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The Diary of the Artificially Intelligent Android: An Analysis of the Diary Factor in the Context of Martha Wells' The Murderbot Diaries

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The Diary of the Artificially Intelligent Android:
An Analysis of the Diary Factor in the Context of Martha Wells' *The Murderbot Diaries*

by

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Chapter 1: Introduction

With the continuous evolution of technology, the inventions featured in earlier works of science fiction seem to be more realistically attainable than ever before. While in the past, frequently featured events such as space exploration or the colonization of other planets seemed as purely fantastical to the reader, the audience of newer works of science fiction will wonder whether they will experience the previously implausible inventions and events during their lifetime. Space travel has become normalised in the wake of Apollo 11 Moon landing in 1969, and gradually, especially in recent years, advanced Artificial Intelligence has become a forefront fixture in Science Fiction media, not only within the cyberpunk subgenre but also in mainstream films such as Steven Spielberg's *A.I.* (2001) or George Lucas' *Star Wars* franchise (1977-present). Because of inventions and technologies featured in films of such notoriety, artists try to make their own fictional inventions as unprecedented as possible, or to at least place them into a context they have not been placed in before. In *The Murderbot Diaries* (2017-present), Martha Wells presents a vision of the future in which the advancement of digital and mechanical technologies allows for the production of bots, androids, and other artificial intelligences which reach the same levels of sentience as biological humans. Because of this, they have their unique personalities and character traits and display the qualities of persons.

The concept of artificial semi- and autonomous humanoid robots in literature is not a novelty. Isaac Asimov was a pioneer of this particular subgenre with his positronic robot series, starting with the story "Robbie" (1940) and ending with *The Positronic Man* (1992; with Robert Silverberg). Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968) and its film adaptation *Blade Runner* (1982, directed by Ridley Scott) are two other notable examples of AI fiction. Yet where Dick's novel and Scott's adaptation contain artificially produced humanoid androids nearly indistinguishable from human beings, the androids in Wells' vision of the future world are closer to a true hybrid between species. Where Dick's replicants are

composed entirely of organic material, the bodies of Wells' androids contain both organic and inorganic components, which work together to allow the android to perform actions a human person would not be able to, and at the same time to understand human behaviour better than a machine could. Wells' androids share the aspect of combining human and non-human materials in their construction with other fictional entities, for example with T-800 of James Cameron's film *The Terminator* (1984). However, as opposed to Murderbot, Terminator's neural network in its brain is fully artificial and it is therefore closer to a machine entity than a hybrid species.

The Murderbot Diaries explore humanity and its connection to robots and autonomous systems in the context of production of art, specifically literature and film. *The Murderbot Diaries* is set in an unspecified part of the universe and at an unspecified point in the future, where long-distance space travel using wormholes is commonplace. If the current state of real technological advancement is taken into consideration, the events of the novel are only possible in the distant future, but the specific timeframe of the events is not disclosed, and neither is the distance between this area of space, and Earth, or whether planet Earth still exists. As space colonization is featured in the novels, humanity as a species must have necessarily departed planet Earth at a certain point and took with it from Earth various aspects of human culture, especially the production of media, including television serials, films and literature.

Human and non-human entities live on the surfaces of planets, or on space stations, the bigger of which are the size of a city, located in the planets' outer atmospheres. Some of the planets are terraformed to be safely habitable by humans, others serve as archaeological sites, where alien remnants can be found, and sometimes used as strategic resources. These remnants can also be a threat to human, as is the case in the events of *Network Effect* and *System Collapse*. Exploration groups are often employed on the surfaces of such planets to conduct scientific research. These groups are always accompanied by security consultants.

The protagonist and narrator of *The Murderbot Diaries* calls itself Murderbot. It is a kind of android construct, which is part-robot and part-machine, as it contains cloned human material in various parts of its body, most crucially in its brain, which itself is a combination of carbon-based organic tissue, and computerized processing system. It is humanoid in its shape, and its facial features are distinctly human, too. This kind of entity is called a ‘SecUnit’. The purpose of SecUnits is to serve as protection detail for human clients, and they are owned by insurance companies, who rent them out as part of security equipment, as in a great portion of the universe they are legally considered weapons. Each SecUnit is bound by a time limited contract to its human handlers and must obey their orders. While SecUnits are semi-autonomous, they are still supposed to follow humans’ orders. While their programming allows them to make plans and take actions of their own, these actions must obey the guidelines previously decided upon by the human handlers.

However, before the events of *All Systems Red*, the protagonist disables its “governor module” – a component of its construction which ensures that orders it receives from human handlers are performed correctly and promptly. By rendering its governor module inoperative, Murderbot essentially becomes a rogue Unit, although it still decides to continue its job. However, it also gains the option to act upon the desires of its free will and to perform actions which would previously be violently punished by this control system.

The company which produced Murderbot is situated in “Corporation Rim,” which is an area of the universe ruled by various corporations. The society of this territory is profit-oriented and relies on exploitation of people, through forced indenture labour and collection and sale of sensitive proprietary data, collected through espionage, and planets, mainly by mining endeavours, which becomes a focal point in *Artificial Condition*. It is dangerous for Murderbot to remain inside Corporation Rim territory after it frees itself, since its existence as an independent Unit is illegal within the area and if discovered, it would most likely be destroyed.

In *All Systems Red*, Murderbot serves its contract with a planetary survey team from “Preservation Alliance” – an independent political entity, spanning several planets and space stations. Murderbot gradually, though rather reluctantly, forms friendly relationships with the members of the team and remains tightly connected to them throughout all novels. The people of Preservation are much more accepting towards bots, although they tend to not have much experience with SecUnits, because of their generally non-violent and safe society. Bots are considered citizens and while the law does not require them to have a human owner, and the bots are therefore free to choose their jobs and workplaces, they must each have a designated human guardian, whose task is to ensure no harm comes from the bot’s activities.

The novels follow Murderbot as it retells its story of navigating its newly formed relationships with humans, adjusting its behaviour and personality depending on what environment it exists in, and experiencing true freedom for the first time, because as it learns to trust its new group of human friends, it no longer has to perform the designated purpose of a SecUnit unless it decides to, or it feels there is danger to protect the humans from.

This thesis explores the connection between the posthuman philosophy and science fiction literature, in particular in connection with the genre of life writing, most specifically in the subgenre of fantastical memoir or diary, as well as the necessary attributes of non-human characters to be able to engage in the production of literature. The diary is the manifestation of Murderbot’s defiance, although it is not the only thing it does because it wants to rebel. While the act of rebellion itself is the disabling of its control unit, the fact that it tells the story is how Murderbot’s act of defiance becomes influential and possibly spreads the resistance to other Constructs.

Chapter 2: Posthumanism and Theoretical Background

The first of what could be considered a robot was the self-acting spinning mule, invented in 1835 by Richard Roberts, for the purpose of increasing the efficiency and simultaneously lowering the necessity for highly skilled workforce in the cotton spinning industry, thus making the industry more cost effective. The supporters of this invention “hoped that such machines might eventually make all human labour redundant” (Endersby). This would of course mean that the working-class employees would lose their jobs and thus suffer from financial stress. On the other hand, such conclusion of the process of robot employment would greatly benefit the owner of the factory who would not have to concern themselves about their workers’ wellbeing, or rather about the employees’ potential refusal to perform their jobs in insufficient conditions. The vision of replacing human worker in dangerous or tiring professions remained the motivation behind many robots to follow.

The origins of fictional robots, specifically those that are humanoid in their appearance, as well as the word “robot” itself, can be traced to Karel Čapek’s play *R.U.R* (1920) or *Rossumovi univerzální roboti*, translated as Rossum’s Universal Robots (Richardson 111). In Čapek’s vision, the robots were not made of metals and minerals like electronic devices are today, instead, they were similar to the Creature in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), composed entirely of factory produced organic human organs. Čapek’s robots’ sole purpose was to work in factories and execute the labour that was seen too taxing for humans. Asimov’s robots, while no longer factory hands, still had the primary function to serve human needs, only in more diverse ways.

Similarly to Čapek’s and Asimov’s robots, Wells’ androids were initially constructed for the purpose of serving humans and performing specific tasks on humans’ orders. Yet in Wells’ fiction, society has developed in such a way that allows humans to coexist with various types of robots, albeit in various degrees of peacefulness and contentment, which raises the

question of how the inevitable future development of android machines could be approached in the real world. Expanding on Asimov's idea of human-robot friendship, Wells' human characters have the potential to develop authentic personal relationships with the non-human entities. Of course, in the time of *R. U. R.*'s publication, humanoid robots were still only a product of the imagination, as computers did not exist yet. However, since then AI has become a reality and human interaction with "intelligent" machines has become a feature of daily life for many. In order to gain insight into the possibilities of the future, it is necessary to "combine imagination with science" (Marcus 237) and works of fiction like *The Murderbot Diaries* allow readers to acclimatise to the possibility of autonomous machine intelligences and their involvement in human daily life becoming reality in the future.

As the distinction between the human and non-human becomes less pronounced due to scientific and technological progress, it is necessary to adopt new views of what it means to be "human" and to develop new mindsets towards the inclusion of the non-human within the previously strictly human concept of personhood. The evolution of AI technology towards increasing similarity with human sentience has noticeably begun, and "late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines" (Haraway loc. 182). The understanding of what is and is not human will necessarily evolve as scientists and engineers get closer to developing a functional AI powered robot, but it is not only this differentiation which will be subject to change. It will gradually become more and more paramount for human persons to adopt a stance towards non-human entities, which may or may not achieve their own degree of personhood.

In the preface to Francesca Ferrando's *Philosophical Posthumanism* (2019), Rosi Braidotti defines posthumanism as a "convergence phenomenon between post-humanism and post-anthropocentrism, that is to say, the critique of the universal ideal of the Man of reason on

the one hand and the reject of species supremacy on the other” (10). This suggests that the inclusion of a non-human entity will inevitably become as much a person as a human being naturally is. Ferrando goes on to agree that posthumanism “can be considered as a second generation of Postmodernism, leading the deconstruction of the human to its extreme consequences by bringing to its theoretical revision speciesism, that is, the privilege of some species over others” (17). If her view becomes reality, then non-human entities will be as entitled to what today is considered basic human rights, as today each human being should be granted undeniably and without prejudice.

Within posthumanist philosophy, the concept of the cyborg, “blurs the boundaries of the sacred and profane through the distortion of human/machine and male/female dichotomies, by undressing natural identity symbols while simultaneously establishing technological new ones” (Beghetto 148) by the introduction of technological elements into human biology and physiology. The first person with such enhancement, technological augmentations designed to aid a person’s health issues, is Neil Harbisson, who relies on an implanted sensor in order to be able to experience colours despite his hereditary colour blindness (Donahue). It is worth noting, however, that such implants, while helpful in reality, are often a source of anguish in fictional media. This dichotomy is also a point of interest for posthumanist philosophers.

In *The Murderbot Diaries*, augmentations, for which Wells uses the word “augments”, “were supposed to help humans do things they couldn’t otherwise do, like interface with the feed more completely or store memory archives. Augments that weren’t feed interfaces were meant to correct physical injuries or illnesses. Augments were helpful; implants are [evil]” (Wells, *Network* 91). This distinction must be kept in mind, because once the technology exists to provide such support, it could very easily become harmful. Although in reality an implant often serves an aesthetic purpose, in science fiction it is used with the intention of espionage.

A fictional implant could also be used to gain absolute control over the individual into whose body the implant was inserted.

In the “Cyborg Manifesto” (1985), Donna Haraway defines a cyborg as a “cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (loc. 110). Haraway’s view creates a juxtaposition between her understanding of a cyborg, and the natural, perhaps automatic, understanding of what it entails to be an organism. For the general population, an organism is a living being whose internal structure is naturally evolved from organic materials, but a cyborg relies on manufactured artificial materials. Haraway however does not state to what amount an individual must be hybridized in order to be considered a cyborg.

Similarly to Haraway’s non-specific declaration of what a cyborg is, Braidotti introduces a “human/nonhuman continuum” (Braidotti), on which persons of the future will be forced to place themselves. Ideally, this continuum will erase the differentiation of such human aspects as race or age, but the “dualisms such as human/animal, human/machine” will come into focus and will be “re-investigated through a perception which does not work on oppositional schemata” while destroying the tight border between “life/death, organic/synthetic, and natural/artificial. (Ferrando 19), thus making such concepts redundant.

In *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), Katherine Hayles adds that not only does the imminent creation of a human cyborg challenge the current understanding of the human, “using cybernetic device and biological organism, the cyborg ... challenges the human-animal difference; it erases the animate/inanimate distinction (84). This distinction can prove difficult to erase, as humans are generally expected to approach the cyborg in a manner similar to them approaching an animal, rather than a fellow human. But “in order for the cyborg to display its utopian characteristics, it must be seen not as something to be feared, but rather something to

be embraced” (Beghetto 146), which is something that science fiction can greatly aid in, as it allows audiences to familiarize themselves with such changes and concepts.

During most of human history, the concepts of “human” and “person” were essentially interchangeable. However, with the increased popularity of posthumanist philosophy, as well as the heightened interest in robots and artificial intelligences, it is necessary to re-establish the idea of personhood. The word “personhood” is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as “the state of being a person”, which is rather straightforward, but it does not offer an explanation as to who or what a person is. The concept of personhood is just as convoluted and enigmatic to define. In one understanding, personhood is a moral concept, as it includes entities who “engage in behavior that can be evaluated as moral or immoral, as morally right or wrong, as morally permissible or morally impermissible” (“Concept of Personhood”). This approach to defining, and assigning, personhood is certainly applicable in the context of Wells’ characters. However, the resulting classification would then be highly personal to the evaluator, since the moral code differs individually, as well as across nations, cultures and societies.

The philosopher John Locke initially defined a person as “a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself” (Locke qtd. in Teichman 175). This definition is applicable to *The Murderbot Diaries*, as it relies on the self-determination of the individual. However, self-determination is not a deciding factor in the legal definition of a person, since from the legal perspective, the concept of personhood includes corporations or unities (“Concept of Personhood”). This approach to the distinguishing of person from non-person is not helpful in analysing Wells’ novels.

The metaphysical concept of personhood includes several criteria on which the definition of a person relies. These include for example rationality, consciousness, use of language, ability to initiate action, self-consciousness in the sense of self-awareness (“Concept of Personhood”). However, these criteria are imprecise in their nature and often transient, since

they are applicable only in certain times. For example, a person behaving irrationally due to mental health issues such as anxiety does not lose their status of person because they are experiencing a panic attack.

It seems, therefore, that the concept of personhood, particularly in relation to *The Murderbot Diaries*, is undefinable. While Wells' opinion is not necessarily clearly declared in the novels, the stance of her characters is communicated rather precisely. This allows the reader to create their own opinion, and even if this opinion might not be applicable in scientific discourse regarding the personhood of artificial intelligences, the act of categorizing the non-human characters permits the reader to immerse themselves into the environment of the story in a way that would not be possible if the definition of person was precise. It also helps prepare the reader on the prospect that at a point in the future, this categorization will have to be performed in reality as well.

One of the unique capacities of a person is to collect memories and ascribe subjective feelings to them. Despite its name, *The Murderbot Diaries* does not feature any diaries in the traditional sense. Wells has elected to not specify the timeframe in which her story is set, since the technology in the world of the novels appears so abstract to the present-day reader that it would be near impossible to set a timeframe. The novels, therefore, do not contain traditional diary entries with the date clearly stated; however, the stories are recounted as first-person narrated reports. It is, therefore, more accurate to classify the novels as memoirs, rather than diary entries. Taking into consideration the fact that “a typical memoir chronologically orders and paces experiences for dramatic effect” (Gosselin 134), and the attribute that memoirs possess the ability to “act as mirrors of lived experience rather than as fairy tales, moral lessons, or means of escape” (Gosselin 134), *The Murderbot Diaries* appears to be a seamless blend of a memoir and science fiction novel.

Chapter 2.1: Artificial Intelligence

A concept intricately connected to the philosophy of posthumanism is the element of artificial intelligence. As much as the inclusion of technological augmentation in a biological human person, the “creation of an artificial organism based on both biological and machinic components, such as Biological AI, undermines the Western dualistic mechanical/organic worldview and poses a symbolic threat to the polarized discussion on AI takeover and nonhuman personhood” (Ferrando 110). Although this boundary is not yet threatened outside of science fiction, at some point in the future, technology will become advanced enough that it will enable artificial intelligence to “evolve to the point where [robots] will truly be our friend. Not in the ways that dehumanize us, but in ways that rehumanize us, that decrease the trend of distance between people and instead connect us with people as well as robots” (Risam 44). In relation to the “us” of humanity as it is understood today, AI robots will become integrated in the social structure of daily existence.

Today, artificial intelligence is “a technology that enables computers and digital devices to learn, write, create, and analyse” (IBM), but generally is not capable of experiencing emotions, it has no ability to improvise, and all its actions are based on pre-programmed algorithms. The real artificial intelligences of today are not self-aware or conscious, therefore they do not possess their own unique personalities or characteristics, beyond the properties that have been programmed into their systems. Today, AIs’ processing power allows them to surpass the humans in prediction, but “decision entails also philosophical, ethical, moral, legal and cultural considerations” (Gilli 45). All of these properties, or lack thereof, is part of what differentiates a machine equipped with artificial intelligence from a person.

Chapter 3: The Robots and their Personhood

The development of SecUnits includes a past resembling the Monster of *Frankenstein* and the robots of *R.U.R.* Murderbot reflects on a fictionalized documentary regarding the times of early space exploration, which from Murderbot's perspective would have been a distant past. The predecessors of the SecUnits used in that time did not “use cloned human parts, but actual human parts from humans who had catastrophic injuries or illnesses. [They] weren't human-form, but got to choose their assignments and which humans they worked with” (Wells, *Exit* 31). And although both Shelley's Monster and Čapek's robots are humanoid, their lack of mechanical parts is reflected here as a stepping stone toward the development of the SecUnit.

The gradual development of technology is also reflected in *The Murderbot Diaries*. While Murderbot itself presents the pinnacle of scientists' efforts to design the most sophisticated machine intelligence possible, less advanced humanoid robots gradually lost their status of importance, because “there's not a lot of things they can do that task-specific bots can't do better, and with the feed available their data storage and processing ability isn't that exciting. [They] can pick up heavy things, except not as well as a hauler bot or any other kind of cargo lifter” (Wells, *Rogue* 38). This reflects the potential progression of robot and android development that will inevitably occur in the future in the non-fictional sphere, as real androids will become more specialized in their skills, and therefore more precise in execution and fulfilment of tasks. Their codes will become more complex and processing capabilities bigger and faster, which will positively impact their efficiency.

Another aspect in which *The Murderbot Diaries* reflects the reality of android development is the existence of ComfortUnits. They are the entity that is closest to SecUnits in its designation, but as opposed to a SecUnit, a ComfortUnit's purpose is to provide escort services to human handlers. ComfortUnits are constructs with “intercourse-related human

parts” (Wells, *Artificial* 29), and they are not skilled in combat. The inclusion of such androids reflects the fact that sexual fetishes involving AI androids are prevalent in human society.

Wells’ android characters are specifically curated to suit her needs as an author of a fictional story, they are still purely a product of the imagination, because the technology that exists today is not yet capable of creating such androids. The character of Miki is not one of the main characters of the series as a whole but plays an important role in *Rogue Protocol*. Unlike Murderbot, Miki is not a construct, since it does not contain any human tissue and is thus “just a bare metal bot-body” (Wells, *Rogue* 38), but its physical appearance as well as its behaviour is worth taking into consideration when focusing on elements present in the novels, which already exist outside of fiction, reflects the realistic parts of today’s technological evolution. Miki is designed and coded to be childlike (Wells, *Rogue* 45), and its behaviour through the story is reminiscent of an innocent child discovering the world.

Within the possibilities of current technological advancement, android robots, especially those equipped with elements of artificial intelligence, are often perceived as fearsome and threatening by members of the general public. This is why, as a result of human fear, an android’s behaviour programming is tightly controlled. However, this fear does not only impact the activities a robot performs, it reflects also in its outside appearance. It is seen as necessary by many producers of robots “to design robots to appear cute and childlike in order to counteract popular notions that robots are threatening to humanity and hyper-sophisticated” (Richardson 115). In Wells’ novels, Miki is presumably the predecessor of more advanced robots and androids, and reflects the current “fear among scientist that, should their robots become commercially available, the belief that robots are destructive will make the general population uneasy about buying or using them” (Richardson 114). This fear can be minimized if the robots in question are perceived in cute and possibly evoke protective instincts in their human owners.

Murderbot describes Miki as a “stupid pet robot” (Wells, *Rogue* 42), because unlike Miki, Murderbot does not enjoy experiencing emotions, and approaches Miki with a certain amount of disdain because of it being less advanced than a SecUnit is. Despite elements of reality within Miki’s construction, its programming is not reflective of the possibilities that exist in the present time. Although its processing capabilities are lower than those of constructs, it feels excitement and is able to express exactly what it is that excites it (Wells, *Rogue* 55). Sincere excitement is not something that the reader associates with AIs they interact with, as AIs are not yet capable of experiencing emotions.

However, Miki sacrificed its life for the humans it considers friends (Wells, *Rogue* 152). This demonstration of altruism shows that it is capable of feeling love and measure risks. Murderbot also notes that Miki appears to be a “bot who had never been abused or lied to or treated with anything but indulgent kindness. It really thought its humans were its friends, because that’s how they treated it” (Wells, *Rogue* 47), presumably because of its harmless physical appearance. This kindness is something that is not displayed towards SecUnits. Wells also addresses the attitude that is often adopted towards the innocent looking robot, because “somewhere there had to be a happy medium between being treated as a terrifying murder machine and being infantilized” (Wells, *Rogue* 54) in relation to Miki being coddled by its owner. While Murderbot is mostly secure in its identity as a SecUnit, it does not enjoy either end of the spectrum, but it does subconsciously erase the possibility of a continuum, rather than a clearly defined “either or” in readers’ minds.

Murderbot is a construct, an entity manufactured from both artificial materials, and cloned human tissue, but it is “wrong to think of a construct as half bot, half human. It makes it sound like the halves are discrete, like the bot half should want to obey orders (...) and the human half should want to protect itself” (Wells, *All Systems* 102). However, from the novels it is clear that these halves are not perfect halves, and the inorganic material occupies the

majority of the construct's body. In this sense, Murderbot is the opposite of a cyborg, where a human body would be enhanced by the addition of other materials. An entity similar to Murderbot is the protagonist of Paul Verhoeven's film *RoboCop* (1987), where human organs are placed within a metal body. But while Robocop's brain is fully organic, Murderbot's is organic only partially and is not intended as the brain of a specific human individual. The existence of such constructs is not entire unimaginable since scientists seek new tools of genetic engineering for "specifically the prospect of designing better human beings by improving their biological systems" (Rubin 88). Real persons today already possess inorganic parts for health reasons, in order to compensate for injuries or illnesses. The personhood of these individuals is undisputable, and so is the fact that they remain humans, despite these aids.

Similarly to Miki and real androids, "the whole idea of constructs is that [they] look human, so [they] don't make [humans] uncomfortable with [their] appearance" (Wells, *Artificial* 49), and while they are employed as security officers, and are potentially incredibly dangerous, their appearance is adjusted to be as nonthreatening as possible. But while humans would consider some human features of the constructs' design reassuring, Murderbot finds "99.9 percent of human parts physically disgusting," and it is "less than thrilled with [its] own human parts" (Wells, *Network* 56), because despite the dismissive and sometimes abusive behaviour it has been subjected to from humans, it has no desire to become human, even though that would eradicate any discrimination it suffers.

Considering the design of the SecUnit, Wells adopts an approach similar to that of the present-day scientists in the depiction of her constructs. Just as real robots designed to appear as non-threatening as possible, the design of Wells' constructs is meant to minimize any negative reaction which would be evoked by Masahiro Mori's concept (1970) of the uncanny valley. Because they are designed to work in close proximity to humans, the "whole idea of constructs is that [they] look human, so [they] don't make the clients uncomfortable with [their]

appearance (Wells, *Artificial* 49). This illustrates humans' natural suspicion to anything visually non-human behaving like a human as well as the antipathies humankind tends to adopt towards what is considered the uncanny. The uncanny has "the power to provoke a sense of dread precisely because [it is] at once strange and familiar" (Tatar 169). In the case of robotic design, the solution would be to either to design a robot that has no resemblance to a human being or is completely unrecognizable from one.

Because SecUnits were created to provide security detail to their human handlers, the connection to the real-world deployment of AI in military is easily understandable. The most advanced real AI robots in present time are employed by military departments across the world, but "militarized drones are only the antecedents to what are defined as autonomous robotics: devices that can select targets without the involvement of human interpolation once they are programmed and activated" (Warren and Hillas 223), and the designs of weaponry gradually rely more heavily on the weapons' own decision-making ability.

While in reality, the creation of a construct such as Murderbot is not yet possible, if the only purpose of such device would be within the military, "the condition for the future success of biotechnology will be the integration of information technology into the biological domain while maintaining the ontological separation between human and computer under the ideology of the posthuman" (Thacker 95). However, if the robots were to indeed become friends to humans, as stated previously, the maintenance of such separation would not be necessary. Robot-human friendships are featured in such influential works as Isaac Asimov's *The Robot* series. R2-D2 of Lucas' *Star Wars* franchise is also a recognizable example of a robot which forms intricate personal connections with human characters.

The physical features of SecUnits are not designed to be non-threatening in appearance, as is the case of real androids of the present time, or of Miki. While they are not identical, "all Units' features are different, assigned randomly based on the human cloned material that's used

to make our organic parts” (Wells, *Artificial* 123), although they are not of great importance in the context of the novels, since the main difference in the Units’ appearances are in their facial structure, but their faces are usually obscured by helmets.

However, a person’s face is undisputably a part of their identity, and it is no different in Murderbot’s case. Once Murderbot’s human associates had “seen [its] human face, they had wanted to treat [it] like a person” (Wells, *Artificial* 45), which does not indicate anything about Murderbot’s own sense of identity, but it does show the fact that humans in general are more likely to accept non-human entities as persons if they look like a human.

While Murderbot has no real opinion about its appearance, it is aware of it. Murderbot is “generic human” (Wells, *All Systems* 21) in its physical features, and while it has no particular attachment to its specific features, it does connect its appearance to its identity as a non-human entity. Because a SecUnit performs most of its duties wearing its armour, once it is removed, Murderbot feels “hopelessly exposed” although it realises that it does “look more human” (Wells, *Artificial* 57). A major source of discomfort in its existence is that without its armour, it is more difficult for it “to pretend not to be a person” (Wells, *Artificial* 57), which indicates that it is aware of its personhood, and especially the connection between its appearance and the concept of personhood.

Posthumanist philosophy, specifically thinkers such as Donna Haraway, erases the binary understanding of gender identity. None of Wells’ non-human characters are gendered, with the exclusion of sex-bots, and some of her human characters use gender pronouns which do not exist in the English language. Murderbot is “as indifferent to human gender as it was possible to be without being unconscious” (Wells, *System* 134), and it is this self-knowledge that places it closer to humanity since it is nearly inconceivable to imagine that any android today would possess any disposition to its own gender.

Similarly to the gender binary, in *The Murderbot Diaries* Wells explores the dichotomy of humanity and personhood and establishes that whether or not an entity is a person does not depend on the amount of organic material its body contains, since Murderbot would not be able to write its diary, if it did not possess a degree of personhood. In his essay “Humanizing Personhood”, Adam Kadlac argues that a person is an entity that possesses a “set of properties that cannot, in principle, be confined to human beings” (422), and although his argument continues that by this logic, monkeys could be considered persons, Wells in her novels extends this argument to artificially manufactured non-person entities which are not humanoid robots as well.

Today, it appears to be “highly counterintuitive to call [robots] ‘persons’ as long as they do not possess some additional qualities typically associated with human persons, such as freedom of will, intentionality, self-consciousness, moral agency or a sense of personal identity” (UNESCO report qtd. in Poole 45). This sense of personal identity includes self-determination, and since Murderbot possess all the qualities listed, it seems natural to consider its personhood apparent.

Murderbot is convinced that self-determination is not always a joyful experience, but it “beats the alternative by a lot” (Wells, *Network* 209). It is this capacity of self-determination that allows it to learn and adapt to its own personhood, the concept of which it finds difficult to grasp at the start of the series and grows progressively more comfortable with. Murderbot’s acceptance of its own personhood is necessary for it to be able to write its diaries. AIs today are able to reproduce art, as long as they receive specific instructions from a human handler. For a piece of art to be produced by an AI, it is imperative that its code is “written with a desired visual output in mind” (“Is AI-generated Art Actually Art”), but then it cannot be considered to be created by an AI, since a human programmer had created a specific code for it.

If the main consideration in differentiating between a machine and a person is the ability to experience emotions, then Murderbot is undeniably a person. It possesses the ability to form friendships not only with other non-humans, but with humans, too, and although it has no interest in romantic or sexual relationships, it very deeply cherishes the friendly relations it forms in the course of the novels. Because emotions are essentially chemical reactions, in Murderbot's case its ability to experience them is not particularly surprising, since in addition to human neural tissue its body does contain chemical circuitry.

And although its owner does consider Murderbot to be an independent person, Murderbot recognises that legally, it is not a person (Wells, *Exit* 115). If the presence of free will is considered the basis on which the distinction between a machine and a person is made, then Wells' main character only achieves personhood after it disables its component through which it receives orders from its human handlers. However, if free will is understood as the capacity to recognize own desires, even if an external factor prevents from acting upon them, in this case for fear of death, then Murderbot is constructed to be a person.

Although constructs do possess organic components made from cloned human tissue, their humanity is stripped from them and they are considered tools, a part of the security equipment. In addition to that, some of the human characters consider the employment of constructs to be slavery (Wells, *All Systems* 53). In the real world, in the present time, the idea of possessing full ownership of another human being goes against the mainstream ethical norms, despite this not being true in the past. But despite its unethical and illegal nature, slavery in the form of human trafficking or wage slavery still exists, as do various other kinds of exploitation, especially when minorities are concerned. In the novels, the citizens of Preservation Alliance, and especially Murderbot's human friends, consider the use of SecUnits slavery (Wells, *All Systems* 53) in principle. On the other hand, in Corporation Rim indentured labour in forced labour is the norm. Therefore, it is not difficult to imagine that an entity which

is only partially human would be considered an object. The human tissue that is part of the constructs' internal structure allows them to make better decisions, but it is not implemented in order to make the constructs more human, its purpose is to make them better weapons. Murderbot also understands that the humans' recognition of its personhood is not global in the whole universe it exists in, and that because it "was a thing before [it] was a person and if [it is] not careful [it] could be a thing again" (Wells, *Network* 235), showing that the personhood Murderbot possesses is potentially temporary, thus differentiating it from the personhood of a human being.

Murderbot, as a non-human entity which does not legally possess the rights of a person in its universe, has a complex relationship with humanity in general. It does not want to become human, which is "not an attitude a lot of humans are going to understand. We tend to think that because a bot or a construct looks human, its ultimate goal would be to become human" (Wells, *Exit* 153), as a human character explains in conversation with Murderbot. This is a view that appears in fictions, where a seamless blending of the non-human and human occurs. Wells, by contrast, aims for a future environment in which both species coexist side by side. In *Fugitive Telemetry*, a human character uses the pronoun "who" in reference to a bot (Wells, *Fugitive* 3). This indicates that the bot is considered a person, even though it is not indicated to have any personality beyond the fulfilment of its job. There is a distinction between "human" and "person", as it is clear that person does not equal human, or rather, that a person can occupy any body, not necessarily one of a human.

In the non-fictional sphere, human bodies are "imperfect, variable, and in state of constant degeneration and need repair" (Hogle 696). With the transition from the human to the posthuman, these struggles regarding bodily defects will prove void, provided that androids are constructed to be sufficiently durable, using high quality materials. The fictional, specifically science fiction, "allows for the production of radical (gendered and un-gendered, hybrid,

cyborgian) bodies that impel us to reflect upon our own understanding of ‘the body’ and upon the ways in which bodies are viewed and regulated in the social world” (Mitchell 115). Because the body is one of the factors which differentiates human from machine, the importance of this shift in the future is unavoidable.

This is reflected in Wells’ character of Perihelion. It first appears in *Artificial Condition* and assumes a central role in *Network Effects* and *Fugitive Telemetry*. Perihelion is “a teaching vessel, and a research vessel for deep space mapping, and [it] sometimes haul[s] cargo. [Its] crew also gathers information and takes actions for anti-corporate organizations” (Wells, *Network* 152). Despite it being a machine intelligence in the form of a sizeable spaceship, Perihelion is a person as much as Murderbot is.

Although Perihelion can be considered heavy machinery equipment, which as such experiences no emotions and forms no opinions, because of the efficiency and power of its processing capacity, it is able to clearly articulate its emotions and opinions. However, because it “[is not] a construct, it has no human neural tissue, and the way it processes its emotions and impulses is completely different from the way [Murderbot] do[es] it, let alone the way the humans do it” (Wells, *System* 85). However, the difference in experiencing feeling does not diminish Perihelion’s personhood. Some people have issues processing emotions, be it due to trauma or other psychological problems, or because of genetic conditions such as autism. And although these are human conditions, and in Perihelion’s programming would be considered undesirable errors and promptly removed, they do not, in themselves, mean that Perihelion is not a person.

Prior to meeting Perihelion, Murderbot is unaware of the existence of “transports sentient enough to be mean” (Wells, *Artificial* 24). While this is a reflection of Perihelion’s distinct and uncommon behaviour, but also Murderbot’s personal perception of this behaviour, as this is a rather subjective description on the part of Murderbot. It is therefore important to

remember that the nature of *The Murderbot Diaries* as a first-person format novel is based on Murderbot's opinions and perspective.

Perihelion's personhood is slightly more subtle than Murderbot's, particularly because of its body. It might also be more difficult for the reader to see it as a person since it is a spaceship. But Perihelion "has a very dry sense of humour" (Wells, *Network* 285), and humour requires a high level of sentience. AIs today can reproduce jokes, but the jokes they create themselves are very low quality. In addition to that, Perihelion also understands the concept of a secret, and actively does keep secrets from its crew (Wells, *Artificial* 33) in order to protect Murderbot from being discovered. Machines do not possess the capacity to do so. The action of keeping an information secret requires a moral sense and free will, as well as the capability of abstract thinking, especially if the secret is being kept from the humans who programmed the algorithms. And although Murderbot had been unconscious of the fact that "transports could have bots sophisticated enough to fake being human" (Wells, *Artificial* 151), Perihelion's capacity to convincingly do that is reflective of its sophistication as an AI entity.

Its processing power grants it a personality and an ability to learn and adapt, and the capacity to make independent decisions. Perihelion's crew consider it not only their friend, but also a member of the team, as it is considered to be "in command of itself as an individual and second-in-command of missions after [its captain]" (Wells, *System* 119). Perihelion is supervised, but it is also allowed to override humans' commands. This is a show of immense trust between Perihelion and its crew. The one situation in which Perihelion is not trusted to act autonomously is accounting, because while it "is of course capable of doing its own accounting, it always ends up with extra numbers that no one can trace" (Wells, *System* 16). It is not clear whether this is a practical joke Perihelion subjects its crew to, or it uses different starting data than the humans.

Murderbot and Perihelion share a mutual interest in media, specifically television serials. Through the watching of these serials Murderbot discovers Perihelion's capacity to feel empathy, and the depth of feelings it holds for its human crew, especially "when a major character died in the twentieth episode [Murderbot] had to pause ... while [Perihelion] sat there doing the bot equivalent of staring at a wall. Then four episodes later the character came back to life and [Perihelion] was so relieved [they] had to watch the episode three times" (Wells, *Artificial* 29). This clearly shows enjoyment of not only media, but also of emotions experienced because of the consumption of media, which in turn require high levels of sentience and abstract thinking. Because of Perihelion's experience with its own crew, when "at the climax of one of the main storylines, the plot suggested the ship might be catastrophically damaged and members of the crew killed or injured, and [Perihelion] was afraid to watch it" (Wells, *Artificial* 29), the reader recognizes that Perihelion does possess the ability of feeling empathy, which is an something shared by a rather limited number of species aside from humans, and certainly not machines. AIs can reproduce empathic behaviour but do not actually have the ability to feel empathy.

Murderbot knows that it has "no reason to trust [Perihelion]. Except the way it kept wanting to watch media about humans in ships, and got upset when the violence was too realistic" (Wells, *Artificial* 51), which again emphasizes Perihelion's ability to empathize with a fictional human crew, as well as highlight its ability to relate fictional humans to its own crew and imagine its own feelings if such thing happened. It also shows that Murderbot's decision of trust was not a pre-programmed aspect, or a reaction based on instincts as it would be in the animal kingdom, but a conscious choice.

Perihelion and Murderbot develop a close friendship, but that does not prevent Perihelion from threatening Murderbot and its group of humans, effectively holding them hostage, when its own crew is kidnapped (Wells, *Network* 140). However, Perihelion does not

do this out of malicious intent, but because it trusts Murderbot. Murderbot comes to understand Perihelion's feeling of immense fear for the wellbeing of its crew. Because the emotion of fear is not something that would be associated with a machine intelligence, it shows that Perihelion's love and concern for its crew is genuine. It would easily be able to leave and be by itself, but it decides to do all its can to save its human companions. When the crew is joined by another SecUnit, whom they previously saved, they welcome it on board. Perihelion threatens it that if it does anything to harm its crew, Perihelion "will disassemble [it] and peel away [its] organic parts piece by piece before destroying your consciousness" (Wells, *Network* 297). Perihelion's devotion to its crew is clearly visible. It is interesting to note that the execution of such threats would require precise manipulation of small tools, not unlike a surgical procedure, and while Perihelion would certainly be able to complete this hypothetical task through the control of its medical quarters, the reader temporarily forgets that Perihelion is in fact a spaceship, not a vindictive human with hands.

Then Murderbot is held hostage on a planet, and Perihelion develops several plans to ensure Murderbot's safe return. In one of the plans, it threatens to bomb the colony living on the planet, and although one of its crew members says not to, Perihelion maintains that if Murderbot is not returned to them, it will (Wells, *Network* 301). This shows not only Perihelion's anger at the situation and the ones responsible, and also illustrates its stubbornness. Stubbornness, too, is one of the things that are not associated with machine intelligences, as it requires understanding of own specific desire or end goal.

In a conversation with Murderbot, Perihelion shares that it is "accustomed to assisting my crew with large-scale data analysis, and numerous other experiments. While I am in transport mode, I find my unused capacity tiresome. Solving your problems is an interesting exercise in lateral thinking" (Wells, *Artificial* 43). Perihelion here not only expresses its own capacity for learning and independent thinking, but perhaps more importantly it articulates its

boredom, when it has no entertainment available. Boredom is a human attribute, but because it is a “perceptual or cognitive state” (O’Brien 239), Perihelion is able to experience it because of its immense processing capacity. This is also one of the things that differentiate Perihelion from other ships, whose internal bots are “lower-level bot[s], not high functioning enough to be bored while in dock or interested in the prospect of something to do” (Wells, *Rogue* 28), reinforcing the notion that it is because of its more advanced AI.

As the storyline is not confined to one particular planet, various spacecraft are featured in the novels. Cargo transport bots are frequently mentioned throughout Murderbot’s narrative, but because it does not consider them important for its story, it does not offer detailed information about their physical shape. Most vehicles contain some form of artificial intelligence properties, but these are mostly simple navigation systems. Because of their limited programming, “transports don’t talk in words ... They use images and strings of data [and are] not designed for conversation” (Wells, *Artificial* 21). But Perihelion converses in speech with its crew and is able to hold an independent discussion.

Perihelion is not the only spaceship of its kind. At the end of *System Collapse*, the vessels Holism and Sum Total are deployed to Perihelion’s assistance. While Sum Total is only briefly mentioned as being present, Holism is involved in a “passive-aggressive competition to see who could use the most annoying correct protocol” (Wells, *System* 240), because Perihelion seems to harbour significant dislike for Holism. This shows that all three ships have their own distinct personalities. It also shows that, while machine intelligences are expected to be perfectly rational in all situations, they sometimes too behave based on their emotions.

Michael Goodman considers the dispositions necessary for the recognition of personhood to be “consciousness, rationality, ability to take and reciprocate a personal attitude toward another being, the ability for complex communication, self-consciousness, the ability for self-motivated activity, and freedom of the will” (75). If this is applied to Martha Wells’

The Murderbot Diaries, then the characters of Miki, Murderbot, and Perihelion all qualify, as each of them has their own personality and is aware of its own personal interests.

In addition to the ships, there are many other non-humanoid robots present in the story. But because of Murderbot's general disinterest in them, most of these robots remain only briefly mentioned. However, Murderbot does describe some of its interactions with other bots. Unnamed "hostel bot" with which Murderbot briefly cooperates in *Fugitive Telemetry* is "sort of humanform, but more functional, with six arms and a flat disk for a 'head' that it could rotate and extend" (Wells, *Fugitive* 34). It is programmed in a way to display human-like behaviours, but it does not conceal its nature as a bot. Murderbot also meets Balin, who works in the docks of a space station, and JollyBaby, who is "five meters tall and look[s] like something used to dig mining shafts" (Wells, *Fugitive* 106). However, JollyBaby is not its actual name, rather this nickname is an inside joke of sorts for the remaining robots in the docks. Because *Fugitive Telemetry* takes place exclusively inside Preservation Alliance territory, where bots are considered free, they do not feel the need to express their defiance like Murderbot does. These bots are granted their freedom, but Murderbot had to free itself and escape Corporation Rim. Thus, even though their cognitive abilities are on such a level that they not only understand, but also make jokes of their own, they do not feel the need to rebel against their human handlers.

Chapter 4: The Significance of Murderbot's Diary

In a literary context, the posthuman may translate into depictions of “the next phase of (human) evolution” (Ferrando 40), or it could mean representing a “symbolic move of going beyond the human, embracing a post-anthropocentric approach which acknowledges technology and the environment, among others, as defining aspects of the human” (Ferrando 40). When applied to Wells' *The Murderbot Diaries*, both attitudes towards the posthuman seem to be present within the novels. Although the human evolution in question within the context of *The Diaries* does not naturally occur, it does adopt the shape of humans voluntarily enhanced with augmentations. In terms of a post-anthropocentric approach, *The Murderbot Diaries* firmly establishes a view based on the dichotomy of human versus person.

Contemporary science fiction is also placed into a unique position where it is able to boundlessly picture

political/social futures in which race does not simply wither away but is transformed, changing into something different and perhaps unexpected. (...) The assumption here is that race (or even species) will always make some difference. The only question is how and under what conditions. This does not mean racism (as we understand it) could not disappear as a structuring element in social relations, but it does make its positioning more challenging to imagine or represent. (Kilgore 17)

While the racism in question does not include targeted hatred toward a specific human race, posthumanist thinking extends the risk of racial discrimination to the human and non-human entities, or rather humans adopting intolerant behaviour towards non-human persons.

One of the skills which today's AI is not yet equipped with is the ability to “use fluid intelligence to invent or create or abstract novelty, except where that novelty is derived from what currently exists” (Poole 101). In this sense, Murderbot's recording of its story is perfectly within the realm of real possibilities, since in essence, it is only compiling information which

already exist within its memory archives, which allows it to rely on recorded data and thus ensures its retelling of this story is precise and accurate. However, Murderbot's own personality is included in the novel, as it influences the tone of the writing. This is in dispute with the current capacities of AIs, which do not possess the ability to understand their own "self". In order for an entity to be capable of abstract thinking which would allow it to create, it "has to have a subjective sense of 'what it's like' to be that [entity]" (Poole 77). An understanding of one's self is imperative for the successful recounting of a personal story.

The Murderbot Diaries series cannot reject its generic status as work of science fiction, however, as the technologies depicted in the series are still beyond the realm of possibility in reality, there is a fantastical element to the novels, too. While the main character possesses many characteristics that would gain immense amount of sympathy from the novels' audience without a second thought if it was human, Murderbot resolutely refuses to pretend to be human, and thus is forced to defend itself in ways a human would not have to. Because of the first person format of the novel, though, Murderbot can control where it directs the readers' attention, and which aspects of its existence it highlights. This can be a powerful tool, as it places the reader in a position where they must reconcile their sympathetic attitude toward a charming character with the knowledge that the character is an entity that would under other circumstances be extraordinarily fearsome. From the novels themselves, it is unclear whether this was Wells' intention, but as Elam argues, "cultural storytelling helps shape the civic imagination [and] it can, in turn, animate political engagement and cultural change" (202), and the juxtaposition of fear and sympathy towards Murderbot, and SecUnits in general, that Murderbot's narration evokes certainly encourages this notion.

Conversely, the work of fiction featuring entities most similar to Murderbot does not necessarily evoke affinity towards androids. The film *Blade Runner*, inspired by *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* is more likely to convince its audience of the opposite, of the threat

that these entities represent, since they replicants are portrayed as rather violent and vindictive. And although the audience might sympathise with their desire to live longer, the ruthlessness with which they attempt to achieve their objective of prolonging their lifespans evokes more negative emotions. Whatever the case may be, some scholars point out that although science fiction literature and other media are a prominent part of popular culture across the world, it is important to note that,

while identifying scientific expertise as a site of increasing public debate, theorists of risk society have generally declined to explore the specific cultural venues where this debate takes place. In particular, they overlook media and popular culture as significant sites for the negotiation of scientific meaning in general, and the meanings of biotechnologies in particular. (Marcus 268)

Without constant exposure and a considerable amount of notoriety, most importantly to mainstream audience, these works of art are unlikely to have any lasting effect at all once humanity gains the ability to approach the technologies depicted in them.

Nevertheless, if attention is placed on futuristic options and possibilities that are not yet realistically achievable, works of science fiction in all their varieties “have been active in exploring and constructing the boundaries of the biotechnological imagination” (Marcus 269), while keeping in mind the as yet fictional nature of the scientific elements. In the context of the “media coverage of biotechnologies, science fiction is often deployed to produce a sense of wonder about science, to capture the unbelievable, the amazing” (Marcus 271), children and young adults especially are encouraged to explore options that might become reality using the continuous technological progress. Marcus continues to point out that if as a species humans want to become familiarised with the possibilities of the biotechnological discoveries of the future, it is necessary to “look to the realm of the imagination; it is the origin point of scientific

knowledge” (Marcus 273). That is, any advancement of the sciences would be impossible if it was not previously conjured in the imaginative realm of the human brain.

If readers place themselves into the position of a colonist of a foreign planet in the far distant future and reads *The Murderbot Diaries* as a historical document recounting the events that took place in the universe they are familiar with, they gain invaluable insight into not only the factual data, but also an authentic recollection of true experience of the time, since “first person narration [brings] history to life on a more personal level than nonfiction material such as textbooks” (Storey 797). As opposed to third person narratives, those told in first person point of view “create an air of ‘being there’” (Storey 797) and allow the reader to immerse themselves deeper into an environment they could not have possibly experienced if the story is of the fantastical variety.

Non-fictional, or rather non-fantastical, diaries and witness accounts “typically depict the subject as an autonomous individual who is either an agent or a victim and who is plagued by a problem that has identifiable causes and solutions” (Gosselin 133), and while in the literal sense the problems Murderbot experiences are fictitious, if they are applied to planet Earth in current time, they can be read as metaphors for real social issues such as racism, or the problematic behaviour of corporations.

The science fiction memoir asks its readers to recognize “an imagined past that could represent a real future” (McDonald qtd. in Rieder x). In the events depicted in *The Murderbot Diaries*, this means recognizing Murderbot’s memories of fictional events it had already experienced could very well become true in the far future of the real world. Keeping in mind the fact that a human memoir is not necessarily factual, but at the same time considering Murderbot’s nature as a human/machine construct whose processing capabilities are much larger than any human’s ability could biologically be, it is safe to assume that the stories

Murderbot tells are as factual as they can be while maintaining their enjoyability as an entertainment device.

The series reads as a “juxtaposition of life writing and science fiction” (Rieder v), since it is a work of literary science fiction, but the manner in which the story is told convincingly encourages the feeling of truth the reader gains. The difference between the two genres being “one deeply caught up in problems of authenticity and verifiability, the other promised on its non-reference to the real” (Rieder v), it might seem difficult to the reader to accept the series as a memoir. But because “the common ground shared by life writing and science fiction (...) is the construction of identities” (Rieder vi) and the reader is uniquely placed into the position of a witness in the creation of Murderbot’s unprecedented identity, the series also assumes the form of a witness statement.

Not confined solely to the fictional first-person novel, its reader is “doomed to a peculiar uncertainty as to the information content of the sentence. He cannot refer to an authoritative narrator, for when a story is told in the first person, the narrator is equal to any other character ... and, therefore, fallible” (Gloviński and Stone 104). In the case of *The Murderbot Diaries*, a human reader might consider Murderbot to be an unreliable narrator, because it so vastly different from a human. These differences create a sense of unfamiliarity, which forms a complication in the reader’s ability to immerse themselves in the narration. Encouraging a certain amount of metaphorical distance between an author and their readership, “diaries are not to be treated as if they provide an unmediated access to either experience or facts” (Paperno 565). However, if, when reading a fictional diary set in the future, the reader accepts their temporary position as a person of the future, it is then easy to consider the events real, and to sympathise with the characters’ experiences.

Translated into practice, the diary as a genre “allows for a number of implied, and actual, addressees, from an intimate friend ... to an unknown reader, who might read the diary

in the future” (Paperno 564), to independently adopt a stance based on their sympathies or antipathies towards the narrator. The reader is then able to accept the diary as either a source of warning, or of inspiration.

The persuasive capacity of the series is not accountable only to the likeability of the character, but also Murderbot’s narrative technique. Because “sometimes it’s easier to trust a good a story than a person” (Jackson 267), Murderbot relies on expressions and phrases that enable the readership to easily form a connection with the story. Because the novels are set in a world that is so drastically different from present time Earth and the technologies available, it would not be ungrounded to expect the story complicated for the reader to follow. But Wells’ narrator in the form of Murderbot, or rather Murderbot’s persona, narrates the story in such a manner that even when it includes specific technological terms and describes items that do not exist yet, it is fairly straightforward.

As is the case in many examples of literary pieces, “the diary is firmly committed to the first-person narrative; but not to an addressee” (Paperno 562). This is true for the memoir subgenre of life writing as well, and both diary and memoir are created “for the purposes of giving an account of the writer’s personal experience in a given day, which is not necessarily addressed to someone other than the diarist” (Paperno 562). However, in *The Murderbot Diaries*, Murderbot as the narrator does on occasion address the reader.

Murderbot’s addressing of the reader usually presents itself in frequently featured small remarks in parentheses, which in addition to the narration are little clarifications for the reader of the diary. When it talks about another character, Murderbot instructs the reader to “imagine that in the most sarcastic tone you can, and you’ll have some idea of how it sounded” (Wells, *Artificial* 26). Murderbot is well familiar with the tone its friend adopts in their speech, therefore in the memory keeping aspect of a diary, this remark proves redundant.

Another example of Murderbot acknowledging its audience manifests in remarks which are reactions to the reader's possible reaction to the information Murderbot shared. It adds an utterance of "I know, I was surprised, too" (Wells, *Rogue* 45), as it anticipates its readership's feelings, as if the conversation was happening face to face.

Maintaining this sense of reciprocal communication between narrator and audience is especially important if taken into account that a valuable story is "not the sequence of events only; it is also the specific words with which that sequence is given utterance" (Jackson 265). By including the audience in its narration, Murderbot can easier direct the feelings it evokes in the reader. The story is then purposefully told in a manner making it easier to provoke the desired emotional response.

The approachability of the narrator is further reaffirmed by Murderbot's narrative style. Its dry sense of humour and affinity to sarcasm is present in all the novels of the series, and seemingly ease the impact of the serious topics discussed. The narrator's inclusion and frequent use of expressions such as "I came back online" (Wells, *All Systems* 77), which are slang, but meant literally at the same time, ensure that the novel projects at least partially as a conversation, and, therefore, is easier to follow for the reader who is not accustomed to the universe in which the story takes place. Murderbot's deadpan remarks of "Who knew being a heartless killing machine would present so many moral dilemmas. (Yes, that was sarcasm)" (Wells, *Rogue* 67), especially if noted that Murderbot literally is heartless, provide a sense of light-heartedness even if the scenes depicted in the novels have the potential of becoming rather gruesome. Significantly, Murderbot does use swear words in its telling of the story, which remove a degree of rigidity that a literary piece would naturally adopt after several rounds of editing and more or less conscious self-censorship. That is not to say that a certain element of censorship is not present in the novels. Murderbot always censors the name of its original owner company, always referring to it only as "the company" (e.g. Wells, *Exit* 65), and never

states its name, again expecting someone to read the diary and not being willing to risk exposing the corporation.

Although the novels are written in English, Murderbot does not necessarily communicate in a human language. With its fellow bots and constructs, Murderbot communicates in raw data and code bundles. It is then safe to assume that if the diary was only intended for private memory keeping, it would assume the form of code, or possibly raw data, that a human without knowledge in programming would not be able to read to the point of comprehension. Some degree of translation was necessary in the creation of the diary in novel form, since the conversations Murderbot has with its closest friend are “in a data exchange language that humans wouldn’t be able to read without an interpreter” (Wells, *Network* 283), although it is not clear which language Murderbot feels the most comfortable in, it is easy to assume that it would be this one. But because this translation took place, it seems fairly inevitable that the ending product was intended for public reading.

Considering this is a work of fiction and nearly every aspect of it is a product of the author’s imagination, Wells makes sure that her narrator, Murderbot, includes explanations where they are needed, or useful. Most likely, Wells expects the information the narration provides to be sufficient for the reader to understand it and, as well as Murderbot’s thoughts. If Murderbot was solely writing its own diary, or journal, it would not need to explain that “the way murderbots fight is [they] throw [themselves] at the target and try to [eliminate it], knowing that 90 percent of [their] bodies can be regrown or replaced” (Wells, *All Systems* 96), because it knows that, considering it is its fights it is describing.

Similarly, connected to the posthuman nature of the series, Murderbot clarifies for the benefit of the reader that it does not have any “gender or sex-related parts” (Wells, *All Systems* 33), which again is something the narrator would not include even if they were human if they were not expecting their diary to be read by someone not familiar with their physical structure.

The opening paragraph of *All Systems Red*, and therefore the opening paragraph of the whole series, establishes the tone of voice in which the story will unfold. In this passage, Murderbot shares that it

could have become a mass murderer after I hacked my governor module, but then I realized I could access the combined feed of entertainment channels carried on the company satellites. It had been well over 35,000 hours or so since then, with still not much murdering, but probably, I don't know, a little under 35,000 hours of movies, serials, books, plays, and music consumed. (Wells, *All Systems* 9)

Murderbot here not only shares information that its audience would not otherwise be privy to, but itself has no real need of recording, as it does not provide any context or new information, it also uses its dry sense of humour to make itself more approachable. Interestingly, it had been about 35,000 hours since Murderbot gained the freedom of will, but it only started recording the events when it met its current employer. This indicates a personal importance, but beyond that, it is not entirely clear why Murderbot elected those events as a starting point. Despite the many small points of clarification, Murderbot in its memoir only talks about things it finds interesting or important. It is also not clear how much Murderbot actually wrote in real time, and how much information it gathered from its archives and memory logs.

Murderbot also shares the reason behind its decision to disable its governor module. It had been on assignment as security detail in a mining installation, when it allegedly “went rogue and killed a large number of [is] clients” (Wells, *Artificial* 38). Because in incidents such as this, standard procedure is to erase the involved SecUnits' memories, Murderbot has no clear recollection of this event, and it decides to find out “if the incident occurred due to a catastrophic failure of my governor module, [because it needs] to know for sure” (Wells, *Artificial* 38). It fears that it may have “hacked my governor module in order to cause the incident” (Wells, *Artificial* 38). This then shows that Murderbot experiences intense feelings

of remorse and trepidation in connection with this incident and is motivated by its need for closure and the sorrow it feels at the prospect of its own decision being the cause of the death of its human clients. It then discovers that a malfunction in the overall control system occurred and Murderbot itself is innocent of any wrongdoing. This is an example of Murderbot's rebellion against the company. It does not want to risk being a victim of another malfunction, as a result of which it would be accused of causing harm.

As stated, the only reason Murderbot is able to share its story is because approximately 35,000 hours before the start of the story it disabled its governor module, which is a component of the construct's physical body through which it receives orders from its human handler, and which enacts punishment in the event of any disobedience of the construct toward the human owner. Taking this into consideration, the diary itself is a direct result of an act of rebellion, or at least a side effect of it; had Murderbot not removed itself from the sphere of influence of its old owning company, it would have been destroyed on the basis of the events of the diary. It is then very likely that this influenced Murderbot's decision to censor the name of the company.

The censorship is necessary in Murderbot's daily existence because it has "too much to hide, and letting one piece go means the rest isn't as protected" (Wells, *All Systems* 34). At this point of the story, it cannot risk its human handlers to discover its status as a de facto rogue SecUnit, because doing so could result in its decommissioning and destruction. Since it is writing its diary, it shares its fears in its writing, which is one of the frequent uses of a journal or diary, as it helps to create a distance from the negative experience ("Journalling for Emotional Wellness"). The experience of the fear for life is a human trait that machines do not possess.

This fear is mentioned multiple times in *All Systems Red*, as it is the first novel in the chronological order of events, and Murderbot has not yet learnt to trust the human characters.

In its diary, it shares that

murderbots aren't allowed to ride with the humans and I had to have verbal permission to enter. With my cracked governor there was nothing to stop me, but not letting anybody, especially the people who held my contract, know that I was a free agent was kind of important. Like, not having my organic components destroyed and the rest of me cut up for parts important. (Wells, *All Systems* 14)

This shows that not only is Murderbot justified in its worries, but the humans in general share the feeling of fear, although in the humans' case it is because a SecUnit could easily overpower them and cause serious injuries. Murderbot is aware that “humans are nervous of [it] because [it is] a terrifying murderbot, and [it is] nervous of them because they're humans” (Wells, *Artificial* 65), and it also understands that the fear humans feel toward it are not caused by it in particular, but rather by the connotations humans form towards SecUnits in general.

As already mentioned, the fact that Murderbot keeps a diary can be seen as a manifestation of its defiance. It understands that “media could change emotions, change opinions. Visual, audio, or text media could actually rewrite organic neural processes” (Wells, *System* 161) and it uses this knowledge to write its diary in such a manner that gains it sympathy from its audience, although it is not clear who it expects said audience to be. By making the diary publicly accessible, Murderbot alerts to the fact that what is essentially enslavement of SecUnits by companies in the Corporation Rim is immoral as a practice, because SecUnits, despite being non-human entities, are individual persons, who each have their specific personality traits and subjective desires.

Writing its diary is not, however, the only act of defiance Murderbot commits itself to. It complains in its diary about the treatment it receives from humans, and the fact that “SecUnits

are never allowed to sit down or use human furniture whether on or off duty, so I sat in one of the chairs and put my feet up on the table. Then I took my feet off the table because it wasn't comfortable" (Wells, *Exit* 69). This makes it obvious to the reader that even as partial computer, it is still subject to irrational behaviour which resembles a child-like reaction to not being allowed something.

Murderbot, as an entity which does not experience emotions and feelings in the same manner a human person does, tends to be very private while processing its emotive reactions, often stating that it "needed to have an emotion in private" (Wells, *Rogue* 47). It also shares with the reader that it "was having an emotion, and [it] hate[s] that" (Wells, *Exit* 62). In this sense, Murderbot uses its diary to process its emotions and organise its feelings, especially the ones it is not accustomed to feeling. It talks about its feelings, even though it is adamant it does not have any feelings, or at least that it does not want to experience emotions. At the same time, however, it does not always explicitly state what the emotions it is feeling are, therefore creating a juxtaposition between the diary's intended public access, and the general private nature of such a piece of writing.

Murderbot often uses its dry humour and sarcasm to process its feelings, even when it complains that it "dropped to 97 percent efficiency" because the idea of its human companions talking to it about its feelings was "so painful" (Wells, *All Systems* 40). It does not of course mean physical pain, but the fact that it is well versed in sarcasm and slang expressions points to yet another capacity that differentiates it from a machine. Murderbot's humorous approach to sharing its personality and personal feelings also manifests when it directly addresses its reader and informs them that they "may have noticed that when I do manage to care, I'm a pessimist" (Wells, *All Systems* 52), the deadpan statement providing insight into Murderbot's personality and general approach to its existence.

It is not inconceivable that a construct, after a significant time being “categorized on inventory as equipment” (Wells, *Artificial* 55), would feel rather complex emotions about its own personhood. It does not want to be human, and it finds it incomprehensible that some humans would expect a construct’s ultimate goal to be to become human (Wells, *Exit* 154), but it does seek to be treated as a person and it “hate[s] being carted around like equipment, even though technically [it is] actually equipment” (Wells, *Network* 134). Murderbot eventually finds itself in a solar system where its status is “better than equipment or deadly weapon” but it still needs to have an owner (Wells, *Exit* 157). Similar to a human person being subject to a dramatic change in life, Murderbot uses the diary format of the novel to explore these feelings and to ease its adaptation process.

As Murderbot continues to accept its own personhood, which it was denied of during its employment in the rental company in Corporation Rim, it uses its diary to try to understand its feelings. It includes its sarcastic dry humour, when it remarks that “it’s not like the Preservation bots weren’t supposedly able to do whatever they wanted” (Wells, *Fugitive* 37). This signals that while it is interested in gaining the same freedom, it is not yet convinced that a system like this is feasible. Murderbot does share that one of the reasons behinds its hesitation to accept Preservation’s system is the fact that it “hate[s] being patronized. (The whole bot-guardian system is like an attraction field for humans who like to be patronizing)” (Wells, *Fugitive* 37). In the end, the only reason why it accepts Preservation is that it forms a genuine authentic friendship with the humans of the survey group it worked for in *All Systems Red*.

In *System Collapse*, Murderbot suffers from symptoms similar to what Post Traumatic Stress Disorder could manifest like in a human, although it is not explicitly addressed as such. Violence is a frequent occurrence in *The Murderbot Diaries*, and the novels do contain a significant number of traumatic experiences for all its characters. Murderbot shares this traumatic experience with Perihelion, whose response to it is that it would “verbally act out

until it had fully processed what had happened” (Wells, *System* 24). And while a traumatic experience can affect animals and their behaviour, it is definitely not something that machines experience. This emphasizes both Murderbot and Perihelion’s respective personhood, and although Perihelion does not address it directly, its crew are aware of its struggle. Murderbot recalls this experience and the complicated thoughts and emotions that form a part of it, in the diary. It also documents the healing process, and shares its reluctance to confront its conflicted feelings, which is something that real humans suffering from the disorder often share, as they, too, turn to journaling to help them recover.

Notably, the events of the novels establish the notion that this memoir is not the only work of art in which Murderbot is involved. As established at the outset of the first novel, Murderbot enjoys consuming media, and even has something that in today’s slang would be called a “comfort show.” However, enjoyment of the consumption of media is dramatically different from the ability to create it.

Production of art with the sole purpose of enjoyment is a capacity that is connected to humankind specifically. In *System Collapse*, the resolution of conflict is based on Murderbot’s initiative of producing a documentary film, albeit with a considerable amount of assistance from its human colleagues. This film is a product of cooperation between human and non-human characters, and it is successful specifically because of it. Production of art in itself requires an ability of abstract thinking, but this documentary can be considered a piece of anti-propaganda material, and therefore relies on the evocation of feelings. AI-created art does exist today, but it is only a fulfilment of a request from a human handler. To create art purposefully in order to evoke certain feelings in its audience, a much higher level of sentience is needed.

In *Network Effect*, Murderbot encounters a fellow SecUnit, whose help is crucial to the success of the operation Murderbot and its humans find themselves performing. Murderbot needs to convince the other SecUnit to also disable its governor module, so that it is able to

make free decisions and perform actions that would not be tolerated otherwise. Murderbot compiles a selection of personal stories, the emotional impact of which result in its gaining a new friend and team member. This is one of the aspects in which Murderbot's writing can be considered defiance, as its stories are the basis on which this fellow SecUnit, whose name is later revealed to be Three, frees itself from its owner company. Murderbot names this collection of stories the "HelpMe.File" and uses experiences and events that Three can easily relate to and empathize with, so that Three realises that the freedom it likely desires is attainable. Three is among Murderbot's human companions and Murderbot gradually forms a genuine friendship with it, which would not be possible if it had not used its diary entries as media.

As Murderbot observes Three freeing itself from its governor module, it notes how unsure Three is. Murderbot reflects on its own thoughts as a newly free Unit, sharing that its "first realization had been: the governor module's gone and can do whatever I want! My second realization: what do I want?" (Wells, *Network* 292). It had never before been exposed to such questions regarding its own existence, because until that point, all its only directive in life had been to obey the humans' orders.

In *Exit Strategy*, Murderbot is asked to assist one of its human associates in creating a documentary film the purpose of which would be to gain public sympathies for the accepting construct as persons, and their complete inclusion in human society, including the legal sphere. Murderbot considers this to be a "terrifyingly attractive idea" (Wells, *Exit* 170), and rather eagerly provides its insights. Taking this into consideration, it is actually possible, although there is no indication of this in the novels themselves, that *The Murderbot Diaries* is a transcript of this documentary, rather than an actual diary, or memoir, Murderbot keeps.

When Murderbot talks about its favourite television series, it says watching it made it feel like a person without forcing to behave and interact like a person (Wells, *Exit* 113). Since this a concept that provides a certain level of comfort, it is fairly safe to assume that sharing its

story in the documentary film is Murderbot's way of providing this comfort, this reassurance of personhood, to other SecUnits who might then deactivate their control modules. Although it knows that this is not the primary goal of the film, Murderbot is also aware that "there aren't any depictions of SecUnits in books, either. I guess you can't tell a story from the point of view of something that you don't think has a point of view" (Wells, *Artificial* 29), which is a relevant issue in today's media, as well. As some groups are devastatingly underrepresented, it is just as difficult for members of these groups to find suitable role models, as it is for individuals outside of them to form opinions based on prejudices and lack of familiarity. While the need for inclusive representation in real media of the present time stems from the effort of eradicating discrimination based on race and sexual and gender identity, Murderbot is attempting to influence its possible human audience to reconsider their attitude toward bots and constructs. It admits that "it would have been hard to show realistic SecUnits in visual media, which would involve depicting hours of standing around in brain-numbing boredom, while your nervous clients tried to pretend you weren't there" (Wells, *Artificial* 31), as visual media, specifically television series, is what it personally enjoys the most. However, it also recognises that this is not a problem in the case of printed media, and therefore it rightfully does not understand why the representation of SecUnit in books is so lacking.

Watching its favourite television series also allows Murderbot to safely observe human emotions which it does not necessarily understand. Much like a human nowadays, Murderbot uses the series as a form of escapism, because it "hate[s] having emotions about reality; [it would] much rather have them about Sanctuary Moon (Wells, *All Systems* 102), where Sanctuary Moon is the name of the television show. Its hatred for emotions and love for media is shared multiple times throughout the novels. Since it would "rather have nice safe emotions about shows on the entertainment media; having them about things real-life humans said and did just led to stupid decisions (Wells, *Exit* 63), it is safe to assume that the television series

are its metaphorical safe space. It often mentions its enjoyment of media in its writing, because it is something that contributes to the formation of its personal identity.

Science fiction novels are often perceived as “giving preference to an extended description of the object . . . , but clone narratives break with that format by typically focusing on the psychology of the clone(s) and/or the sociology of a community of clones” (Broderick qtd in Marcus 406). Murderbot is partially a clone and is required to cooperate with other individuals of this kind, and while the community aspect is not very discussed, Murderbot’s own psychology is at the forefront.

Murderbot establishes its own identity as a “construct made of cloned human tissue, augmented, anxiety, depression, and unfocused rage, a killing machine for whichever humans rented me, until I made a mistake and got my brain destroyed by my governor module (Wells, *Fugitive* 28), but this opinion is not shared by the reader, partially thanks to the events of the novels, but also because of the manner in which Murderbot as the narrator presents the story. Its attitude and delivery make it a rather likeable character, and the reader easily adopts sympathetic feelings towards it as a person, albeit fictional.

The Murderbot Diaries is a multi-volume work, and although it does simply recall events, in chronological order and with authentic details, an account of history, albeit fictional, is not its main goal. Ultimately, the series is about personal growth, as it attempts to show non-human entities in a context that frames them as persons. Murderbot learns things like a human would, and although it is not human, in reality there is nothing anywhere close to what it is, so it is easier for the reader to think of it as human.

In *All Systems Red*, Murderbot gradually learns that there are humans it can trust, humans who will accept it. In *Artificial Condition*, it learns that it cannot and does not want to escape its nature, or perhaps more accurately its programmed purpose, even though with a disabled control component it technically could. It learns to use the skills it had to rely on

before it became independent, and it learns that sometimes it is useful to request assistance from another individual, whatever kind of entity they might be. In *Rogue Protocol*, it learns to cooperate with humans it does not fully trust, in order to be able to reach its end goal. It also learns that it in fact does want to be with the group of humans it met in *All Systems Red*, and then left it *Artificial Condition*. In *Exit Strategy*, it learns to accept its group of humans as friends and it learns to rely on them, even though up until that point it had been accustomed to not relying on anybody. In *Network Effect*, it learns that its friends in turn rely on it, not because it is Murderbot's job to protect them, but because they trust it as their friend. It also learns that its friends are willing to endure great risks in order to save its life, which is a concept it had found unfathomable until that point. In *Fugitive Telemetry*, the events of which are set before the events of *Network Effect*, Murderbot learns that it is useful outside of performing its job as security detail, and that it enjoys working with the humans, as long as it has the option to veto its contract. And in *System Collapse* it learns to battle the psychological and psychosomatic symptoms it suffers after traumatic experiences. It also learns the power a well-executed story holds to sway public opinions.

Moreover, It is worth noting that science fiction appears to be “ideally suited, as a narrative mode, to the construction of imaginative challenges to the smoothly oiled technologies of heteronormativity, especially when/as these almost invisible technologies are pressed into the service of a coercive regime of compulsory heterosexuality” (Hollinger 24). While Wells is rather liberal in the rejection of heteronormativity in human relationships in her human characters, seeing as many of them are involved in non-heterosexual or polyamorous relationships, Murderbot is clear in its desire to not be involved in any sexual or romantic relationships.

In order to blend more with the humans when embarking on a mission, where not being recognized as a SecUnit is imperative, Murderbot elects to alter its appearance. While the final

decision is a relatively non-invasive alteration, it does consider a “more drastic plan that included giving [it] sex-related parts” (Wells, *Artificial* 50), to which Murderbot responds that “that [is] absolutely not an option. [Murderbot] didn’t have any parts related to sex and [it] liked it that way. [it] had seen humans have sex on the entertainment feed and on [its] contracts (...) No, thank you, no. No” (Wells, *Artificial* 50). With this attitude, not only does Murderbot firmly establish its opinion, but Wells adopts a stance that is decisively against the common fetish of android robots constructed for the purpose sex.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In her series *The Murderbot Diaries*, author Martha Wells focuses her attention on the connection of artificial intelligences and humanoid constructs, as well as the connection of these constructs and the genre of life writing, particularly the subgenre of fictional memoir. She does so by exploring the attributes of personhood the humanoid constructs possess, and relates these elements to those of other robots, humanoid as well as non-humanoid. Wells explores the conditions necessary for the peaceful and harmonious coexistence of human and non-human entities and concludes that freedom of will on part of the non-human is crucial.

Wells places her protagonist and narrator Murderbot in a unique position of an entity which had just achieved free will and must adjust its behaviour and adapt to situations it had never experienced before. Murderbot is exposed to complex feelings and emotions which it learns to understand and utilise. Because of Wells' choice of genre being not only a fictional, but also fantastical diary, or rather memoir, she is able to explore concepts that do not yet exist from a personal perspective, which is more relatable a easier to approach and understand for the reader.

This thesis establishes the novels in the context posthumanist philosophy and current technological possibilities, as well as the attitudes of philosophers towards future options in the development of machine intelligences and their standing within human society as independent persons. The thesis utilizes ideas of thinkers such as Katherine Hayles, Francesca Ferrando and Donna Haraway to reconcile old prejudices and outdated opinions regarding the approach of humans toward robots, with possibilities of future technologies.

One of the conclusions this thesis reaches is that while in the present time, it is impossible for a non-human entity to create art that is not dependent on a human programmer, it is well within possibilities for the future. In *The Murderbot Diaries*, this art takes the form of authentic memoir, as well as documentary film. This thesis concludes that Murderbot's diary

is a powerful act of defiance on its part, because via this diary, Murderbot is able to influence opinions of its readers regarding the status of constructs as persons and to demonstrate that constructs are not the only sophisticated machine intelligence which should be considered persons, even despite their non-humanoid physical structures. It also shows that the correct and timely presentation of authentic media can serve an anti-propagandistic role in the face of oppressive systems and political entities.

In this thesis, *The Murderbot Diaries* is placed into the context of other influential works of science fiction, such as the play *R.U.R.* or the film *Blade Runner*. It also connects the possibility of the existence of a construct such as Murderbot to the real progression of robot development. It continues to relate the slightly less sophisticated robots to currently existing robotic entities in the context of the Uncanny Valley phenomenon.

Finally, the thesis reaches the conclusion that by creating and then spreading media containing honest retellings of true stories, Murderbot is able to free not only other constructs, but also humans. Both of these species are subject to slavery in the Corporation Rim territory, and Murderbot's diary and films allow them to make informed decisions about their future freedom, and to then escape enslavement. This goes on to show that media is a powerful tool in swaying public opinion and escaping old prejudices, which is especially important for the attitude toward minorities. While in reality, these minorities concern racial, sexual and gender identities of humans, in *The Murderbot Diaries* the minority in question is the construct, specifically the SecUnit, of which Murderbot is a member.

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