the same age group as the readers, and therefore are bound to experience similar personal challenges (22). In this sense, the idea of the *bildungsroman*—a narrative that typically follows a child's journey from naivety to maturity—also comes into play (Wang 84). Reading these novels can compensate for an adolescent's naivety, as readers begin to interpret texts based on their own level of understanding and personal experiences (83-84). This can exemplify the preliminary stages of transitioning into adulthood, as readers are exposed to issues that they will eventually encounter in their daily lives and are able to develop a more rational sense of judgement (85). By witnessing young characters live through certain conflicts or encounter specific kinds of people, readers begin to identify these things outside of the world of the novel and develop their own solutions and perspectives.

For instance, Mallan describes dystopian YA novels as “tales of resilience” in which young protagonists can empathize with others, build well-rounded relationships, and stand their ground to overcome political adversaries that they face (23). In the context of *The Hunger Games*, the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen represents this kind of resilience (22). Before the games, Katniss was from the poorest district in the nation and willingly became the breadwinner for her family by illegally hunting in the meadows (22). Despite her financial struggles and the government's neglect, Katniss adapted to a society in which she is marginalized (22). During the actual Games, Katniss refuses to be tied down by the government's manipulative tactics and exploitative power by forming alliances with other tributes and appealing to the nation-wide audience of the Games to increase her chances of survival (23). Katniss' empathy towards her starving family and other desperate tributes helps her develop the intimate relationships that help her survive. She sets an example for young adults to be wary of the inequalities that governments help create, but also reassures them that these struggles can be overcome.

Dystopian novels strive to explicitly highlight political realities through a fictional lens by encouraging readers to speculate stories beyond the parameters of the text and apply them to their own political environment. In the past, dystopian texts have presented stories in a more

speculative manner but have recently started to make direct commentaries on political and social matters (Seeger and Davison-Vecchione 61). Rising concerns over authoritarianism and mass surveillance (in light of technological advancements and the dominance of digital platforms) have been, and continue to be, the focus of many political debates (61). These concerns are presented through the method of extrapolative dystopia (55). Extrapolative dystopia is when a text takes issues that are already prevalent in society and showcases them through imaginative aspects of literature to create images of what real, future affairs could look like (55).

Many dystopian states have figuratively used the concept of the panopticon (Atchinson and Shames 65). The principle of the panopticon is the uncertainty of where and when someone is being watched, but the certainty that if they are caught disobeying, there will be consequences (65). This is showcased through corporal punishment in *The Hunger Games*, when Katniss witnesses a girl hiding and then fleeing for her life in the woods, moments before she is caught by the government and taken away in a hovercraft (Collins 82). Katniss eventually encounters her again to see that she has become an avox—someone who has had their tongue cut off because they have committed a crime (77). Although some of the scenarios presented in dystopian texts are exaggerated, exposure to these extremes allow readers to find similarities and differences between the society in the novel and the society that they live in (Mallan 16). In particular, if the reader were to draw out dangerous similarities between the text and real life, such as the oppressive nature of authoritarian states, they can begin to question how the outcomes in the text can reflect their own reality.

Lastly, dystopian texts carry an intended moral or purpose to encourage young people to become more involved with the world outside of fiction. The most effective way of achieving this is by using fictional stories to shift and shape adolescents' political attitudes (Jones and Paris 969). Writers will use the tactic of narrative persuasion, which is a way of influencing attitudes through emotional development and engagement (972). Narratives are said to be an effective way for people to remember and understand information, become persuaded by said information, and become more driven to act (971). This kind of narrative method is important because media scholars have argued that young readers feel disconnected from conventional sources of information such as news broadcasts (Ames 5). Through various means of research and interviews, it was revealed that many young adults do not believe that their generation has a voice in politics, and therefore accept the fact that they go unheard (5). But with the revival of

dystopian fiction and in the age of digital media, there are numerous ways in which youth can take part in political matters. Dystopian novels both mirror and criticize the society that the reader lives in, forcing readers to confront their reality amid their attempts to escape from it (6). Readers confront the social and political issues that are presented in the books they read, and they do so through online discourse. Social media has become a place where all demographics can post their own commentaries on current matters, criticize traditional media coverage, and keep up to date with social movements and protests (6). Despite being a platform for all age groups, as young people continue to overpopulate these sites, the internet is bound to be a place where they can be fully heard.

Moreover, dystopian fiction takes a step beyond political discussions and can be used in the context of “literature-inspired activism” (Hentges). The American Federation of Labour and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) has taken inspiration from ideas and symbols in *The Hunger Games* to create the “We Are the Districts Campaign,” which brings awareness to poverty and social injustices (Hentges). The dystopian series has also inspired the “Girls on Fire Leaders” camp in Kenya, which is a non-profit organization that provides vulnerable girls with opportunities to help their community and motivate them to create changes within these communities (Hentges). This showcases how even though dystopian literature tends to focus on corruption and oppression, it can also communicate empowering messages. Readers can be motivated to learn about what is bad in society, as well as try to turn it into something good.

Dystopian YA novels are not just a form of entertainment for its younger audience. They can also be used in an educational context that allows readers to see the injustices and inequalities in their local communities, and on a more national or global scale. Readers can see themselves in the shoes of struggling characters and can situate themselves in the ambivalent conflicts of these other worlds. Although these texts play on many of this generation’s fears and anxieties, there is still a sense of hope and empowerment that can be derived from these stories.

Unlike other genres, dystopian texts often do not have a definitive solution to the story and presents the future as blurry and uncertain (Mallan 17). Authors of these novels will take this approach “as having a respect for the capacity of its readership to judge for themselves the potential outcome” (17). In other words, although young adults are often perceived to be apathetic about politics and civil engagement, their readerly habits suggest differently as they continue to actively address the issues presented in these novels. Younger generations are what



will impact the future, and by closely studying these alternative societies, they are able to apply these stories to a real-world context.

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# **Is Netflix Dangerous to the Environment? How Our Video Streaming Use Is Making the Internet Unsustainable**

*Our excessive streaming practices have environmental repercussions. It is time to acknowledge how our data consumption is contributing to climate change and take action as responsible web citizens.*

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***Sarah Williams***

## **Current Patterns of Media Consumption**

There has been a massive cultural shift in media consumption. Generation Z and Millennials are credited with bringing about the death of cable television despite consuming enormous amounts of video content (Desjardins). Today's experiences of 'television' are associated with immediacy, streaming, and binge-watching, where, on a weekly basis, an average of five hours of entertainment are consumed in a single setting (Spangler). We often choose to finish tv-series on Netflix or Hulu in one sitting, play virtual reality games regularly, leave our cameras on for hours-long Zoom classes, and download smartphone apps without being fully aware of the implications. However, it is vital that users develop a comprehensive understanding of the technologies they interact with so that their actions reflect their values. For instance, those who consider sustainability important should develop practices that enhance global health and ecological balance. Individuals who value responsibility and community care - in the face of machine values, such as urgency and individualism - should act in accordance with their beliefs, instead of further embedding themselves in technologies that function in opposition to them. The director of The Green Web Foundation describes this unconscious practice of unsustainability: "Every single time I speak to people who work in tech, people seem to be astonished by the fact that servers run on electricity and electricity comes often from fossil fuels." (Stone).

## **The Significance of Web Literacy**

The main issue being addressed when looking at the carbon footprint of video streaming is web literacy. That is, the deeper understanding of how the internet enables us to become responsible participants of the digital world. Not only should we maintain a comprehensive understanding of the digital world and its effects on society, but more importantly exercise our responsibility to demand change where it is necessary (Mozilla Foundation 7-8). Becoming

informed about the environmental degradation caused by the vast amount of data that streaming requires, raising awareness of the issue, and then taking action to address it cultivates digital citizenship (“Internet Health”). A healthy internet is a sustainable one. Cultivating digital literacy will push users to reimagine how we interact with and within the digital environment in the face of climate change and the internet’s vulnerability.

Given that the aim of this paper is to assess the impact of video streaming, and our potential roles in perpetuating and preventing the environmental degradation that it brings about, it is approached from a media ethics perspective with specific emphasis on web literacy and its implications for sustainability. What makes an action ethical, in this paper, can be considered as those actions that allow us to build a healthy digital self and media ecology. Taking actions according to ethical considerations warrants a media ecosystem that puts people first - before capital - and helps us better understand how emerging technologies shape how individuals interact with society and their environment.

### **The Impact of Internet Usage on the Environment**

It is easy for one to think of the internet as a transcendental and intangible network. But collectively, the consequence of streaming videos is huge: nearly 4% of all carbon dioxide emissions can be attributed to global data transfer and the infrastructure needed to facilitate it, with the actual use of that infrastructure - of which 60% is online video, including film and serial type contents, pornographic content, ‘tubes,’ (Efoui-Hess 8-10) and those hosted by social networks consuming 10% points more electricity (Welle). The internet is not merely living on the screen of your phone or laptop, it is powered by server farms and cooling equipment that run all the time, generating a hefty carbon footprint (Trueman).

### **Implication 1: Video Streaming Services Are Designed to Encourage Excessive Consumption**

Online video streaming technologies are designed to create engagement with users on an everyday basis, thus saturating the day-to-day internet with data. A recent study on Netflix and binge-watching practices shows how the company uses data-intensive techniques to maximize the length of time a user spends on the platform. Netflix uses ‘binge-watching’ as its main marketing strategy, creating a user experience around recommendation, attention, and attachment

(Pilipets 1). The subscription-based model of Netflix tells the user how they are meant to consume content. When the platform releases shows in seasons, it allows for the devouring of massive amounts of content in a matter of days. For instance, 10% of viewers watched all fifteen episodes of the 2013 season of *Arrested Development* within a day upon its release (Matrix 119). Such practices demand a high amount of energy. Furthermore, multiple affordances of the platform ensure user attention. This includes the ability to skip the introduction of shows, auto-play, and using algorithms to make show suggestions that reflect your viewing taste and interests. As we move into 2030, which the United Nations has designated the global deadline for climate action (Kearns) we must ask ourselves if it is truly okay that features designed to draw users in, in this attention economy, use so much global energy.

### **Implication 2: Heavy Data Consumption Cannot Be Truly Sustainable**

Companies are turning to renewable energy sources to lessen their environmental impact. However, a more efficient production of data will only increase demand, bringing us to face the issue of sustainability once again (ibid). This describes the rebound effect:

“The increased efficiency will result in a reduction in price of the associated service, and therefore increased use because it is cheaper... This would manifest as increased use of YouTube, particularly over the mobile network, because the reduced data required would mean that the data cost has been reduced... The ‘reductions’ we have discussed would simply result in a decrease in the rate of growth of energy use and associated emissions, not an absolute reduction.” (Preist et al. 397).

This shows that the Greenhouse Gas Emissions reporting standards of technology companies need to be altered to provide a clearer understanding of the delivery and use of data in streaming to the public, and to account for this energy use. Moving forward, it would be helpful if companies published sustainability reports in straightforward, user-friendly language for the public to make digital literacy a less complicated endeavor.

### **Difficulties in Confronting Climate Change**

Climate change is a severe and fundamentally ethical challenge that forces us to confront tough questions as individual moral agents and users of technology. The decisions involved are value judgments that juggle uncertainties and risks (Gardiner “Ethics and Global Climate” 554-556). With the relationship between users and their data use being central to the environmental impact of the internet, we must choose between reevaluating our relationship with

data consumption or continuing to consume data in an unsustainable fashion. If we do not make such choices soon, we face the threat of tyranny of the contemporary, wherein earlier generations inflict catastrophic costs on future generations in favor of enjoying the ‘moderate benefits’ of the present (Gardiner “Why Climate Change”). However, there is no denying that rapid change in our use of technology would be disruptive to the day-to-day routines of people, and policies that demand such disruption would be potentially unjust and harmful. As responsible users of technology, we must decide the point at which the severity of the risks we are imposing to future generations outweighs benefits from current technology use.

### **Potential Future Impacts if the Issue Continues**

Our internet is currently unsustainable, and therefore not healthy. Examining the energy consumption of streaming services offers a perspective of the bigger picture: the internet is inextricably linked to the climate crisis. It works as a force of environmental devastation, with the construction and operation of data centers requiring massive amounts of energy. If we continue our tremendous consumption of online content, the internet is expected to generate about 20% of the world’s carbon emissions by 2030 (Lozano).

Our lives have been gradually built - and increasingly revolve - around data streams from centers which are regarded as “massive energy hogs” (Daigle). These centers house stacks of servers that warm during heavy usage and must then be cooled to avoid overheating. The growing public interest in efficient energy use and the cloud’s environmental impact has pressured companies into acting more sustainably. There is now a greater emphasis on cloud providers to show their efficiency. Since Greenpeace started reporting in 2010, more than 20 of the largest companies have established public commitments to power their data centers with 100% renewable energy (Saran). Additionally, while Netflix saw an 84% jump in its energy consumption in 2019 (it has doubled to 451,000 megawatt-hours), the company’s 2019 Environmental, Social and Governance report disclosed, “that 100% of its estimated direct and indirect non-renewable power use was matched with renewable energy certificates and carbon offsets in 2019” (Kearns). While renewable energy is more healthier than coal, a planet with finite raw materials cannot sustain increases in data demands. The consumption of content is already increasing at such an exponential rate that they will likely outweigh any gains in efficiency of energy use (Efoui-Hess). The data-center industry and our excessive streaming

habits demonstrate that our online activities have massive energy consequences that pose ethical questions of action and responsibility.

### **Putting Ethics into Action with Sustainable Development Goals**

As streaming videos online impact climate change in a fundamental way, the case requires a solution that is an actualization of ethical principles. This is where the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals "the commitment to ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all," ("*Goal 7.: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*") and "taking urgent action to combat climate change." ("*Goal 13.: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*") allow us to put ethics into action. If users are educated on the grossly unsustainable consumption of energy that is required for video streaming, they are more likely to take individual action and pressure technological companies into better practices and transparency.

Furthermore, individual awareness of the environmental repercussions of excessive streaming practices enables collective action. While the need for sustainable development poses complex challenges due to the interconnected economic, sociocultural, and environmental components of energy and climate change, they also present "unique leadership and research opportunities for higher education." (Hart et al.1). Solutions-oriented sustainability initiatives that mobilize diverse resources and cross-sector collaborations strengthen the capacity for problem-solving. Even on a broader level, educational campaigns that target those especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change - whether that be students who are expecting to live another fifty-plus years, those with ocean-front properties, or victims of environmental racism - can promote ownership of the issue and encourage mobilization (McAdam 203). The more people cognizant of the existing systems of unsustainable production and consumption patterns - especially the energy demands of data storage, data streaming, and data management - the larger their impact when mobilizing as a collective to demand changes to FANGAM's (Facebook, Apple, Netflix, Google, Amazon, and Microsoft) means of production.

A shift in behavior, combined with more innovative ways to generate energy, may aid Canada in meeting its Paris Agreement obligations (Zarnett). The agreement itself is mentioned in the Goal 13 report, where expectations of parties to maintain their contributions to the agreement as well as revise and create more ambitious targets is highlighted. As both individuals

and technological institutions have the capacity to act in ways that support these goals, it is their ethical imperative to do so.

### **What Can We Do Moving Forward?**

Users need digital literacy skills to understand how their online actions affect the world around them. We must be fully aware of how new and existing technologies impact the environment. Applying a virtue ethics perspective to this case underscores its importance: citizens must learn how to browse the internet, and foster their awareness, abilities, and wisdom to ensure human flourishing. We can foster awareness by having websites provide us with our energy consumption information. We can also stop glorifying ‘binging’ by reflecting on our actions. Users should think more critically about their data consumption and try where possible to be responsible digital citizens.

This is not meant to encourage users to boycott internet services altogether. Instead, we can make small changes that collectively have a positive impact. A study done by Harvard Law School’s energy manager shows that turning down the screen brightness from 100% to 70% on devices used for streaming can reduce total energy consumption by 20% (Kearns). Another study showed that streaming Netflix on medium quality instead of high definition could save over 75% of carbon and water used by data processing centers (Elegant).

I am mindful that this approach may emphasize the role and responsibilities of everyday consumers more than institutions. However, the objective of this analysis has been to highlight the agency of everyday actors. The solutions to the problems that contribute to climate change should not be tackled exclusively by companies and agents that benefit from our excessive streaming and data consumption habits. To effectively address climate crises, collective action by everyday people is necessary.

There are many working parts in the internet of things: individual internet users, platforms that are video streaming based, data centers, and economic institutions anchored by money made from capturing our attention. A more radical - and desirable - solution would be to decentralize the internet. Decentralization is one of the focuses of Mozilla’s Internet Health report, which shows how intertwined issues of the internet can be. A decentralised internet would look like: collaborative ownership, peer-to-peer data sharing, communication between users without mediated connection, and content that lives in multiple places. It would be healthier for



the environment, and more sustainable economically and socially. Slowing the streaming speed of videos and breaking down large and power-hungry data centers into smaller and more localized parts uses less energy. Doing so also breaks up the consolidation of power from companies that have outsized control over the internet, bringing in better data security, privacy, fair competition, and equal opportunities for growth among users. A heterogeneous internet places a more equal responsibility on all actors involved.

### **Conclusion and Research Questions**

To change the way data is consumed, we must educate users on the environmental effects of video streaming technologies. It is the ethical imperative of both individuals and larger institutions to change our approach to streaming services in face of the rapid rise of data consumption. An additional approach to this issue calls for the decentralization of the internet. I believe that while radical, this is the best solution, as such a massive collective action issue requires all actors to recognize their duty to future generations. However, as the internet has steadily transformed into an “ecosystem of large, corporate-controlled mega-platforms which intermediate speech online,” (Barabas et al. 1) it could be lucrative to consider creating pre-conditions, or smaller-scale steps, to work towards beforehand. A successful and smooth-running decentralized web may simply start with a shift in how we think about the internet. Instead of viewing the internet as an infinite and abstract resource, we should change our framing, and consider it finite. As the growing awareness of climate change - and its tangible effects on the Earth - has led companies to become increasingly careful in their use of finite resources, including the internet in this category has the potential to make people think twice about the ecological footprint of the web.

The movement to make the internet more environmentally friendly serves to make it less toxic, wasteful, and therefore, healthier. Some further questions to consider are: (I) Should we treat tech giants such as Google and Amazon the same as companies with smaller data infrastructures when creating policy that aims to reduce the carbon footprint caused by being online? (II) How may climate change make internet access even more unequal? (III) What type of process can we implement that ensures users are aware of the physical effect of their online actions?

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## Genesis Targets Young Elites With New Brand Identity

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*Ivy Tianyu Zhang*

The Genesis commercial at the 2020 Super Bowl features celebrity supercouple Chrissy Teigen and John Legend throwing a going-away party. The party is not for a friend or family member who is fleeing to a new city or moving to the suburbs. Instead, it is to say goodbye to “old luxury”. The first half of the advertisement features Teigen making a toast and jokingly insulting several ill-fated victims for their peculiar actions and personas. Teigen concludes her spiel with a final toast, “To old luxury: You had a good run but now it’s time to zhuzh you up a little bit ... I give you young luxury” (“Going”). Soon after, the advertisement presents the Genesis GV80 model and the couple appears to be riding in the SUV. The 2020 Super Bowl Genesis commercial deploys luxurious elements, left-leaning values, and the concept of obsolescence to appeal to progressive, young, upper-middle-class and upper-class adults.

Upon initial viewing, the toast given by Teigen seems irrelevant to the message of the advertisement. However, the party settings and the characters being called out by Teigen embeds an idea of opulence for the viewer before revealing that the going-away party is for “old luxury.” The opening scene of the advertisement flaunts a lavish mansion with an enormous giraffe statue in the dooryard. In “Conspicuous Consumption”, Gaynor Bagnall explains how upper-class individuals spend hefty amounts on exclusive and “highly visible commodities” that are not necessarily pragmatic to differentiate themselves from other social classes (232). The ostentatious party setting and giraffe statue are highly visible commodities that Genesis is using to associate themselves with affluent audiences. Undoubtedly, the party guests are all decked out in swanky outfits. Two of the ill-fated victims of Teigen’s toast emphasize the message of conspicuous consumption; one for creating his persona based upon his dramatic suit and the other for her overdone plastic surgery. Both of these characters are participants of the “extravagant consumption of resources”, one for wearing conspicuous gala attire and the other for undergoing countless costly plastic surgeries (Bagnall 232).

Although the commercial’s class representation only includes upper-class individuals, the commercial successfully depicts a racially diverse cast and appeals to left-leaning audiences. Many supposedly racially inclusive advertisements practice tokenism by casting one token person of colour while placing white characters in the foreground (Frith and Mueller 110-111).

This Genesis commercial is well executed in terms of race by recruiting multi-racial protagonists and a diverse cast of party attendees. Circling back to Teigen's toast, the third ill-fated victim is a white woman dressed in Indian traditional clothing and is criticized for thinking she is spiritual after her one-time visit to Asia. The advertisement addresses the issue of cultural appropriation instead of leveraging such cultural signifiers that are extremely identifiable and routinely exploited as otherness. Otherness is a marketing strategy deployed to captivate white audiences by providing a fantasy of interacting with dehumanized and marginalized cultures as members of the dominant culture (hooks 26). In addition to the recruitment of a diverse cast, the supercouple Teigen and Legend have been known as political activists who are vocal about defunding the police and critical towards Donald Trump (Brown). New brand images are generated when companies cast public figures with recognizable personas and notable actions. By hiring left-leaning activists such as Teigen and Legend, Genesis attempts to appeal to individuals with liberal ideologies.

The advertisement portrays the concept of obsolescence when the idea of old luxury is applauded, followed by an immediate urge to upgrade to young luxury. More specifically, technological obsolescence is an effective tool for automobile companies to market newer models (Strasser 385). This marketing strategy is popular amongst advertisers and advertising agencies to stimulate consumers to purchase the latest, trendiest, and most cutting-edge products by providing them with more options (Strasser 386). By branding the GV80 model as the young luxury, Genesis advocates consumers with high purchasing power to call it quits with the outdated old luxury. When Teigen introduces young luxury in her final toast, the scene switches to an older woman becoming visibly upset, which is ironic because the Youtube description states that "After all, young isn't an age, it's a mindset". Although they attempt to deny it, Genesis aims to appeal to younger and early middle age consumers as opposed to elders. This scene is intended to sell the newness and age-related exclusivity that comes with the GV80 model. With this car, trust fund beneficiaries and younger high-income millennials can differentiate themselves from their parents and higher-ups.

The purpose of casting Teigen and Legend is to combine the ideas of luxury and fun while debunking the monotonous image of upper-class individuals painted by existing luxury advertisements. Teigen's comedic toast and the reference to Legend's title "Sexist Man Alive" successfully portrays youthful and whimsical brand images while continuing to embrace the

exhibition of higher social status. This conventionally attractive but not provocative couple, one of them being a *Sports Illustrated* model, makes them the ideal faces of advertising in the 21st Century (Arend 62). They are that exceptionally good-looking yet perfectly matched “It Couple” audiences aspire to be. In the 2020 Genesis Super Bowl commercial, accompanied with humour and obsolescence, the desirability of this particular couple resonates with young elites who regard themselves as polished but unconceited, privileged but progressive, sexy but refined, and eager to distinguish themselves from old-fashioned elites who have always been the target audience for conventional luxury car commercials.

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# Shifting Perspectives: From Victimry to Survivance in Indigenous Children's Literature

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*Maarya Zafar*

*Notice: This article makes reference to residential schools, child abuse and suicide*

The concept of “survivance” in Indigenous literature is paramount to one’s understanding of Indigenous history and culture. A combination of survival and resistance, “survivance is an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy and victimry” (Vizenor vii). While victimry draws attention to Indigenous narratives by using sympathy, survivance fundamentally challenges this perspective by highlighting themes of strength instead (LaPensée 43). This perspective is not only restricted to complex scholarly texts, but is also a literary tool frequently employed in all genres, including children’s literature. Two children’s books, *My Name is Seepeetza* by Shirley Sterling and *When We Were Alone* by David Robertson, explore the detrimental effects of the residential schooling system through the lens of survivance. Stirling’s work features a series of diary entries from the perspective of Seepeetza (also known as Martha), an indigenous youth who recounts her harrowing academic experience. Alternatively, Robertson’s picture book weaves illustration, colour and creative expression to inform the audience about the narrator’s Kókom (grandmother), and how her daily practices are rooted in resilience and power. Intended to “kill the Indian in the child,” residential schools in North America began as day schools that eventually transformed into legally mandated boarding institutions, where Indigenous children were faced with abuse, dangerous living conditions, and the repeated degradation of their Indigenous heritage. In *My Name is Seepeetza* and *When We Were Alone*, the oppression and trauma resulting from this academic incarceration is likened to a sense of general unhappiness and underlying unease, rather than a direct exclamation of despair. By minimizing the time spent on hardship, the authors are able to move the stories towards themes of noncompliance and positivity during times of hardship. In both books, emphasis is placed on instances of survivance, which are employed through the ritualistic enactment of culture during imaginative play. These powerful moments of resilience punctuate the darkness of oppression through expressive language, sensorial descriptions and engaging visuals, ultimately aiding in the



de-victimization of the Indigenous child in children's literature.

Before exploring this transition into survivance, it is imperative to understand the historic victimization of native cultures within classic children's novels. For instance, J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* employs imperialist language to construct a highly stereotypical representation of Indigenous peoples. Published in 1911, the work uses terms like "redskin" and alludes to the notion that Peter is the "great white father" (Barrie). In doing so, the novel operates under the white savior complex; a perspective which suggests that "Westerners have the unique power to uplift, edify and strengthen [others]" (Straubhaar 384). During one of Peter's many adventures, the Indigenous character Tiger Lily and her tribe are presented as defenceless individuals in need of saving. It is ultimately this belittling, weak and inaccurate portrayal of Indigenous groups that contemporary survivance stories aim to escape from through a reimagining of literary elements.

The physical and psychological hardships induced by residential schooling have been explored in depth within a wide range of Indigenous literature. Comparatively, Sterling and Robertson digress from this tradition by using trauma as a vehicle to approach survivance. Implicit allusions are frequently represented through suggestive language and dark imagery. The former literary tool is utilized fully in *My Name is Seepeetza* when the protagonist Martha is forced to remove her clothes in front of one of the Sisters in order to bathe. After repeatedly refusing to remove them, Martha makes a direct and highly charged gesture:

I looked at the DANGER sign up where the electricity switches are. She saw it too. I was thinking if she made me do it I would wait till she left, climb up on the pipe, touch the switch and get electrocuted. We stared at each other. Then she opened the door and went out. I took my bloomers off and climbed in the tub. My hands were shaking for a long time. We're not supposed to look at the Sisters like that. (Sterling 83)

This passage provides a brief look into Martha's psychological state without providing detailed descriptions of her thought process throughout the interaction. Her non-verbal act of defiance does not directly suggest her contemplation of suicide. Instead, readers are only able to assume just how deeply the implications of being forced into a state of complete vulnerability affected her emotional wellbeing. The usage of subtle yet suggestive language is also reflected in *When We Were Alone* each time the narrator's grandmother makes reference to her experience in a residential school. When asked why she keeps her hair so long, Kókom states "...at the school I

went to, far away from home, they cut off all our hair. Our strands of hair mixed together on the ground like blades of dead grass” (Robertson 14). Within this statement, Robertson indirectly equates the loss of hair with the loss of cultural identity and ultimately with the killing of Indigenous heritage. Kókom then goes on to explain that her hair was cut because “they wanted us to be like everyone else” (Robertson 15). Through direct and pithy language, Robertson introduces young readers to the concept and effects of assimilation without directly referencing it. Moreover, the two children’s books subliminally reference trauma and pain by evoking dark visual imagery. In *My Name is Seepeetza*, Martha discusses the day the children received dolls at school:

I buried the doll today. Somebody from town gave the school some old dolls, and Sister gave one to me. It had a hard face and messy brown hair. Its eyes could open and close. It had eyelashes...The wind was blowing and I was so cold my hands felt numb. I went on the other side of the teeter-totters where there is soft sand, and I dug a hole and put the doll in it and covered it up so it would be safe from the cold.” (Sterling 37)

This passage is inserted between two other unrelated diary entries. By offering no further context, Sterling asserts the entry’s primary function as an isolated thematic allusion to distress and suffering. The haunting description provides readers with the ability to clearly visualize the doll and its burial. Ominous passages like this occur throughout the story, eerily tainting the novel with an overall sense of unease and discomfort. While *My Name is Seepeetza* uses language to evoke an unsettling tone, *When We Were Alone* primarily relies on illustrated images and formal aesthetic choices to achieve the same. When referring to instances of oppression in Kókom’s past, the colour palette changes dramatically. These pages allude to the grim reality of the schooling system by utilizing a dark sepia colour scheme and primarily bare pages. Illustrations, like that of the child having her hair trimmed, also contribute to the general dark tone. With her head tilted and shoulders slumped, it is implied that she has been forced into submission (Robertson 15). Neither story dwells on the effects of oppression caused by residential schools, but instead uses brief and implicit references to trauma as a way to fully examine how the protagonist survived in spite of it.

Subsequently, these methods of survivance in the face of hardship are exemplified through the playful mimicry of cultural practices and tradition within Sterling’s *My Name is Seepeetza* and Robertson’s *When We Were Alone*. After Martha buries her doll in *My Name is Seepeetza*, she engages in a game of make believe with an older student: “...Maryann

surprised me by talking Indian. We're not supposed to. She ordered me to eat all my fish just like she was a real grandmother. We laughed. 'I wish it was really fish,' she said. 'And I wish I was at home with my grandmother. My parents are dead'" (Sterling 39). By whispering words in their native tongue and assuming the roles of grandmother and child, the girls strengthen their ancestral heritage and re-establish the legitimacy of their language despite the school's attempts to diminish it. Similarly, in Robertson's *When We Were Alone* Kókom explains how she and her classmates expressed their own forms of resistance. In reference to her hair being trimmed she states: "But sometimes in the spring, when we were alone, and the grass had grown so long and thick in the field, we would pick the blades from the ground. We would braid them into the short hair they had given us, and we would have long hair again" (Robertson 16). This statement clearly indicates that acts of survivance can be achieved even through the most basic forms of play. By finding any means to give themselves long hair and grooming one another, the children foster close relationships and begin to recognize hair as an important cultural symbol. Additionally, by referencing concepts such as rebirth and life through the usage of terms like growth and spring, Robertson directly subverts the image of lost hair as dead grass presented on the previous page (Robertson 17).

Furthermore, instances of survivance in both books are explored more extensively than oppressive behaviour as their language extends beyond visual descriptions into fully sensorial passages. During harvest season in *My Name is Seepetza*, the girls find pleasure while sorting and shucking corn: "Today we shucked corn after school...we had to pull off the outer skins and corn silk. That's what shucking is, peeling corn... When Sister wasn't looking one of the girls took a bite from the raw corn. Then she passed the corn down the line so we all got a bite. It tasted sweet and juicy" (Sterling 14). Unlike previous entries which document trauma and primarily evoke a visual response, this passage appeals to different senses. The notion of taste, and the sweetness of the juicy corn elevates the passage and makes it come alive with excitement and energy. By avoiding the Sister's attention, the girls in the passage are able to incorporate visceral, real-world acts of resistance into their daily lives. While *My Name is Seepetza* relies heavily on the concept of food and taste to enhance sections on survivance, *When We Were Alone* implements physical touch. This can be exemplified when Kókom mentions sneaking out to meet her brother: "But sometimes in the winter, when we were alone, and we were sure that nobody could see us, we would find each other. We would take off our

mitts, and in the crisp, cold air we would hold hands so we could be with each other” (Robertson 28). This beautiful exclamation at the power of physical touch makes their act of resistance incredibly vivid and real. References to survivance through play in Robertson’s picture book are also equally sensorial. When Kókom explains how she used to replicate the colours of her clothes from home, she exclaims: “But sometimes in the fall, when we were alone, and the leaves had turned to their warm autumn hues we would roll around the ground. We would pile the leaves over the clothes they had given us, and we would be colourful again” (Robertson 10). The physicality of rolling on the ground and feeling the leaves on their clothes infuses the passage with texture and liveliness. The section also highlights the fact that acts of survivance can extend beyond internalized strength, and can be expressed through an individual’s interaction with others and the external environment. By appealing to multiple senses, it can be understood that resisting oppression is a rounded experience that engages the mind, body and soul. Sterling and Robertson highlight the importance of survivance by establishing these acts as fully immersive sensorial experiences rather than simple visual descriptions.

Ultimately, Shirley Stirling’s *My Name is Seepetza* and Robert Davidson’s *When We Were Alone* employ the lens of survivance to explore the topic of the residential schooling system in similar ways. By approaching oppression and traumatic experiences from an implicit perspective through the use of evocative language, haunting imagery, and sensorially infused cultural references, both books are able to shift the thematic focus from pitifully shrouding the protagonist in sympathy to saluting the protagonist’s ability to overcome maltreatment. Through highly captivating descriptions of survivance in the form of play and friendship, readers begin to engage with the narrative in a constructive way as the children are now symbols of justice and strength that stand against institutionalized marginalization and ignominy. These children’s books and their departure from traditional native stereotypes assert their significance as invaluable educational tools for the future generations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals alike. Through their emphasis on survivance and the ability to overcome, Sterling and Robertson successfully escape the singular narrative of victimry and enter the rapidly growing body of Indigenous narratives that value strength, pride and resilience.

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# Writing, Feeling and Healing in Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*

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*Sai Rathakrishna*

*Notice: This article makes reference to suicide and sexual abuse*

Trauma is a complex human experience, one that cannot be reduced to any single definition due to the individual ways in which it distorts the boundaries between mind and body, memory and forgetting, and speech and silence. Stephen Chbosky explores trauma in his novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, depicting how trauma influences a boy's understanding of his self-worth in relation to his social context. The narrative is focalized through the protagonist, Charlie, who navigates his first year of high school while carrying repressed memories of repeated sexual abuse by his aunt, Helen, during his childhood. Charlie writes a series of letters addressed to someone with whom he is not acquainted, but he nevertheless refers to as a "friend." In these letters, he documents the dreams, anxieties, and hopes that he otherwise refuses to share with the people in his life. Confining the expression of his feelings to his one-way correspondence enables Charlie to escape his feelings as they situate him in his embodied relationships. An internalized notion supports Charlie's conscious suppression of his feelings: the idea that his friends and family are faced with worse problems than his. However, the regular exercise of writing letters facilitates a gradual shift in Charlie's worldview from constantly 'putting things into perspective' to valuing his feelings. Recording and processing his feelings on paper provides Charlie with an outlet for developing the confidence that he needs to overtly express them in his social interactions. Writing to his "friend" leads him to accept that his loved ones value and respect his feelings, helping him to embrace their inherent value as well. Learning to prioritize his feelings allows Charlie to begin the important process of integration, of constructing a sense of self that is necessary to heal from his trauma.

Writing letters is "an act of self-reflection and an act of self-creation, the formation of an identity that the correspondent presents to the recipient of the letter" (Berman 409). While composing letters, Charlie engages in a candid assessment of his feelings, ironically revealing their repeated suppression in his real life interactions. Charlie's tendency to reject his own feelings is discernible in his description of a moment shared with his friend Patrick: "We didn't do anything other than kiss [...] Then, he started crying. Then, he started talking about Brad.

And I just let him. Because that's what friends are for" (Chbosky 172). Reflecting on Patrick's consolation, Charlie justifies their intimate moment as an expectation that entails being a friend. However, his confession that he 'let' Patrick kiss him implies a reluctant submission to Patrick's impulsive display of affection. Charlie's retelling of this event contradicts his interpretation of it as he reveals his prioritization of Patrick's heartbreak over his own discomfort. His passivity is explicitly recognized when Patrick endearingly refers to him as a 'wallflower,' explaining, "'You see things. You're quiet about them. And you understand'" (Chbosky 41). Charlie is praised for his sensitivity to others' feelings and his willingness to allow people to express them without restraint. From this point onward, Charlie integrates his new 'wallflower identity' into his self-reflection and his self-creation. This externally imposed identity settles him into complacency, reifying his assumption that other people, like Patrick, are faced with worse situations than himself, and therefore his feelings are comparatively insignificant.

Charlie's tendency to value other people's feelings above his own is motivated by the repressed memories of his traumatic experience. The trauma scholar Cathy Caruth outlines the effect of trauma on a survivor's worldview: "The specificity of trauma resides [...] in the fact that it is not assimilated by consciousness, not fully experienced as it occurs, which is why it returns to haunt the survivor later on, possessing them instead of being possessed by them as an 'ordinary' memory" (Bond & Craps 57). In line with Caruth's theory of trauma, Charlie's grief over the tragic demise of his aunt Helen is sustained by the unassimilated memories of his sexual abuse. Before his repressed memories surface, Charlie remembers his aunt as a woman who loved him and often gave him special attention. Although the circumstances of his aunt's death in a vehicle collision were beyond his control, Charlie construes the event as a consequence of his failure: she died because she wanted to purchase an additional present for Charlie on his birthday, because he was born during a month when snow creates unsafe driving conditions (Chbosky 98). His guilt is compounded by his awareness that his aunt was a victim of sexual abuse, leading him to realize, "Some people really do have it worse than I do" (Chbosky 6). Charlie's memory of Helen's death and his associated feeling of remorse underpin his need to put things into perspective. Knowledge of his aunt's suffering suggests to him that his grief and self-ascribed blame are unworthy of open, verbal discussion. Although the memory of his sexual abuse from Aunt Helen is latent at this point in the novel, Charlie's self-reflection and self-creation are possessed by the resulting trauma. Charlie's trauma reinforces his wallflower

tendency to devalue his feelings and, consequently, to recede into the background of his social environment.

Charlie becomes comfortable with working through his feelings in his letters because this medium of communication presents him with the freedom to engage in authentic, unrestrained expression without potentially disrespecting the feelings of his friends and family. In his first letter, Charlie informs his “friend,” “I am writing to you because she said you listen and understand and didn’t try to sleep with that person at that party even though you could have” (Chbosky 3). Charlie’s belief in his intended reader’s sympathetic capacity inspires him to begin writing down and making sense of his feelings. However, as he conveys to his “friend” certain truths that he acknowledges as disturbing, he is inclined to withhold his identity in his letters (Dücker 166). After a visit to Aunt Helen’s grave, Charlie reflects, “I don’t know if you’ve ever felt like that. That you wanted to sleep for a thousand years. Or just not exist [...] I think wanting that is very morbid, but I want it when I get like this” (Chbosky 99-100). Charlie is aware that his interest in withdrawing from the world may be interpreted as “morbid”; regardless, he divulges its details. Charlie writes without restriction to his self-reflection and self-creation because of his understanding that letter writing affords him anonymity while enabling him to confide in someone. The “friend” to whom he writes letters, then, is his personal wallflower. The letters, like wallflowers, absorb the feelings that Charlie does not share with others due to his dismissal of them as inappropriate and unjustifiable.

As he develops relationships with his real-life friends Patrick and Sam, Charlie learns that people in his life are accepting of his feelings. This realization would not be possible without his trust that people like his addressee, whom he believes is approachable and willing to listen, truly exist (Dücker 167). Sam directly challenges Charlie’s rigid view that being supportive of other people necessarily involves disregarding one’s own feelings. She tells him: “It’s great that you can listen and be a shoulder to someone, but what about when someone doesn’t need a shoulder [...] You can’t just sit there and put everybody’s lives ahead of yours and think that counts as love. You just can’t. You have to do things” (Chbosky 214). Sam’s statement forces Charlie to become aware of his external, social presence and assures him that this presence is valued despite his lack of participation in his social environment. The practice of writing letters to his “friend” reconciles his passive presence in the company of people with the emotional, articulate self that he depicts in his writings. It helps him gain the courage to depend on his loved ones just



as Sam encourages him to do so. Sam's advice prepares Charlie for when his repressed memories surface, her words reminding him to value his feelings just as other people value them.

Marion Baraitser's book about the healing power of reading and expressive writing offers a useful framework for understanding Charlie's path to healing and self-integration: "We construct ourselves from the narratives of others in our society and from the changing stories we tell ourselves. Trauma disrupts these narratives, leaving the 'self' frozen, the memory dominated by images of the trauma. When language returns, so that memories are verbalised or 're-told' in a positive way, a restoration of the persona begins" (58). The "self" that Charlie constructs in his writing also privileges the "wallflower" worldview that arises from his repressed traumatic memories. However, after he recalls his repeated abuse during childhood, he uses his writing to reimagine his trauma to restore his true self. Charlie describes to his "friend" his confrontation with the traumatic memories that guided his passive interaction with the world thus far: "It's like if I blamed my aunt Helen, I would have to blame her dad for hitting her and the friend of the family that fooled around with her when she was little [...] And I did do that for a while, but I just couldn't anymore. Because it wasn't going anywhere. Because it wasn't the point" (Chbosky 223). Charlie admits that his anger toward the perpetrators of his trauma temporarily took hold of him, simultaneously indicating that he prioritized his emotions. Charlie's experience with trauma models Baraitser's conceptualization of healing: his underlying trauma limits him to the 'wallflower' way of thinking until he learns to reorganize his values through composing letters. Continuing to blame the perpetrators would not be conducive to rewriting his narrative; nonetheless, Charlie's initial anger when he remembers his abuse is necessary to integrate his traumatic memories into his self-reflection and self-creation, to help him work toward constructing a narrative of the self that is unique and authentic to him.

Chbosky's novel presents trauma as an underlying influence on Charlie's approach to interaction. Trauma also informs Charlie's self-reflection and self-creation through letter writing for most of the novel, influencing him to escape his feelings in favour of concerning himself with the feelings of others. However, allowing his feelings to emerge to the forefront enables Charlie to adopt an optimistic outlook on his situation. In his final letter, he writes, "even if we don't have the power to choose where we come from, we can still choose where we go from there" (Chbosky 224). Charlie understands that he cannot control the generational perpetuation of trauma that has already been inflicted in his family; however, he can heal from it. He has already

discovered that writing letters is the most comfortable and effective way for him to lay out and process his feelings. Writing about his feelings is integral to Charlie's healing because it positions him to possess the memories of his trauma instead of submitting himself to them entirely.

By the end of the novel, Charlie also decides to avoid dismissing his feelings when considering those of other people: "Maybe it's good to put things in perspective, but sometimes I think that the only perspective is to really be there [...] Because it's okay to feel things. And be who you are about them" (Chbosky 225). Charlie is able to understand and retell his experiences in a positive way because, while reflecting upon his aunt's experiences with trauma, he embraces the weight of his emotions and recognizes their utility in perceiving the world before him. He accepts that although someone else may be facing greater challenges in life, his feelings about his circumstances do not have to be diminished in light of this possibility. Ultimately, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* depicts one of infinite ways in which trauma and healing can take place. The story of Charlie is a reminder that, regardless of its form, trauma is a testimony to survival, to experience and to humanity.

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## Curtain Call

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*Oana Calin*

Mr. Nelson had hardly seen the flash of headlights as he shuffled into the intersection of Brookview Drive and Covington Road. He was returning from the market, a bag of tomatoes shaking in his frail hand – Mrs. Nelson was at home, working on her famous lasagna and insisted on making her pasta sauce from scratch.

He watched his shadow, gliding slowly across the concrete. He had a habit of doing this. A shadow was a much more forgiving version of oneself. It maintained an aura of anonymity, not allowing one to see the scars with which passing years marked the human body – like dogs, pissing on bright red fire hydrants. He noticed the way the hunched figure on the concrete began stretching, shivering against a backdrop of lights. It reminded him of his days in the theatre, back when he had met Betty. Who would have known that the pretty brunette smoking cigarettes in the dressing room between scenes would now spend her evenings baking copious amounts of lasagna in a pink apron printed with the words “World’s Best Grandma”. She had never enjoyed the spotlight. But an angelic voice paired with overbearing parents praying every night that Judy Garland had – with the will of God – reincarnated into their daughter, she was sent to the local theatre each week to hone her talents. Mr. Nelson, on the other hand, loved the warmth with which the spotlights filled him. So much so that he could feel them now, spreading across his arm and blinding his left eye. He could almost feel his tap-dancing heels on the soles of his feet, the tips of his fingers itching to snap to the tune of *Guys and Dolls*’ “I’ve Never Been in Love Before”.

He imagined the loud vroom of the orchestra as it seamlessly accompanied the booming baritone of his voice. For a second, he wished Betty could leave her pink apron behind and join him in the street, her soft voice intertwining with his own. They would stand hand in hand as the roar of applause pounded in their ears and the spotlights faded to black, cuing the curtains to grind shut and hiding the lovers from view. At this moment, it had occurred to Mr. Nelson that the spotlights of his imaginary stage had only grown brighter. Perhaps Larry had forgotten his cue to pull the curtain shut again. He was probably off sweet-talking the understudies, attempting to impress them by describing the grandeur of his rope pulling. Sometimes Mr. Nelson wished Larry would actually pull the ropes instead of yapping about it. As he turned to give the young

boy a piece of his mind, a gust of air hit his fragile limbs. He stumbled back, launching his grocery bag in the air. Two brake lights, as red as Mrs. Nelson's tomato sauce, whizzed past him and disappeared onto Brookview Drive. Plump, round fruit lined the road in various states of distress. The seed-filled membrane had even managed to stain Mr. Nelson's corduroy pants. Perhaps his performance was worse than he thought.

## How Sugar is Made

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*Oana Calin*

This flimsy plastic bag,  
we filled with  
store-bought confectionaries:  
orange,  
purple,  
and  
blue.

Granule after granule, sugar  
oozed through our veins giving us a  
headrush, making  
our tongues sticky with lust.

This flimsy plastic bag,  
we filled with  
secrets:  
yellow,  
red,  
and  
green.

We discarded them  
like empty wrappers  
and savored their contents,  
letting them drip from the corners of our mouths  
onto our chins.

This flimsy plastic bag,  
fed us  
until our throats were brimming  
with bitter sweet  
cocoa powder,  
shooting in the air like cannons at the command  
of our laughter. It put us to sleep  
with promises of boiling  
kisses and  
dreams dripping in syrup  
after making love.

Last night, I uncovered  
our plastic bag – fuzzy  
with gathered dust like  
Maynards peaches,  
and brought it back to life:

white,  
black,  
and  
brown.

I ate until my cheeks  
turned orange and my finger nails  
tasted sour,  
corn syrup clogging my tear ducts  
and bubbling under pressure.  
I ate until  
my arteries shivered,  
pumping viscous blood to my taste buds  
hoping,  
begging,  
that I could taste the sugar once more.

This flimsy plastic bag,  
I filled with  
illusions,  
grey.  
They dumped dust into my mouth  
by the truck-load and  
rotted my tic-tac teeth  
and jelly gums  
until I could scarcely  
pronounce your name.  
They set me drowning in the  
black treacle of your eyes,  
my breaths fizzing out like  
pop-rocks.

Our flimsy plastic bag,  
now lies  
futile  
and  
bitter.

It was you who filled it with sugar,  
after all.

## Angel by the Wings, Devil by the Horns

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*Isabella Mckay*

In one of the millions of pits, fires illuminated Angelus, who led the Devils to slaughter innocent children. Behind a pillar, Diabolus jumped to grab the hands of Angelus. Diabolus attempted to use the crown of thorns to bind his hands and stop the killings, but the Devils attacked and chained her hands.

Devils held their knives up to stab one of their own, but Angelus roared, “Stop! It would be such a spoil to kill such a pretty so-called Devil. I will punish this so-called Devil. Alone.”

As the Devils escaped into caves, Angelus eyed Diabolus, “If you could see in light like they do up there, you’d see that I pointed to children standing beside fire pits that Devils would fall into if they went too close.”

He waved his hands over his horns to reveal his halo and wings, “You risked your life by saving those children.”

Her eyes widened. She longed to pass the Golden Gates and Angelus could lead her to the opportunity. She pleaded, “Take me to the Heavens. You saw what I did. I will do more up there.”

“I always see what you do,” Angelus whispered and then said, “Angels can’t know about my mission or they’ll never let me return to this dangerous, cold place. You could also never reveal yourself, because Angels, not as pure as I, would never accept a Devil.”

“I won’t tell anyone about any of those things! I’ll save more lives than I do here.”

Angelus chuckled, “I never trust a Devil, but your heart just needs to match your face.”

Angelus brought out a bottle from his pocket and slammed it onto the ground in front of Diabolus. Her scorched skin transformed into white glitter. Her horns became a halo. Her tail disappeared into air. Her dirty and holed shirts changed into stainless clothes.

Angelus frowned, “Like a replica. It’s going to be fun to watch the Angels, especially my parents, be fooled. Get on.”

The corners of her lips stretched into her cheeks. Diabolus climbed onto his back and held onto his shoulders. His wings flapped and flew them out of darkness and above the clouds. Her eyes adjusted to the light, white, and gold in the Gates, kingdoms, Angels, and food.



Diabolus marvelled at how well she would fit in this world. She didn't realize that Angelus landed in front of the doors of the grandest castle.

"We're at my castle. The castle of the Queen, King and Prince. That's me. But this will be my castle in a few years," Angelus mumbled the last two words, "Or weeks."

She gasped, "All of this is amazing! Thank you. I can't repay you. This is—"

He cut her off, "Yes. Amazing. Now come with me. You must meet my parents and I'll show you your room."

"I will live here?"

"It's even more fun to trick the King and Queen who think that they've accepted a long-time friend of the Prince into their home," Angelus guided her into the castle, where she gasped at the luxurious dove engravings throughout the castle.

In the throne room, the King and Queen danced as a servant played the harp.

Angelus smiled and bowed, "My dear King and Queen, I see your afternoon is splendid. If you have a few spare moments, I would like to introduce you to my dear friend, Diabolus, at the abroad academy."

"Our son becomes more like a true Prince every day," the Queen gushed.

The King nodded, "It is a pleasure to meet a friend of my sons. I'm sure that your manners are as impeccable as his."

Diabolus bowed, "It is an honour to meet the King and Queen. I must say that your son is more angelic than you both have described. I cannot meet his standard."

"It is a difficult standard to meet. Our son is the nation's treasure" the Queen smiled.

"Thank you, my King and Queen. You give me too much praise. If only Devils could understand our gracious and holy ways," Angelus sighed.

The King spat, "Devils are soulless. I wouldn't waste your time on them, son. If I see any of those Devils using the cloud stairs to climb their way up to the Heavens, I'll send them back down. That will, of course, be your job in a couple of years."

Diabolus reddened like a Devil.

"If it were not in my nature to care for all living things, I would harm them to save others. My King and Queen, thank you for your time. I hope that my dear friend can stay in one of our chambers,"

“Of course, son. You do not even need to ask,” the Queen smiled, “Please enjoy your time here, Diabolus.”

“I-I will. Thank you,” she nearly sprinted out of the room.

Angelus introduced Diabolus to royal families and friends, who hugged and invited Diabolus to their charity events and social gatherings. Within a month, Diabolus became known as the Angel who gifted the most health and wealth to humans and who guarded the most humans from diseases and dangers. She wore golden silk gowns and ate the fresh, organic food as she fearlessly explored the kingdom with her friends, knowing that no one would insult, grab, or hit her.

Angels often scolded Devils and praised Angelus in their discussions. They repeated, “If it were not for our benevolent natures, I would surely have them all eliminated if only to bring purity and good fortune to this world and humans. I’m sure that the angelic Prince agrees.”

Her cheeks reddened every time. If she had an angelic heart, but a devilish appearance by birth, she was an Angel who wore more white makeup and more decorative clothing. Therefore, she should not feel like an imposter.

Meanwhile, Angelus devised a plan. He didn’t want to wait years to become the crowned King. He wanted the title and power now.

When the sun rose, he went to the kitchen. The servants left the room to wake the King and Queen. He dropped the colorless poison tonic, which he’d conjured in Hell, onto the Angel food cake for the King.

At breakfast, he watched as the King drank his served cake. The King clutched his throat and vomited, then gasped for breath and survived the poison.

“How is this possible?” the King choked, “How can a Devil be among us? Satan has played one of his tricks. Call the army. Search everyone.”

“My King, the Devil is likely far from the kingdom by now. Would our resources be enough to find the Devil?” Angelus gently asked.

The King roared, “We are Angels! By God’s power, we will never be defeated by such satanic nightmares! Find the Devil!”

As the Army continued to search for the imposter, Angelus grew more anxious that the aggressive search would lead to Diabolus, who would reveal her true identity and recall how Angelus went to Hell to bring her here.

He thumbed the emptied poison bottle and headed to the chambers of Diabolus, who spoke about saving humans at the Altar in the Chapel.

Storming through the Chapel, King, Queen, Prince, and Army found Diabolus. Her muscles froze and her jaw hung. Soldiers seized her arms.

She wrestled her shock to speak, “W-what are you doing?! W-what’s wrong? I haven’t done anything.”

“You liar,” Angelus spat, “Satan has sent you.”

The audience gasped. Her friends protested, “My Prince, Diabolus has saved countless lives and helped humans so much during these two months. More than any other Angel.”

“You forget, my fellow Angels, that the Devil is a master of manipulation and deception. Fooled me into believing that she was my old friend. They do kind things, but they will kill,” Angelus hid his smirk when Diabolus blushed.

“T-t-that’s not true. It’s not true! I’m Angel Diabolus!” she pleaded.

“The Devil lies, again. It is not in my Angel nature to tell a lie, but I thought that I saw you wake up early in the morning of my gracious King’s poisoning. It is never in my nature to tell a lie, but I felt a pure horror when I saw the King gasping for his breath that I would never want my King or God forbid, my Queen, or anyone to suffer through it once or twice.”

“Therefore, I acted with the best intentions as I believed that no one would be hurt if the soldiers checked her chambers earlier. Luckily, what we found was—”

“You poisoned me!” the King shouted, “After I took you into my own kingdom and gave you a beautiful chamber. You poisoned me!”

The audience gasped, roared, and retreated from the stage. Everyone held their stomach or the pews as if they would vomit or die in the presence of a Devil.

“If my heroic son hadn’t seen you and hadn’t asked the soldiers to check your chambers to find the tonic bottle, the Devil would still be in the castle, in the kingdom! Oh my son, you are deserving of any throne,” the King cried.

“My King,” his eyes welled with tears, “To see you and the Queen alive and healthy, and the kingdom safe, is enough.”

“It wasn’t me! I don’t even look like the Devil!” Diabolus screamed, but her façade instantly dissipated to reveal her scorched face, pointed horns, triangular tail point, and torn clothes.

The audience ran from the Chapel. The Army handcuffed Diabolus. Angelus shook his head and whispered, "Deals with Satan are never free."

She screamed that she would never hurt the King. She argued that saved more humans than any Angel. She revealed that Angelus led Devils to kill children and that he brought her here. But everyone believed that she was a liar.

Angelus became a perfect King to his second kingdom. But Angelus secretly escaped to Hell, where he committed adultery, killed any human in sight, and tortured Diabolus. Because of the wings on his back, Angelus was praised in Heaven.

Diabolus endured the insults and attacks of Devils in jail. But she continued to stop disaster and bring peace to humans. Because of the horns on her head, Diabolus was banished to Hell.