



# JACLR

*Journal of Artistic  
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**Elsa del Campo Ramírez**

**"Technophoria"**

**2<sup>ND</sup> PRIZE "VIRGINIA WOOLF" FOR SHORT NARARTIVE**

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Elsa **DEL CAMPO RAMÍREZ**

#### **Technophoria**

Linda Chang only seemed to live to prove her mother wrong.

Linda Chang didn't like the idea of a main residence; nor did she understand why she should be condemned to stick with her appearance if she didn't approve of it. She had made herself a home from the more than five different hotel rooms she had stayed in for the past month; and, making a real concentration effort, she could barely distinguish whether it had been three or six the times during that year that she had visited her regular plastic surgeon, whom she already considered a friend even if they had never gone out for coffee together.

Linda Chang liked to call herself Sasha, and spent about seven hours a day updating her Instagram account with her latest and most fashionable pictures. She thought the mirror was and would always be her most loyal lover, and painfully regretted not being able to kiss her reflection anywhere else but the lips. Sasha had never lifted a finger in her life for anything other than polishing her nails and combing her luscious, silky, ginger curls; but she honestly believed she deserved the best.

Sasha Chang had lost her left foot in the war, but now she was fully used to walking with her artificial leg. During the first months after its implantation, when she still limped badly, dragging the metal scrap through the grass, Sasha's little brother would race her in the back yard. But the doctors had replaced the wooden sole for a plastic material that helped her bounce when standing on her left leg, and now she was much faster than Geoffrey, much faster than she had even been before sacrificing her flesh to Mother Technology.

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Her Instagram supporters had multiplied after she had started uploading images of her new appearance. They took it as visual proof of her resilient spirit and capacity for over-coming adversity. She just loved how the iron springs and titanium bars traversed her skin, sinking deep into her dark, black flesh, protruding from her useless limb like a parasite unwilling to abandon its host. She just loved the symbiotic relationship her numb nerves had seemed to

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establish with the rusty filaments and sharp metallic fasciae penetrating her awkward stump. It was just grotesquely beautiful.

Her account got so successful she even started receiving money for every new capture she shared with her fans. She got phone calls and e-mails from different institutions, NGOs and centres fighting for the social integration and self-appreciation of their handicapped members. They wanted Linda Chang to give motivational speeches, to open up about her personal experience, encourage those who, like her, had been deprived of a precious part of their body to learn to love themselves again for who they really were. She twice gave a twenty minutes' talk about how it sometimes hurt when she woke up, and how much that excited her. She would inform her audience about how she had persuaded doctors to actually fix the prosthesis to her bone because she couldn't bear the idea of not having it close to her, of losing it.

'Don't feel ashamed, or clumsy, or misfits for having an artificial hand, or hip, or boob. Embrace it, love it, masturbate to it!' She had concluded.

Apparently organizers had misunderstood her words; they were not too sure they had heard properly, they wanted to know what she had really meant. She had meant exactly what she had said: she wanted everybody to touch themselves thinking about the metal embellishments added to their bodies, and rejoice in it. They hadn't liked it, and so phone calls, and e-mails, and text messages soon stopped. But her number of supporters kept on increasing. She would spend more and more time everyday picking the best outfit (always a mini-skirt, always plunging necklines and sandals), putting stickers and flowers on her artificial foot, doing her hair, and taking pictures, thousands of pictures, oceans of pictures, to later on upload them on her account.

Her mum had told her to settle down, to look for a job or study to get a good one. She had told her to use socks and boots in winter, to focus more on the real people who loved her and wanted to see her and catch up, than on her Internet acquaintances, whose real face she had never actually seen, who wrote on her profile only because they didn't know her.

'And who knows what else they do with those photos of you!' She cried.

Sasha had complained that her mum just didn't get her, that she didn't know how to appreciate art because she belonged to that repressed and failed middle-class sector clung on to tradition, who was unable to adapt to change unless specifically backed by the WHO, who mistook concern for bigotry. She accused her of being stuck in the 20th century, blamed her for not being able to come to terms with the new generation. But Linda Chang would prove her wrong, she would make a life out of it, and her mum would see, then. She would have to see.

She travelled around the world with the money she was given. She didn't like anywhere.

She would run in illegal competitions to pay her beauty operations without having to offer any explanation later on. Her competitors thought she would be easy to beat because she was crippled. They didn't know her artificial foot actually implemented her performance. It was twice as gratifying when she made them bite the dust in the morning, and felt the consequences of overstraining her metal limb in the evening. Sometimes she forced it so much the flesh around the sheets and filaments got infected, all swollen and with pus. She would spend 45 minutes just taking pictures of herself touching her inflamed shin, polishing the foils and screws and nails that, together, completed her body and caused her so much pain.

When in hospital they had assured her they could make the prosthesis look like a real foot, that there were real artists out there who could just work wonders with aluminium. But she had insisted she wanted it to look as rough and robotic as possible.

'Had I wanted something like my original foot I would have never gotten rid of it in the first place!'

It is true what they say, that prosthetics create addiction. Her cosmetic surgeon had shown her all the different possibilities available for someone in her successful economic position. She had both her hands removed and substituted by wonderfully-carved aluminium plates, crowned with articulated cylinders of titanium that looked delicate and fragile. They had an automatic option that allowed her to play the piano without actually knowing a single key. She had also replaced her once pointy nose for a smell detector, which had been attached to her cranium, and somehow pulled her upper lip. Now she couldn't close her mouth, but she was happy, and she could perfectly tell if the person speaking to her was a dog owner, or a parrot owner, or gluten intolerant, and she felt fulfilled. Sometimes there were complications, but she stoically endured the agony. No pain no gain.

Linda Chang looks at her reflection in the huge mirror in her hotel room. She is alone. She cries. She contemplates her body, whole in its purity and its nakedness. Puffy, fatigued and upgraded. She loves herself. She celebrates herself. She does no longer need a lover to arouse her inner pulses. She is enough.

**Perfil de la autora:** Elsa del Campo Ramírez es filóloga inglesa por la Universidad Complutense de Madrid y ha obtenido recientemente el grado de doctora en Estudios Literarios, especializándose en literatura postmoderna estadounidense, estudios de género, y teoría feminista chicana. Compaginó sus estudios con varias estancias en el extranjero, entre las que destacarían la Universidad de Birmingham (UK), y la Universidad de California Los Ángeles. En el año 2012 obtuvo el tercer puesto en la II Edición del Certamen de Relato Breve en Lengua Inglesa Virginia Woolf con su narración "The Derelict Race."

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