

Short Story 145*: Counting Cats in Zanzibar

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Marc Aramini — 25 Apr 2015, 02:35

#COUNTING CATS IN ZANZIBAR

"Counting Cats in Zanzibar" was first published in 1996 in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*. It is collected in *Strange Travellers*.

##Summary:

On an Indonesian vessel in the Sulu Sea near the Philippines, a widow talks with a young man who has given her money for passage. Her first action is counting that money. She dons the underpants she found in Kota Kinabalu (the capital of Sabah in East Malaysia) and hides her money. The tropics seem to say, "Breathe deep of me while you can" to her. She considers that she could escape to Zamboanga in the Philippines or to Darwin in the Galapagos Islands with the money she has.

Her companion greets her with a grammatically corrected quote from Kipling's "Mandalay" (see Literary Allusions below) — a quote which was originally intended to represent nostalgia for a free, youthful, and foreign passion, but here simply implies the dawn. He says that now she is safe for the duration of the trip.

"'But you're not,' she told him, and nearly added Doctor Johnson's observation that to be on a ship is to be in prison, with the added danger of drowning."

He asks about her claim that "things" talk to her, and she responds, "Machines. Animals, too. The wind and the rain." He asks if they ever give her quotations, and she responds that perhaps one has. In a glimpse of foreshadowing, she watches the shadow of a shark pass under the hull, though she thinks of her companion as a shark in this scene. They further discuss Kipling's poem and the extent of the British Empire, and she claims that she is actually Dutch rather than British, though he thinks she talks like an American.

In extreme dialect which she claims would have been a real accent in Dickens's day, she says that she has heard a widow is worth at least 25 ordinary women. When asked if she can speak Dutch, she responds in German: "Gewiss, Narr!" — which means, "Certainly, you fool!" (or something to that effect). [While Dutch is a Germanic language, she is clearly not employing it here]. She hears the thrum of an ancient engine as a warning: "Dontrustim-dontrustim-dontrustim."

She says, "I never thought you were really so anxious to go that you'd pay me five thousand to arrange this."

The scene cuts to them at breakfast, with her quoting W. Somerset Maugham: "To eat well in England you should have breakfast three times a day." She interprets the signs of their server for her companion, calling him "the big policeman". He asks if she is a widow, since "only a

widow would remember that business about widows coming over people.”

She responds with an altered biblical reference from the book of Job in which she replaces a war horse with an inorganic ax: “Aha, a deduction The battle ax scenteth the battle afar.” (See Literary Allusions below for the implications of this substitution). After further banter in which she says she will not tell the truth, she states, “You’re looking for an excuse to seduce me,” and clasps his hand, which “felt like muscle and bone beneath living skin. Then, quoting Felix Riesenbergs’s description of the sea as a cold and careless male seducer, she even further hastens their flirtation — soon revealing that she is ?wearing pink underdrawers, — aflame with passion.” At the same time, she contemplates his artificial nature and even eliminating him:

How many of these polyglot sailors would it take to throw him overboard, and what would they want for it? How much aluminum, how much plastic, how much steel? Four would probably be enough, she decided; and settled on six to be safe. Fifty dollars each should be more than sufficient, and even if there was quite a lot of plastic he would sink like a stone.

He says she would be nice looking if she wore makeup, and then eats what the server brings without comment. They discuss the possibility that he is a policeman, and she attempts to get a reaction from him:

?I wasn’t going to tell you, but this brown stuff is really made from the penises of water buffaloes. They slice them lengthwise and stick them into the vaginas of cow water buffaloes, obtained when the cows are slaughtered.

Then they wrap the whole mess in banana leaves and bury it in a pig pen.

He merely says that they must sweat a lot, considering the “salty tang”. She asks if he can joke, and he says he isn’t sure, but that he came from Buffalo, New York to get her (punning on her food story, she thinks at first). She asks if he is going to arrest her and why he would pay so much so that they could be perhaps the only two passengers on the ship, also showing her facility with the language of their server.(Her “*Silakan gula* ” means, “Please, sugar”).

She says that she stole nothing, leaving the country with one bag and less than 20,000 dollars.

“And you’ve been running ever since.”

“For the wanderer, time doesn’t exist.”

He responds, “This is something you should say, not me ?But I’ll say it anyhow. You stole God’s fingertip — But you didn’t break the law. He’s outside everybody’s jurisdiction.”

When the sugar arrives, he says that both he and humans can only taste four basic categories. He then goes on to say that he has a list of seven pseudonyms she has used in her perennial flight — when she claims to be Dutch, she is Tilly de Groot. She says she really is Dutch and of German descent, and identifies herself as The Flying Dutchwoman. When he almost says her maiden name, she cuts him off, proclaiming it, “Something I’ve forgotten.”

At this point, she quotes Anias Nin’s autobiographical novel *Seduction of the Minotaur*: “The farther she traveled into unknown places, the more precisely she could find within herself a map showing only the cities of the interior.” He nods as if he understands, and begs her to come home, to the company which is responsible for implementing the creation of artificial intelligences such as himself. He starts to mention her husband’s discovery, and her expression reveals that it was not really her husband’s after all: “Yes. The first hint came from me. I thought I could control my expression better.”

He says, "Thanks for my life. I was thinking of that picture, you know" The finger of God reaching out to Adam? All this time I've been thinking you stole it. Then when I saw how you looked — You didn't steal God's finger. It was you. She reveals that her husband developed it, but they decided to keep it private. After his death, she "wiped out his files and smashed his hard drive with the hammer he used to hang pictures" for her.

He says that he is capable of lying, and warns her of this fact.

"But not of harming me, or letting me be harmed." He responds, "I didn't know you knew," but she has already seen and heard that in the news and in magazines. He reveals he wanted to get her alone so that they could talk and "maybe hold hands or something" — so that she could see he isn't so bad. He asks, "Are you afraid we'll outnumber you" Crowd you out? We cost too much to make. There's only five of us, and there'll never be more than a couple of hundred, probably. He says there are more than a billion people in China, and she quotes Samuel Johnson's "The Vanity of Human Wishes": "Let observation with extensive view, survey mankind from China to Peru." (See Literary Allusions below).

He says even in a hundred years there will only be two or three of his kind in China, not even enough to fill the room. "But they will fill it from the top," she says. "That's the trouble, huh" Even if we treat you better than you treat yourselves? We will, you know. We've got to, it's our nature. (Here he asks if a green orange is ripe - it seems that in tropical climates, the lack of cold weather prevents ripe oranges from ever turning orange - which seems to be a metaphor for external appearances and the proper location, somehow). He mentions that the previous night she quoted the title-inspiring *Walden* statement about how it wasn't worth the time to go halfway around the world to count the cats in Zanzibar.

She says that in the night, she realized even when he wasn't talking he was telling her over and over what he really was, and, "What you may not know is that even while you lie -especially while you lie, perhaps - you cannot prevent yourself from revealing the truth. You can't harm me, you say."

Speculating on some level that he must resent that, since it is what humans would do, she also says, "You quoted that bit from Thoreau back at me to imply that my travels had been useless, all of my changes of appearance, identity and place futile. Yet I delayed the coming of your kind for almost a generation."

He says she can return with him as companion and bodyguard, also saying, "You're going to be kind of a saint to us. To me, you already are."

She quotes Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*:

"From women's eyes this doctrine I derive - they sparkle still the right Promethean fire. They are the books, the arts, the academes, that show, contain, and nourish all the world."

She refuses to be his Prometheus, and takes half his orange, so "it should not perish in vain."

He says she is pathetic with her few books and belongings, always traveling. She invites him to her cabin. He reveals that he is two years old, but "Like you said for travelers time isn't real."

She tells him to come after sunset, and then they can throw the books out the porthole, which he doesn't want. He promises her a whole library when she gets home: "Real ones, CD-ROM, cube, whatever."

She reveals that in the night she spent a hundred dollars to get the radio operator to send a message three times, indicating who she was sailing with, and stating that she expected him to try and kill her.

He says he wouldn't do that, and she says he would be subjected to a great deal of checking, with added circuitry to avoid danger.

"Not when I bring you back in one piece ... You're thinking about killing yourself, about trying again. You've tried twice already that we know about." She says it has been four times, once even putting a pistol in her mouth which tasted too much of oil to pull the trigger. She ends by saying, "If I give you my word that I won't kill myself before you see me tonight, will you accept it?" He says he wants her promise not to do it at all, and, looking upon her rice "as she pretended to consider", she promises upon her honor and everything she holds dear to not take her life or attempt to take it, and to tell him if she changes her mind.

He asks if she wants to die. "They catch you by the throat, questions like that. ... It's when you want to live. Life is a mystery as deep as ever death can be; yet oh, how sweet it is to us, this life we live and see!" She makes him promise to leave her alone until the night comes.

When he tries to say good-bye to her using her married name, she claps her hands over her ears. She tells the server that she is afraid in his tongue, and he calls over several sailors.

She described what she wanted, and seeing that they were incredulous lied and insisted, finding neither very easy in her choppy Malay. Thirty dollars apiece was refused, fifty refused with reluctance, and seventy accepted. "Kalam ini," she told them. ("This night.") "Sweat kami peri kamarku." [The final words mean "When we leave my room"]
They nodded.

That night, after they become lovers and lie side by side, she wants to go outside to look at the stars. She compares the moon to a clipping from one of God's fingernails, and they watch a shuttle from Singapore leave for a larger ship headed to Mars, and she realizes he wants to go there.

She says, "I need to warn you ... I tried to this morning but I don't think you paid much attention." His eyes seem full of wonder as he looks at the sky. She says he is in danger, and must act to save himself, as his instincts demand. She assures him that she wants to live as much as she did in the morning, but he needs to consider what will happen to him if she doesn't make it back under his care.

A gentle wind from the east sang of life and love in beautiful words that she could not quite catch; and she longed to stop her ears as she had after breakfast when he was about to pronounce her husband's name.

She says that whoever tries to put an end to the Flying Dutchmen, a vessel that never reaches its port and sinks, will become the new Dutchman. She asks him a favor - to read a Kipling poem in her book. He gravitates onto another quote first: "If you think you're too small to be effective, you've never been in bed with a mosquito." She says that one has helped her through some bad moments. He says mosquitoes don't have to bite him to inconvenience him. He turns to the Kipling poem "The Undertaker's Horse" and reads, "It may be you wait your time, Beast - quit the sunlight, cut the rhyming, drop the glass - follow after with the others, where some dusky heathen smothers us with marigolds in lieu of English grass." He asks if she sees him as the Beast.

She says there lovemaking was like incest:

Her instincts warned her to keep her feelings to herself, but if they were not spoken now ... "I felt, almost, as though I were doing all those things with my son. I've never borne a child, except for you. ... You shouldn't be in the world at all. We shouldn't be ruled by things that we have made, even though they're human, and I know that's going to happen. But it was good - so very, very good - to be loved as I was in there. Will you take my books, please? Not as a gift from your mother, because you men care nothing for gifts your mothers give you. But as a gift from your first lover, something to recall your first love? If you won't, I'm going to throw them in the sea here and now."

He says he wants them both. She tells him to read them and remember what he read. They kiss, and she holds her breath until she realizes that he has no need to breathe, "and might hold his breath forever." She whispers good-bye to him, and he says he has much more to tell her, in the morning.

Nodding was the hardest thing that she had ever done. On the other side of the railing, little waves repeated "No, no, no, no-" as though they would go on thus forever.

"In the morning," he said again; and she watched his pale, retreating back until hands seized and lifted her. She screamed and saw him whirl and take the first long, running step; but not ever he was as quick as that. By the time his right foot struck the deck, she was over the rail and falling.

The sea slapped and choked her. She spat and gasped, but drew only water into her mouth and nostrils; and the water, the bitter sea water, closed above her.

At her elbow the shark said, "How nice of you to drop in for dinner!"

##Commentary:

While a fairly straightforward tale, the irony and pathos on display for both the primary characters makes any claim of an authorial moral position complicated. The artificial lifeforms tries to save her, and the tender moments they share on board are real, transforming from worship to something more touching. The widow begins her day counting the money that she will ultimately use to secure her own death at the hands of the sailors for seventy dollars apiece and damn her artificial companion to a life like hers, eternally on the run — as she says, when you try to stop the curse of the Flying Dutchman, you become simply another iteration of the curse. Ostensibly, her death will serve the greater good for purely organic and natural humans, who will not be placed in a position inferior to a group with some innately superior features. Yet at the heart of the story lies this vast emotional pain: that two lonely people find each other, and an ideological purpose drives one to destroy her own life and doom the other to a kind of life forever on the run, though it would be easier for them both to simply, perhaps naively, stay with each other rather than destroy the thing they have found.

The story is bookended by actual personified dialogue from things generally considered unable to speak: The freshness of the sun and the cool actually says, "Breathe deep of me while you can" and the shark which consumes her greets her with, "How nice of you to drop in for dinner!" Of course, the final line of dialogue from the shark is particularly jarring, for it is presented as an actual quote. This concept of hearing a voice where there should be none is commented upon by the (artificial) male character, and she responds that machines and other objects actually do talk to her — of course, he speaks to her, too. Immediately upon saying this, "she watched the dim shadow that was a shark glide under the hull and back out again. No shark's ever talked to me, she thought except him." This symbolic association of the artificial human and the shark is quite telling, for it is the ability she has to make the inanimate speak to her and to humanity at large which results in the necessity of her death. No matter how she tries, she cannot silence

the voices of the objects around her, for which she serves as the animating fingertip of God. The shark will speak to her at the end, in one of the most ironically disjunctive endings to be found in Wolfe's body of work, after all of the romantic and touching implication of the previous scene.

While a simple tale, it is particularly dense with allusions. Some of them are simply witty, and others have a thematic application. Perhaps in some way this is a manner of holding on to a vanished past and giving meaning to an empty, constantly moving present. The yearning for the exotic, the disappointment of the modern world, and the zeitgeist of the expatriate artistic generation are all on display in these quotes and references, creating much the same mood and atmosphere for "Tilly De Groot" in her self-imposed exile as the despair and emptiness that lurks in the backdrop of famous, sometimes suicidal modern figures like Hemingway. Tilly's position can be boiled down to the idea that no matter how noble the construct's motives may be, it is still by its very nature and existence a threat to humanity. This is not a very common attitude espoused by Wolfe's stories, but strains of this could also be seen in "All the Hues of Hell", where natural and artificial life intersected at a point rife with the imagery of hell. She believes that the only thing that can save the situation is orchestrating her own death - though it seems that she has found someone (or something) which would worship her and give both of their lives meaning. It is her stubborn refusal to accept this and select death alone over life together that makes the story such a complicated one emotionally.

##Name(s):

Tilly De Groot: the pseudonym of the widow when she is using her Dutch persona, supposedly the name of her mother's friend. De Groot means "big" or? large?, and Tilly means "mighty in battle". She refuses to hear both her maiden name and her old married name, denying who she once was.

##Literary allusions:

In typical Wolfe style, this rather straightforward near future SF tale is saturated with poetic and literary allusions, though one almost certainly relies on Asimov's future schema for the guidelines which govern robots, the infamous Three Laws of Robotics. It seems that, more or less, the artificial intelligence which "Tilly de Groot" has helped create is also governed by an inability to hurt a human being, and Tilly's own ability to stretch the truth and passively cause her own death are dark mirrors of the mandate for truthfulness and the caveat against inaction allowing harm in Asimov's laws (though this particular artificial life form says he can lie, though Tilly would be able to read through his deceptions, anyway). Tilly also seems to bear a kind of relationship to Asimov's robot psychologist, Dr. Susan Calvin, who at least once is prompted to destroy a robot which has become entirely too human — though in this case, Tilly acts to destroy herself to change the popular perception of artificial life, killing the idea that they are safe and harmless to humanity rather than killing an individual robot.

One of the features of Wolfe's near future SF seems to be an intense saturation of quotes and poetic and literary allusions, from works such as "The Nebraskan and the Nereid", "The Woman Who Loved the Centaur Pholus", to even "In Looking Glass Castle", and this tendency seems one of Wolfe's most traditional narrative ploys. Much like a 19th century novelist, many of his works are purposely situated in a relationship to a particular philosophical, literary, or historical context. A complete lack of familiarity with the source allusion sometimes makes his short stories seem more mysterious than they actually are (such as "Melting") — though when he plays with obvious and well-known tropes, the resonance can be satisfying on even one read (as in "In the House of Gingerbread"). In this particular story, the surface struggle between artificial life and humanity and the suicidal decision of Tilly, made to stop the advance of the intelligence that she helped to create in an effort to preserve mankind, is obvious without the allusions.

However, it is still worth tracing them.

In this particular story, I think that the theme is one of appropriated words: the inanimate objects which come to life speak with the words of humanity, and in all of the quotes and references we have the sense that all of their discussions are thematically predicated upon a subtext which came before but is not necessarily strictly appropriate — thus revealing a theme of ideas removed from their context, as free will and intellective ability are taken out of their human context and applied to something very different than a human being, though it wears the external shape of one, and even speaks as one. Yet still, there is something vital and true which they reach in their brief communion, and these quotations are all Tilly holds on to form the past - quotations that she bequeaths to her artificial lover.

The title references Thoreau's **Walden**, one which challenges the idea that a change in landscape will actually change the human soul : "It is not worth the while to go round the world to count the cats in Zanzibar?. No matter where one goes, the essence of humanity and individuality will be essentially the same, and the same things one might do at home will be there in the new, exotic location, with no escape from the self and who one really is.

In addition to the title quote, soon the artificial man says, "The dawn comes up like thunder out of China across the bay," a reference to Rudyard Kipling's poem "Mandalay", though the original reads, — An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the Bay!? The poem is from the point of view of an old soldier who has returned to London but yearns for the exotic, passionate world of his youth assigned to Burma, where idolatry could be burned away with passion — a poem of nostalgia and a yearning for otherness. It is notable that the artificial life form cleans up the grammar and makes the quote uniform in its adherence to standard English, then claims that English people do not really talk in the vernacular "Tilly" uses to describe the worth of widows. Tilly has a kind of contradictory impulse, yearning for her past but running from it even to the point of death.

Tilly also quotes Johnson several times - the first, in context, concerns his manservant Francis Barber, who served aboard a ship, a service from which Johnson sought to free him, saying: "No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into jail; for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned." (Boswell)

In addition, "To eat well in England you should have breakfast three times a day," famously quotes Maugham (who spent a large portion of his life in France, no doubt to escape lunch and dinner)? praising the modern English breakfast, but condemning the other meals. The quotes are not limited to English Literature, though many of them seem to feature the British Empire. A much older biblical reference, in "The battle-axe scenteth the battle afar," is an alteration of a passage concerning a fearless horse which enters battle simply for the joy of it in Job 39:25. This shift from the original beast that serves blindly to personifying a steel instrument of war is of course related to the unnatural being with whom she speaks — this time, it is not a flesh and blood horse which revels in the battle, but the instrument itself given strange volition — comparing him to a battle ax rather than a flesh and blood horse. It is her subtle method of revealing that she already knows he is not a flesh and blood creature.

"The sea has always been a seducer, a careless, lying fellow," is a quote from Felix Riesenbergh in **Vignettes of the Sea**, which continues in very gender specific language: "The sea has always been a seducer, a careless lying fellow, not feminine, as many writers imagine, but strongly masculine in its allurements. The king of the sea, with his whiskers of weed and his trident and dolphins, truly represents the main and gives it character. The sea, like a great sultan, supports thousands of ships, his lawful wives. These he caresses and chastises as the case may be. This explains the feminine gender of all proper vessels." Tilly uses the quote once

again to highlight his inhuman and uncaring nature — though he is masculine, he is as devoid of an individual identity in this metaphor, instead represented by a vast, cold, and careless temptation.

Tilly also quotes Anais Nin's **Seduction of the Minotaur**, an introspective look at a woman who has travelled to Mexico from her home in New York, exploring the solitary isolation of humanity conjoined with the disjunction between modern civilization and a more traditional society, almost pulled from the past. Of course her journey reveals the self, having the same theme as the quote from **Walden** which forms the title of this short story. Tilly's travels to remote locations are ultimately a failed attempt to escape her own knowledge. (The Wolfe-Wiki incorrectly attributes this quote to Jeanette Winterson's **The Passion**.)

"The finger of God reaching out to Adam" obviously refers to Michelangelo's painting, but here it is the secret that only Tilly represents — the gift of life and sentience to the lifeless, the ability to speak and listen to the inanimate. What happens once that creation has free will and volition? Should humanity take upon itself this power and responsibility?

The main character later quotes the first two lines of Johnson's satire of Juvenal, "The Vanity of Human Wishes":

Let Observation with extensive View,
Survey Mankind, from China to Peru;
Remark each anxious Toil, each eager Strife,
And watch the busy Scenes of crowded Life;
Then say how Hope and Fear, Desire and Hate,
O'er spread with Snares the clouded Maze of Fate,
Where wav'ring Man, betray'd by vent'rous Pride,
To tread the dreary Paths without a Guide;
As treach'rous Phantoms in the Mist delude,
Shuns fancied Ills, or chases airy Good.
How rarely Reason guides the stubborn Choice,
Rules the bold Hand, or prompts the suppliant Voice,
How Nations sink, by darling Schemes oppres'd,
When Vengeance listens to the Fool's Request.
For Gold his Sword the Hireling Ruffian draws,
For Gold the hireling Judge distorts the Laws;
Wealth heap'd on Wealth, nor Truth nor Safety buys,
The Dangers gather as the Treasures rise.

...

New Forms arise, and diff'rent Views engage,
Superfluous lags the Vet'ran on the Stage,
Who frown with Vanity, who smile with Art,
And ask the latest Fashion of the Heart,
What Care, what Rules your heedless Charms shall save,
Each Nymph your Rival, and each Youth your Slave?

An envious Breast with certain Mischief glows,
And Slaves, the Maxim tells, are always Foes.
Against your Fame with Fondness Hate combines,
The Rival batters, and the Lover mines.
With distant Voice neglected Virtue calls,
Less heard, and less the faint Remonstrance falls;
Tir'd with Contempt, she quits the slipp'ry Reign,
And Pride and Prudence take her Seat in vain.

Above, we can see some of the themes of the story, such as her fear that the creation of new forms will make humanity superfluous, the concept that slaves are foes, and the certainty that gold can buy any outcome. The poem concludes with an almost existential plea (though couched in a theistic philosophy), that humanity must create its own happiness, which is not truly found in the external world:

Yet with the Sense of sacred Presence prest,
When strong Devotion fills thy glowing Breast,
Pour forth thy Fervours for a healthful Mind,
Obedient Passions, and a Will resign'd;
For Love, which scarce collective Man can fill;
For Patience sov'reign o'er transmuted Ill;
For Faith, that panting for a happier Seat,
Thinks Death kind Nature's Signal of Retreat:
These Goods for Man the Laws of Heav'n ordain,
These Goods he grants, who grants the Pow'r to gain;
With these celestial Wisdom calms the Mind,
And makes the Happiness she does not find. (Johnson)

The quote which begins "From women's eyes this doctrine I derive..." is from Shakespeare's **Love's Labour's Lost**, one which views women as an ideal and inspiration. However, the play also shows the characters in their obsessive need to fulfill a role and actually deny or delay love, and we see the same effect here: all of the work that our artificial man has put into retrieving his spiritual mother and lover is wasted.

The final poem quoted is from Kipling's? *The Undertaker's Horse?*. Here are the last three stanzas, which might be of interest to even casual readers of Wolfe:

It may be you wait your time, Beast,
Till I write my last bad rhyme, Beast?
Quit the sunlight, cut the rhyming, drop the glass ?
Follow after with the others,
Where some dusky heathen smothers
Us with marigolds in lieu of English grass.
Or, perchance, in years to follow,
I shall watch your plump sides hollow,
See Carnifex (gone lame) become a corse?

See old age at last o'erpower you,
 And the Station Pack devour you,
 I shall chuckle then, O Undertaker's Horse!
 But to insult, jibe, and quest, I've
 Still the hideously suggestive
 Trot that hammers out the unrelenting text,
 And I hear it hard behind me
 In what place soe'er I find me:
 'Sure to catch you sooner or later. Who's the next? (Kipling, "The
 Undertaker's Horse")

Obviously the threat of death is here given the form of a randomly trotting horse that always follows somewhere, though in the second to last stanza the poet imagines that perhaps he shall see the end of this beast, the vehicle of death at last devoured by the station pack.

The quote, "If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito?" has been attributed to both Betty Reese, and, with slightly modified verbiage, to the Dali Lama — of course it means that even small, insignificant things or gestures can still inconvenience and disturb a creature or thing many times greater in size or importance. Here, one woman's death will change humanity's attitude toward artificial life.

##Connection with other works

The pity and pathos on display here, ending in a rather disjunctive ending, mirrors the feel of "In the House of Gingerbread", though that story played with fairy tales rather than quotations and the science fictional concept of artificial life. Wolfe's take on artificial intelligence is never simple, and the character here is actually loving and heroic, though Tilly believes humanity should never be ruled by the works of its own hands. This is perhaps close to "Eyebem" and harshly opposed to the concepts in "Of Relays and Roses" or the picture of chems from *The Book of the Long Sun*. Our main artificial intelligence in this story is far more noble and less subtextual creepy than Kyle from "All the Hues of Hell".

##Resources

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