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Literature's Identity Crisis: Simulation and Selfhood in Contemporary Fiction

A Thesis in English Literature

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This thesis examines novels by Orhan Pamuk (*The White Castle*), Shyam Selvedurai (*Funny Boy*), Moshin Hamid (*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*), and Kazuo Ishiguro (*Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun*) to get a sense of what is unique about contemporary fiction and how contemporary authors are changing the novel as a literary form. The novels are analyzed in context of globalization and technological advancements and how they are affecting contemporary literature. It grapples with the idea that the turn of the 21st century is dealing with augmented and sped up issues that the turn of the 20th century was dealing with. It asks whether this postmodern era is more faithful to reality than realism was, or if it is dealing with reality in a different manner. Through the use of historical fiction and science fiction genres, these contemporary novels are responding to issues of twenty-first century's global society and the idea of a new global identity, despite being set in the past or future. By using critical and philosophical frameworks by Roland Barthes, Peter Boxall, Judith Butler, Walter Benjamin, and Jean Baudrillard, among others, the thesis will analyze the formal qualities of the novels to demonstrate the problematization of national, gender, and sexual identity and how these problems manifest themselves in conversations surrounding technology replacing aspects of human reality.

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Introduction

As Virginia Woolf claimed, technological advancements seemed to cause a shift in human nature in 1910 which in turn influenced a change in literature. In the recent turn of the twenty-first century there seems to be another change, an augmented and sped up version of the change in 1910. What makes this century different? In the early twentieth century the invention of photography and the gramophone transformed society, introducing arguments about artificiality and originality of art and music. Photography replaced realistic paintings, gramophones took over for live performance. With film emerging, aspects of reality were being replicated so well and literature had to respond and step away from realism. Currently there is the boom of AI, a new speed at which we could get information but also a new fear of technology replacing the human, a new fear of artificiality even though it always seems like we are going through a big change: "the contemporary appears to those of us living through it to be a transformative moment; it is difficult to imagine a time that does not feel transitional to its contemporaries, that does not involve an alienating wrench from the dying past towards the unborn future" (Boxall 4). The reality we live in is constantly changing and it is impossible to define the present, but critics have tried to define it in relation to literature based on the recent past and its particular crises. Take, for example, September 11, 2001, a crisis that was only understood after the chaos had settled, a crisis that changed the way airports operated and created extreme stereotypes. It was also an event that was mediatized, allowing it to be witnessed globally, but in a disassociated way. Hansong Dan in his article "Introduction: Global Crises and Twenty-First-Century World Literature" points out that "What is new about crises today is that they are usually mediated and mediatized in such an unprecedented way that crises are turned into a postmodern spectacle, or *mise-en-scène*" (248). Dan is referring to the new ways we see

reality, the new ways we communicate and the fact that we can "end direct" the narratives that enter our imagination. The reality of the information we receive is intervened by cameras and the media's ability to crop and fragment it. Despite being able to communicate globally and people being able to witness the same crises from around the globe, the crises' nature is transformed into a fragmented reality. It seems that with all of this technology connecting us, allowing for easy cross-global communication, a global identity could exist, and therefore that global or world literature can exist. Authors of this supposed global literature seem to share similar preoccupations with globalization's effect on the individual.

This new global identity seems to be a common preoccupation among awarded contemporary novels. Contemporary literature asks questions like: How do we see globality? How do we see our identity in the global space? Are our experiences liquid, fluid? Are our boundaries dissolving? At the same time, contemporary postmodern literature is self-reflexive and meta-fictional, disturbing the sense of reality in its fiction. Some argue that "the potential referentiality that their language inevitably carries is so overwhelmed by a barrage of metafictional devices that we cannot seriously connect them to the world as we know it" (Bertens 159). However, I argue that this postmodern, meta-fictional writing can be applied ever the more to reality, that writing of this time has created, what Peter Boxall points out, "new kinds of realism" through new techniques (10). The postmodern brings attention to the ways in which we write and create our own lives, how we create and perform our own identities, how we copy each other's and fictional personalities. Certain contemporary novels explore the relationships between different cultures on a global scale. In these novels, globalization is represented through the relationships of characters. Authors such as Orhan Pamuk, Shyam Selvadurai, Moshin Hamid, and Kazuo Ishiguro can be considered authors of global literature. It is important to note

that English seems to be the language to either write in or get translated into in order to be considered global literature. Out of these authors, Orhan Pamuk is the only author that writes originally in Turkish and has gotten translated into English. Selvadurai and Hamid write in English, because of their origins: Sri Lankan-Canadian and British-Pakistani respectively. Sri Lanka and Pakistan had been colonized by the British, making the English language prominent in both countries and one of the official languages in Pakistan. Selvedurai and Hamid chose to express cultural experiences in English, most likely because it seems to be the neutral language, the language of the world. Ishiguro is considered a Japanese-British author, despite him not really feeling completely connected to Japan in his identity, as he moved to Britain at the age of five. These English-writing authors with hybrid backgrounds invite Anglophone readers to question their own identity and experience a story through the "other."

This thesis' first chapter looks into *The White Castle* by Orhan Pamuk, which is a historical fiction novel that bleeds into a fantastical rendering of history, becoming fable-like. Pamuk's novel was published originally in 1985 in Turkish and was then published in English in 1990. This is the oldest novel that will be discussed in this thesis, however, it deals with similar preoccupations to the novels in the following chapters. The second chapter begins with an analysis of Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*, a bildungsroman, coming out narrative, and historical fiction published in 1994. It is set in the mid 1970s and moves through the life of a young boy named Arjie as he explores his gender and sexuality and witnesses the Sinhala-Tamil tensions leading up to the riots in 1983. In the second half of the second chapter, the discussion moves into the twenty-first century with Moshin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist,* published in 2007, a historical fiction that is more based in reality than *The White Castle.* It follows the career of a Pakistani man in America who witnesses the twin towers fall in 2001. The

third chapter focuses on science fiction, starting with an analysis of *The Matrix* which came out in 1999 right at the turn of the century and is set in New York City. Both *Never Let Me Go* published in 2005 and *Klara and the Sun* published in 2021 are science fiction novels by Kazuo Ishiguro. *The Matrix* is connected to Ishiguro's novels particularly because of science fiction and the relation to reality that Ishiguro's novels explore. Ostensibly these novels and the film do not have much in common apart from being a part of this vague "global literature," however, they certainly treat similar issues of identity in their own way using their different genres and voices. The novels and film reveal the real ways in which people reproduce, copy, and perform identities to create a sense of community as well as boundaries between themselves and "others."

People have always created groups separating themselves from others, creating hierarchies of humanity, spreading from the most superior to the non-human. The meaning of "human" and what makes up the nature of human beings has always been unclear. Using Boxall's phrasing we can ask: what are "the limits of the human?" In the chapter "The Limits of the Human," Boxall discusses "the category of the human" and what it means to be considered human (84). What constitutes the difference between the human and the animal, or the human and the non-human? Christianity tries to define the human category through closeness of God, which provides humans with spirit or soul. But that puts us in a liminal space: "As Augustine rather wonderfully puts it, 'man is a kind of mean; but a mean between beasts and angels'" (84). Our spirits are meant to live in the divine, but we are forced to live inside these animalistic bodies making us something between beasts and angels. The human comes from always fighting between the two natures: "the human attains conscious being only partially and fitfully, in the throes of an impossible erotic dance between spirit and matter" (85). This flimsy definition of the human has failed on multiple occasions to save groups of people from slavery and genocide.

Therefore, within the category of the human we form groups that try to exclude from it. This issue of grouping, boundaries, and exclusion continues to be a problem politically and has an effect on the personal level. A way to try to understand this relationship between the personal and the political is through fiction.

Communities, boundaries, and labels for identities are all created by us, and are therefore in a way fake or not necessarily organic because they exist by definitions. Fiction creates representations of or reproduces communities, boundaries, and identities. The characters in a piece of fiction, in both film and literature, are reproductions of people with "real" identities and can offer insight to the inner workings of a human. A character is a construction of fiction and can easily be deconstructed for analysis, more easily than reality can be dissected (since real people are very complicated and are constantly changing). Therefore, characters can be used for analysis as long as they aren't analyzed as real people—as long as there is an awareness that they are a reproduction of a human personality—and can then be used to understand reality[1]. Fictional characters are the perfect source of dissection because they are constructed to have a particular identity, to evoke a certain type of person, existing in a reproduction of society.

This thesis will look into the structures of novels and a film in order to understand whether contemporary literature is capturing contemporary reality in a faithful way. Are we seeing a new wave of realism? How are the effects of globalization and technological advancements affecting literature? By using ideas from critics and philosophers such as Roland Barthes, Judith Butler, Walter Benjamin, Jean Baudrillard, etc. the thesis will analyze the formal

[1] This idea is further discussed through Baudrillard's ideas of simulations and simulacra. He explains the difference between the symbols of God and of God himself and how only recognizing the symbols can eradicate the original: "One can live with the idea of distorted truth. But [the iconoclast's] metaphysical despair came from the idea that the image didn't conceal anything at all, and that these images were in essence not images, such as an original model would have made them, but perfect simulacra, forever radiant with their own fascination." In other words the "despair" comes from only seeing the symbol of something and taking it to be the complete truth. Therefore it is important to understand that the representation or symbol of something is simply a symbol and does not provide its own truth.

qualities of the novels and film to demonstrate the problematization of national identity in addition to gender and sexual identity and how these problems of identity manifest themselves in conversations of technology replacing aspects of human reality.

Chapter 1: Re-defining Boundaries of East/West Identity in *The White Castle*

Orhan Pamuk's *The White Castle*, originally published in Turkish in 1985 and published in English in 1990, takes the reader back into the seventeenth century, following an Italian scholar, the narrator, who gets captured into slavery by the Ottoman Empire[2]. The Italian soon meets an identically looking Ottoman, Hoja (master), and becomes his slave. The narrator continually tries to gain his freedom, which the Ottomans would only grant if he converted his religion and became a muslim, but he refuses and remains enslaved. Despite being the slave, the Italian is the one teaching Hoja throughout the process of their projects (they are assigned to work on a fireworks display and then to create a weapon later on in the novel). The slave and his master spend a lot of time together, and their identical appearance begins melding into an identical knowledge, identical memories, and even identical identities. In certain moments of the novel they seem to become one person or two people with a shared mind; during the conclusion it becomes difficult to distinguish the difference between the characters because the narration becomes ambiguous–it is difficult to tell if it has switched to Hoja's perspective or not. Their thoughts and lives become so intertwined that they could easily replace each other. As they grapple with the uncomfort of having interchangeable identities, they begin to realize that exchanging identities may bring them great freedom.

Pamuk's oeuvre focuses on the identity of Istanbul and he seems to re-define the East-West dichotomy. According to Bayrakceken, "Pamuk portrays an extremely localized creative consciousness… [and] this localization of imagination enables a re-evaluation of the understanding of East-West relations" (191). In other words, his focus on the personal local Istanbulite perspective allows for the connection to global understanding of the East-West

[2] Turkey did not yet exist as a nation during the novel. However, references to Turkish national identity will be made because their identity is not yet stable—it is modern and is being created.

relations. His characters are sometimes semi-autobiographical and his Istanbulite identity is reflected in his work. He lives on the European side of the Bosphorus but sees Asia across the water through his window. Pamuk seems to appreciate liminal spaces and the relationship of the in-between. In *The White Castle* in particular he seems to do certain, what Bayrakceken calls, "identity experiments" that play with the liminal, blended space between identities. Pamuk started being considered as a postmodernist after gaining more reputation and popularity in the English-speaking world, allowing the East-West conversation to expand and evolve.

The preface of the novel, in a style akin to *The Scarlet Letter*, describes where the rest of the novel originates. It is a description from fictional Faruk Darvinoglu of the discovery of a fictional manuscript (the rest of the novel). He admits that "the events described in the story bore little resemblance to fact" (Pamuk 10). There were inaccuracies of viziers names, some misspelled, some switched, some changed completely. Big events seemed to be made up. Faruk Darvinoglu, however, decided that "this discrepancy had a special place in the story" (Pamuk 10). He suggests that the history described by the author of this manuscript can be verified by "our" general knowledge of history. He admits that the author seems to be "fantasizing" and that he may have taken inspiration from "memoirs of European travellers or emancipated slaves" (Pamuk 10). Not only does this preface suggest that there is false information in the story, but it also mentions that the manuscript is written in two calligraphy styles, suggesting that there are two authors (this becomes significant in the plot and narration). This means that the original fictional version of the story was an old Ottoman script which was then (fictionally) translated into contemporary Turkish. The version of Pamuk's novel analyzed in this chapter has also been translated from its original language in Turkish into English. Therefore, the text has gone through multiple translations and reproductions, through different authors both fictional and real,

who have translated the language into their own, causing distortion of the story and its reality. Faruk Darvinoglu was so passionate about the story he would talk to everyone of its "symbolic value, its fundamental relevance to our contemporary realities, how through this tale [he] had come to understand our own time, etc" (11). In other words, this fictional character is highlighting the ability of a story to help understand the contemporary landscape. Faruk Darvinoglu puts focus onto the story, rather than onto the story's origins, as Barthes says: "As soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say; finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins" (142). The story becomes disconnected from the author. Therefore, the author, or multiple authors, of the story are not relevant because the writing takes on a new life and becomes significant to Darvinoglu's reality—even as a fictional character—allowing it to become relevant to him as a reader. Despite the story's significance to understanding reality, a professor told him after thumbing through it that "in the old wooden houses on the back streets of Istanbul there were tens of thousands of manuscripts filled with stories of this kind" (Pamuk 11). The professor points out that the story is not unique, that it is just another copy of the same known story. However, as Darvinoglu reasons, the story actually helps us understand contemporary realities and the reproducibility of our own identities. In this way "it is the language that speaks, not the author" in order to comment on this aspect of our identities (Barthes 143). This preface addresses the commonality and reproducibility of stories like this one.

Interchangeability and reproducibility becomes a motif that foreshadows the conclusion of the novel. During Hoja and the narrator's work on the fireworks display, while Hoja is

preoccupied complaining about “fools” and their incompetence, the narrator is preoccupied with his physical similarity between the master and himself. He is uninterested in Hoja’s complaining and instead explains a dream he had: “he had gone to my country in my place, was marrying my fiancée, at the wedding no one realized that he was not me, and during the festivities which I watched from a corner dressed as a Turk, I met with my mother and fiancée who both turned their backs on me without recognizing who I was, despite the tears which finally wakened me from my dream” (Pamuk 44). The narrator dreams that they had switched bodies and that Hoja has now taken over his relationships. He is afraid of being replaced based just on a surface level quality of a human being: their appearance. Although this dream showcased a more superficial fear of being replaced, it foreshadows the deeper replacement of identity that is to come where dreamworld and reality begin to blend. In another moment, while they are looking at drawings of animals Hoja criticizes their two dimensionality saying “Reality may have been flat like that in the old days… But now everything is three-dimensional, reality has shadows, don’t you see; even the most ordinary ant patiently carries his shadow around on his back like a twin” (Pamuk 49). Although Hoja is talking about drawings and reality, his idea of the shadow twin can be applied to him and the narrator. They are twins in appearance and Hoja seems to carry the narrator around like his shadow. Despite their uncanny resemblance, Hoja doesn’t directly acknowledge that they are like shadows of each other, leaving the narrator to wonder what he thinks until Hoja finally breaks and stands them in front of a mirror to reflect on their resemblance.

In this scene of the novel, Hoja and the narrator acknowledge their twin-like appearance while looking in the mirror at each other. While the narrator has described how similar they are throughout the novel, it is not until this moment that they have spoken of it to each other. The

narrator admits that their relationship has shaped his thoughts about his own identity and who he should be. Their resemblance forced him to consider how he is different from Hoja and whether he should be more like him. In front of the mirror he admits when he first met Hoja, "I had seen someone I must be; and now I thought he too must be someone like me. The two of us were one person! This now seemed to me an obvious truth" (Pamuk 82). He no longer seems to believe that they are imitating each other but that they in fact are not different separate people. It becomes increasingly "obvious" that they are connected when the narrator checks whether he is his own person:

> I made a movement to save myself, as if to verify that I was myself. I quickly ran my hands through my hair. But he imitated my gesture and did it perfectly, without disturbing the symmetry of the mirror image at all. He also imitated my look, the attitude of my head, he mimicked my terror I could not endure to see in the mirror but from which transfixed by fear, I could not tear my eyes away; then he was gleeful like a child who teases a friend by mimicking his words and movements. He shouted that we would die together! What nonsense, I thought. But I was also afraid. It was the most terrifying of all the nights I spent with him. (Pamuk 82-83)

It is at this moment that the fear of sameness is the most prominent. The narrator feels as though he is no longer his own being but that he is being imitated by this shadow that he cannot get away from. Although he was uncomfortable his fear "transfixed" him to the point of being unable to stop staring at his twin. Then, Hoja becomes mad when he says that they would "die together!" They were living and dying as one: master and slave, being and shadow. Although the narrator believes this to be "nonsense," he still is afraid because at this moment it does not seem that his own being matters. His selfhood was being taken away. He no longer is living just as

himself, he is carrying, like the ant, a twin shadow on his back. There is also an uncertainty in this passage of who the narrator is truly looking at because he is looking in a mirror. Somehow, Hoja mimics the narrator's movements without "disturbing the symmetry of the mirror image at all." It is possible that the narrator was looking at himself because a person would not be able to "perfectly" mimic a movement without a delay. It is the "most terrifying of all the nights" the narrator spent with Hoja because it is the first time that they are acknowledging how easily they could be mistaken for each other. While still in front of the mirror, Hoja goes on to say that "he had taken possession of [the narrator's] spirit" and that whatever he "was thinking now, he knew it, and whatever [the narrator] knew, he was thinking it!" (83). The resemblance in appearance transforms into the merging of spirit and thought between them. The narrator admits that this is because Hoja is also afraid of their resemblance and that he is talking in this way to frighten the narrator, "to play upon his own fear, to make [him] share the burden of that fear" (83). Although they are both full of discomfort over this, they admit that they actually do want to be like each other: "He was right, I too wanted to say and do the things he said and did" (83). Eventually Hoja admits, "Now I am like you… I know your fear. I have become you!" (83). They share the same appearance, the same fears, the same thoughts, and the same life. Hoja finally points out that they aren't their own person anymore but that they have become mirror images of themselves. They have not merged into one, it rather seems that they have doubled and become two of the same person. Their identities seem to be merging, and they can act as each other, replacing each other, proving the constructedness and performativity of identity in the first place. Their different origins does not stop them from being able to seemingly understand each other.

Later on in the novel the narrator becomes more accustomed to the idea that they can switch lives and even feels that their resemblance gives him freedom, but he cannot understand

this yet. The scene in front of the mirror develops into a discussion of replacing each other in their lives. While still looking in front of the mirror, half-naked, Hoja shares this idea:

> He was going to take my place, I his, and to accomplish this it would be enough for us to exchange clothes and for him to cut his beard while I left mine to grow. This thought made our resemblance in the mirror even more horrible, and my nerves grew taut as I heard him say that I would then make a freedman of him: he spoke exultantly of what he would do when he returned to my country in my place. I was terrified to realize he remembered everything I had told him about my childhood and youth, down to the smallest detail, and from these details had constructed an odd and fantastical land to his own taste. My life was beyond my control, it was being dragged elsewhere in his hands, and I felt there was nothing for me to do but passively watch what happened to me from the outside, as if I were dreaming. (84)

Their difference in nationality, culture, and religion could be negated by simply switching out their clothes like a costume. The narrator could look muslim if he left his beard to grow and Hoja could look more Italian if he shaved his off. These differences in appearance were not mentioned in the novel beforehand, only assumed by their difference in religion and nationality. If they switched costumes they could play the part of the other person and Hoja would have the freedom to perform the life of an Italian while the narrator would be stuck living the life of a Turk. Their Eastern and Western identities are suggesting a blend, challenging the reader's stereotypes: “The mirror, once made to reflect cross-cultural identification, loses its capacity to reassure the viewer of singular, separate identity… it obliges the viewer… to acknowledge the other, the intransigent and uncanny other, as the mainstay of any viable sense of self” (Bayrakceken 196). In other words, it forces the viewer to acknowledge people with different identities as being similar to

themselves, even though it is “uncanny” and terrifying. The narrator is terrified of the idea of switching places and the fact that Hoja knew so much about his past. He had told Hoja stories about his childhood “down to the smallest detail.” Hoja could take these stories and construct an “odd and fantastical land to his own taste.” Hoja’s memories of the narrator’s childhood would be so far from the truth because they have been translated from real life into memory, into spoken story, into the memory of another person. This would distort the real truth into this “fantastical,” dreamland past. This, however, still terrified the narrator because he felt as if his life was “beyond” his control, as if he were dreaming. The word dreaming provokes ideas of simulation and distortion of reality. Through thinking about his life getting taken over by someone else in a sort of dream-like, simulative fashion, the narrator feels the discomfort of the reality of his identity disintegrating. Someone else’s melding would distort his identity, shaping it into a reproduction of himself and his past.

In another scene the narrator’s personality is implanted into a stranger and mixed together with Hoja’s in an impersonation. The narrator and Hoja spend a lot of time at the palace with the sultan, updating him on their projects and talking to him about their ideas. The sultan begins to notice the similarities between them besides their appearance, which worries the narrator: “I began to believe that my personality had split itself off from me and united with Hoja’s, and vice versa… the sultan by evaluating this imaginary creature, had come to know us better than we knew ourselves” (115). The imaginary creature is the mixed version between Hoja and the narrator, which the Sultan is able to analyze. Despite their acknowledgement of their twin-like appearance, they weren’t completely aware of their melding actions until an outside source brought it to light. Their minds are becoming intertwined. The sultan says: “No, this is his thought, not yours… Now you are glancing around just as he does. Be yourself!” (115). It is

almost a challenge to the narrator and Hoja to "be themselves" because they have started to imitate each other subconsciously. He is asking them to figure out what makes them different, what separates them. He even asks them to watch an impersonator impersonate them. One at a time the impersonator acts like Hoja, then like the narrator, then the sultan asked the impersonator to do a mixed impression: "When the sovereign asked him to impersonate someone who was half Hoja half me, I was totally bewitched" (116). It was uncanny for the narrator to experience someone mirroring the imaginary mixed creature he had felt started to come alive–his personality mixed with the personality of his visual twin. The sultan then invites them—orders them—to reflect on what they just experienced. The narrator asks: "What did he mean?" (116). He could not answer, and this moment invites the reader to question what this means as well. For Bayrakceken it seems that "mimicry unsettles power structure by presenting the site of a double transformation: both Hoja and the captive change; the master is no longer unambiguously the master, nor is the slave simply the slave" (198). Their relationship is bringing out an exchange of their knowledge, culture, and actions leaving their identities to both evolve.

As the master and the slave's relationship and identities continue to evolve, their tasks do as well, causing them to create a weapon that they then take on the Sultan's military campaign to the land of the Poles. Here their weapon fails and their army will not be able to conquer the white castle on the hill. In their defeat they continue to exchange stories of their past lives; the narrator tells Hoja of small details and stories which "have seemed to [him] mere reflections of [his] fantasies, not the truth" (144). Despite the stories of his past being untrue he "believed them," making them memories and a part of his identity. It is in this moment that Hoja and the narrator exchange clothes including important family memorabilia such as a medallion with pictures of a great grandmother and a fiance's lock of hair. The narrator then slept in Hoja's bed while Hoja

left their tent and walked into the fog. The last chapter acts as an epilogue to this moment of exchange. The narration is still from the narrator's point of view but a few years later and through his new life as Hoja, which he now refers to as "Him" with a capital "H." He missed Hoja and even tried to replicate his relationship with Him by getting a slave and asking him to teach him everything about his childhood. When visiting the sultan, he was asked to talk about Italy and "His" memories of it, which the narrator acted as if he knew nothing about until he pretended to tell his own childhood as someone else's: "I replied that I had little knowledge of it, he grew angry: He knew that He had told me everything, why was I afraid, it was enough that I should remember what He said. So I described to the sultan in detail again His childhood and His beautiful memories" (149-150). It is uncanny for the narrator to be describing his own self as if he was talking about someone else, using the word "He." Capitalizing the "H" in "He" almost gives the narrator a name, a differentiation other than being the one who is telling the story. The reader starts questioning what, if anything, was true to the narrator's story when he says that he talked to clients about their memories in order to write books: "I'd make them tell me their life stories at length, and at night I would write down what I'd heard in notebooks so as to use them later in my stories, just as I have done with this book" (152). He speaks with a travel writer about the Italy that "his slave" taught him about. He then admits that he "imagined" the novel the reader was about to finish when he spoke to this travel writer. Afterwards a visitor from Italy reads this novel, which, like the real readers, he realizes is truly about the narrator because there is a description of the scenery through his window. The narration of this last chapter reveals the imaginary dreaminess of the rest of the novel, where the reader begins to realize how unreliable the narration was from the start. Hoja and the narrator's identities were reproducible to the point of replaceability.

Despite their completely different origins, Hoja and the narrator are able to completely switch their lives and act as each other. Other people around them treat them as if they were truly a different person, as if their performance was natural. On top of the intricate narration that allows for ambiguity between the characters, the details in the plot provoke questions of national identity and the act of "othering." How can people with different nationalities, coming from the "East" and the "West," switch lives? This brings into question the validity and solidity of national and central identity and its boundaries. Are national identities so rigid? Or are they national identities pushed onto society in order to create imaginary boundaries between people and in turn create opportunity for hierarchies and "othering?" Pamuk's characters, "and by extension the cultural constructions he stages, are driven by need, the need to seek completeness and coherence in the field of otherness" (Bayrakceken 203). They explore "the other" and the culture of "the other" and learn about themselves in comparison. The need to understand "otherness" comes from wanting to understand one's not otherness, oneself. Orhan Pamuk's novel seems to break down the boundaries between the East and the West, creating a "new third voice" by combining Eastern and Western elements into his literature (Bayrakceken 203). He invites a liminal identity into the conversation, bringing new understanding to the relationships between the East and West, how they can and do interact with each other and learn from each other.

The treatment of the East/West identity dichotomy in *The White Castle* puts the novel into a global context and is a symptom of globalization. Despite its seventeenth century setting, it calls out dehumanizing issues which are continuously relevant, even forty years after its publication. Although it seems to be a typical "Prince and the Pauper" type of story, the characters who look identical do not simply switch lives but instead get to know each other's

identities and switch them. The ancient setting and fable-like plot makes the novel seemingly outdated, but Pamuk's technique puts him and his novel in the category of the postmodern, contemporary author. *The White Castle* is meta-fictional and bends its own reality. The narrator writes his new identity through his interactions with Hoja and at the same time imprints his identity onto Hoja; their identities transfer between them as if through the process of osmosis. Despite the hierarchies of the human, the master/slave dynamic, globalization makes its mark through the cultural exchange between who is considered human and non-human.

Chapter 2: Performance of Gender and National Identity: The Reproduction of Self in *Funny Boy* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

The cultural and economic exchange caused by globalization is putting pressure on identity formation. Despite the mixture of cultures we have access to, as mentioned in the intro, society does not approve the occupying of the liminal space between identities. People in between identities are difficult to categorize. Labels are provided to people to attach to themselves and it is in those labels that they are meant to express their identities. Most labels are given to us: woman, man, white, black, rich, poor; and most of the time society expects us to follow certain expectations put onto those labels. If these expectations are not followed, we tend to be ostracized. Gender identity ties into ethnicity, race, and nationality which all define a person's worth and overall status in society. In Shyam Selvadurai's novel *Funny Boy,* Arjie is characterized in the liminal space between identities. He is a "funny" boy because he has feminine tendencies as a child and enjoys reading feminine books such as *Little Women*. On top of that, he is Tamil, a second-class ethnicity according to society in Sri Lanka, but speaks Sinhalese so well that he is allowed to take his classes with them. So, in a sense he occupies the liminal space between femininity and masculinity as well as the space of ethnic boundaries. Another novel that explores the performativity of masculinity is *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid released in 2007 where the character Changez also occupies the liminal space in between identities. He is Pakistani and yet is almost American because of the way he acts, who he hangs out with, and who he works with. However, after the attack of September 11, he is deemed as a threat by society, even though he personally had nothing to do with the tragedy. These characters, although seemingly identifiable to society as Tamil or a terrorist, have different and complicated personal identities. Unlike the narrator and Hoja in *The White Castle*, who

aren't occupying the liminal and instead completely switch their identities, Arjie and Changez grapple with their liminal identities and what it means to live in a globalized, culturally mixed society. In order to fit into society, these characters are forced to perform the identities expected of them even though their personal identities are more complex. While Chapter 1 focused on the national identities of the characters, *Funny Boy* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* use their characters to expose how gender and sexuality alongside nationality come into play in the web of identity performance.

It is important to define what performativity of identity is as a concept before getting to analysis. This identity performance and its ties to gender is described in Judith Butler's book, *Gender Trouble*. Butler claims that a singular term such as "woman" fails to be exhaustive because "gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities" (3). In other words, one cannot identify someone as just a woman or a just man without acknowledging the entire web of labels that creates their identity. Identifiable labels that are not gender labels are still tied to gender identity and "it becomes impossible to separate out "gender" from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained" (3). Therefore, gender identity cannot be separated from other identities. Furthermore, gender is "produced" and "maintained" by other aspects of identity. What is more is that these identities are "performative." One does not simply "be" a gender. Gender is always an act, it is "always doing." Feminine and masculine identities are performed by acting in feminine and masculine ways. Butler maintains that "gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (33). The

repeated performance of one's gender identity is what makes it become seemingly natural, seemingly tied to one's sex, especially since it is "regulated" by society's framing. I argue that this performativity can be extended past gender and into the racial, ethnic, and national identities—identities that are intrinsically linked to gender.

Selvadurai's novel, *Funny Boy,* originally published in 1994, has a great fictional example of gender performance through child's play. The main character, Arjie, tends to play with his girl cousins as a child. When his family gets together on Sundays, the children divide themselves into two territories, one where the boys play and the other the territory of "the girls." Although separated by gender, the territories were not so rigid as to not include a tomboy in the boy's territory who would struggle for leadership against one of the boys, while Arjie played with the girls. The kids seemed to have no problem accepting these gender intruders. Arjie "seemed to have gravitated naturally" to the girls territory (3) despite his male sex. He wanted the "free play of fantasy" and because of his powerful imagination he was set as the leader of the girls territory (4). While this was Arjie's way of exploring his imagination, he was also exploring his gender—performing as a girl through the game of "bride-bride." The girls and Arjie have clear interest in femininity and a sort of apathy towards the masculine, the groom being the least appealing role to play for all of them: "It was a role we considered stiff and boring, that held no attraction for any of us" (6). Even though the groom is a vital part of a wedding, more important in reality than the priest or pageboy, for them it was "unattractive." The groom–the most masculine role in the play–held no attraction for the group, including the only boy, Arjie. He considered it an "unfortunate feature" of the marriage ceremony. Despite their apathy towards the masculine part of the wedding, they structured their reproduction of it in a heteronormative manner, displaying their socialization and their inability to perform outside of society's rigid

frame. Arjie and the girls could have easily played bride-bride with two brides and had fun making two little girls pretty. Instead, they kept up the performance of heteronormative society with a bride and groom in a sort of twisted manner where a boy is the one who gets to play the feminine role of the bride. The character that best exemplifies the children's reproduction of society in their performance is "Her Fatness." She seems very upset that Arjie is playing with the girls and that he is the leader. One could argue that she is advocating for women to be leaders of their own groups and that a boy shouldn't be the leader of the girls. However, when she throws a small tantrum about being placed into the role of the groom, she exposes her real reason for demanding to be the bride: "'But he's not even a girl… A bride is a girl, not a boy… A boy cannot be the bride,' she said with deep conviction 'a girl must be the bride'" (11). In this moment, the girls defend Arjie telling Her Fatness to leave if she can't play "properly." What Her Fatness does in response can only be something she learned from her parents; she calls Arjie a pansy, faggot, and a sissy. The other kids did not even understand what those words meant, only that they were an insult. In this moment, innocent child play turns into a reproduction of society, a moment where children learn their place in society and how they are expected to perform their assigned gender labels in the real world. After this Her Fatness tells the adults about Arjie's playing which results in his exile from the girls world and his re-socialization as a "boy."

Arjie's new socialization begins with his mother trying to force him to perform as a boy in the boy's territory at the next Sunday gathering. Arjie gets himself kicked out of the boy's territory because he insists on playing even though he is horrible at sports. He gets called a "girlie-boy," which is in itself a display of his liminality. After this, he tries to join the girls again, but he gets caught by his family members and his occupation of the literal liminal space

between the girl's and the boy's territories begins. The adults, especially Arjie's mother and father, stop his tendency to, in Butler's words, stylize himself as a female personality. Because he refuses to play with the boys, his parents force him to physically occupy the liminal space in between the boys and girls territory by staying inside the house which rests between the areas where the boys and girls play. He displays liminality even in his reaction to being exiled; Arjie runs towards the beach—a place in between the land and the ocean: "Now both the beach and the sea, once so familiar, were like an unknown country into which I had journeyed by chance" (38). In the liminal between the land and sea is where Arjie contemplates his own liminality. He "would never enter the girls' world again" (38). He glances at the ripped sari and understands the "loneliness" that would come from being "caught between the boys' and the girls' worlds, not belonging or wanted in either" (39). With his feet being burned by the sand, he "paused and looked back at the sea one last time" (39). In this moment, the sea could represent the territory of the girls which Arjie longs to come back to but acknowledges that he can never enter into again. The burning sand could represent the boys' territory, where he is being hurt, where he is uncomfortable, but he endures either way, because he knows the punishment that would come if he were to stay in the water—or the girls' territory.

Arjie continues to occupy the liminal space throughout the novel, but is joined by Jegan for part of it. Although it is not explicitly stated, Jegan's support towards Arjie seems to confirm that he too occupies liminal space. Even though he ostensibly seems to be a regular Tamil man which Arjie's father approves of, he seems to have a personal identity he needs to hide. Jegan exposes his flexible views on gender when he disagrees with Arjie's father (and the rest of society) that reading *Little Women* is a feminine thing that men shouldn't do. He says to Arjie's father, "I don't think there's anything wrong with him," after his father accuses Arjie of being

unusual because of reading the book and of playing with dolls (162). Jegan occupies the liminal space between the outward identity of a conforming Tamil and inward identity of a Tiger. The political climate between the Tamils and Sinhalese is "volatile," with Tigers killing Sinhala policemen while the Tamils demand separation. The father tells Jegan to "Go around quietly, make your money, and don't step on anyone's toes" (169). He expects him to almost pretend, or perform, being politically neutral in order to stay away from trouble. Jegan sighs impatiently at this statement, knowing that he aligns with the politically radical Tigers. Arjie overhears this conversation which Jegan discovers and begins to confide in Arjie. It seems that they have an unspoken connection and understanding. When he speaks about his male friend, Jegan says, "We were… we were very good friends" (171). The hesitation suggests there was something else between Jegan and his friend other than just being good friends, possibly a sexual or romantic relationship. He continues to display a liminal existence in the world as he describes himself as not being a part of the Tigers anymore, even though it seems his ideals align with them. He says,

> What is the alternative? We cannot live like this under constant threat from the Sinhalese, always second-class citizens in our own country. As my father used to say, 'It's small choices of rotten apples.' Here you can be killed by the Sinhalese and there you can be killed by the police or the Tigers. (Selvadurai 172)

His belief in the Tigers comes from his feeling like a "second-class citizen." He seems to believe that the violence is inevitable and that one should side with the Tigers, since they are fighting for their political liberation. In his essay, Kimmel discusses the idea that globalization "disrupts and reconfigures traditional, neocolonial, or other national, regional or local economic, political and cultural arrangements, and thus transforms local articulations of both domestic and public patriarchy" (603-604). Jegan's national political views enforce his domestic identity and

perpetuation of patriarchy. Although he hints towards understanding Arjie's feminine side and sexuality, his political beliefs cause him to publicly perpetuate a masculine, violent form. Kimmel believes gender has an important role in globalization: "Gender becomes one of the chief organizing principles of local, regional and national resistance to globalization, whether expressed in religious or secular, ethnic or national terms" (604). In this sense, Jegan is performing his gender role as a Tamil man, using his masculinity to display violence against others who have different political ideals than him. In Kimmel's terms, he is performing the "global hegemonic masculinity" in order to make political change, while hiding his own personal identity.

While Arjie can't explore his gender identity, at least in the public sphere, he is able to explore his sexual identity with his relationship with Shehan, his Sinhalese classmate. However, even this exploration of his sexual identity has to be kept away from the public, including his family. After he and Shehan have sexual interactions, he feels that his relationship with his mother is changed forever: "I was no longer a part of my family in the same way. I now inhabited a world they didn't understand and into which they couldn't follow me" (279). Arjie admits to occupying a liminal space that most of the world does not understand. He cannot express himself fully. He has to hide his personal identity from his family and the world. Through the characters and their occupancy of liminal spaces, the novel is commenting on the taboo nature of liminal personalities and the expectations for certain identities put on by society.

Selvadurai's novel, therefore, explores and exposes the contradictory nature of identity—how identity is naturally performed as well performed in the uncomfort of society's expectations. In Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the narrator also occupies a liminal space between identities. The novel also reveals how certain performances of identity

are rejected and comments on society's expectations of people to occupy identities in a particular way.

In Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist,* published in 2007, this discussion of identity is explored through Changez's character, who displays his liminality as a Pakistani American. While still having very strong Pakistani roots, Changez seems to want to truly be a part of his new society: "On that day, I did not think of myself as a Pakistani, but as an Underwood Samson trainee" (34). Changez points out that starting his new job made him feel his identity shift. He performed as an Underwood Samson trainee and that was his identity now. But his identity could shift and change. Gender is a performance, as Butler understands it, but so are other aspects of identity. Changez admits that everyone working with him was performing:

> Two of my five colleagues were women; Wainwright and I were non-white. We were marvelously diverse… and yet we were not: all of us, Sherman included, hailed from the same elite universities—Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, Yale; we all exuded a sense of confident self-satisfaction; and not one of us was either short or overweight. (38)

So, while their ethnic and sex origins were different, their performance as elite university graduates and Underwood Samson employees was the same. They might have personally identified as women, as Pakistani, etc. However, their prestigious university air, along with their shared physical fitness allowed them to share the label of an Underwood Samson employee. Changez continues to perform this American employee identity when he travels to Manila for work: "I attempted to act and speak, as much as my dignity would permit, more like an *American.* The Filipinos we worked with seemed to look up to my American colleagues, accepting them almost instinctively as members of the officer class of global business—and I wanted my share of that respect as well" (65). His performance as an American was not because

of his desire to personally identify as an American but to gain the respect society gives to Americans. He also does not seem comfortable with this performance, since he only tried to be as American as his "dignity would permit." He soon realizes that his performance does not fool anyone, that his appearance gives him a different label, according to society, when the driver in the car next to the limousine he is in displays hostility towards him. Changez is wearing the skin of a Third World person but acting as a First World person, meaning that he looks as if he is of less privileged background while acting privileged. He admits that he, in fact, shares "a sort of Third World sensibility" with the hostile driver. He finally sees the difference between him and his white colleague next to him in the limousine. He thinks, "you are so *foreign*. I felt in that moment much closer to the Filipino driver than to him; I felt I was play-acting when in reality I ought to be making my way home, like the people on the street outside" (67). He recognizes his false performance. He recognizes that his personal identity does not align with the identity that gains the most respect in society. There is a battle within himself of performing to be respected and performing as himself. It is in this way that he occupies the liminal space of identity.

In a moment of culmination of his opposing feelings, Changez smiles at the news of the twin towers falling in New York, displaying his liminality. The reader is forced to question Changez's morals when he describes his satisfaction at watching them crash. An American reader is at once disgusted at and understanding of his reaction; the reader has gotten to know his struggle between identities and can somewhat sympathize with him but not entirely because of their own connection to the event. Changez admits that his positive reaction to the twin towers collapsing was detestable: "Yes, despicable as it may sound, my initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased" (72). He tries to placate the reader by describing his sympathy towards others and that he is "not indifferent to the suffering of others." He admits that his pleasure at

seeing the deaths of thousands of innocent people is “perplexing” and complicated. He was not preoccupied with the death but instead he was “caught up in the *symbolism* of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees” (73). In this moment he reveals his true feelings towards the unequal global system. His desire to become part of the global north was not because he personally felt like an American because he truly did feel more connected to his Pakistani roots. This national Pakistani identity led him to feel guilty when he flew back to New York and felt “uncomfortable in [his] own face” (74). He was “aware of being under suspicion” because of his Pakistaniness. This is a moment where society begins to force its predisposed identities onto the world.

His male gender identity bleeds into his national Pakistani identity when he decides to grow out his beard. It is a physical statement of masculinity as well as a statement confirming his religion. As Kimmel says, “Beards especially symbolically reaffirm biological natural differences between women and men, even as they are collapsing in the public sphere” (616). Growing beards became a requirement of the Afghani republic on top of the policies for women needing a male escort, covering up, and not going to school or work. These policies enforced the difference in biological sex but also in gender performance of the masculine and feminine, building men up and bringing women down: “Such policies removed women as competitors and also shored up masculinity, since they enabled men to triumph over the humiliations of globalization” (616). Changez seems to feel this humiliation of globalization. He feels this hatred towards the unequal quality of globalization. Changez gives in to his personal identity, his male Pakistani identity in order to make a statement against the unequal globalization. Growing his beard out allowed him to reaffirm his masculinity and regain a sense of power over his own identity. He returns to Pakistan and joins the protests staged during the American ambassador’s

visit. The protests included thousands of people "of all possible affiliations—communists, capitalists, feminists, religious literalists" (179). All affiliations and identities that are not exclusive from each other. In the moment, they become one, as protestors, but their identities separate and intersect in multiple ways. This small detail allows for the novel to point out the complex nature of identity, while focusing on how prominently national identity is affecting Changez.

This commentary on complex identities and stereotypes is especially evident in the last scene of the book. Changez and his American guest are walking back to the hotel together and there is a sense of danger, of them being followed. However, Changez tries to calm his guest by saying, "You should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all undercover assassins" (183). In this moment, the novel is asking the reader to contemplate the complexity of identity. A Pakistani is not just a Pakistani but can also be a woman, man, mother, daughter, etc. Their affiliations do not need to align with the one idea that is tied to stereotypes of Pakistani identity or American identity. At the end of this scene, which is also the end of the book, we are left wondering if either of them are a terrorist or an undercover assassin. We are left wondering if either of them was hurt and who to trust. This ambiguity that the novel creates allows for contemplation of identity and its disguised liminality—it forces the reader to recognize the complexities of these identities rather than seeing them as one dimensional.

Both *Funny Boy* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* illuminate the pressure created by globalization and the unequal world-system to define and perform identity. In other words, the unequal world-system and national hierarchies only elevate people with certain identities while negatively stereotyping others. Performance of identity becomes necessary to exist in this

globalized society. However, the liminal space between society's predisposed identities exists and it is part of many people's realities to occupy this space that isn't necessarily accepted by society. The characters in these novels exemplify the struggle between their social identity, the socially imposed norms, and their personal identity, internal inclinations, and the absurdity of those things being separated.

Chapter 3: What Copies What?: Reproductions and Simulations in Contemporary Science Fiction Film and Literature

As mentioned in the introduction, the twenty-first century has provided us with technology that has augmented and intensified tensions between reality and fiction, between what is deemed original and copies, furthering fears of being replaced. The internet is drowning in a sea of copies with only a handful of originals. It is difficult to trace where content comes from and which content came first. Pictures, ideas, and identities can be stolen, copied, and reformed. In this section, the terms reproduction, simulation, copying, and performance will sometimes be used interchangeably as they all have to do with recreating an image or idea. Reproduction can be the act of copying something or the act of creating offspring. Simulation is the process of imitating or of assuming the appearance or effect of something. Copying is imitation or reproduction of an original work. Performance is the execution of an action, an action in representation of a certain message, a simulation of actions. These terms are important to this chapter in particular, as it deals with the genre of science-fiction and its use of simulations and reproductions in the movie *The Matrix* (1999), and in the novels *Never Let Me Go* and *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro. These fictional works use science fiction to explore the ideas of performance of identity. *The Matrix, Never Let Me Go,* and *Klara and the Sun* all raise questions like: What simulations or copies do we consider real? Why are we so obsessed with being copied? What is the difference between an original and a copy or between a real action and a performance? In posing these questions, this film and these novels reveal the ways in which reproductions and simulations play a part in the construction of our own realities and identities, paradoxically through the use of fiction.

In order to discuss how *The Matrix, Never Let Me Go,* and *Klara and the Sun* deal with these questions, a foundational understanding of these following concepts are necessary. In 1935,

Walter Benjamin was already exploring the idea of authenticity in the midst of reproduction of art in his essay: “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” He discusses how art is changing in the age of photography, film, and phonograph records. Photography allows things to be captured that are beyond the human eye. Benjamin explains that the camera lens can capture different angles and that the footage can be manipulated, slowed down, or enlarged beyond the reach of the original. The phonograph allows choral productions to be listened to in the “drawing room” at home. As these reproductions become more popular, Benjamin is concerned with the concept of the “authenticity” of art. He believes in the idea that a piece of art has “aura.” For instance, paintings such as the Mona Lisa or Monet’s water lilies have a sense of aura because of their originality and authenticity. The paintings have presence and provide feeling; there is value in them because of their authenticity. The prints and pictures of the paintings do not have the same aura as the actual original paintings. Furthermore, art created in a religious setting is created for ritual and is not meant to be reproduced. The art on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is an example of religious art that has cult value; It was painted for ritualistic purposes and can only be admired by looking up. Certain statues are only for the eyes of priests. For pieces of art such as those “one may assume that what mattered was their existence not their being on view” (Benjamin 7). By reproducing these works of art, the cult value becomes replaced by exhibition value. The function of the work of art changes through reproduction. The Mona Lisa becomes a post card instead of a painting. The aura is therefore damaged through reproduction and the authenticity of the original is blurred.

Although Benjamin claims that the aura of an artwork is damaged through reproduction, he claims that “even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be” (3). He

therefore believes that an object or artwork cannot be copied so perfectly to replicate its history, including the physical changes in an item's condition. Therefore, the authenticity of the original cannot be replicated. However, at the same time, reproductions can allow more to be seen than what an original can offer. For example, a camera can penetrate deeply into reality allowing humans to perceive certain details of reality that the naked eye cannot see. In a way, photographical reproduction of reality can actually show us more truth. Benjamin describes the difference between paintings and photography through the comparison of a cameraman and a painter: “The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web” (Benjamin 13). He describes the painter and his art as like a magician with an ill patient; the magician does not need to touch the patient to heal them, meaning that there is distance between them. The cameraman is more like a surgeon who sinks into the skin to heal them. Although photographs do not have the same aura as paintings, their form of reproduction allows more truth to be revealed. This is not to say that photography should replace art, in fact, the interplay between an original artwork and a photograph can help reveal more of reality than each of them on their own ever could. Although Benjamin does not claim this, his ideas about art and photography can be applied to literature and film. Novels are like the paintings and film is the picture. Novels can manipulate time and space, documenting things of reality but not as directly as a movie can. Through his comparisons of art and “mechanical” reproduction Benjamin questions what “reality” means. He suggests that art can be a helpful tool to understand social reality, as it reproduces and represents aspects of what we know as reality.

This “reality” conversation continues about fifty years later in 1983 when Jean Baudrillard revisits the idea of reproduction as penetrating reality in his book “Simulacra and Simulations.” Unlike Benjamin, Baudrillard focuses more on simulation and reproduction in

general, applying his ideas to more than just artwork. He explains the difference between pretending and simulating something. To pretend is to conceal a truth—to conceal a reality. To simulate is to create a reality. Sickness can be simulated. Behavior can be simulated. Therefore, the thing to fear is a simulation penetrating so deeply into reality that it becomes reality. For example, the Iconoclasts were afraid of religious simulacrums because they believed that people would stop believing in God and instead start believing in the simulacrum. It was not that the simulacrum was concealing or distorting the idea of God; The despair "came from the idea that the image didn't conceal anything at all, and that these images were in essence not images, such as an original model would have made them, but perfect simulacra, forever radiant with their own fascination" (Baudrillard 5). In other words, the fear comes from the idea that a simulacrum or simulation are used symbolically and are exchanged for meaning which suggests that God himself could possibly be simulated and reduced to simulacrum, therefore making the symbols more meaningful. However, simulations and simulacra do not have to override the original or the reality. The simulacrums and simulations serve as tools to understand the originals or the reality, as long as the difference between reality and simulations is clear. Just as a reproduction of artwork can help reveal a new truth, simulations can help reveal aspects of reality.

Technology has evolved immensely since 1935; technological reproduction has begun replacing human reproduction in nearly every aspect of life and the fears surrounding reproduction have only multiplied. Although these concerns are not necessarily a new issue, technology is always progressing and the concerns evolve with it. Artificial intelligence and artificial reproductive technology are becoming a normal aspect of today's society. People in today's world will have to learn to grapple with the ever-changing relationship with technology. An interesting and particularly illuminating avenue through which one can explore how we do

that is through the analysis of film and literature, especially when using the concepts introduced by Baudrillard and Benjamin to help analyze these ideas. As mentioned before, film and literature are in their own ways reproductions of reality which are symbolic of our social realities, and analyzing them can allow for understanding certain aspects of reality.

In discussion of simulations in film and literature, it is difficult to ignore *The Matrix* (1999). It was "the film everyone talked about" according to a 2019 article by Faisal Salah from The National titled, "'The Matrix' 20 years on: why it's still the best sci-fi film ever made." For an article to be published 20 years after the release of the movie, it had to have been groundbreaking, marking a change in society as well as the science fiction genre in film. The film depicts a world in which humans are living in a simulated 1999 New York City while their real bodies are stored in pods in the year 2199. Thomas Anderson, the protagonist who is better known as Neo, is a computer programmer by day and a hacker by night. He, like most others in this world, lives in the simulation but is not aware of it. Therefore, the reality he thinks he is living in is 1999 New York. However, he has an inkling of something being off about his reality. He ends up meeting Trinity, another famous hacker, who gives him contact with someone he has been looking for, Morpheus. After a cryptic phone call, Neo is taken to meet Morpheus. At their meeting Morpheus asks if Neo knows what the matrix is and gives him a choice between a red pill and blue pill: "If you take the red pill, you stay in wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes." The blue pill would leave him in ignorance. Neo chooses the red pill. After taking it, he touches a mirror and its glass surface begins morphing into his skin and covering him. This transports him out of the simulation and into the real life he is living in his pod, plugged up to machines in weird gooey liquid. Neo discovers what the matrix is compared to reality with help from Morpheus, Trinity, and the rest of the crew in the real world.

The “Alice in Wonderland” reference made in the film is only one of an abundance of references made by the directors, the Wachowski siblings, that involve separate worlds of the dreamlike and the real. The names of the characters, Morpheus and Trinity, reference biblical figures. Baudrillard’s *Simulations and Simulacra* is widely considered to be the most prominent reference in the movie, most likely because the physical book is actually used as a prop in a scene. However, Sven Lutzka argues that the film should be analyzed through more than just a Baudrillardian lens. In fact, the movie has a “Rorschach-inkblot-like quality” that allows philosophers to see “existentialism, Marxism, feminism, Buddhism, nihilism, or postmodernism” in it (Lutzka 114). This mish mash of pop culture and philosophical references make this movie a true piece of postmodern cinema. In a way, it is a web of imitations and reproductions. The references reproduce the original meanings to create new symbols by their combination. This multifaceted aspect of the movie raises questions about the performance of identity, making it a particularly productive lens through which to analyze the film.

Performance of identity is explored through Neo’s character, who in his discovery of the matrix and the real world discovers his own identity. After exiting the simulation of the matrix, Neo is told he must help the crew in the real world save humanity from the matrix. Neo is told he is the “one” who will actually have the ability to save humanity from the matrix and he cannot seem to embrace this idea despite Morpheus believing it to be true. Although he does not quite believe it, Neo decides to help the crew in their mission. This requires going between the real world and entering the matrix. In the simulation he is known as Thomas Anderson and is accused by “the agents” of living a double life under the alias “Neo.” There is constant tension between his identities as Thomas Anderson or Neo because the agents who are trying to get rid of him are calling him Mr. Anderson. Neo has to learn how to manipulate the rules of the simulation in

order to defeat the agents. In the matrix's loading program, which is completely white, one could load items and one's desired appearance. In this scene where Morpheus is showing him the loading program it is important to note that Neo's desired masculine appearance matches with his male sex even though he could experiment with his gender identity in the matrix if he so desired. Later on Neo installs programs into his brain like a computer to become comfortable and gain skills in the digital world. Near the end of the movie, Neo decides to fight against the agent instead of running away like the rest of the crew from the real world always do. During this fight the agent says, "Goodbye Mr. Anderson." To which Neo responds, "My name… is Neo." By refusing his name in the simulation, Thomas Anderson, and accepting the name "Neo," he is affirming and choosing his identity. After this he begins defying the rules of simulation and uses the technology to his advantage. His reality becomes intertwined with technology, as Donna Harraway argued: "The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment." Technology does not have to rule over humanity, "We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us." Neo is not dominated by the matrix and instead uses it to his advantage and discovers himself through it. Once he bends the rules of the simulation by surviving death, he finally embraces his identity and becomes the "one" that Morpheus said he was. He embraces his computer hacker name "Neo" which is—not coincidentally—an anagram for "one." This discovery of identity was only possible through the interplay between reality and technology. It was through the simulation of the matrix that Neo was able to finally embrace his identity. The simulation did not replace his reality, like Baudrillard warns against, but instead helped reveal an aspect of it – his identity, while others are trapped, their realities replaced by the simulation.

A few years after the release of *The Matrix*, Kazuo Ishiguro published *Never Let Me Go*, a novel that also explores the blurred lines between a reproduction and an original through the

subject of cloning. The story revolves around a group of clones who are given the opportunity to act[3] like regular humans in Hailsham, where they live and attend classes. The clones differ from regular humans because they are reproduced artificially and cannot reproduce sexually amongst themselves or amongst natural born humans. Their only purpose in existing is to be farmed for organ donation. The clones seem to be obsessed with this fact as well as trying to pretend as if they aren't obsessed with being organ farms. Kathy, the narrator, observes how her fellow clones mimic the actions from television show characters such as "the way they gestured to each other, sat together on sofas, even the way they argued and stormed out of rooms" (121). She comments on the clones' tendency to also pretend that they've read something they haven't; they are, in a sense, mimicking or imitating someone who has read the book. Kathy, however, doesn't seem to understand the appeal of copying the actions of television characters; she tells Ruth, her best friend, "It's not something worth copying" (123). She says that what they watch on television does not represent what people do in real life: "It's not what people really do out there, in normal life, if that's what you were thinking" (124). Kathy seems to be making a distinction between television and reality here or, in other words, a distinction between art and reality. The television shows are just an imitation of what normal people do, not the reality of what normal people do. In her outburst against Ruth, she shows that she is actually worried about what imitating a normal life means when she knows that they are not living one. She seems to be uncomfortable with her condition as a clone, and is struggling to understand how she is and isn't considered to be human. She tries to understand her existence as a clone, a copy, through multiple artforms.

The idea that Kathy is uncomfortable with her condition as a clone is illuminated by the scene in which she pretends to be holding a baby while listening to a song called "Never Let Me

[3] "Act" because they are not "living" as regular humans but they can pretend they are. They are simulating a normal life.

Go.” The song becomes “her” song as she reproduces the sound again and again as she plays it when she is alone, since the other Hailsham students weren’t inclined to that kind of music. Through her impulsive replaying she reproduces her own actions—copying herself. In a particular moment in the novel, when Madame, one of the women in charge of the organ business, catches Kathy listening to the song, Kathy reproduces the meaning of the song. Not only is she constantly replaying it, she is re-interpreting the lyrics “Oh baby, *baby,* never let me go" from being romantic to being motherly. The “baby” in the lyrics originally refers to a romantic partner which Kathy re-interprets to refer to an infant baby (70). The song allows Kathy to imagine a mother holding her child dearly. She then reproduces the image of the mother and child she has created in her head by dancing with a pillow held in her arms like a child. By dancing with her pillow baby, she is imitating a normal human being who can be a mother. Here, she is directly addressing her condition as a clone who cannot reproduce. In her article, Shameem Black suggests that the song is the only cry of rage in the novel against the clones’ condition. Kathy’s performance with the song implies that “only replica, the simulacrum, or the symbolic clone has the power to illuminate the contradictions of Kathy’s own life” (Black 803). Therefore, Kathy’s performance of being a mother illuminates her condition of being unable to have a child. This illuminates her separation from normal humans. At the same time, her performance suggests that the clones are not really that different from normal people; if having a baby and the emotions attached to having a baby can be imitated, Kathy becomes closer to being normal through her copying. Furthermore, she is not imitating television, which is itself an imitation, and she is not trying to perfectly replicate being a mother. She is taking a song and making it her own in a series of imitations. She is capable of experiencing romantic love but she can never feel motherly love, which she is recreating and copying through her dance with the

pillow baby. Her reproduction, or performance, is how she is able to understand herself and her position in relation to “normal” people.

Madame gives us a sense of the connection between “normal” people and clones when she describes later in the novel how she felt when she walked in on Kathy listening to the song. She says she saw “a little girl, dancing… eyes closed, far away, a look of yearning… dancing so sympathetically. And the music, the song. There was something in the words. It was full of sadness” (271). Madame reveals her sympathy towards Kathy by recognizing the yearning and sadness Kathy was presenting during her performance. However, Madame clarifies that her sympathy was not specifically towards Kathy, but towards the representation of a little girl that knew the world was changing. For Madame, Kathy is just a simulacrum, a representation of someone else, a performer that illuminates her discomfort towards change. Kathy translates the lyrics of a song into an experience that is not her own, but that closely sits within her heart. Kathy imagines that the song is about an infertile mother who miraculously has a child and therefore never wants to let it go. Madame’s perception of Kathy’s performance should prove that Kathy has humanity. However, Madame believes her performance is detached from Kathy’s individuality and therefore does not prove her humanity. In other words, a reproduction or performance of a human act, such as having a child, cannot be considered a true human action according to Madame’s character. There is a blurry line between reality and simulation here. Madame represents the rest of the novel’s society, the “normal” humans, who do not recognize the clones as having humanity, even though the clones are capable of reproducing their lives and emotions. In other words, the clones are considered to be “the other” in this fictional society, who are being diminished to serving as organ farms for the rest of society despite being equally human.

There are some people in this fictional society that try to prove the clones' humanity, putting them through multiple tests, including making them create art. In fact, much of their value at Hailsham comes from being able to create a piece of art. Their artwork was often circulated between them at what they called "Exchanges" where they basically got to sell their art in exchange for tokens that they could use to buy their classmate's artwork. The guardians at Hailsham assigned different values to artworks based on what they thought was more deserving. Their artwork became important to them because the Exchanges were the only opportunity they had to collect their own personal treasures and in a way create their identities by collecting art they feel connected to. Therefore, the clones' valuation of each other was largely based on how good they were at "creating." Kathy and her love interest, Tommy, hear a rumor of a deferral for clones who deserve more time before their completion which would give them more time to spend together. They feel as though their artwork can prove their love for each other and that they will therefore be considered for this deferral. When they go to ask for it, they learn that the best artwork they were creating while in Hailsham was being sent away to be judged by normal humans. The art they were forced to create at Hailsham was a test in order to "*prove [they] had souls at all*" (260) not to see if their souls are comparable to "normal" humans. In his chapter "The Limits of the Human," Peter Boxall points out that "To test the students for traces of humanity is inhumane and classifies them, immediately, as less than human, preserving and enforcing that barrier between them and us that the tests were designed in part to overcome" (104). Therefore, their artwork is at once proving they have a soul while categorizing them as "the other," as separate from humans. Despite their fitting into the definition of a human, their eerie relatability, their uncanniness as copies causes their othering.

While the clones are clearly ostracized from the human characters in the novel, Kathy invites the readers, real humans, to relate with the clones. The decision to use "you" and address the reader as someone who can relate to Kathy makes the reader question whether or not their experience as a human is not parallel to that of the character. Therefore, the novel as a piece of artwork is inviting the reader to place themselves in this world that really is not much different than theirs. This relatability is augmented by Ishiguro's choice to have his fictional society reflect a sort of English society. His descriptions of the setting are not really describing the real England, but an imagined England which he shares in an article from *The Guardian*: "I don't have a deep link with England like, say, Jonathan Coe or Hanif Kureishi might demonstrate. For me it is like a mythical place" (Adams). In *Never Let Me Go*, Hailsham is a kind of sepia-toned version of the quintessential English boarding school, giving it an uncanny resemblance to reality. So, although he is writing in the science fiction genre his setting and characters are closely inspired by an idea of Englishness. Instead of creating a completely different world to explore these ideas of othering, he creates a world that is uncomfortably close to reality, forcing the reader to make connections with real world othering. His blend of reality and simulation encourage discussion of the fictional clone's connection to contemporary society.

Ishiguro revisits the science fiction genre and ideas of reproductions in his 2021 novel *Klara and the Sun*, a story about a robot who learns to act like a human. The story begins in the store where Klara, the robot or AF as they call them in the novel, is being sold among other AFs. The point of these robots is for children to feel less lonely and for the robots to help them in any way that they can. They become a friend or parent-like figure in the children's lives. They are designed to look human-esque with certain genders. Klara is presented as a female robot, which is why she is referred to as a "she." Klara is bought by Josie's mother to serve as Josie's friend

and to keep her from being lonely, or at least that is what it seems like in the beginning. Once Klara goes home with Josie, she starts to be able to replicate humanity even more convincingly. She is able to reconstruct the human emotions and actions she observes. Because of Klara, certain characters recognize technology's ability to imitate human qualities and realize they fear a lack of uniqueness or the lack of differentiation of being human. The novel is riddled with fears of being replaced by technology. It makes apparent the layers of these fears and how they relate to society and relationships. Certain characters in *Klara and the Sun* try to reject the technology that is being embedded into their society. For example, Rick, Josie's neighbor and friend, and his mother decide that Rick does not need to be "lifted" in order to be successful. The idea of being "lifted" is not explicitly explained in the novel but can be assumed to be the title for genetically modified humans. On the other hand, Josie has been "lifted" and which is most likely the cause of her severe illness. Another character, Melania Housekeeper, who lives with Josie and her mom, resists the presence of Klara, always frowning at her and ignoring her presence. It takes Melania Housekeeper a long time before she accepts Klara's help to protect Josie. In addition, Josie's dad, an engineer, is skeptical towards Klara. He does not see her as "part of the family" like The Mother and Josie do. There is, therefore, scepticism towards this human-like robot because of the uncanny human nature she is able to project and her ability to cut into and assimilate into their human life.

As a cause of Josie's declining health, her mom, Chrissie, is doing everything she can to not lose her daughter, including asking a robot to embody Josie. Her mom seems to be comforted by the fact that she will not completely lose her daughter after her death because of Klara's ability to "continue" her life. She tests Klara's ability to do this on multiple occasions, one of them being on a trip to a waterfall Josie enjoys visiting. Chrissie says, "Since Josie isn't here, I

want *you* to be Josie. Just for a little while. Since we're up here" (Ishiguro 103). Note that in Josie's absence, Chrissie wants Klara to become Josie; she uses the words "to be" her, not just to imitate her or pretend to be her. She asks Klara to sit like Josie would, and once she accomplishes that, Chrissie demands: "Don't stop being Josie" (Ishiguro 104). She wants the robot to move and be Josie, and when Klara hesitates and is unsure of her task Chrissie says, "No. That's Klara. I want Josie." Klara complies with her wishes and starts to speak as Josie, which causes the mom to confess: "I'm sorry, Josie… I'm sorry I didn't bring you here today… I wish you were here. But you're not. I wish I could stop you getting sick." This is an odd interaction, because it seems that Chrissie actually feels that she is speaking to her daughter, even though she is aware of her daughter not being there. This seems like a preparation or simulation of what it would be like if Josie died. Chrissie would be able to still talk to Josie, almost as if she were talking to her ghost, through the help of technology. However, when Klara slips and says something only Klara would say, Chrissie becomes uncomfortable and says, "What is this? Who's this talking? … That's enough. Enough!" (Ishiguro 105). Chrissie then continues to talk to Klara as if nothing out of the ordinary just happened. This scene between Klara and Chrissie shows the mixed emotions the characters have towards technology. Chrissie is at once playing with and manipulating a robot to do something for her, but also seems to be angry or afraid when the robot slips into itself instead of Josie. While it seems that Chrissie wants Klara to perfectly copy Josie's being in order not to lose her, she is still uncomfortable with that desire. This character interaction brings out the complexities of accepting a nonhuman into the human community.

To complicate things further, Klara has her own differing point of view on replacing Josie. Although she learns how Josie acts, Klara would need Josie's appearance in order to

perfectly replicate her being. Chrissie takes this into account and forces her daughter to go to the city and sit for a "portrait" which is in fact more of a sculpture of her—the skeleton for Klara's programming to inhabit. During their visit to Mr. Capaldi, the sculptor, Klara finds the "portrait" of Josie:

> Her face was very like that of the real Josie, but because there was at the eyes no kind smile, the upward curve of her lips gave her an expression I'd never seen before. The face looked disappointed and afraid. Her clothes weren't real clothes, but made from thin tissue paper to approximate a T-shirt… Her hair had been tied back in the manner the real Josie wore it on her ill days, and this was one detail that failed to convince; the hair had been made from a substance I'd never seen on any AF. (Ishiguro 201-202)

Klara analyzes the duplicating artwork. She points out the aspects of the portrait that are different from the human Josie by using the word "real." Klara points out that the substances used for the portrait's t-shirt and hair are different from the substances on the "real" Josie. Although it was a recognizable representation of Josie, it was not perfect. Klara almost points out that there is no "aura" in the portrait, which seems counterintuitive to Benjamin's idea of art's "aura." Klara seems to give humans that sense of aura, of something special that separates them from other beings or from technology.

Josie's father, Paul, has his own differing opinion about the imitative quality of technology which is the root of its uncanniness. Paul ironically chooses to discuss his fears towards technology with Klara, a robot. In a way, he is talking to her about his fear of her. It is a scene of confrontation somehow similar to the mirror scene in *The White Castle*, when the look-alike's confront the idea of switching lives. In *Klara and the Sun*, however, Josie and Klara never talk to each other about the idea of the replacement, it is instead the characters surrounding

them that are concerned with this idea. In this scene, Paul reveals his feelings after driving Klara around to try and help her find the Cootings Machine, which Klara believes that if destroyed will improve Josie's health. This contrasts with Josie's mom's interaction with Klara because he is working with Klara to try and heal Josie instead of trying to train Klara into being Josie 2.0. While sitting in the car with Klara he says:

> I think I hate Capaldi because deep down I suspect he may be right. That science has now proved beyond doubt there's nothing so unique about my daughter, nothing there our modern tools can't excavate, copy, transfer. That people have been living with one another all this time, centuries, loving and hating each other, and all on a mistaken premise. A kind of superstition we kept going while we didn't know better. That's how Capaldi sees it, and there's a part of me that fears he's right. Chrissie, on the other hand, isn't like me. She may not know it yet, but she'll never let herself be persuaded. If the moment ever comes, never mind how well you play your part, Klara, never mind how much she wishes it to work, Chrissie just won't be able to accept it. She's too… old fashioned. Even if she knows she's going against the science and math, she still won't be able to do it. She just won't stretch that far. But I'm different. I have… a kind of coldness inside me she lacks. Perhaps it's because I'm an expert engineer, as you put it. This is why I find it so hard to be civil around people like Capaldi. When they do what they do, say what they say, it feels like they're taking from me what I hold most precious in this life. (221-222)

Paul admits that he believes that technology is powerful enough to be able to copy and transfer human qualities. He thinks that humanity has been mistaken in living in a society full of emotional turmoil of love and hate because it is a "superstition." He seems to think that because

humans can be copied and that the belief in love and hate is false. He calls humanity ignorant of the reality that they can be copied, that their emotions are not real. He is questioning the idea that the "human" as a category differs from the category of technology, wondering what the qualities are that make a human. It is important to point out that all of these ideas are just suspicions Paul has, he does not claim them as being completely truthful. He is only revealing what he fears might be true and claims that his cold nature is what might allow him to believe it. He compares himself to his ex-wife, who he claims will not accept this truth. However, it is Josie's mother who is pushing for Klara to be ready to replace Josie. There is a contradiction between what the mother's character is showing through her actions, and what another character is revealing about her through their relationship. All of this is revealing of the fears settling inside all of the characters regarding technology and its uncanny humanness. At the end of his speech, Paul reveals that he feels as though scientists are taking away his daughter, taking away her humanity by claiming that there is nothing unique about her. To him, she is what is "the most precious in his life," but scientists are reducing her to something to be copied by robots.

Another aspect of Paul's reluctance to this idea of technological replacement lies in his fascist views. Throughout the novel, fascism is not a prominent or obvious topic. However, it is briefly mentioned in conversation between Paul and Rick's mother while they are waiting to enter a theater. Rick, Josie, and Klara are present. They are discussing Rick's future and his difficulty in finding opportunities. Paul gives his advice:

> It's all very well calling me a fascist. Call me what you want. But where you're living now, it may not always remain so peaceful. You hear what happened in this very city last week? I'm not saying you're in danger right now, but you need to think ahead. (232)

He directly references what seems to be political violence in the city, which he is trying to protect them from. He is suggesting that this very vague "other" group is threatening them and that they need to be aware of them and potentially act against them. Rick's mom claims she is thinking ahead and she hopes her son will soon be elsewhere. Paul responds with a claim that suggests the past had been better: "I hope he's able to find a path through this mess we've bequeathed to his generation" (232). Paul wants to revert to a vague ideal from the vague past because the current situation is a "mess." Despite not saying this directly, he seems to be idealizing the past, a past without AFs that take over the lives of humans. While they are entering the theater, a "lady in a high-rank blue dress" who looks to be forty-six asks if they are bringing "this machine" into the theater: "These are sought-after seats… They shouldn't be taken by machines" (238). This lady is also idealizing the past, one without the AFs and technology taking over. The lady refers to Klara as a "machine" and Josie clarifies that she is an "AF," giving her a proper title that humanizes her. The lady responds: "First they take the jobs. Then they take the seats at the theater?" (238). This woman is disheveled by the presence of the AFs and their infiltration into human roles and spaces. She does not approve of technological replacement of humans. Paul and this lady seem to be the only characters that are strongly opposed to the AFs, who seem to be in support of fascism. The brief mention of fascism elevates this discussion of technological replacement into the realm of humanity and the idea of an evil or threatening "other." Much like society's disapproval of the clones in *Never Let Me Go* as creatures other than human, or the disapproval of the Pakistani nationality after 9/11 in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist,* the AFs in *Klara and the Sun* are considered to be this threatening "other."

Ishiguro places the fear of "the other" in a robot that arguably learns how to have humanity and seems to only differ from a human by her physical composition. The fear towards

the other usually manifests by diminishing their status, making them into slaves, lower class, or terrorists. Much like the Italian in *The White Castle*, Klara is a slave to Josie and her family and is forced to learn about her master in great detail. And much like the Italian, Klara doesn't have a choice whether or not she gets to occupy this identity that she must learn and is a slave to. The difference between them is that the Italian continues to be a slave through having to occupy his master's identity, while Klara gets discarded because Josie doesn't need to be replaced. Therefore, even though Klara listens to the commands of the people around her and she tries to "learn" Josie to "continue" Josie in a perfect way, she ends up admitting that her replacing Josie is most likely impossible at the end of the novel when she is sitting in a landfill. Although Klara thinks that she would have learned Josie accurately she doesn't believe it would have worked out: "however hard I tried, I believe now there would have remained something beyond my reach. The Mother, Rick, Melania Housekeeper, the Father. I'd never have reached what they felt for Josie in their hearts" (301-302). In other words, Klara is saying that she could not replicate the relationships Josie had to others. This connects back to Benjamin's idea that "even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (Benjamin 3). Klara could have accurately imitated Josie but she could not have accurately inhabited her history and experiences. Therefore, Klara could perfectly imitate but she could not truly replace Josie because everyone around her would be aware that she is not the "real" Josie, unlike the Italian in Pamuk's novel, who has convinced everyone around him that he is his master.

Despite being discarded, Klara does seem to have her own personality and identity by the end of the novel. She feels human in her reaction to her origins, her excitement at seeing her store while driving into the city with Josie: "It was just then I realized that the Tow-Away Zone

sign we were passing was the very one I knew so well, and in that same instant, the RPO Building appeared on Josie's side, and the familiar taxis were all around us. But when I turned with excitement towards our store, I could see something was not correct" (190). She finds that the store she occupied for the beginning of her "existence" has been changed into a lighting store. She is "startled" by the store's new appearance. This reaction to her origins and her overall development of emotions humanizes her, which allows the reader to somehow feel sympathy towards a robot. This effect is achieved by this meta-fictional quality of mechanically constructing a character's identity through the birth of a robot. And the reader is invited to sympathize with a character that is clearly not human but has the same qualities as any other human character. Through this robot character, Ishiguro seems to be shedding light on the constructed boundaries that are created between humans (ones that are considered human and others that are considered threats—them and us).

The Matrix, Never Let Me Go, and *Klara and the Sun* all construct an identity for imaginary characters. Ishiguro's novels in particular construct identities for characters in a post-human world where technology allows clones and robots to echo humanity, making them seem relatable to readers. The film and the novels pose the questions regarding originality and copying without providing concrete answers. What simulations or copies do we consider real? That seems to be up to the character or person that is interacting with a simulation or copy. Why are we so obsessed with being copied? Despite all being imitations of each other, humans want to have something unique about themselves, something that a robot cannot replicate. What is the difference between an original and a copy or between a real action and a performance? The difference is that the term "original" cannot exist without there being a copy and therefore there must be something different about it. A performance can only become a genuine action if it

becomes habitual. The film and the novels do not act as the answers to these questions; they instead expose the blurred lines between what is considered real and what is considered fake or copied. Although the content of the film and novels are about simulations and technology reproducing human life, their forms are also inherently doing the same. A movie is not a reality. A novel is not a reality. However, they are pieces of artwork that can help reveal something about reality. Just as Benjamin said, that a camera can penetrate more deeply into reality than the human eye can, film and literature can penetrate into our realities. The construction of novels and films allow us to ponder the construction of ourselves and our identities. *The Matrix* and Ishiguro's novels achieve this through the genre of science fiction, allowing for an augmented version of our technological and scientific life to be constructed. These ideas can be applied to aspects of our realities and the questions could evolve into: Who do we consider to be human? Who do we consider to be "the other?" Who are we discomforted by? Who do we diminish as a threat to us? Kathy and Klara are representations of societal groups that are not being accepted by dominating societies, like Arjie and Changez. These pieces of fiction that are seemingly very different all expose the idea of identity performance and performance to fit into societal groups and how boundaries between these groups are blurry.

Conclusion

Although fear of the "other" is not a new concept, our contemporary time period seems to be more aware and obsessed with how this idea is at once changing and stagnant. We are experiencing it on a different level, globally and through technology. And despite the moves made to be more understanding to different cultures, genders, and sexualities, there are still traditionalists that are afraid of the change and are sticking to their views of "the other." These fears are being manifested in contemporary literature and the authors who are exploring them through different perspectives are gaining recognition. *The White Castle*'s author, Orhan Pamuk is a Nobel Prize winner. Shayam Selvedurai's *Funny Boy* won the Books in Canada First Novel Award and the Lambda Literary Award for Gay Fiction. Moshin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, selected as New York Times Notable Book of the Year, and was adapted into a movie, among other accomplishments. Kazuo Ishiguro is a Nobel Prize winner and his novels have won countless awards and have been recognized by multiple institutions. Even though these novels are widely different in terms of setting, author origins, genre, and style they share notable similarities in their treatment of identity. *The White Castle*'s identity and life switch is just like the planned replacement of Josie by Klara in *Klara and the Sun*. While Pamuk decides to go back in time, into the seventeenth century, Ishiguro decides to go into the vague near future to explore this idea of replacement. The blending of nationalities and occupying a liminal space is shared by characters in *The White Castle, Funny Boy,* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.* All of these works of fiction share characters who are struggling with a feeling of discomfort in their identities as a cause from pressures in society; they are bringing attention to the difficult feelings surrounding identity in the contemporary globalized world.

Even though national boundaries are prone to fluctuate and are simply ways to physically separate ourselves, they create the sense of being organically connected to a group of people. This desire to be connected to one's organic origins can be considered a universal experience and is represented through the characters in these works of fiction. It is particularly interesting in *Never Let Me Go* to experience clones looking for their original human like adopted children looking for their birth parents. Or in *Klara and the Sun,* when Klara feels excitement at seeing the store she was bought from, a robot experiences a feeling of familiarity. Both novels are looking at "non-human" characters who desire connection but are being barred from experiencing it in an organic way because society is deeming them as unworthy of human treatment. The novels and film analyzed in this thesis all have political tensions between groups because of their fear of each other and the desire to dehumanize one another. It seems like these works of fiction are echoing E.M. Forster's "Only connect!" from 1910. The difference between 1910 and the twenty-first century is that E.M. Forester was only able to focus on class differences and the dehumanizations created through them, while these contemporary novels were able to complicate this by adding nationality, gender, sexuality, and even technology into the mix. With all of this in mind we might ask: What will future contemporary novels look like? What other aspects of humanity and identity will be reflected in future contemporary literature? Will we see another evolution of identity formation in the next turn of the century?

The problem of the human versus non-human will probably continue to exist and therefore will continue to be represented and discussed in literature. However, because contemporary literature is increasingly becoming global, the nuances of this tension will be able to be discussed and heard by diverse authors and audiences. Worldly literature is responding to our overly connected yet detached and fragmented global societies. The confusion of being in

between tradition and modernity, between having boundaries to being borderless, between being human and and non-human is infused into these novels. While we grapple with the ever changing and evolving world of AI and our new sense of global identity, contemporary literature will continue to capture the fears of replacement and hopes of connection.

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