Revelation to Revolution, in Search of Queer Liberation through Self-Actualization, Self-Definition, and Group Mobilization in Science Fiction Narratives

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I pledge my word of honor that I have abided by the Washington College Honor Code while completing this assignment.

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Introduction: Silent Reign

"She must have thought I was free to speak or be silent. She could not imagine the silence reigning inside me. No one can imagine that silence" –Christa Wolf, "Selbstversuch."[1]

Queer folks are constantly fighting for intelligibility. The Closet is often conceived as the singular barrier to queer visibility. It is misconceived as something a queer individual leaves once and to which they never return. But the Closet is a perennial structure in our lives. We ebb and flow through its doors with new relationships, changing communities, and our own sense of safety. And even when we are publicly queer—be it through pride memorabilia, displays of affection, or transition—our identities and bodies are made invisible when they are misinterpreted. We are forced into hegemonic standards, molded by peers to fit heterosexist expectations, erasing our queerness often through their own heterosexist ignorance.

Queer bodies are erased from public view to perpetuate heterosexist abuses time and time again. Sodomy was not only criminalized but labeled as "the crime whose name is not to be uttered" (Sedgwick 74). It was not enough for patriarchal powers to criminalize subversive sexual acts but to erase knowledge of and thus the possibility of them. A century later, the willing ignorance of the HIV/AIDS crisis catalyzed and condoned the mass deaths of queer siblings, neglecting to provide educational, medical, and monetary relief to an already suffering community. Our grief was not only censured; it was ignored to promote the permanent silencing of those cries. Today the cycle continues with Floridian lawmakers censuring educators' abilities to speak to students about queer topics, perpetuating ignorance of queer identities within children and obfuscating the burgeoning subjectivities which exist in us from a young age. Or turning to Texas, supporting trans* youth is itself criminalized, transforming the support of queer identities,

[1] Schwarzbaeuer and Takvorian 222

the allowance of their visible presence, into abuse. The same war around visibility, and thus knowledge, persists. Knowledge becomes "sexual knowledge, and secrets sexual secrets," aspects of ourselves which are hidden from even *us* (73). The ability to define ourselves, profess our existence, and find fraternity becomes heavily guarded at the cost of our lives.

Visibility is not the end of queer revolution, but it is a means. Deconstructing the various legal and social barriers in our lives is an ongoing process. It is not only fighting for representation in schools, for the right to transition as youth and adults, or to use public bathrooms, it is fighting to be recognized as legitimate ways of being. Our unintelligibility hides us from the purview of peers and sees us overlooked—when not directly targeted—by legislators. Recognition of our queer visages is disruptive, challenging broader understandings of sexuality, gender, intimacy, love, risk, suffering, euphoria, and so on. Bringing wider attention to our existence, suffering, or joy is core to opening those opportunities for policy and social change. But we are fighting for definition in a language and culture which fundamentally refuse queer ontologies. And engaging in a grueling, centuries-long war of language, legislation, and love is demoralizing. So, at times, we find escape in spaces of fantastic possibility, searching for strategy, hope, and inspiration.

Queer exploration often escapes to the stars in search of new ontologies. Science fiction (sf) has become core to queer art. Its introduction of fully fictional worlds provides ample opportunity to explore different ontologies—fictional and nonfictional—in allegorical spaces. This is especially so for stories that engage with the posthuman by asking, 'what if the category of human itself was arbitrary?' By undermining that core master narrative, such stories disrupt the categorical structures built on its foundation (Telotte 5; Pearson 4). When authors re-imagine humanoids' relationships with distinctly inhuman bodies, they can create both euphoric and

dystopic queer spaces which reveal “utopian desires and dystopian fears in its visions of the far future, constructing the alien body and social systems with signifiers from the human present to demonstrate these desires and fears” (Thibodeau 262). This characteristic contemporaneity tethers the fantastic to the nonfictional because sf is not cut of whole cloth. Creating new identities from the building blocks of contemporary ontologies, sf codes its identities with the same hegemonic ideas that shape their authors. And when the world is shaped by our own, it too begins to mimic our conflicts, speculating on the paths needed for its inhabitants to live freely.

SF becomes not only a space to imagine new ontologies but new paths toward legal and social liberation, especially through the definition and redefinition of subversive identities. The nature of literature gives voice to the voiceless. The nature of sf gives voice to the unborn. Marrying the fight for self-actualization with the fight for civil rights creates complex narratives which reveal the power of revelation and visibility in search of queer liberation.

Chapter 1: Queering Space

SF is not a genre of the future. As J.P. Telotte writes in *Replications: A Robotic History of the Science Fiction Film*, the genre's freedom "to move about in time" does not give voice to predictive constructs; rather, it "lets [sf] speculate freely on our *current* condition" (7, my emphasis). With the faux-guises of futurity and fictionality, the genre confounds the specifics of nonfictional power systems and integrates them into social responses to fictional populations, alienizing our systems of power and questioning their central oppressive tactics. However, sf is also a space for utopian possibility. It is "a space of desire, a place within the self where we can experience a kind of otherness, and where we almost longingly speculate about … possibilities that 'exceed the experience' of our normal being" (9). While the core of Telotte's musings sit comfortably with other analyses of sf, his assertion that sf is a space to *experience* otherness pushes against a basic fact: *many readers already are othered*. Stories told about marginalized figures can create empathy for their non-allegorical counterparts, but many marginalized readers also witness their own allegorization. Sometimes their humanity is lost in that transformation, other times they explore their own hypothesized discursive possibilities, seeing how their identities denaturalize master narratives (Pearson 4).

Wendy Pearson recognized the power of these allegories to denaturalize heteropatriarchal master narratives in sf, even outside of explicit queer representation. As Pearson wrote in "Alien Cryptographies: The View from Queer," "the inclusion of gay and lesbian characters or issues does not make a text queer … [rather, queerness requires] a movement beyond the inclusionary towards a radical rewriting of the current understandings of sexuality and its relationship … to the sex/gender dyad" (Pearson 2). Queerness in sf is not representation but radicalization. It is the creation of a world which does not merely recognize that we as gendered bodies are constructed, but which deconstructs those systems of power (Pearson 3; Telotte 10). This

deconstruction can occur through the stories of explicitly queer characters or in allegorical queer bodies which "deviate from the 'normal' in ways that are radical and subversive" (Pearson 3). Cyborg, android, and monstrous bodies can fulfill this subversive niche. Even as minor characters or plot devices, they become centers of discursive stories. Sometimes they may only examine the politics of how identities are constructed, but the genre's interest in battles for self-actualization often pivots this framing to emphasize how queered characters find themselves "in conflict with that 'web' which would control [them]," examining how they battle these forces to "'be' something apart from that complex realm we inhabit" (Telotte 10). In battling the placement of their identities, these characters reveal that queerness does not emanate from the categorizations, but from how they deconstruct those categorizations while reconstructing themselves.

When queerness comes through a character's self-discovery, the text reveals the unessential nature of those initially ascribed identities, making them susceptible to nonfictional theories of gender and sexual identification. Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity speaks to both the unessential nature of ascribed identities and how their deconstruction challenges hegemonic understandings of sexuality and gender. Butler posits that while gender is often defined as "the cultural interpretation of sex" (J. Butler 7), its historically uncoherent and inconsistent constitutions reveal it to be unnatural (3). Gender is not something which can be had; rather, it "is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance" (33). Gender is performative, so one could theoretically choose to perform a different gender or create hybrid presentations that undermine binary categories. The creation and proliferation of identities which encapsulate "subversive confusion" are thus central to hegemonic disruption as they both

confound the certainty of the category (34) and question how we identify humanity, which often only becomes "intelligible through becoming gendered" (16). Thus, when queer identities become allegorized in sf texts, revelations that those categories too are arbitrarily defined, unessential, and able to be subverted through performance can hold the same revolutionary power. Afterall, when an android can be read as human through sexual encounters or gender presentation, does that not undermine the concept of gender, of orientation, of humanity, and of their intertwining? With the undermining of such concepts also comes the undermining of the language which constitutes them.

While the ability to act subversively is core to categorical disruption, there is another aspect which is central to Butler's inciting crux: labels. Language is central to categorization. Gender is not just a regulated set of behaviors; it is a label. One performs femininity to become a woman, but womanhood feels inherent because persons assigned female at birth are told they are women at birth. Thus, power lies in the ability to *claim* an identity (2; 24). Jack Halberstam expands on the issue of labeling in *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Guide to Gender Variability*. Similar to Butler who asserts that control comes through the regulation of naturalized categories, Halberstam states that naming has a "godlike" function (Halberstam 5). By assigning people labels of their own creation, hegemonic forces frame "the sexual and gendered body in relation to orientation, norms, and identity" (7). The ability to label bodies as ab/normal influences how these ostracized people "lived, loved, and hid or exposed themselves" (6). However, there is a shift in the queer community as individuals reject medicalized terms in favor of vernacular (8-9). The cultivation of new language which describes queer multiplicity gives voice to queer perspectives while decentralizing traditional authorities (10-11), allowing the community to speak their intersections and invent their identities. It is not just the ability to perform something

outside of female/male, something other than heterosexual, it is the ability to name that performance and give it power. However, Halberstam warns that a reliance on language which is touched by heteronormativity fails to break those norms. Entering a new community-curated linguistic paradigm is key to breaking the categorizations which restrict ontologies (11); however, that revolutionary power may perpetuate heteropatriarchal domination in fictional and nonfictional spaces.

While Halberstam and Butler work in nonfiction, their concepts are applicable to allegorical identities and battles for equality. This is especially so in post-human texts that platform minoritized figures' struggles for disruption, their struggles for freedom revealing the intersections of non/fiction. By searching for liberation in words and examining how minoritized figures re-, de-, or -construct their labels in search of a "true" name, one can reveal how self-naming becomes discursive to the heteronormative ways we ascribe humanity (Telotte 17). By renaming themselves, queer figures learn to rename the powers around them, recognizing the arbitrariness of hegemonic ontologies (J. Butler 33; Halberstam 9). They may also become aware of their own "completely unselfconscious…reproduction of the heteronormative environment," identifying how these oppressive systems are perpetuated and regulated by both authorities and victims (Pearson 18). These revelations may reveal to the solitary queer subject the "*wonder*land … [where any] wonderous way we might conceive of the self, might be fashioned" (Telotte 11). However, these are personal revelations which only enlighten the *subject*, keeping the *group* short of liberation. For while the individual learns to celebrate their queerness, they will remain the target of the brutal system around them. Revelation may be personal, but revolution is societal.

Revolution is where these theorists and themes collide. SF is not only an act of description; it is a thought experiment. Revolution and liberation in a queer sense only exist in the hypothetical, partially because their end goal is unknown. Is queer liberation the deconstruction of all difference, the embracing of a multimodal society ala multiculturalism, or another variant? That philosophical quandary simmers beneath every queer rights ideology. However, freedom starts the process of recognition and visibility. This is where theoretical paradigms like Butler's and Halberstam's connect with revolution. Butler's theory arose out of a need to unite feminist movements. Halberstam's book warns against the dangers of infighting. Their queer political action is integrally tied to their theories of visibility. Because intelligibility is itself an ongoing battle, there are strong theoretical modals for how heteropatriarchal structures are queered and how that queerness accrues weight, but the modality for political revolution remains more philosophical.

Some political paradigms, like that criticized by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Epistemology of the Closet*, see queer legal freedom as connected to the "defining structure of gay oppression": the Closet (Sedgwick 71). Sedgwick describes a vein of politics which embodies the idea that the personal is political, suggesting that coming out is the core of change. Sedgwick uses the story of Esther to represent a simplified example of the transformative potential of coming out, showing how it describes the ways in which queer folk with powerful connections might influence authority through revelation. Outing oneself reveals a lack of difference despite sexual and gendered identities (75). This revelation and the deconstruction of stereotypes related to queer people enacts a "powerful unknowing" as it undermines stereotypes of queer people and garners empathy for them in powerful figures (77). The idea that revelation is the core of queer freedom,

while flawed, connects to the broader idea within liberatory philosophy that increased visibility and "good" representation are core to political progress.

Donna Haraway also centers representation in her paradigm of political change, but she takes a more communal approach in her essay, "A Cyborg Manifesto." Where the Closet paradigm focuses on one person revealing their identity on behalf of the many, Haraway's cyborg is a theoretical figure which expresses the need for intersectional, group-based mobilization (Haraway 154). Rather than revealing an individual experience, the cyborg represents the "joint kinship" of nonhuman and human identities, platforming a multitude of experiences separate from western heteropatriarchal systems (151, 154). The Cyborg's technological origin and dual identities make it an ever-changing multitude held within one being, forever growing and changing, representing the needs of the many, but acting as one (155, 163, 177). Visibility sits at the center of both paradigms, but Haraway's Cyborg emphasizes group-based action over the passive reliance on authority figures that the Esther paradigm prefers. As activists engage with these dynamics in actuality, so too do fictional radicals explore their core ideologies in allegorical spaces.

Like the stories of Esther and Haraway's Cyborg, much of this political theorizing remains just that, theory. However, sf becomes the space in which those theories of influence can be tested. Just as queer sf can challenge the ways we understand sexed and gendered identities, so too can it change the ways we imagine liberation for queer people. I approach this intersection of literature and politics by centering questions of personal identification, human rights, and political mobilization in my analysis of post-human narratives. By not prioritizing individual acceptance over collective rights, the texts I will analyze in this paper—Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, Christa Wolf's "Selbstversuch: Traktat zu einem Protokoll,"

and Octavia E. Butler's "Bloodchild"—create thought experiments which ask how queer people not only find themselves but each other in an attempt to de-stigmatize queer lives. Following their paths from personal radicalization to group mobilization, we see how different forms of revelation (private, semi-private, and public) disrupt heteropatriarchal structures and attempt to create wider unity and freedom.

Chapter 2: "Identification; there goes I," Outing Ourselves

Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is far from a staple of queer literature, let alone queer liberatory literature. The novel's protagonist, Rick Deckard, is a thoroughly heterosexual bounty hunter who often insults and evaluates the women around him while murdering android after android. Perhaps no character emphasizes his toxicity better than Rachael Rosen, the 18-year-old android girl her sleeps with and nearly murders. However, Rachael presents a queer example of posthuman emancipation. She strategically reveals her identity as an android to manipulate and convince Deckard of her humanity, not to protect herself but to protect her escaped android friends. She weaponizes the Closet in search of the freedom to be visible or unseen. However, her tactics rely on pre-existing language. Finding it impossible to vocalize her experience without erasing her queerness, her liberation is muddled by a hegemonic language which refuses to acknowledge her existence.

The posthuman possibility of *Androids* is central in its scholarship, often being the core of the discussions regarding environmentalism, technological revolution, trauma, and race. However, gender and sexuality are often marginalized from these interpretations. Many readings do not acknowledge Rachael nor the importance of sex in the narrative, but the sexual core of her posthuman rhetoric is vital to queer readings of the text. As Tony M. Vinci and Jill Galvan write in "Posthuman Wounds: Trauma, Non-Anthropocentric Vulnerability, and the Human/Android Dynamic in Philip K. Dick's 'Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?'" and "Entering the Posthuman Collective in Philip K. Dick's 'Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?'" respectively, the category of human "exists as the ultimate master narrative" (Vinci 94), apparently being firmly cemented and unchangeable. However, the android's ability to pass with average humans "having no knowledge of the presence of androids among them" and declare "its right to live as an autonomous self, challenges the very categories of life and selfhood—and, in

turn, the ontological prerogative of its creators" (Dick 121; Galvan 413). Even when androids are interpreted as simulacra of humanity, their bids at personhood destabilize the interweaving categories of heteropatriarchal oppression. If an identity as foundational as "human" can be expanded or deconstructed, then what stability do race, gender, or sexuality have (Vinci 106-108; Galvan 418; Lenč 57)? How *Androids* de/constructs the Other also draws attention to one way in which we identify "humans": heteronormativity (J. Butler 17).

Androids' post-apocalyptic society centers empathy as the dividing factor between humans and androids "in such a way as to belittle and disempower human and nonhuman others" (Vinci 92), centering the empathetic core of humanity in homophobic rhetoric which is deconstructed through sexual relationships. Societally, this separation plays into eugenicist ideologies because, as Andrew Howard writes in "The Postmodern Prometheus: Humanity and Narration in the SF Worlds of Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Scott's *Blade Runner*," the empathetic deficiency justifies the destruction of the Other through the murder of androids (Howard 110; Vinci 92). From an interpersonal perspective, however, this deficiency severs human-android relationships, because "if humans alone have the power to empathize, then their only emotionally profitable, mutually beneficial relationships occur with each other" (Galvan 414). These meaningful relationships are additionally limited to heterosexual couplings, as Deckard utilizes descriptions of "a full-page color picture of a nude girl" and a "husband [who] likes the picture" to gauge Rachael's responses to (homo)sexual stimuli while determining her humanity (Dick 47). By discounting the emotional profitability of human-android relationships, and making sexual conformity integral to human identification, android "love [becomes] another name for sex" (133), making it is as consumable and ephemeral as their rapidly-decaying, commoditized bodies. This combination of apparent emptiness and queerness

creates a dual regulatory system where social stigmas uphold the legal criminalization of human-android intercourse (133). This dual regulatory system creates a "pointed cognitive *refusal*" of sexuality between humans and androids (Sedgwick 73, original emphasis). Their affection apparently cannot exist, because androids cannot love, and it apparently does not exist, because the relationships cannot be disclosed. The sexual double-bind weaves a thread of queerness through the androids as empathy is demonstrated through both identification and romance (Galvan 415). Thus, sexual attraction and its professed existence becomes central to the androids' categorical inscription and deconstruction.

Rachael Rosen is a curious figure in this survey because she is a conscious and purposeful rebel from the beginning. She is a woman who knows she is an android for at least two years, is "very close friends" with other androids on Earth (Dick 182), and uses her privilege as a legal android to prevent bounty hunters from being "able to hunt androids any longer" (182). She seeks disruption in two primary spaces: the undermining of the Voigt-Kampff scale—which is used to identify androids—and the conversion of bounty hunters through seduction in a process that "reclaim[s] the disturbed hierarchy between human and machine" (Galvan 419). Her targets and tactics reflect an attempt to undo the double bind of in/visibility which ensnares androids, reflecting Sedgwick's model of the Closet, in which queer disclosure is both compelled and silenced (Sedgwick 70). The Voigt-Kampff scale forcefully outs androids; bounty hunters forcefully closet androids, "remov[ing them] from public view" (Telotte 153) through retirement to protect "humans, [who have] no knowledge of the presence of androids" from that forbidden knowing (Dick 121). By disrupting both tools of oppression, Rachael gives androids the freedom to disclose themselves and to exist as public bodies. She strives for this disruption through the

manipulation of her own visibility, not only through the Closet but through the ways in which she professes and performs the Self.

The reliance of freedom on visibility is revealed through Rachael's failed attempt at undermining the Voigt-Kampff scale. In search of the privilege to be unseen, Rachael attempts to challenge the Scale by questioning its ability to identify androids by passing as human. While the ability of androids to be "nearly undetectable among humans [completed renders] any moral or philosophical ruminations upon the android … gray and ambiguous" (Howard 109), Rachael's tactics keep "human" centered in the same hierarchies which deem her inhuman. Rachael draws her initial sway over Deckard through passing, positing herself as human to sow doubt about the morality of retiring androids. She questions core human-supremacist narratives by asserting that "You [Deckard] have no difficulty viewing an android as inert … So you can 'retire' it, as they say" (Dick 38). Her human-passing privilege challenges both the ideas that all humans support the subjugation of androids and that androids are inherently lifeless. "Inert" posits androids as lacking vigor, as if they are already "retired." By questioning this characterization, she suggests that androids have an inherent spark of life whose snuffing would be a death. However, her performance leaves the apparent superiority of humans intact by referring to androids as "it." The depersonalized pronoun objectifies the androids, demeaning their assumed personhood and leaving them vulnerable to retirement. The veil of humanity may be used to support the uplifting of androids through the critique of bounty hunters; however, Rachael fails to undermine the definition of "human" which inscribes it with superiority.

This central failure proliferates in the crux of Rachael's disruption, the preservation of *human* life. Rachael's subversion does not hinge on her passing the test; rather, it relies on her failing the test but insisting, with the help of the human Eldon Rosen, that she is a human with

"underdeveloped empathic ability" (Dick 52). Thus, while Deckard believes that Rachael is human, the disruption is not the Scale's inability to detect Nexus-6 androids; rather, it comes from the inability of the "empathy delineation test" to detect a human (50). This inconsistency has disruptive potential, because the "persistence and proliferation" of unintelligible identities, like apathetic humans, "provide critical opportunities to expose the limits and regulatory aims of that domain of intelligibility" (J. Butler 17). But this revelation does not cause Deckard to question the limits of humanity or the existence of android personhood. He is only thankful that he "didn't go out bounty hunting on the basis of this test" (Dick 51). Shame arises from the failed test and its ability to kill a human, not from the act of hunting which capitalizes on the destruction of android bodies. Because Rachael's tactic poses the disruption as a question regarding the ethics of possibly killing a human, not the ethics of systematically outing and killing androids, she fails to undermine the superiority inscribed in humanity.

This logical flaw is evident in Rachael's own outcry after the test. Rachael spits out, "You [Deckard] would have retired me" (Dick 50). Because "retire" is a term which justifies the murder of androids by making them "equipment," disregarding their sentience (Howard 112), Rachael's invocation in defense of her humanity shows that the true ethical problem is the lowering of humans to androids, not the uplifting of the latter. Thus, while Rachael's ruse would have retired the Voigt-Kampff scale, by leaving the original grounds for discrimination undisturbed, the hierarchy remains and "a new scale … [would] replace it," perpetuating the cycle of abuse (Dick 53). The truth of this failure is reflected in the effects of Rachael's outing, revealing the ephemerality of her initial disruption.

Rachael's involuntary outing reinscribes Deckard's understanding of android-human relations by erasing sexual possibility. Despite interacting with Rachael as a human, Deckard

promptly dehumanizes her when she is outed as an android, regarding Rachael as "her—or rather it" (49). While the initial gendered discrepancy exists, showing that Rachael momentarily made her humanity intelligible, Deckard's corrective "it" pronoun re-subjugates her. That subjugation is centered in the loss of gender intelligibility and, thus, sexual possibility, demonstrating that if she is not someone he can "go to bed with," then all he can do is "kill her" (133). Deckard is not only unmoved by Rachael's performance, but her outing reaffirms his othering of androids. When he confirms that Rachael is robotic, his final thought is not reflective but reactionary, raging that "they damn near did it; they came awfully damn close to undermining the Voigt-Kampff scale, the only method we have for detecting them" (57). Despite Eldon Rosen being a human coconspirator, Rachael is the target of Deckard's ire. She loses her individuality and is consumed by the plural "they," reinforcing the "us versus them" scenario on which the human-android hierarchy is built. Thus, her actions are transformed from a genuine ethical challenge to an underhanded manipulation, allowing Deckard to disregard any concerns over the Voigt-Kampff scale, reinscribe it with power, and justify its preservation.

Rachael pivots her emancipatory tactics to focus on the disruption of bounty hunters, prioritizing the right to be visible. With the failure of her first pass at freedom, Rachael returns with the same goal but different tactics, attempting to undermine Deckard's understanding of androids by seducing him as an android. However, because the "human" identity only becomes intelligible through "conformity with recognizable standards" (J. Butler 16), Rachael defaults to human supremacist rhetoric, as seen in her offer to help Deckard kill the Nexus-6s. When she calls him, "her tone seemed placating," as if apologizing for her earlier disruption and returning him to a place of power (Dick 83). She also plays with her self-references to emphasize her apparent conversion. Preluding her request, Rachael refers to herself in the first-person plural

"we of the association" and "us" (83). By including herself in the Rosen Association, she aligns herself with human subjects. She does not differentiate herself from humans until her suggestion that "the Nexus-6s would be wary at being approached by a human. But if another Nexus-6 made the contact—" (84). While she verbally admits to her otherness, Rachael uses her android identity for the perpetuation of human supremacy. Rather than empathizing with fellow androids, she aligns herself with the desires and needs of humans as a hegemonic body. However, the true source of her disruption is not categorical alignment but interpersonal connection.

Rachael engages disruptive capabilities by reclaiming the right to interpersonal relationships. Approaching an Esther-esque frame of liberation, Rachael seeks to ignite "a powerful unknowing" by revealing her empathy to—and for—Deckard despite her android identity (Sedgwick 77). She does so by reclaiming one right denied to androids: speech. As Galvan notes, speech is central to totalitarian control, because the speaker-auditor dynamic created by the Voigt-Kampff scale "utterly prevents an exchange founded on reciprocity," creating an immutable hierarchy (Baudrillard qtd. in Galvan 421). When the Voigt-Kampff scale is in use, bounty hunter-android conversation becomes a power play in which speech condemns the latter. By removing the scale from their conversation and addressing Deckard as an equal, Rachael seeks to establish reciprocity and form an empathetic—or romantic—connection.

She creates reciprocity by focusing her actions on Deckard's needs. Her final plea when convincing Deckard to permit her assistance is that "Without me … one of them will get you before you can get it" (Dick 84). She is concerned with Deckard's wellbeing, not the human conglomerate, giving his life more weight than androids'. This tactic returns when the power shifts and Deckard asks Rachael to assist his hunt after his near-death experience. While she declines, she justifies it by stating, "I can tell that you don't want to do this job tonight—maybe

not at all. Are you sure you want me to make it possible for you to retire the three remaining androids? Or do you want me to persuade you not to try?" (168) Rachael signals that she sees and understands Deckard's feelings, that she cares for his needs, and that she wants to be what he requires. This statement is emotionally responsive, reciprocal, and even romantic, making them equal partners in the conversation. Thus, she reveals that despite being an android, she can still understand and connect with humans, beginning the task of categorical deconstruction while subtly introducing the desired result: Deckard's inability to complete the job and thus his inability to "reclaim the disturbed hierarchy between human and machine" (Galvan 419). While her final question suggests her ability to be the bridge between android and human, discouraging the murder of the Nexus-6s, her verbal turmoil with the term "android" continuously uplifts herself while abandoning her kin.

The power of reciprocity and downfalls of conformity return in Rachael's pinnacle moment: her foreplay with Deckard. As Rachael enters the crux of her plan, she centers her intelligibility in her own label and its complications. Part of this complication arises from her adoption of human-supremacist language, specifically slurs. Androids are subjugated primarily by two words: "retire" and "andy," which "contains both humiliation and contempt" (Lenč 59). Rachael uses the term "andy" either in reference to herself or to the other Nexus-6s eight times throughout their foreplay (Dick 171, 172, 173, 174, 176, 177, 178). The effect of its initial usage appears in its first mention:

> "On the phone you told me if I flew down here tonight, you'd give up on the remaining three andys. 'We'll do something else,' you said. But here we are—"
>
> "Tell me what upset you," he said.

> Facing him defiantly, Rachael said, “Tell me what we’re going to do instead of fussing and fretting about those last three Nexus-6 andys.” (171)

In a reflection of their earlier call, Deckard reciprocates Rachael’s emotional state. He identifies her distress and makes himself an outlet for her needs, forming a relationship that is mutually beneficial. However, this reciprocity only comes after she verbally subjugates the androids through the slur. She is untouched by the “humiliation and contempt” that connotates the other androids, making her exceptional and justifying their sexual relationship (Lenč 59). Rachael uses this exceptionality to plant her revolutionary rhetoric as she shifts who constitutes an “andy.” After seeing the picture of Pris, who is the same model as Rachael, she professes:

> “It’s a good thing the association admitted I’m an andy; otherwise you’d probably have gone mad when you caught sight of Pris Stratton. Or thought she was me.”
>
> “Why does that bother you so much?”
>
> “Hell, I’ll be along when you *retire* her.” (173)

By referring to herself with the slur and placing herself in the doomed position of Pris, Rachael temporarily undoes the exceptionality with which she imbued herself. If Pris is nothing but an object to “retire,” then so too is Rachael, because they are one and the same. Likewise, by separating herself from Deckard through the second person, she identifies the primary tool in her own destruction: Deckard. He would be the one to retire Rachael. So, if he sees her as human due to their reciprocity, then to kill Pris is to condemn both and equate “retire” to “murder.” However, that humanity is only fully recognized through forced conformity.

While Rachael subverts slurs to undermine hegemonic thinking, her humanity is forced into conformity by Deckard’s expectations. As their conversation continues and becomes more intimate, Deckard signals his changing concept of Rachael with a kiss. By preconceiving this act

as “kiss[ing] an android,” Deckard knowingly opens himself to queer intimacy, passing through the initial social and legal sexual boundaries (173). Rachael uses his openness to dive deeper into her subversive rhetoric. When she asks, “You know what I have? Toward this Pris android,” Deckard responds with “Empathy” (173). Instead of Rachael vocalizing her humanity, she demands that Deckard admit her contradiction, ascribing her with humanity and confessing the arbitrariness of the human-android hierarchy. While this admission demonstrates the success of Rachael’s rhetoric by redefining “android,” she pushes back with “Something like that” (173). As Vinci notes, Rachael’s statement only approximates her experience (Vinci 98). Because she is using “the language of a dominant culture that does not legitimize her status as a person,” she is stuck groping for terminology, finding herself “sitting … in a linguistic gap between the human … and the android” (98). It is in this gap where, as Rachael laments after the confession, “Identification; there goes I” (Dick 173). Caught in the word “goes,” her subjectivity shifts. She watches it leave her android identity (“I”), disappearing into the muteness of human subjectivity (the continuous “you”). “Goes” also signals mobilization. This loss of modality begins the metamorphosis of “android” identification, its unintelligibility challenging the hegemonic category’s definition and questioning the human-android dichotomy (J. Butler 17). However, that nuance is not detected by Deckard. His assertion that she feels “Empathy” is an assertion that she is human. He attempts to place her within pre-existing ontologies and disregard the possibility of an alternative way of being, of experiencing “something like that” and not empathy itself (Dick 173), essentially erasing her android identity.

Rachael’s revolution collapses when she bows to that erasure. By hinging her plan on the conversion of Deckard through seduction, Rachael’s freedom relies on the ability of love to queer Deckard. His discovery of legally/socially forbidden love would transform his subjectivity,

breaking down the barrier between himself and androids (Sedgwick 80), thus reversing the feelings he is "accustomed to feel—am *required* to feel" and making the murder of androids unethical (Dick 133, original emphasis). However, Rachael only succeeds in this seduction by folding to the whims of humanity. The plea that finally initiates intercourse is her command, "*Go to bed with me and I'll retire Stratton*" (179, original emphasis). Rather than keeping the possibility of her killing an android nebulous, she promises to not only help murder an android, but to adopt the mantle of bounty hunter and kill the android copy of herself. Thus, Rachael aligns herself fully with the human hegemony, accepting the duty of subjugating not only her fellow androids but her android Self. She would essentially become human for Deckard, erasing the queerness of their sexual relationship, and leaving his subjectivity intact. Her revolution is doomed to fail because of this erasure.

Rachael's second revelatory attempt crumbles like the first because it is also founded on erasure. While Rachael professes the abandonment of her android identity to seduce Deckard, her overall goal is to procure the freedom of visibility for her kin, a right she claims the morning after. While Deckard notes a changed perspective of Rachael, seeing her as "cheerful and certainly as human as any girl he had known" (180)—demonstrating her successful performance the night before—she subverts his interpretation by coming out again. Revealing that that she always knew she was an android and is friends with the units he is hunting, Rachael proclaims that he is "not going to be able to hunt androids any longer … No bounty hunter ever has gone on … After being with me" (182). She not only reconnects her personal and android identities but does so as an act of violence against the human-android hierarchy. By generalizing Deckard as a "bounty hunter," she makes him a synecdoche of their sociopolitical boundaries which she kills. The term "gone on" draws connotations of continued life; thus, to stop the bounty hunter

from hunting androids is to kill its purpose, to kill it as a system, and to strip away Deckard's political and professional power, leaving him as Deckard and not a bounty hunter. However, her preemptive celebration comes from an assumption that Deckard truly sees her as human. When that humanity is based on the erasure of her synthetic identity, the reclamation of her android Self does not undermine the category of "android;" rather, it undermines her humanization. She once again becomes an object as Deckard reflects that "She—or rather *it*—nodded" (183, my emphasis). Instead of forming a mutually beneficial relationship, their intercourse becomes tainted with the same "us versus them" conflict which re-justified the Scale's power. Thus, the bounty hunter's role is also justified as a tool of war to reinstate the startled hierarchy, capitalizing on the connotations of "it" and forcibly closeting their relationship.

The collapse of Rachael's humanity is the collapse of android freedom. Scholars such as Galvan (428) and Vinci (106) argue that Deckard enters the posthuman collective at the end of the book, accepting the humanity of androids. Even the narrator seems convinced of his conversion, reflecting on Rachael's "victory over him" (Dick 186). However, not only does he still murder the Nexus-6s, but he murders a copy of Rachael. Encountering Pris first, Deckard reflects "that it was not quite Rachael … The eyes, the same eyes. And there are more like this; there can be a legion of her, each with its own name, but all Rachael Rosen," before shooting her (203). While Vinci argues that Deckard's ability to kill is proof of his posthuman subjectivity, because he proves "the human to be inhuman" by overcoming his empathy to kill the androids (Vinci 108), his "sacrifice" of Pris shows that Deckard still sees androids as objects to be used (108). Only Rachael becomes a "her." Pris is marginalized to the inhuman. Despite having "the same eyes" as Rachael, denoting a similar soul or spark of life, she is derivative of the human android. She is regulated to "it," becoming objectified, separated from the sexual viability of her

sister, and made vulnerable to retirement. Deckard may not kill Rachael directly, but he murders her simulacra, killing a monstrous "legion" of her android Selves in search of his own humanity. Deckard prioritizes his life over those of the androids, subjugating them, closeting them, killing them to either cloak or actualize his own queerness. While Deckard may understand himself better by the end of the massacre, nothing changes socially because he silences the subversive voices that would undo human hegemony.

Rachael seeks to undermine the heart of her oppression, targeting both the double bind of in/visibility and the strictness of binary categorization through the exploration of queer love. While her tactics make her revelations private, Deckard's position as a bounty hunter makes him a synecdoche for the android-oppressing complex. Thus, her revelation can be read as a social—or political—movement instead of a private one. However, the only way she makes her intimacy intelligible is through conformity with categorical—and thus sexual—mores. Sex with a human is queer due to its illegality and forbidden nature, but by erasing her android identity, she allows Deckard to mentally justify the relationship as normative and separate Rachael from "androids." Thus, the revelation that their relationship was not founded on normative values deconstructs their connection and justifies Deckard's reclamation of hegemonic power through the destruction of the Nexus-6s. Rachael's failed revolution not only reveals the flaws in the simplified idea that visibility is equality, but the damage which arises from the upholding of hegemonic structures. While Rachael's overall goal is to deconstruct the line between android and human, she does so by using the language of hegemony and aligning herself with its values. By preserving that language, she preserves those values, subjugating the android class while making herself exceptional. This exceptionality may save her life, but it condemns the remaining Nexus-6s who rejected the norm of human superiority by escaping servitude.

Rachael's progress reveals some hope. It is possible to deconstruct categories, to reveal one's indifferences, and to claim intelligibility. But intelligibility cannot be grasped when one's experience is erased or approximated. It cannot be found in a language which denies your existence and the appearance of normativity. Rather, liberation relies on the ability to not just reveal oneself, but define oneself, as Christa Wolf begins to explore in her short story, "Selbstversuch."

Chapter 3: "Neither fish nor fowl," Naming No One

Christa Wolf's "Selbstversuch: Traktat zu einem Protokoll" tells the story of an unnamed female narrator as she undergoes chemically induced sex reassignment to become a biological man named "Anders." The Narrator, who is the scientist that designed the experiment (Schwarzbaeuer and Takvorian 199), initially undergoes transitions to better understand the gender experience of her lover and mentor, the Professor who created the transformative drug. However, Anders's changed gendered experience does not reveal a binary transition; rather, he finds himself caught in a "blurry no-man's-land," in which he struggles to define his own identity in opposition to hetero-/cisnormative readings of his body, especially by colleagues like the misogynistic Dr. Rüdiger and romantic Irene (210). While the Narrator professes that this "blurry" existence silences Anders's voice and erases his sense of self, transforming him into the "no one about whom you can write nothing," her own treatise contests this claim as she writes his subjectivity after de-transitioning (222). The Narrator's act of writing subjectifies Anders, revealing the flawed paradigms of essentialized gender and giving his nonbinary being weight. However, Anders's transformative power is limited by his dependence on authorities for liberation.

Unlike other texts explored in this survey, "Selbstversuch" was written with an activist theoretical purpose. Initially published in the short story collection, *Blitz aus heiterm Himmel*, Wolf's tale is part of a larger project to explore feminist discourse through sex reversal (Kaufman 191). While *Blitz* is considered pseudo-feminist due to the German Democratic Republic's censoring and tarnishing of feminist ideologies—associating them with the West, misandry, and lesbianism (Perogoraro 240)—by participating in the collection, Wolf's work is posited as part of a literary movement to voice gendered experiences and queer pervasive

systems of power. This activist edge blossoms in the Narrator and her primary tool of discursion: language.

The Narrator focuses her systemic disruption in explorations of—and gaps in—language. Working in a country which asserted its political power primarily through censorship—with both linguistic and physical restraints—confessing queer identities is an act of upheaval. Censorship is a societal-level closeting, silencing gender nonconforming identities or homosexual desires, and thus making "accessibility to knowledge [of queerness] uniquely preterited" (Sedgwick 74). By never vocalizing the existence of alternative ontologies, the possibility of possessing an "anti-identity" outside of the naturalized binary becomes unthinkable (J. Butler 5). Thus, the Narrator's decision to write her treatise is a twofold act of rebellion. As Anne Chiarloni Perogoraro writes in "'MANN' VERSUS 'MENSCH': Zu Christa Wolfs Erzählung 'Selbstversuch,'" the Narrator guides herself through the mist of misogynistic misconceptions to her authentic identity by writing down her experience (Perogoraro 241, 248). And in constructing her gender identity through writing, her treatise also seeks to vocalize her queer existence and deconstruct what Carlotta Von Maltzan calls in her essay, „‚Man müsste ein Mann sein:' Zur Frage der weiblichen Identität in Erzählungen von Kirsch, Morgner, und Wolf," the center of patriarchy: ignorance and power (Maltzan 155). The public format makes the Narrator's gender crisis a case study for other queer—or hegemonic—bodies.

The Narrator probes the gaps within cisnormative ideologies as she seeks a flawed liberation through gender conformity. Similar to Rachael's performative humanity, the Narrator attempts to conform with hegemonic ideals by playing Anders. However, she initially lacks Rachael's awareness, not seeing how performing masculinity as a female-identified person can

subvert gendered expectations. Instead, the Narrator paints a self-portrait of her own gender-nonconformity to justify her transformation. The Narrator describes herself as:

> Single, no children … Doctor of Physiopsychology and director of the team SC (Sex Change) at the Institute of Human Hormonetics and therefore an insider to this research program like no other besides the director of the institute himself … Finally, capable of summoning male courage and manly willpower, which would both be required when the time came. (Schwarzbaeuer and Takvorian 199)

The focus on her marital and maternal statuses shows a disconnect from her gendered and sexed expectations as she refuses heteronormativity. Likewise, by centering her identity as a scientist, she is separated from traditionally gendered occupations and positions of power. Her role as the team's director puts her in relation to the Professor himself. She is still derivative of him, but she becomes his second, holding power over cisgender male scientists like Rüdiger and undermining masculine power dynamics (209). However, these nonconforming identities do not elevate her above patriarchal power; rather, the emphasis on the Professor's absence shows that she is subordinate because her sexed body is vulnerable to the experiment. The experiment does not seek to turn men into women; "no test subject would have been found for such an absurd experiment" (200). It only targets female sexed bodies, identifying some inherent flaw which must be changed. For the Narrator, that flaw is her own nonconformity, as she describes her self-portrait as making her "suited beyond all measure as a test subject" (199). Her nonconforming identities as well as the presence of her "male courage" and "manly willpower" demark some inherent masculinity within her which cannot exist in variously sexed bodies. Rather, it is a blight that must be brought within gender conformity through sexual transformation. Because

masculinity already exists within her, she need only embrace it corporeally. However, that goal alludes even the masculine sexed body.

The Narrator's queer disclosure arises through her disconnect from Anders's cisnormative expectations. The Narrator not only seeks to recreate an essentialized idea of masculinity but to replicate the godlike image of the Professor. As the creator of the transformative drug and as the dubber of Anders, the Professor accepts the "godlike function of naming" (Halberstam 5), and thus, as Anne Herrmann writes in "The Transsexual as Anders in Christa Wolf's 'Self-Experiment,'"[2] "reproduces himself [in Anders] … by enabling the female scientist to transform herself into a man such as he" (Herrmann 51). The Professor stands as a model of patriarchy, dominating his peers socially through his status (Perogoraro 246) and sexually as he emotionally controls his wife, her "face [being] prepared to reflect [yours]—that's it" (Schwarzbaeuer and Takvorian 226). The Professor endows Anders with expectations of heterosexual hypermasculinity and the Narrator accepts them (Maltzan 152). Expressing a belief that her transformation into Anders has no "undesirable side effects," the Narrator gives his reproduced masculinity the appearance of perfection (Schwarzbaeuer and Takvorian 197). Hypermasculinity becomes the epitome of Anders's success as an experiment.

But his name inscribes him with a disconnected perception of gender. The label, "Anders," imbues the Narrator with queerness. Despite the scholarship's tendency to assert that Anders becomes a man (Herrmann 50; Wilke 251; Maltzan 141; Perogoraro 245), he is separated from cisgender men from the moment of conception. Receiving the name from the Professor immediately after she transitions (Herrmann 46), the Narrator's title is not chosen but rather

[2] It is important to note that Herrmann uses "transsexual" in a theoretical manner, focusing on the subject's experience living as both a man and a woman. She does not focus on gender identity, dysphoria, or other topics associated with trans* analyses today.

ascribed. Thus, this naming becomes a symbol of heteropatriarchal power as the Professor frames Anders's "sexual and gendered body in relation to orientation, norms, and identity" (Halberstam 7). This framing posits the trans* body as other, because, as Herrmann notes, "Anders" is an adverb which translates to "other." Because an adverb modifies an action, it not only imbues Anders with strangeness and makes him derivative of the Professor, as Herrmann writes, but it also places him in relation to action, transforming Anders into something which is only acted upon.[3] He is not seen as masculine nor able to shape his masculinity, but as existing "in relation, in reference to the 'One' that is masculine" (Herrmann 46). This separation reveals a disconnect from the concept of naturalized gender as well as the impossibility of arbitrary gender expectations. If the gendered subject "only becomes intelligible through … conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility" (J. Butler 16), and one standard is that gender is "the cultural interpretation of [one's] sex" (7), then Anders can never be read as fully male due to his trans* identity. He is destined to be unintelligible to those around him, to be Other. However, because intelligible masculinity was angled as the Narrator's liberation and the symbol of scientific success, the looming expectation of a "successful" transformation lingers over his every word.

The oppressive pressure to be male informs Anders's performance in official settings. Just as Rachael must repeatedly reinforce her human visage, Anders is pressured by himself and the research team to overcome his trans* identity and prove his manhood by abandoning femininity (Herrmann 50). The pressure of continued gender compliance arises in Anders's first formal test where he is given an opportunity to dis-/prove the effectiveness of the drug—and thus the naturalization of gender. When Rüdiger administers the Rorschach Test, Anders becomes

[3] This thesis uses "trans*" for the same reason as Halberstam: to keep the terminology open for modification, growth, and exploration by those who identify with the prefix.

conscious of how this data will interpret the success of his transformation, wondering: "Should I answer as a woman? As a man? And if as a man, how, for heaven's sake? So that I finally didn't say 'love' when I heard 'red,' as usual, but 'rage.' And when I heard 'woman,' I didn't say 'man' but 'beautiful.' To 'child' I said 'dirty' instead of 'soft,' and to 'girl' I didn't say 'slim' but 'cute'" (Schwarzbaeuer and Takvorian 208). While Perogoraro and Wilke assert that Anders's responses come naturally from his new masculine psyche (Perogoraro 248; Wilke 251), his observed performance is prefaced by choice. The ability to answer as a woman or as a man presents the ability to choose between the "either/or opposition" of language (Herrmann 47), transforming his gender presentation into a series of actions (J. Butler 25). The memory of feminine performance remains, but success is defined through the reproduction of heterosexist sentiments, encapsulating the Professor's hypermasculinity through violence, sexualization of women and girls, and rejection of maternity. Moreso, the either/or structure of this section demonstrates the idea that gendered compliance is not the embracing of masculinity—something the Narrator already does—but the rejection of femininity. While this performance is presented as emblematic of an inherent opposition existing between masculinity and femininity, the lack of clear antonyms challenges this interpretation. There is nothing inherently binary between any pair besides "love" and "rage," which is itself not a perfect opposition. These slanted antonyms paired with the either/or structure question the assumed clarity between masculinity and femininity while positing binary gender opposition as something that is learned, not known. However, even this masculinized performance is made derivative in the original German text.[4]

Rüdiger's German response stratifies Anders between masculine recognition and feminine alienation. After the test, Rüdiger coos out, "Olala … ganz schön schon, mein Lieber"

[4] The original German is used because the English translation loses its gendered nuance (Schwarzbaeuer and Takvorian 208).

(Wolf 167).[5] Unlike in English, German genders almost every noun that refers to people, using different articles and endings to signal the masculine (der / ein / -er) and feminine (die / eine / -in). Thus, the use of the masculine "Lieber" shows that Anders makes himself intelligible through his performance. However, it is not a perfect exclamation of homosocial recognition. Where Decker recognizes and asserts Rachael's humanity through the combination of his empathetic exclamation and their intercourse, Rüdiger's comment carries flirtatious overtones that undermine Anders's masculinity. The "Olala" and term of endearment carry the same libertine air as earlier comments he makes to the female Narrator ("What a shame, toots!" [Schwarzbaeuer and Takvorian 200]). Thus, while he concedes some masculinity to Anders, the residual sexuality reflects Rüdiger's continued understanding of him as inherently female. Rather, Anders's possible masculine power comes through the abandonment of his Cyborg—or liberatory—potential.

While trans* identities themselves have disruptive properties, Anders embodies a Cyborg potential through his dual consciousness. Unlike Rachael whose liberatory possibilities arise solely from her marginalized identity, the Narrator's writing partially gains its disruptive abilities through the revelation of Anders's dueling identities. Femininity does not only remain as an option to be chosen; rather, it lingers like a memory in his body. When describing the hours after her transformation, the Narrator confesses that Anders still "sensed quite strongly" the woman he once was, sleeping "curled up like a cat inside of me" (204). She may be dormant, but that awareness of femininity leaks into his subjectivity, influencing how he re-interprets the world. As seen in his interaction with a traffic cop two weeks into his transition, Anders realizes that after his accident, fellow drivers help push the car to the side "without any urgent need to be

[5] "Olala, my friend Rüdiger said, very good already, my dear." (my translation)

instructed, reprimanded, and notified of an offense" (213). He is not infantilized by paternal peers, because he embodies the patriarchal identity. This perspective helps him identify the discriminatory ideologies around him, and thus also identify the need to deconstruct them. However, Anders does not seek liberation through deconstruction. Rather, his embracing of heterosexist orientations leads him to fight for empowerment by rejecting femininity and oppressing his own female self (Haraway 151).

Anders's attempted rejection of his gendered duality represents the abandonment of revolutionary goals. The climax of Anders's performance is the oppression of his own female self through the declaration of masculinity. The Professor may label him Other, but Anders professes a right to cisgender masculinity when, after his Rorschach Test, he asks Rüdiger if he is "einfach einer Frau als Leiter überdrüssig" (Wolf 169).[6] Anders's separation of "Frau" and "Leiter" demonstrates his continued acceptance of heterosexist norms by insinuating that femininity and authority are mutually exclusive. While the English allows "female" to modify "boss" as an adjective, the German makes the two nouns independent while erasing female possibility from "Leiter" by opting for the male conjugation. However, Anders not only asserts his masculine power by degrading the concept of feminine power but by degrading his own power. The separation he speaks demeans his feminine self's authority while aligning himself with masculine power by rejecting "Leiterin," the conjugation the Narrator uses earlier when identifying herself (Wolf 160). Thus, Anders rejects his female subjectivity and continued feminine sense of self to profess a connection to cisgender masculinity. It is this label manipulation for which Anders is rewarded with a "Cuban cigar" from Rüdiger, a phallic symbol

[6] "simply weary of having a female boss" (Schwarzbaeuer and Takvorian 209).

(Schwarzbaeuer and Takvorian 209). However, the desire for cisgender power is not the same as being cisgender.

Anders's trans* identity is unescapable, undermining his attempted gender performance and challenging the idea of how gender is perceived. Trans* gender perception is torn. While Herrmann claims that "the transsexual has only one way of being looked at (Herrmann 52), trans* experience testifies against this assertion. Trans* people often face misgendering when their identities become unintelligible or are purposefully misidentified. The presence of misgendering in Anders's sexual encounter with Irene brings this complication into the theoretical, asking what it means that a biological male can still be misread as female. Irene and Anders unite a couple weeks into his transition to write a satirical treatise on the troubles of dating men, during which Irene misgenders Anders. She gets "a kick out of calling me by my man's name" (215), demonstrating that while Anders identifies with this name, Irene does not respect it. She further undermines his gendered presentation as she jokes that "there is nothing funnier than women who write treatises" (215), sweeping Anders into the collective, "women." Even after Anders verbally rejects this female identification, asserting a heterosexual desire to prove said masculinity by channeling "that tone of voice which a woman could expect from a man at that hour" (215), Irene rejects him. Her rejection does not arise from disinterest but due to her perceiving him as female, lamenting that they "knew each other from before" (215). Despite Anders's sex, Irene reads the encounter as homosexual and rejects him. This revelation of that "male" label's fragility pushes Anders into his revolutionary prime.

The recognition of dysphoria and the impossibility of gender expectations breaks down Anders's understanding of gendered power, leading to their rise back to revolution. While the Narrator constantly professes a mixed identity, they do not try to vocalize Anders's experience

until after Irene's rejection, which forces them to wonder what a man is (Perogoraro 244). In retrospect, the Narrator writes about feeling "the woman I had been … curled up like a cat inside me" (Schwarzbaeuer and Takvorian 204); watching "I, the woman, [sabotage] the most manly triumphs of Herr Other" (207); and as "existing in a blurry no-man's-land" when caught in conversation between male and female colleagues (210). After time to reflect, they profess a disconnect from femininity and masculinity. Both the catlike woman and "Herr Other" are third-person entities, but "I" and "me" remain both personal and doubly gendered. They experience both gendered identities and neither, caught between binaries. However, this language only comes in time. It is the recognition of a lacking vocabulary which deconstructs Anders's hegemonic ideas.

When Anders tries to express their dueling genders, they find that it is impossible to speak both publicly and privately. After being ignored by the Professor in public, Anders panics and goes to their parents' house where they consider confessing the whole ordeal. However, they prevent themself from coming out, because "the two of them would have … spent the entire night brooding over what they had done wrong" (219-220). The taboo of their trans* identity prevents them from publicizing their transition, not because it would pain them but because their nonconformity would indirectly queer their parents. However, their attempt to privately wrestle with their identity is also muted as their "ability to find words to describe my condition" dwindles (220). The censure of trans* identities silence their predecessors, creating a dysphoric silence as Anders's dual consciousness and desire for intelligibility become unspeakable. They are filled with the "silence … of the ungendered subject" (Herrmann 51) until their become the "no one about whom you can write nothing" (Schwarzbaeuer and Takvorian 222). Anders is left

blank, an undefined and unseen presence whose name is unknown and unspoken, erased from the Narrator's chosen liberatory tactic. However, Anders does not remain unwritten.

While Anders dwindles into nothing, the Narrator chooses to return to their original body. In doing so, they reject the name assigned to them by the Professor and inscribes themself "in the text through the sexual undecidability of the first person pronoun," I, embracing their dual identity once more (Herrmann 60). In doing so, the Narrator refuses the Professor's godlike power, both undermining his authority and that of the traditional gendering structures he represents while choosing to inscribe herself in the unnamable (Halberstam 3, 5, 8). They untether their body and subjectivity from the "seemingly 'natural' systems … [which] fixes bodies in time and space and in relation to favored social narratives of differences" (Halberstam 8). Cutting themself from binary sex and gender, the Narrator envisions their transforming body as "Neither fish nor fowl" (Schwarzbaeuer and Takvorian 203), separating the blossoming Anders from two images imbibed with sexual imagery. Their acceptance of this liminality is what grants them the strength to finally testify to their nonbinary perspective, thriving in the neither/nor. While the Narrator cannot identify themself with certainty, that freedom from sexual and gendered fatalism is itself liberating. However, as Maltzan notes, this liberation is spread outward through the publication of her subjectivity (Maltzan 155), transforming their self-experiment into a third-party experiment to find "the one who can be loved" (Schwarzbaeuer and Takvorian 228).

However, Maltzan's interpretation of the emancipatory potential of the Narrator's treatise is itself over-extended because it is not written for the public but for the Professor. While Maltzan sees the publication as widely accessible, it is less an attempt to reveal trans* subjectivities and give identity to the no one's but more so an attempt to come out to the

Professor. The treatise is written for him under a "secrecy stipulation" which ensures it will never see another pair of eyes (197). Thus, rather than radicalizing the group, the Narrator seeks to queer the authority through the "transformative potential" of outing (Sedgwick 75). While the reader does not know the outcome of this tactic, the possibility of failure is glaring. On a personal level, the Narrator's affair with the Professor means their queer identity questions his own gender and sexual orientation. Similar to Irene who rejects Anders due to the threat of perceived bisexuality, the Professor may shove them back in the Closet for his safety (81). In the theoretical realm, when the Professor represents patriarchal power, why would he lessen his power and authority to make space for their queer voice? The secrecy stipulation has already silenced them; thus, the censure of their treatise can mute the whole experiment. To challenge notions of essentialized gender, to challenge notions of masculine power, is to challenge his own authority. Thus, like Deckard who kills to prove his own humanity, the Professor might obfuscate to prove his own intelligibility.

The Narrator of "Selbstversuch" struggles for power. They struggle to be singularly gendered, to be intelligible to those around them, to be looked at and seen. But it is not until they recognize their own trans* invisibility that they can embrace their dual identity and speak queerness to power. Where Rachel attempts to emancipate herself by conforming with humanity, the Narrator finds strength in the recognition of difference. By being rejected from the label, "man," they realize that gender is not inherent. By rejecting the name, "Anders," they step into the power of the unknown. The Narrator becomes free to experiment on themself and discover what language best describes their subjectivity, even if it is only within neither/nor dichotomies. However, while they identify liberatory subjectivities, their attempt at group emancipation is moot. By focusing their efforts on the sole patriarch, the Professor, through the act of coming

out, they place the possibility of revolution solely in his hands. The Narrator could be a modern-day Esther, but this choice leaves emancipation at the bequest of the ruling class, an act which would disempower them and undermine the systems on which their authority is founded. The sole reliance on authority for freedom leaves their trans* siblings trapped in the silence of no-one.

While the Narrator's liberatory bid falls moot, their idea of seeking a partner in revolution in the guise of a romantic partner is not without merit. Queer romantic identities queer romantic partners, creating an opportunity to disrupt the roots of gendered and sexed discrimination. The importance of love and risk to queer liberation is explored further by Octavia E. Butler through her alien love story, "Bloodchild."

Chapter 4: "Something Else, Something Wrong": Redefining the Alien Self

Octavia E. Butler's "Bloodchild" is well-known for its subversive approach to sexuality and gender. Lovingly referred to as her "pregnant man story," Butler's de-centralizing of biological sex and re-centralizing of companionship while exploring reproduction creates a vibrant space for critically examining gender and sexuality (O. Butler 30). The tale also carries a unique political characterization in its activist protagonist, Gan. A young Terran (or human) man who is promised to a female Tlic (or alien) named T'Gatoi, he learns what it politically means to be a parent and a partner. Learning that the sanitized depictions of reproduction are untrue, and that current systems undermine Terrans' ability to consent to surrogacy, he is mobilized to first change the sexual dynamic in his own relationship before educating Terran society. While Rachael attempts to convert bounty hunters behind the scenes and Wolf's Narrator tries to publicize their voice through their treatise, Gan accepts the possibility that he will be the future face of change. Thus, themes of revolution and liberation become intrinsically linked to the story's exploration of love, sex, and gender, all of which are connected to the story's primary conflict: Gan's sexual label. Left officially undefined in the story, Gan seeks to transform his subjectivity as a sexual partner into a Cyborg identity, uniting Terran as a political force beneath a re/definition of surrogacy which emphasizes individual subjectivity, autonomy, and consent.

The possibility of categorical disruption lies in Gan's lack of a label. Rachael and the Narrator's stories revolve around the re-defining or complication of pre-existing terminology. Rachael seeks to expand the category "android" and show how it overlaps with "human," deconstructing barriers to equality. Meanwhile, the Narrator explores the limits of "man" and "woman," identifying the need for new terminology that reflects their subjectivity. Both have a preexisting language which they center in their rhetoric, either promoting the expansion or re-working of their vocabularies. Gan, however, has a pre-existing subjectivity with no formal

label. While a formal term presumably exists for the surrogates, it is not written in the story. The only definite label the reader is privy to is "N'Tlic"—a title referring to a surrogate without their Tlic at the time of birth (10). Thus, while it is a public label—N'Tlic often being "all we see … pain and terror and maybe death"—it prioritizes the Tlic, not the Terran, and is not a universal name for the Terran surrogates (29). This lacking title reveals the disconnect between surrogates—after all, without a united name, there is no united front—and Gan's ability to connect them through a definition that is separate from the ownership of Tlic.

The developing label becomes central to building a Cyborg identity which can unite surrogates. Gan as a Cyborg figure may be controversial within previous scholarship because core pieces, such as Elyce Rae Helford's "'Would You Really Rather Die than Bear My Young?': The Construction of Gender, Race, and Species in Octavia E. Butler's 'Bloodchild,'" metaphorize Gan as a woman through pregnancy, deploying a biological-determinist understanding of gender (Helford 261). However, as Kristen Lillvis wrote in "Mama's Baby, Papa's Slavery? The Problem and Promise of Mothering in Octavia E. Butler's 'Bloodchild,'" because the Tlic can impregnate both men and women, surrogacy is separated from reproductive organs and nullifies traditional understandings of sex and gender (Lillvis 14). The separation of biology and surrogacy denaturalizes Gan's reproductive identity, making impregnation a choice and divorcing it from naturalized hierarchies, emphasizing the arbitrariness of the powers that place the surrogate Terrans in subordinate roles to the impregnating Tlic (Haraway 150). While this divorce grants surrogates the ability to destabilize the Tlic-Terran hierarchy, the nature of surrogacy imbibes the unnamed identity with the multiplicity of the Cyborg.

Despite the unifying and racialized experience of sexual slavery, the nature of surrogacy separates expecting Terrans from the fold. The ability for any Terran to become impregnated

creates a coherent thread of fear which might, and did, unite them as a community. The unifying effects of shared trauma appear in Gan's description of past abuses, noting that "Only [T'Gatoi] and her political faction stood between us and the hordes who did not understand why there was a Preserve—why any Terran could not be courted, paid, drafted, in some way made available to them" (O. Butler 5). For Tlic, their perpetuation of sexual violence and exploitation synonymizes "any Terran" with host, disregarding the need to differentiate impregnated (or impregnatable) Terran from others. From a Terran perspective, because it was assumed that implantation comes from rape or coercion, impregnated Terran were not aligned with the Tlic. Rather, their condition is reflective of their shared trauma. However, the ability to choose implantation moves impregnated Terrans from hosts to surrogates, a term loaded with connotations of consent and partnership. This lateral movement complicates the generalized Terran paradigm. While their social standing does not improve—the term "Preserve" zoomorphizes its inhabitants—the threat of sexual violence is decreased for part of the population and impregnation becomes fated for another.

Surrogacy is integrated into the identities of chosen Terran, creating a Cyborg subsection which is exposed to additional abuses. As Amanda Thibodeau writes in "Alien Bodies and a Queer Future: Sexual Revision in Octavia Butler's 'Bloodchild' and James Tiptree, Jr.'s 'With Delicate Mad Hands,'" the creation of the Preserve severs the Terran identity as some members examine the Tlic-Terran relationship as symbiotic, but "to most Terrans—those in the story and those reading it—the relationship appears parasitic, a form of slavery worsened by the horror of the monstrous conditions" (Thibodeau 269). Terran who participate in the symbiotic relationship become "just [Tlic] property" (O. Butler 18), selling themselves into one form of slavery to escape another (Lillvis 9). This consensual contract makes them compliant in the Tlic's power

system, improving their own status, and thus separating them from their peers. Radical peers equate these surrogates to Tlic themselves through their violence, “shooting Tlic, shooting N’Tlic” (O. Butler 12). By referring to surrogates as N’Tlic and not Terran, they are made linguistically derivative of the Tlic and thus aligned with their faction, separating them from Terran society. More sympathetic—or piteous—perspectives are also prominent.

Other Terran, such as Gan’s brother, Qui, conceptualize surrogates not as compliant partners but as “host animals” (21). These surrogates are seen as not only inhuman but the crux of Terran oppression. Rather than becoming consenting partners, impregnated Terran unwillingly—or unknowingly—become the core of their own oppression as they reproduce the Tlic, their hierarchies, and their ideologies. These confounding images create an ironic identity for surrogates as they are transformed into both Tlic’s pets and livestock: pampered in preparation for implantation and butchered for birth (3, 15). These differing perceptions of privilege and power breach the boundaries of Terran, coupling Terran-Tlic and Terran-animal identities within the surrogates, “mapping [their] social and bodily reality” in singular figures (Haraway 151). However, unlike Haraway’s Cyborg who recognizes his hybridity and dual loneliness, these dueling ideas of the surrogate often arise from outsiders who are privy to the physical reality of hosting.

Gan’s understanding of his own internally ironic identity is controlled and regulated by Tlic perspectives, restraining his Cyborg potential. Recognition of internal dissonance is key to each awakening that this survey explores. Rachael realizes she feels something like empathy, if not for Deckard than for her Nexus-6 friends, deconstructing the human/android barrier. The Narrator discovers that their gender presentation is unintelligible as both a biological woman and man, questioning the equating of sex and gender as well as the limits of binary gender. Gan’s

story similarly centers the disruption of his surrogate identity by challenging the hegemonic narrative (Thibodeau 269). However, rather than breaking down the categorizations of Tlic/Terran, his coming out emphasizes the recognition of his own intersectionality. Gan's earliest sentiments toward surrogacy are shaped wholly by the influence of T'Gatoi. Choosing Gan for her partner when he was an infant, T'Gatoi takes over his education and socialization. He is separated him from his biological family and "caged" in her "many limbs only three minutes after my birth" (O. Butler 8), removing Gan's ability to choose her as a partner and transforming him into her property to be "caged" and trapped. In this dependent position, T'Gatoi continues teaching him about the world and himself, showing him "diagrams and drawings. She had made sure I knew the truth as soon as I was old enough to understand it" (13). The utilization of "diagrams and drawings" decenters Terran experience from Gan's surrogate education. The Terran body is marginalized to simulacra, losing its presence in his education. T'Gatoi introduces Gan from a solely Tlic perspective (Lillvis 12), positing the subjectivity and beliefs of the majority power as the "truth," not only erasing the existence of an oppositional Terran perspective but preemptively devaluing experiences which contradict these teachings. The erasure of Terran-centric experiences changes how Gan describes his relationship with T'Gatoi (Halberstam 6), obscuring the language and knowledge he needs to describe his subjectivity.

By losing the language he needs to express a Terran subjectivity, Gan loses the ability to fully recognize his own political othering. Due to T'Gatoi's biased presentation of the surrogate role, Gan is "sheltered from the physical reality of his gendered bodily expectations" and naively assumes the erasure of difference between Tlic and Terran (Thibodeau 270). While he is aware that some Tlic would "swallow us" in their "desperation," emphasizing their difference in power

and positing pro-Preservation Tlic as benevolent protectors (O. Butler 5; Helford 265), the Tlic's reliance on Terran for reproduction evens the power deficit and creates a symbiotic relationship (Thibodeau 269). This apparent equality helps Gan reinterpret T'Gatoi not as a politically and sexually dominant subject, but as a member of his family who "was not interested in being honored in the house she considered her second home" (O. Butler 4). While the disruption of social difference between Tlic and Terran is central to a Cyborg revolution, the inability to recognize inequality is not the same as equality. T'Gatoi positions herself as human and says she does not want to be honored, but she still disproportionately wields her power in the household. She calls Gan "over to keep her warm" (4); chides his mother, Lien, into consuming the intoxicating egg when she refuses it (5); and stings Lien "within the cage of [her] limbs" for insubordination (6). T'Gatoi does not request honor; she takes it, physically controlling the Terran family members. Recognizing this differentiation is key to Gan's awakening and the first step in his revolution.

Exposure to a Terran-centric understanding of sexuality—and its risks—disrupts and redefines Gan's subjectivity. Gan's Tlic-curated sex education creates gaps in his subjectivity, refusing him the chance to fully comprehend his own placement in their hierarchy. He is unaware of both the physical and political nature of the birth. Having only seen "diagrams and drawings" of a Tlic birth (13), he is hidden from the physical risk that the Tlic's presence poses. Instead, he is only aware of the historical threat that Terran have been to N'Tlic, murdering them alongside their mates and positing violence from outside the relationship as the greatest risk. Likewise, being educated by a Tlic on reproduction, he is taught that birth is "a good and necessary thing Tlic and Terran did together" (16). The focus on togetherness posits reproduction as symbiotic and not parasitic while its necessity makes reproduction compulsory. Tlic must

reproduce to survive and Terran must be "adopted" by Tlic to secure their family's position on the Preserve (9). While this dynamic apparently removes the ability of either party to choose this arrangement, Tlic can still rape Terran or return to old host animals with an increased infant mortality rate. Thus, it is only the Terran who cannot truly choose to accept this sexual role without risking their lives. The mistimed labor of the N'Tlic, Lomas, gives Gan the opportunity to witness birth first-hand and re-educate himself on the physical and political realities of birth.

Lomas's untimely delivery gives Gan the language to describe his sexual relationship. Where he was educated solely by T'Gatoi, Lomas becomes a case study in Terran-Tlic relationships for Gan. Choosing to witness his botched birth is itself a pivotal moment in gaining autonomy as Gan rejects T'Gatoi's warning that "You don't want to see this … It will be hard" (10). T'Gatoi's plea asks Gan to remain passive, finding ease in willing ignorance. However, rather than acquiesce to T'Gatoi, he chooses awareness. Gan chooses to become an accomplice, if not a partner, in the delivery. But the birth itself reveals the arbitrariness of that coordination. Gan restrains and witnesses Lomas as T'Gatoi begins extracting the Tlic young:

> His body convulsed with the first cut. He almost tore himself away from me. The sound he made … I had never heard such sounds come from anything human. T'Gatoi seemed to pay no attention as she lengthened and deepened the cut, now and then pausing to lick away blood. His blood vessels contracted, reaction to the chemistry of her saliva, and the bleeding slowed.
>
> I felt as though I were helping her torture him, helping her consume him. (15)

The physicality of the birth reveals the passivity of Terran in reproduction. Lomas loses all agency as he is trapped, pinned to the ground under Gan and dissected by T'Gatoi. No longer a partner in the process, Lomas is transformed into a resource. The word "seemed" hints that

T'Gatoi is aware of his pleas but ignores them, marginalizing his voice in the apparent partnership. Lomas's voice is turned into something inhuman. Paired with the butchery imagery, Lomas is re-defined as animalistic and thus consumable by both the adult Tlic and their grubs. The Tlic's needs as a species are put above those of the Terran as T'Gatoi ignores "the terrible groans of the man" (16), only celebrating the hatching of new grubs. But T'Gatoi is not the only empowered subject in the scene; Gan too consumes the suffering man. While Gan's physical participation in the birth aligns his body with the Tlic, his consumption is intellectual. Lomas becomes an education resource for Gan as he watches T'Gatoi dissect him and thus dissect his previous understanding of surrogacy, revealing it to be exploitative and parasitic. By undermining the benevolent image of reproduction, Gan sees his sexual relationship transformed into something which is "wrong, alien" to him (17). Seeing the Tlic as alien helps Gan separate their subjectivity from human subjectivities, better conceptualizing his political and sexual positions in relation to the Tlic. By realizing how he helps perpetuate the exploitative systems that threaten his own life and autonomy, Gan becomes alien to himself.

Combatting the alien self is vital to Gan's Cyborg mobilization. Gan's enlightening moment is the realization that Tlic-Terran birth is not symbiotic but parasitic. However, knowing the truth of his situation is not itself a revolution; it only has the potential to catalyze. This knowledge is not a realization that Rachael or the Narrator are privy to in their stories, because they lack examples of other revolutionary figures. However, Gan has an example of a fellow Terran who is enlightened but not radicalized. After witnessing Lomas's delivery, Gan flees, being approached by Qui. He admits to Gan in this interaction that he "*saw them eat a man*," having witnessed a botched N'Tlic birth when he was younger (O. Butler 20, emphasis in text). Similar to T'Gatoi, the Tlic helping the surrogate who Qui watched placed the lives of the grubs

above that of the Terran, slaughtering him so the grubs could feed, eating "their way out, then [burrowing] in again, still eating" (20). Qui's revelation is also sparked by consumption, recognizing that parasitism is integral to surrogacy and transforming Terran into resources. Qui experiences the same alien sensation as Gan through this revelation; however, Qui embraces his own alien subjectivity. Rather than revealing the truth to Gan, he chooses to leave him in ignorance, because he would become the surrogate "if anything happened to you" (20). Rejecting the risk of surrogacy, Qui transforms Gan into a resource whose ignorance is exploitable, refusing the opportunity to educate Gan and empower him to choose his future. Thus, Qui seeks a freedom from surrogacy by reinstating the Terran-Tlic sexual hierarchy through exploitation and ignorance. Qui becomes aware of his own oppression but smothers the infant revolution by ending this revelation with himself. The selfish and the selfless is what divides Qui's stillborn and Gan's blossoming revolutions.

Gan's acceptance of the surrogate role prioritizes the uniting and uplifting of the community through partnership. The story's climax stands as a controversial moment for consent and autonomy. Finding his way back to T'Gatoi after confronting Qui, Gan demands, "Ask me, Gatoi" to carry her eggs (24). Their sexual relationship becomes a manifestation of the Tlic-Terran power struggle as Gan demands the ability to consent, rejecting T'Gatoi's manipulative justifications of her sexual authority until she asks if she "shall … go to Xuan Hoa," after which he acquiesces (24-25). Helford reads Gan's acceptance of the surrogate role not as free choice but as coercion. T'Gatoi threatens sexual violence against Xuan Hoa, making "it clear to Gan that he *must* submit to her reproductive demands" (Helford 266, emphasis added). Helford's interpretation transforms all possible implantations into rape, using the threat of sexual violence to transform Gan and Xuan Hoa into host animals. However, María Ferrández San Miguel

pushes back in her article, “Appropriated Bodies: Trauma, Biopower and the Posthuman in Octavia Butler’s ‘Bloodchild’ and James Tiptree Jr.’s ‘The Girl Who Was Plugged In,’” arguing that the ability to choose between shooting himself, shooting T’Gatoi, or sending T’Gatoi to Xuan Hoa “succeeds in breaching to a certain extent the power of the Tlic, opening up cracks in T’Gatoi’s seemingly superior position” (San Miguel 36). Gan reclaims a semblance of autonomy by having the choice to accept the egg, emphasizing an alternative reading that the perpetuation of Tlic power does not stem from surrogacy itself but the surrogate’s ignorance of their role.

The ignorance of risk creates the unbalanced power dynamic which informs Terran-Tlic relations. Xuan Hoa would be transformed into another host animal through her implantation because, as Gan notes, she “hadn’t had to watch Lomas. She’d be proud … Not terrified” of the risk (O. Butler 25). Xuan Hoa remains loyal to their Tlic-supremacist upbringing because she has not partaken in the exploited resource that is Lomas. While she may be the happier of the two, Gan’s recognition that the “red worms … growing in her flesh” would be no easier to bare than the ones in his own demonstrates that the core oppressor and liberator of the surrogate is knowledge (26). By perpetuating the selfish impregnation of the ignorant, Gan would perpetuate the exploitative systems which seek to use his body, the body of his father, and the bodies of his descendants. Instead, he makes the informed decision to accept T’Gatoi’s child, declaring that “there is risk, Gatoi, in dealing with a partner” (26). Dropping the honorific before her name and redefining his role from host animal to surrogate to partner, Gan demands the creation of a sexual relationship founded on consent and equality. He “opens up the possibility of becoming a new kind of subject: not one who, like his brother, is hostile toward the Tlic nor, like his sister, blindly embraces their authority, but one who acknowledges the risks and desires each partner

brings to the union" (Thibodeau 271). Rather than seeking freedom from sexual interactions, Gan seeks freedom to choose his sexual relationships.

Gan's revolution does not come through his personal liberation nor the conversion of only the majority; rather, it originates from the education and radicalization of the surrogate community. While Gan's desire to freely choose to love T'Gatoi arises from his connection to his sister, that is not where this revolution ends. Rather, Gan seeks the ability to act upon this desire to choose love. He seeks "access to the power to signify" his subjectivity by proposing an educational partnership with T'Gatoi (Haraway 175). After Gan is impregnated in a sexually subversive show of androgynous eroticism—T'Gatoi both taking the female and male sexual roles by penetrating Gan with her ovipositor and providing the fertilized egg (O. Butler 27; Helford 264)—he and T'Gatoi discuss the Lomas incident:

> "Terrans should be protected from seeing [birth]."
>
> I didn't like the sound of that—and I doubted that it was possible. "Not protected," I said. "Shown. Shown when we're young kids, and shown more than once, Gatoi, no Terran ever sees a birth that goes right. All we see is N'Tlic—pain and terror and maybe death."
>
> She looked down at me. "It is a private thing. It has always been a private thing."
>
> Her tone kept me from insisting—that and the knowledge that if she changed her mind, I might be the first public example. But I had planted the thought in her mind. Chances were it would grow, and eventually she would experiment. (O. Butler 29)

Gan's usage of plant imagery centers Tlic-Terran romantic partnership in revolution through its reproductive nature. Like how they implant and nurture the Tlic young, here they cultivate a new generation of surrogate couples in a non-exploitative manner, because both the soil and the seed

require care to prosper. However, Gan is not naïve to the fact that symbiosis does not produce equality, nor does it deconstruct ignorance. Unlike Rachael who assumes that Deckard will change his hegemonic thinking due to her love, Gan recognizes that T'Gatoi is still a Tlic. She may hear his laments and fears, but she is informed by her matriarchal position, seeking to "protect" Terran like children. However, Gan's insistence that Terran be "shown" is not a request that Tlic disappear from the education process. Rather, they are one party participating in the education. By exposing Terran to births that are not N'Tlic, Tlic would reveal themselves, how they work with Terran, and the presumed love and security which arises from their presence in a proper birth. This model prioritizes partnership instead of surrogacy, deconstructing the compulsory nature of the sexual relationship and de-centering Tlic subjectivity from intercourse (J. Butler 23). Gan's ability to even suggest this model empowers him as a partner, giving him "the potential to develop an advantageous kinship" (Lillvis 8). He is empowered to protest T'Gatoi's beliefs and advise on their relationship, speaking as one on behalf of the many, despite the discomfort that political activism and public education might bring him (Haraway 177). Gan offers to make his private self public to educate and radicalize Terran and Tlic, redefining their social relationship as "partners" instead of "hosts," and making it possible to imagine alternative sexual ontologies based on education, consent, and equality, despite the risk.

Gan's ending is perhaps the only utopian outlook of these three stories. Rachael's story ends in tragedy and the Narrator's ends in a nondisclosure agreement. But Gan's story ends with disclosure on a societal level, revealing himself to his brethren in an attempt to cultivate a culture of partnership which acknowledges and accepts the risks inherent to queer relationships (Thibodeau 272). Gan recognizes and accepts the Cyborg potential of his subjectivity, that he can radicalize Terran and Tlic alike, but that one party's mobilization will not succeed without the

mobilization of the other. However, that realization comes through the need to know, to define, and to speak his own subjectivity. It comes from the queer desire to know oneself and one's peers; the desire for your love to be visible. He seeks visibility and partnership not in the rebirth of the Tlic-Terran relationship, but in its regeneration, reshaping a monstrous limb in his own image rather than repeating its previous extremities (Haraway 181).

Conclusion: Inventing the One Who Can be Loved

Revolution is not just revelation; it stems from regeneration. Rachael's rebellion falters because she rebirths human hierarchies, not reshapes them. She makes herself exceptional to Deckard by erasing her android identity, presenting herself as human, and demeaning other android bodies. By making herself normative, Rachael erases the potential to exist queerly and freely. By offering to murder her fellow androids—and thus participate in their censuring—she reinscribes the idea that the only bodies that can exist are normative ones. Rachael seeks to improve her image in the eyes of Deckard at the expense of her peers, even though her end goal is one of group mobility. While her rhetoric is flawed, her idea of queering the hegemonic body through companionship is persuasive, because to undermine normative ideas of sexuality and gender, one must queer those fundamental structures themselves.

The Narrator recognizes the need to manipulate core master narratives in their bid for regeneration. Vocalizing an unspoken experience, they reveal their nonbinary subjectivity, overcoming dysphoric silence. While they begin their journey to queer disclosure with a bid at normativity, their conclusion finds that it is impossible to erase their otherness. Embracing that otherness allows them to thrive in the neither/nor's of language, neglecting to choose one subjectivity, and utilizing a multitude of perspectives to identify the oppressing structures that influence perceptions of gender. By revealing themself as Nobody through writing, they can connect with fellow Nobodies and create the group that must be mobilized. However, the Narrator does not disclose themself to this group; rather, they disclose themself only to the Professor. By working within an undisturbed power structure, they are officially censured, failing to uproot the perennial barrier to queer disclosure and visibility: the Closet. This failure to amputate the limb that must be regenerated becomes the Narrator's fatal flaw, one which Gan seeks to amend.

Gan becomes the most successful of the revolutionaries by seeking systemic reformation which unites surrogates and challenges his master narratives. Gan seeks freedom to be a surrogate, not freedom from surrogacy. The ability to choose his identity disrupts the sexual power structures inherent to the master narratives that control his life, introducing autonomy, consent, and education while making the borders of surrogacy both clearer and more flexible. By making the truth of surrogacy visible, he makes the truth of Tlic sexuality visible, queering his understanding of T'Gatoi. As Gan brings T'Gatoi into his revolutionary fold by forcing her to give him a choice—and thus forcing her to admit he lacked agency before—he queers her understanding of herself. Beyond blurring the edges of hegemonic identity, Gan turns T'Gatoi into an ally and himself into a model, seeking to create the educational community he lacked before to perpetuate group mobility. In doing so, Gan embraces the role of the Cyborg, becoming the one who can act on behalf of the many, representing their many subjectivities in search of the path that benefits all without erasing individual identity.

While each narrative exists in their own fictional setting, sf's descriptive nature makes them recognizably non-fictitious. SF is not a handbook on advocacy, but by exploring these narratives we see our perpetual struggles arising in their conflicts. Rachael shows us the dangers of whitewashing our identities when our society is not gender- and orientation-inclusive. By making queerness akin to heterosexuality, we only place our identities back into heteronormativity's binaries. Likewise, the Narrator demonstrates the fatal flaw of relying on heterosexist systems for our liberation. When the legal systems that regulate our bodies are founded in heterosexist ideals, their proliferation only leads to further oppression. It is impossible to use heterosexist systems and language in the fight for queer liberation; and it is impossible to use racist, ableist, or otherwise discriminatory legal systems to uplift peers who

exist at intersections. Rather, we find strength in Gan's path forward, which centers queer voices in education, advocacy, and legislation. By making ourselves visible, we create paths to group mobilization, and group mobilization creates political salience which can push democratic structures in our favor. Through visibility and the ability to define ourselves, we find unity in multiplicity which elevates our voices, tearing the Closet from its hinges as we overflow into public view.

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