

# Posthumanist Androids, Animals, and Aliens

Using Science Fiction “Others” to Re-negotiate Human Interactions

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## **Abstract:**

Science fiction has long been a place to reimagine first contact. Sometimes it follows a strictly imperial path, in which civilizations (often inspired by the vestiges of our own colonial past) prove their dominance across the stars, but some seminal works of science fiction have been used by authors to rethink the ethical implications of interspecies and interhuman meetings. Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (*Androids*), Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Word for World Is Forest* (*Forest*), and Octavia E. Butler's *Dawn* each use "Others" as metaphors to examine necessary humanizing elements for human-human relationships. In *Androids* and *Forest* the non-human Other is fully a stand-in for humans, failing to imagine an authentic Other and potentially dehumanizing real humans, while the aliens of *Dawn* are not part of the human identity, but still critique Western traditions. *Androids* argues for the importance of empathy on both sides of the relationship, *Forest* of the inadequacies of extending rights based on likeability or rationality, and *Dawn* of the need for accountability through guilt. Of particular theoretical import to this thesis is biologist and literary theorist Donna J. Haraway and her concept of "response-ability" from her book *When Species Meet*. *Response-ability* is Haraway's belief that cross-species cooperation and benefit relies on looking for, understanding, and following cues from the Other. Although *response-ability* is Haraway's methodology for interspecies relationships, I argue that it is the basis for any respectful relationship, not just human-animal but also human-human. Science fiction visualizes new meetings between humans and Others to emphasize the importance of *response-ability* in human-human relationships. As this thesis deals with dehumanization, it touches upon acts of dehumanization such as racism and rape. I have tried to do so respectfully.



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## Contents

<b>Abstract:</b> .....	v
<b>Acknowledgements:</b> .....	vii
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Haraway</b> .....	7
<b>Humanism and Posthumanism</b> .....	15
<b>1. Androids and Attitude: Avoiding Dehumanization</b> .....	21
1.1 De/Humanize .....	22
1.1.1 The Cartesian Mind.....	24
1.1.2 Individualism and Technology.....	26
1.1.3 Speciesism .....	31
1.2 Dehumanized from Conception .....	35
1.2.1 Sexism.....	36
1.2.2 Schizoids and Schizophrenics.....	40
1.3 Deckard's Problematic Solution .....	44
1.4 Conclusion.....	46
<b>2. Monkeying Around: Humans in Fur Suits, or Animals in Human Suits?</b> .....	47
2.1 Activism.....	48
2.2 The Human.....	50
2.2.1 The Anthropologist and the Noble Savage.....	51
2.2.2 Too Animal.....	55
2.2.3 Civilized White, Barbarous Black .....	59
2.3 The Too Human Animal .....	61
2.4 Conclusion.....	67
<b>3. Guilt: The Irreconcilable Calculation</b> .....	69
3.1 Cyborgs and Malinche .....	70
3.1.1 The Cyborg.....	71
3.1.2 Slavery and the Figure of Malinche .....	74
3.2 Oankali and Biological Determinism.....	79
3.2.1 Sociobiology and Butler .....	79
3.2.2 <i>God Tricks</i> and Utility .....	85
3.3 Conclusion.....	90
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	91

**Works Cited:** .....95

# Introduction

*“Of all the souls I have encountered in my travels, his was the most human.”*

Capt. James T. Kirk, *The Wrath of Khan*

This is how Kirk eulogizes his friend, Spock, a half-Vulcan, half-human Starfleet officer. Spock struggles with his hybrid identity throughout *Star Trek: The Original Series*, originally wishing to be unquestionably Vulcan, but eventually seeing benefits in being part human. Whenever Spock acts more in accordance with Vulcan values, Dr. Leonard “Bones” McCoy emphasizes Spock’s non-human aspects with racial slurs, while both McCoy and Kirk encourage Spock to emulate humans in spontaneity and emotions. The greatest compliment Kirk can give Spock? That he was human. Spock is human, not an aggressive Klingon, nor a conniving Romulan, not even a logical Vulcan. Being human is one of the greatest compliments, while being inhuman is an insult and degradation.

Science fiction (SF) is a site of social transformation. *Star Trek* is famous for featuring one of the first interracial kisses on TV, as well as having an African American woman (Nichelle Nichols) in the main cast as an equal. *Star Trek* has continued to push the boundaries of the traditional. One summer, my husband and I watched various *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episodes, one being “Half a Life.” In this episode, Doctor Timicin (an alien) is attempting to save his planet from a dying star, but will reach the age of forced euthanasia (the “Resolution”) before his work is done. At first he plans to undergo the Resolution, the purpose of which is to remove the surprise from death, but when another character notes the potential contradiction of saving a dying star (and thereby prolonging the lives of his people) and yet embracing enforced euthanasia, Timicin hesitates. He wants to live, but ultimately decides to fulfill his culture’s expectation and is euthanized.

That same week the SyFy channel had a rerun of the *Stargate SG-1* episode “Learning Curve.” Merrin, a young alien girl trained with nanobots to become an expert in generators, is expected to go through “Averium” wherein her *nanites* are removed so that her whole society can share and benefit from her knowledge. The dilemma for the main characters is that children who undergo Averium lose their memory, sitting in an institution for the rest of their lives.

Nonetheless, like Dr. Timicin, Merrin decides to go through with her operation, but with a happier outcome: her knowledge of children's education on Earth is spread throughout her society, and a societal-wide reform is made. Children with removed *nanites* are taught and engaged with, no longer listless in quiet halls.

Two shows, looking at the same problem in the same week: how to ethically interact with a morally different society. *Star Trek* and *SG-1* are hardly the only series to examine clashing cultures, and cultural killing (of the body or the personality) is not the only issue that SF addresses. Gender, race, nationality, animals, environment--SF is frequently a site of cultural commentary and activism. Biologist and literary theorist Donna J. Haraway claims, "the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" (*Manifestly Haraway* 6).

SF is hardly "innocent," however. In an article on ecology and SF, Robert Latham summarizes traditional SF as, "quasi-imperialist vision of white men conquering the stars in the name of Western progress" (107). Men abound, quaint inferior cultures are brought into the technological light or saved--SF is just as much a site of traditional thinking as cultural transformation. Not blind to colonial and racist traditions in writing, SF critic Brian Attebery views SF as "a special case" of moving past these problems (385). It is forward-thinking SF that I look to.

Originally, the purpose of this thesis was to look at realist SF, in particular Cold War literature and death ethics. In *On the Beach*, the British-Australian engineer and writer Nevil Shute imagines the world ending in nuclear war, with those in the southern hemisphere waiting for radioactive winter. Some become daredevils unafraid of death, and for everyone else the government provides a suicide pill. Shute looks at the end of the human race, a fascinating concept prompted by human destructive capability. Although I moved away from this particular novel, facing humanity's end became a theme in my search.

The interplay of religion and SF in YA literature was also formative. Although "Chosen One" is a phrase better known from J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series and other fantasy novels, special heroes abound in SF. Paul Atreides from Frank Herbert's *Dune*, James Holden from James S.A. Corey's *The Expanse*, Luke Skywalker from George Lucas's *Star Wars* films, Andrew "Ender" Wiggin from Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Quartet* series, and so on.

Ender is of particular interest, with Cold War and religious overtones. Aliens are threatening human life, but Ender leads the humans to victory: genocide of the aliens. The Cold War “dream” is fulfilled, outliving the annihilated enemy, but Card problematizes this before the end of the first novel *Ender’s Game*, and writes Ender a redemption arc throughout the rest of the series. Empowered by technology, Ender saves humanity by committing genocide, then fights to save the next alien species humans meet, and brings back the original species that he killed. In two different times, in two different ways, Ender is a chosen one who dictates how xeno-relationships should be, how humans in a populated universe should act.

Written more recently, Brendan Reich’s YA series *Nemesis Project* raises interesting questions about what it means to be a resurrected human. Reich’s characters survive uploading into computers and downloading into clones, dying and being brought back with the most recent uploaded memories, be the memories from moments or months before. These books assume that the individual is the same, unblemished from being mixed with technology and cloning, but the other option is admitting that the natural human race is completely extinct. This made me curious--what makes a human, human, and not just a program?

Curious about the Cold War, human annihilation, religion, philosophy, and what it means to be human, we might think of dystopian novels: Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*, Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*, etc. Tendrils of each theme thread through all the books here mentioned in fear of change and uncertain futures. Throughout the Cold War, the Space Race, the Feminist Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, assassinations, and government corruption, the latter half of the twentieth century saw fundamental changes in US society. The books I have chosen are representative of that prolonged moment where humans broke apart and came together. In each novel, humans are still standing in spite of catastrophe, and have a better idea of what they want being “human” to mean. This thesis will follow the books chronologically to examine how human-Other relationships are used as metaphors for human-human relationships.

The first is Philip K. Dick’s 1968 *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (*Androids*). Human society is in decline, thanks to World War Terminus and ensuing radiation sickness. Many immigrate to Mars to start anew, gifted an android by the government to help. But some androids break free of their human owners and return to Earth, cold-blooded machines walking

amongst the humans. *Androids*'s main character Rick Deckard has a job that legitimizes the social order: killing androids.<sup>1</sup>

Although many theorists reflect on different paths of dehumanization, personal attitude is the site of de/humanization in *Androids*. Dick directly states, "the theme of the book is that Deckard is dehumanized by tracking down androids" (qtd. in McNamara 434). Killing, being a killer, is wrong, as is distancing philosophies. As a survey of distancing philosophies, I turn to Sherryl Vint's analysis of the Cartesian Mind in *Androids*, Christopher Sim's analysis of individualism, and both their and Ursula Heise's take on speciesism. Consequently, it is bad for Deckard to kill the androids. However, the novel never fully separates the androids from being killers, as they are shown to be dangerous. N. Katherine Hayles finds that the androids are femme fatales and killers, unfeeling, manipulative, and dangerous ("Schizoid Android"). Killing androids is therefore a societal imperative to preserve the sanctity of life and humanize humanity as a whole, but at the same time dehumanizes the bounty hunters and police who kill androids, mostly because of how closely they resemble humans. I join other theorists in arguing that humanizing attitude is the driving theme of *Androids*, and that androids are shown to be humans without empathy rather than a new species, but argue that this is problematized by Dick's dehumanization of the android.<sup>2</sup>

The second book is Le Guin's 1972 *The Word for World Is Forest* (*Forest*). Although *The Left Hand of Darkness* has a Cold War connection, an interesting gender dynamic, and more critical attention, the human-Other dynamic in *Forest*, added to the fact that it is an activist piece, makes it more compelling for this thesis. In *Forest*, Earth has run out of natural resources, so its inhabitants (Terrans) travel the stars until they find Athshe. They begin extorting the land and the people (Athsheans) are forced into slavery by the Terrans. Meant to emulate and criticize the Vietnam War, *Forest* is full of humans, but they are not the same. Terrans are the typical Earth humans, while Cetians and Hainishmen are slight variations on the same. Yet Athsheans, also human in genetics, are apart. According to Latham, the Athsheans are noble savages (117-118). They and the Hainish are presented as idyllic humans in contrast to the Terran barbarity, mixing tropes of noble savage and the imperialist binary of white as civilized and black as barbarous, dehumanizing the characters and real life people. Another negative aspect of the Athsheans is

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<sup>1</sup> There are some interesting parallels between the protagonists of *Androids* and *Fahrenheit 451*.

<sup>2</sup> Also of import are Jill Galvan and Kevin McNamara.

that they are green-furred and short, one character calling them “monkeys.” More spiritual and in harmony with their surroundings, Athsheans are Vietnamese to the Terran’s US capitalist state, but what does that mean to have “green monkeys” as humans (*Forest* 21)?

Animals are frequently used as literary tools rather than authentic Others (Cary Wolfe “Human, All Too Human” 567). To make the Athsheans uncanny to the Terrans, Le Guin animalizes their appearance. The use of animalistic humans in *Forest* reinforces animals as literary tools rather than actual beings, as well as undermines Le Guin’s original purpose: proving Vietnamese humanity. Identity politics and literary theorist Walter Benn Michaels discusses identity in difference. Specifically written on my third choice (Octavia E. Butler’s *Dawn*), Michaels argues, “To insist that the difference between humans and aliens is physical is to insist on the insignificance of differences between humans; to insist that the difference between humans and aliens is cultural is to insist on the importance of differences between humans” (650). Both physical and cultural difference exists in *Forest*, and although by the end of the novel the difference is more accepted as cultural, initially and throughout the novel difference is emphasized as physical. Being visually animal-esque, the Athsheans are not like humans.

The issue then is, how animal or human should the Athsheans be? Writing on ecological imperialism, science fiction professor and critic Latham thinks the Athsheans are too human, and that this reinforces the idea that only a human presence makes someone or something morally deserving (117-118). I, however, argue that since *Forest* is meant as an activist piece for real life humans, the Athsheans should have been visibly human; had the purpose been animal and/or environmental rights, then the Athsheans should have been completely inhuman, visually and genetically. Being in-between projects human expectations on animals and erases actual animals, muddying moral deserving for both. Using a human exotified through animal features reinforces the importance of physical difference between humans rather than cultural difference, which in turn sets up ethical relationships to only be extended to those we consider similar or like, which I join Wolfe and Haraway in finding problematic (Wolfe’s *What is Posthumanism* 59-60; *Manifestly* 129).

Androids and Athshean monkey-humans are human stand-ins to demonstrate treating humans properly, however problematically these two novels approach that subject. But there is always a power differential in relationships, something Octavia E. Butler takes seriously. Butler

is an outlier among these authors; Dick is the most traditional SF writer, a white male with a male protagonist, etc. Le Guin is a known white, female, feminist SF writer, one that Haraway acknowledges as inspiration, but Le Guin is also known for following the male tradition of male heroes and quests in her Hainish novels, something Elizabeth Cummins notes while examining Le Guin's feminism (*Manifestly* 282-283; Cummins 157). Butler, however, is a black female writing a black female experience, and what it means to be weighted down by history.

Accordingly, to get a different perspective on human-human relationships, I look at Butler's 1987 *Dawn* and its accompanying books. *Dawn* is the first in Butler's *Xenogenesis* series, also called *Lilith's Brood*, from when *Dawn*, *Adulthood Rites* (1989), and the finale *Imago* (1990) were gathered into one print. *Dawn* starts with the end of the human species: nuclear war has ravaged the world, worse than in *Androids*, and humans only survive by the grace of an alien species, the Oankali. But human survival is short-lived. The Oankali demand the humans breed with them, and that the result of that miscegenation be the end of the human species. Similar in colonial overtones to *Androids* and *Forest*, the Oankali representing Western imperial and consumptive forces, *Dawn* is an example of humans and Others deliberating how to live alongside another species.

Butler sees her work as defined by feminism and Civil Rights, but laments the presumption of critics in assuming her work is all on slavery, Butler telling interviewer Stephen Potts, "The only places where I am writing about slavery is where I actually say so" (in interviews with Randall Kenan 501; Potts 332). Consequently, for my analysis of *Dawn* I do not consider it a slavery novel, if not for what Butler asserts then for the fact that *Dawn* is not as easily relegated to wrong as slavery is. Butler's writing is ambiguous in how things should be, causing multiple theorists to cite Butler's "contradictions" (Tucker 164, Haraway *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* 227).

Butler starts with the assumption that relationships are complicated, and that guilt should not be erased. Her aliens and humans have a symbiotic relationship, and Butler thinks that the compromised and interdependent relationship is more realistic than typical SF imperial relationships of complete domination or annihilation (in Kenan 498; Potts 332). On a smaller scale, Butler also considers familial relationships complicated, which can be seen in *Dawn* by the family that grows around the main character (in Potts 333). Yet in all of these relationships, guilt remains, acknowledging that benefit and harm are not mutually exclusive.



In *Dawn*, all of Butler's characters are guilty, from her nuclear humans to her rapacious Oankali aliens, thus demonstrating the importance of admitting guilt and allowing choice. To show why guilt is of import to Butler while innocence is ignored, I will look to Haraway's cyborg and the historical Malinche figure, alongside the role of philosophies in guilt and innocence (*Manifestly* 5-90). Butler bases human guilt in biology, with Oankali innocence in biology as well. Yet according to Sherryl Vint, Butler disavows any innocence of the biologically biophilic Oankali when the humans are allowed choice, showing that despite embodied tendencies, the Oankali are still guilty in philosophy (in Johns 384). One philosophy the Oankali could be said to follow is utilitarianism, favoring results over actions in determining guilt, but by the end of *Xenogenesis* they allow the humans choice and Butler maintains guilt. Viewing complicated relationships as inescapable may be a function of Butler being black in a racist country, but has bearing on how to act in any unequal relationships, something *Androids*, *Forest*, and *Dawn* all try to negotiate. Admitting guilt does not erase guilt, but does take a step toward equalizing unequal relationships.

This thesis looks at human-Other relationships and their use as allegories in *Androids*, *Forest*, and *Dawn*, to argue that being a human in a posthuman society is not just about treating Others (androids, animals, and aliens) well, but significantly about treating our fellow humans well. We can humanize ourselves with empathy, appreciating cultural difference, and accepting guilt. Before progressing to these texts, I will review Haraway and posthumanism.

## Haraway

Although multiple theorists are relevant and appear in this thesis, Haraway is of primary interest. A biologist in a complicated relationship with posthumanism, Haraway is famous for contributing to the fields of feminism, biopolitics, posthumanism, animal studies, and more. Moreover, she is an interesting read, a whirlwind of thought, a force of (theoretical) nature. Renowned posthumanist Cary Wolfe compares reading Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" to "recalling the first time you listened to a record that really blew you away" (in *Manifestly* vii). Haraway commands interest.

There are a number of reasons I am drawn to Haraway. I am a white female of middle-class background, an easy affiliation. I also grew up religious, Mormon rather than Catholic as Haraway did, but have since come to a complicated relationship with religion and God. Haraway

dislikes the terms “lapsed” and “‘falling’ away” in regards to reevaluating one’s spirituality, claiming for herself the term “*secular Catholic*” while still fully appreciating the impact Catholicism has had on her life, and for that I admire her (*Manifestly* 266-267). I am more religiously pessimistic than her, but the epistemology involved with religion persists.

During my undergraduate education I encountered conflicting “ways of knowing.” This is a phrase Haraway applies to biology and how different creatures interact with the world, physiology ensuring different views of the world, but this phrase does not belong purely to the realm of embodied difference (*Manifestly* 205). This is not to equate humans and animals, but simply to acknowledge that different human philosophies and teachings are different *ways of knowing*, human *ways of knowing*. Different *ways of knowing* for humans rely on nurture, not nature, humans being able to reason and change opinions. There are myriad *ways of knowing* for humans, different practices in the everyday, in science, and in religion.

In a class on spirituality in literature, one classmate shared a story of his friend’s spiritual experience: standing where Jesus had stood. Unfortunately, this experience was falsely predicated--the building was built after Jesus’s time. My classmate then asked the class what his responsibility, as a faithful individual, was to spiritual knowledge--did he affirm his friend’s spiritual experience for the good it did, or point out the chronological infeasibility and perhaps taint the experience? Was the experience worth a false *way of knowing*, or was the knowledge too valuable to be lost to mere actuality? What should one do when philosophical *ways of knowing* come into conflict?

In a much different circumstance, on a train ride here in Oslo, my husband and I discussed *ways of knowing*, religious and scientific, with a friend. The issue at stake was whether religion could be as worthwhile as science, our friend arguing the negative. We argued to the contrary, that science functions similarly to religion. It was a very Derrida-esque conversation, striving to convince our friend that science is just as much a religion in the sense of being a *way of knowing*, having faith in others’ knowledge and faith that truth is knowable, while sometimes having to accept new truths that decenter the old. Haraway herself addresses the disparity in skepticism between religion and science in “Situated Knowledges,” lamenting, “They tell parables about objectivity and scientific method to students in the first years of their initiation, but no practitioner of the high scientific arts would be caught dead acting on the textbook versions” (“Situated” 576-577, 576).

“Knowing” is complicated, and deserves every ounce of deconstruction that can be thrown at it, something which Haraway undertakes by upending “false unity” in her 1985 essay “A Cyborg Manifesto” (*Manifestly* 5-90) and her 1988 essay “Situated Knowledges.” Admittedly, unity has already been questioned by previous greats, in particular renowned deconstructionist Jacques Derrida (whom Haraway frequently places herself in conversation with), with his *différance* (the uncertainty of meaning inherent in language) and Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure’s work on signifiers and signified mixed with Claude Lévi-Strauss, the relational aspect of meaning (Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* 62-63; Saussure 37-48; Lévi-Strauss 74-83). Haraway takes Derrida’s deconstruction of unity to a new level and reveals new multiplicities, however.

Derrida’s *différance* deconstructs simplicity and unity in language and meaning, such as the assumption that everyone understands words and sentences the same way, and in the same way that the speaker/writer intended, but categories are also in need of deconstruction and reevaluation. Derrida criticizes assumed unity of the group “Animal:” “there is already a heterogeneous multiplicity of the living, or more precisely (since to say ‘the living’ is already to say too much or not enough), a multiplicity of organizations of relations between living and dead,...” (“The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)” 31). Not to trivialize the human in my comparison, Haraway similarly joins other feminists in recognizing the multiplicity of “Woman” in her essay “A Cyborg Manifesto.” I specified earlier that I am a white woman, as is Haraway, and an important move in feminism was recognizing that not all women are white, and that feminism has different battles and triumphs depending on one’s personal intersections. Haraway describes postcolonial feminist Chela Sandoval, “she was at the bottom of a cascade of negative identities, left out of even the privileged oppressed authorial categories called ‘women and blacks,’” and so Sandoval developed “oppositional consciousness” and used her voice, a voice for non-white women, black non-men (to illustrate the negative identity, *Manifestly* 17-19). Feminist Katie King decries presenting one’s own feminist views as representative of all feminism (in *Manifestly* 19-20). Haraway brings together Sandoval and King to argue, “Cyborg feminists have to argue that ‘we’ do not want any more natural matrix of unity and that no construction is whole” (21).

The term “cyborg” is hard to determine. Haraway uses cyborg to delineate crossed boundaries of humans and machines, animals and humans (*Manifestly* 11). Additionally, cyborg

is a reclamation of origin, exiting patriarchal traditions and expectations to become one's own person (8-10). It is also a recognition of the uniqueness of each person's position, rejecting simplified feminisms and race studies to see the intersectional individual (16-27). Later, Haraway documents her switch to dogs as more valuable for studies in "companion species" and further exploring biopower and co-evolution, but the cyborg plays its own role and is most relevant to this thesis (96-97).

Haraway reacts against implied unity using the metonym of cyborg, fully embracing multiplicity by pointing to the flaws in so-called unity and purity. Although she scrutinizes problems of simplistic unity in feminism, post-colonialism, language, and origin myths in "A Cyborg Manifesto," Haraway's treatment of false unity in knowledge is best done, in my opinion, in her essay "Situated Knowledges." "Ways of knowing" (described in Haraway and Wolfe's interview "Companions in Conversation") links knowledge to biology (*Manifestly* 205). "Situated Knowledges" fully explores this idea of pragmatic knowledge, pitting a unified vision and purported objectivity, what Haraway terms "god trick," against individual ways of knowing, subjectivity that provides objectivity by being singular, "embodied" truth: "I would like a doctrine of embodied objectivity that accommodates paradoxical and critical feminist science projects: Feminist objectivity means quite simply *situated knowledges*" ("Situated" 575-578, 581). Part of Haraway's concern with *god trick* objectivity is the ambiguous state of culpability. She argues, "against various forms of unlocatable, and so irresponsible, knowledge claims. Irresponsible means unable to be called into account" (583). Objectivity is problematic for being unblameable, innocent, untouchable. Life is, of course, more complicated than that.

As part of Haraway's move from cyborgs to dogs in biopower, one arena of supposed objectivity and innocence that garners Haraway's attention is that between human researcher and animal test subject. Innocence and guilt in scientifically justified "instrumental relations" fascinates Haraway, and indeed overshadows each first contact in the novels of this thesis (*When Species Meet* 69). Innocence implies objectivity, which Haraway has shown to be false (alongside other deconstructionists). In the lab, she declares "...acquiring knowledge is never innocent..." whereas guilt shatters the illusion that "calculations about ends and means" suffice for absolution (70, 75). Guilt in human-animal relationships is real in a way innocence never can be. In a letter to her friend and colleague Sharon Ghamari-Tabrizi defending both scientific

research and guilt, Haraway deconstructs the binary “inviolable animal rights”/greater “human good.”

Yes, all the calculations still apply; yes, I will defend animal killing for reasons and in detailed material–semiotic conditions that I judge tolerable because of a greater good calculation. And no, that is never enough. I refuse the choice of “inviolable animal rights” versus “human good is more important.” Both of those proceed as if calculation solved the dilemma, and all I or we have to do is choose. (*Species* 87)

Multiple times, Haraway emphasizes that calculations are both necessary and insufficient for humans interacting with animals. Responsible relationships require something more, and never erase guilt.

Although guilt’s importance to Haraway is easily attributable to her Catholic upbringing, to do so would trivialize and enact a *god trick* of objective misconstruing what Haraway terms “response-able” relationships (*Species* 71). Haraway primarily describes *response-able* relationships in the lab, between humans and animals, as a replacement for a calculating attitude. Traditionally, humans are considered agents, while animals are considered test subjects or victims; the animals are objects. *Response-ability* means to recognize and make the lab interaction an interaction between humans and animals rather than between humans and objects, “People and animals in labs are both subjects and objects to each other in ongoing intra-action” (71). Both sides respond to each other and create a relationship together, however unequally each side contributes. The relationship is multi-directional, not just human to animal but animal to human as well. Being *response-able* is Haraway’s moving away from the Cartesian view of animals as machines, incapable of responding, and accepting human onus to look at animals “face-to-face.” (*Species* 70-73)

Haraway actually finds the word “guilty” lacking for explaining human accountability. However, what she describes in its place is similar enough that I shall continue to use it throughout this thesis:

To me [unequal human suffering] does not mean people cannot ever engage in experimental animal lab practices, including causing pain and killing. It does mean that these practices should never leave their practitioners in moral comfort, sure of their righteousness. Neither does the category of “guilty” apply, even though with Baba Joseph

I am convinced the word wicked remains apt.<sup>113</sup> ... The needed morality, in my view, is culturing a radical ability to remember and feel what is going on and performing the epistemological, emotional, and technical work to respond practically in the face of the permanent complexity not resolved by taxonomic hierarchies and with no humanist philosophical or religious guarantees. (*Species* 75)

In other words, innocence in interspecies relationships is nonexistent. Haraway's position is that misdeeds can still be labeled misdeeds even if they are ultimately necessary. I will continue to use "guilt," as guilt signifies belief that an action is wrong or damaging, and that the guilty agent should find a new way of doing things. Guilt recognizes that the animal test subject is a being, not an object.

*Response-ability* and guilt are cornerstones of this thesis. *Response-ability* replaces objectivity and innocence with subjectivity/accountability and guilt, and is also a theory of "being/becoming"--"...responders are themselves co-constituted in the responding..." (*Species* 72, 71). The interaction and relationship makes the people and animals into who they are. Haraway takes this quite literally on the animals' part, recognizing that lab animals are sometimes constructed for the experiment (72).<sup>4</sup>

Although formulated for human-animal relationships, I find *response-ability* applies to human-human relationships as well. Responses co-constituting beings is what every relationship is built on, expecting and giving responses shows respect. Obviously, responses will be different between humans and humans, compared to humans and animals--part of respect is in recognizing the individual for what they are, Haraway noting the problem of projecting humanness onto animals or animalizing humans: "[it] sets up children to be bitten and dogs to be killed" (*Manifestly* 128; 128-131, 187). Humans are not animals, and animals are not humans; treatment cannot be equivalent.<sup>5</sup> When we expect responses from people, give responses to people, we are "co-constituted in the responding," human to human (*Species* 71). In the first chapter and throughout I tie *response-ability* and co-creation to the term "humanize."

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<sup>3</sup> Baba Joseph is a character from Nancy Farmer's book *A Girl Named Disaster*; Haraway is drawn to him for feeling the pain of being bitten by flies alongside his test subject guinea pigs (referenced in *Manifestly* 69-70, 74-75).

<sup>4</sup> Haraway acknowledges Dolly, Snuppy, OncoMouse, and other animals created in the lab (*Species* 54-55, 76).

<sup>5</sup> The importance of humans as humans, animals as animals, will be discussed further in chapter two, section 2.1.2 "The Too Human Animal."

Although “humanize” is implicitly a human word, as in it is anthropocentric with humans as the center, *human-ize*, I use it to represent whenever one being treats another with respect. Ideally, I would use another word. Though my focus is on human-human interactions, this thesis follows androids, monkey-humans, and aliens, while referencing animal Others; a human face and reality should not be projected onto non-human beings. It creates false expectations of non-human Others, something Haraway warns can be dangerous (*Manifestly* 128). Consequently, when I use humanize, I do not mean to anthropomorphize the animal. However, there is not currently a species-neutral word that is equivalent. Thus, for the purposes of this thesis, “humanizing” is not tied to species, but to a *response-able* attitude. Each being in a relationship helps to humanize each other by responding.

The final part of Haraway’s philosophy this thesis relies on is the culmination of everything preceding, *god tricks* versus *situated knowledges*, unity versus cyborgs, innocence versus guilt, calculations versus *response-ability*. In Judeo-Christian religions, there are Ten Commandments, the Sixth of which mandates, “Thou shalt not kill” (Exo. 20:13). Noting humanity’s absorption with the question of whom this commandment does and does not apply to, and still acceding to the benefit of instrumental relationships, Haraway suggests, “Perhaps the commandment should read, ‘Thou shalt not make killable.’” In this case, *killable* means that the killer faces no repercussions or hindrances to killing, they can kill with impunity. Calculating innocence by determining who is *killable* is not the kind of world Haraway wants to live in. (*Species* 80)

Near the beginning of this Introduction, I stated Haraway’s position on SF, that, “the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion” (*Manifestly* 6). Haraway sees SF is already present, machines inescapably part of our lives, “we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism--in short, cyborgs” (7). Cyborgs are “both imagination and material reality, the two joined centers structuring any possibility of historical transformation” (7). We are a SF society, from the technology we already have to the technology we imagine having. SF encourages and forces change, reevaluating the past, and Haraway enjoys that: “Science is culture” (*Simians* 230).

Accordingly, Haraway thinks highly of Le Guin and Butler and highlights their influence and importance (*Manifestly* 282-283, 52). Though I debate the problem of visually animal people for muddying anthropomorphism and animalization in *Forest* (a problem Haraway sees in the

world if not in this particular book, *Manifestly* 128), Haraway focuses on Le Guin's nuanced ending when the Athsheans learn to kill: "LeGuin, like Derrida, cannot rest in, cannot have the solace of, a utopic future...I turn to what Deborah Bird Rose would call with her Australian Aboriginal teachers and interlocutors, somehow being response-able in the thick present..." (*Manifestly* 282). Haraway more closely aligns with my interests in *Dawn*. Butler's protagonist Lilith is one of Haraway's cyborgs, a black woman navigating being true to herself while surviving the end of the human species, enduring Malinche's guilt of joining with the imperialists to survive (*Manifestly* 62-63, 56-58). Haraway also appreciates that Butler leaves unresolved dilemmas, such as the importance of "sameness and difference" as boundaries between humans and aliens change (*Simians* 229). Butler is of specific significance, as Haraway acknowledges her as an influence (*Manifestly* 52). Science fiction studies Benjamin Robertson emphasizes the interplay of the two authors, "What these critics ignore in their use of Haraway, for example, is the fact that Haraway does not bring the concept of the cyborg to Butler to explain Butler, but rather uses Butler's writing to help define the cyborg" (376). There is an interactive convergence of thought, both of them implacable on the importance of complexity.

Dick and his novel do not appear in Haraway's writing, although the movie based on *Androids* does. Unlike the book, *Blade Runner* redeems the android Rachael, prompting Haraway to say, "The replicant Rachel in the Ridley Scott film *Blade Runner* stands as the image of a cyborg culture's fear, love, and confusion" (*Manifestly* 60).<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the android Luba Luft would be the equivalent in *Androids*, as she performs the function of humanizing androids for the protagonist Deckard (see McNamara 434). However, Dick's theme is Deckard's dehumanization by dehumanizing Others, clearly connected to *response-ability* (qtd. in McNamara 434). Where Dick and Haraway would differ is Dick's fear of the Other being incapable of *response-ability*, unempathetic humans that dehumanize and endanger themselves and those around them.<sup>7</sup>

One could summarize Haraway's philosophy to a commitment to difference and accountability in reaction to problematic, traditional philosophies in Western thought. False unity in knowledge (*god tricks*) and being (sameness), false innocence, and calculating instrumental relations, is informed by the great Western philosophy Humanism. Within the past century, philosophers and thinkers have reconsidered Humanism and the position of humans in the world

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<sup>6</sup> In the movie, "replicant" is used for android.

<sup>7</sup> See Heise and Hayles "Schizoid."



around us; posthumanism is one of the results. Haraway is typically regarded to be on the posthumanist side, yet although she finds herself “implicated” in posthumanism she finds it problematic (*Manifestly* 261-262). I shall now endeavor to define both Humanism and posthumanism satisfactorily for the purposes of this thesis.

## Humanism and Posthumanism

Both Humanism and posthumanism are slippery terms to define. Humanism is related to different philosophies over a great span of time, such that any definition of Humanism is either overly specific, or too generic. Likewise, posthumanism can refer to philosophies responding to various humanisms or ideals of human or environment perfection. Accordingly, I shall use my own definitions of the terms, erring on the side of generic (rather than following in Wolfe’s steps and using Wikipedia, *What* xi).

Humanism has been reworked many times. Related to classical Republicanism, the Enlightenment, Renaissance, and Cartesian philosophy, Humanism (or humanisms) celebrates and depends on humanity’s ability to think and act rationally (read also morally) and freely, saving itself from tyrannical institutions, political and religious. Despite its secularity, Humanism retains human uniqueness; the human brain sets humans apart from the rest of the animal kingdom, while the decision to use that brain sets a standard for other humans to follow. The element of choice, deciding to be rational or not, is muddled by those considered incapable of being rational but who nevertheless retain some form of human dignity.<sup>8</sup>

Rationality and self-determination are the markers of a life well-lived, according to Humanism, and yet this seemingly well intentioned and well thought out philosophy plays into a history of exclusion. Posthumanist feminist Rosi Braidotti notes the Eurocentric bent of Humanist thought, “Humanism historically developed into a civilizational model, which shaped a certain idea of Europe as coinciding with the universalizing powers of self-reflexive reason” (13, 13-16). She also connects anti-Humanist sentiment with political activists for gender, race, and pacifism, stating, “They challenged the platitudes of Cold War rhetoric, with its emphasis on Western democracy, liberal individualism and the freedom they allegedly ensured for all” (16-17). Humanism is inextricably linked with assumptions of personhood, the white Euro male

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<sup>8</sup> For specificity, see Tony Davies’s *Humanism*, Neil Badmington’s *Theorizing Posthumanism*, and the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry “Civic Humanism” by Cary Nederman.

being the Humanist epitome of rational thought, an idea Braidotti finds embodied in Leonardo Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man (13). When Haraway moves away from objective truth, she is moving away from a Humanist codification of ways of thinking.

Another problem with Humanism is in its name: human. A fine animal, and admittedly of great accomplishment, the human is not the only animal around (and indeed, the multiplicity of humanity argues for a greater recognition of the different ways of human being; "the" human is problematic, just as "the" female or "the" animal, hence Haraway's cyborg). Anthropocentrism, the belief that humans are greater than animals, top of the hierarchy of life, allows humans to make all other animals *killable*, in Haraway's parlance.<sup>9</sup> It cannot be immoral killing, if they are not human, in anthropocentrism. Defined rationality and anthropocentrism are two overarching problems of Humanism that frequent the pages of *Androids*, *Forest*, and *Dawn*, both on purpose and on accident.

Posthumanism is equally indefinable, applying to transhumanist ethics of bodily perfection, antihumanist sentiment to either the Humanist philosophy or humans in general, etc. However, posthumanism falls into a long tradition of "post-." For this thesis, then, posthumanist theory is a reaction against intellect and humanity as a basis for rights, and the philosophy grounding affirmative biopolitics: humans are not inherently better or more deserving than animals,<sup>10</sup> and should strive to live as companion species (as Haraway advocates in *Species*) rather than masters of the Earth. One of the main proponents of this strain of posthumanism is Wolfe, who connects animal studies with posthumanism because the two "[return] us precisely to the thickness and finitude of human embodiment and to human evolution as itself a specific form of animality, one that is unique and different from other forms but no more different, perhaps, than an orangutan is from a starfish" ("Human" 571-572).

A quick clarification is needed on the terms animal studies and animality. Animality theorist Michael Lundblad has argued for a distinction between "animal studies" and "animality studies," that although both are invested in examining how we think about real animals, that "animal studies" should be primarily used for animal advocacy while "animality studies" can be concerned about human politics and the use of animal nature in explaining human nature (496-497). Indeed, a primary concern of Wolfe's is the use of animals as tropes for humans ("Human"

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<sup>9</sup> For more on the relationship of Humanism and anthropocentrism, see Braidotti 69 and Roden 10-13.

<sup>10</sup> See Peter Singer's "Speciesism and Moral Status."

567). Although this thesis touches on treating animals ethically, I primarily explore how Others are used to explain how people should be treated, closer to animality than animal studies. The posthuman philosopher David Roden ties the various strains of posthumanism together, “Like humanism, posthumanism--or the philosophical critique of anthropocentrism--comes in different flavours. All are opposed to some form of human-centred worldview” (20-21). Posthumanism is humans changing their gaze from the mirror to the world.<sup>11</sup> Decentering the human is recognizing the multiplicity of life around us. Haraway’s posthumanist cyborg also helps to remember the multiplicity of life within the category “human.”

Yet there is also a problem with posthumanism--is Humanism really dead? If not clear from Haraway’s refutation of Western thinking, Humanism is pervasive, something theorists and societies are still working through. The posthumanist scholar Neil Badmington stands with multiple theorists in thinking that the advent of posthumanism does not mean the end of humanism (10-12). Citing ideas from Derrida and sociologist Jean-François Lyotard, Badmington cautions, “the ‘post-’ of posthumanism does not (and, moreover, cannot) mark or make an absolute break from the legacy of humanism” (21). Humanism remains, while Badmington views posthumanism as the act of Freudian “working through” it (20). Badmington also uses Derrida’s deconstruction to show that posthumanism is reiterations of Humanism and thereby examines itself (13-15). Indeed, Badmington’s warning against a “pure outside” brings to mind Haraway’s *god trick*, and suggests that a self-celebratory posthumanism falls into the same trap as Humanism (Badmington 15).

In short, Badmington advocates a view of posthumanism as a self-recursive theory. Badmington cautions zealous antihumanists that, “The writing of the posthumanist condition should not seek to fashion ‘scriptural tombs’<sup>32</sup> for humanism, but must, rather, take the form of a critical practice that occurs inside humanism, consisting not of the wake but the working-through of humanist discourse” (21-22). Asking “*what is to be done?*” if humanism appears in posthumanist writing (12), Badmington proposes viewing posthumanism as a process of thinking about Humanism critically, rather than a celebration of overcoming anthropocentrism that assumes anthropocentrism is gone and thus erases the need for action, a problem that gender and

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<sup>11</sup> For specific strains of posthumanism and more on decentering the human, see Braidotti 16-54, Roden 21, and *What* xi-xxvi

race activism face as well (19-22). Acknowledging the problems entrenched in Humanism is not the same as continually addressing those problems.

Similar to the shift from geocentrism to heliocentrism, posthumanism represents a basic shift in how humans perceive our own position and importance, but unlike those theories, posthumanism cannot be static. Badmington is correct in suggesting posthumanist theory as a perpetual procedure of examining and correcting biases. We are not in a posthumanist utopia, but rather a posthuman realization; the effectiveness of that realization is contingent on continually reevaluating our status as citizens of a populated world. In this way, it makes sense why Haraway would hesitate to be called posthumanist (*Manifestly* 261)--the work of decentering the human is not done just because the posthuman theory exists, and a static theory encourages stagnation. Like other theories, posthumanism is more about a philosophy of viewing the world rather than just a prescriptive theory. Simply having Marxist, feminist, postcolonial studies, disability studies, animal studies, and other theories do not eradicate inequality but shed light on how we can reduce and eventually eliminate inequality. Just so, posthumanist theory encourages us to reassess why we are writing the way we write, why we do what we do, and how that affects the Others around us. Seen this way, Haraway's *response-able* relationships are the self-recursive posthumanist theory that Badmington calls for.

In summary, each of the texts in this thesis support *response-able* relationships, examining how to interact ethically and humanize. Humanize here means recognizing the individual, humans as morally deserving humans, animals as morally deserving animals, rather than making animals into humans. Each novel shows that when we fail to treat Others morally or humanely, we appear less human/e ourselves. However, they each do so imperfectly, betraying Humanist expectations of what matters morally.

Dick's *Androids* is most interested in showing that wrong treatment dehumanizes the actor, such that the android Others are not fully fleshed Others but representative of unempathetic humans. It dares to ask how to treat dehumanizing agents, such as the androids, without dehumanizing oneself, but fails in being a *response-able* relationship when it emphasizes the androids as *killable*, and fails to move past anthropocentrism in only concerning itself with humans nurturing a blind devotion to life.

Le Guin's *Forest* advocates recognizing fellow humans as human, regardless of physical or cultural difference. Yet she exoticizes her alien-humans by making them completely innocent

as noble savages (Latham 117-118). Meanwhile, her humans uphold an imperialist binary by being barbarous blacks compared to the civilized, white Hainish, dehumanizing real life blacks by simplifying the morality in *Forest*. Le Guin also exoticizes the Athsheans by making them green-furred, animalistic in appearance, using a monkey-human to make the wide-spread discrimination seem inevitable from an anthropocentric point of view, and at the same time morally reprehensible from the same view. Latham is right, having the Athsheans be human draws the same line that Haraway is trying to avoid by changing the commandment from “Thou shalt not kill” to “Thou shalt not make killable”--everything outside of human is *killable* (Latham 117-118; *Species* 80). But the problem is two-sided, visually animalizing humans negatively reinforces difference because of historical animalization. Hence, *Forest* does support *response-able* relationships, but in the pursuit of advocacy follows ill-advised tropes.

Butler’s *Dawn* demonstrates the importance of guilt in creating *response-able* relationships, and guilt and the Oankali make this novel an outlier. Although the Oankali are a colonizing force, consuming everything they touch, enacting negative aspects of Western society and thus performing the narrative function of examining human relationships, they are alien where the androids and Athsheans are not. Not unempathetic humans, not monkey-humans, the Oankali are aliens who colonize and consume but also have good aspects in their society. Meanwhile, the humans are not perfect, having from the very beginning destroyed their planet, but they are victims of the Oankali’s biophilic genocide. In the other two novels, it is clear who is in the wrong, or more in the wrong than others. In *Dawn*, both humans and the alien Others are guilty, and it is only throughout the rest of *Xenogenesis* that they learn the importance of overcoming their natural instincts. This guilt then reinforces the need to reevaluate one’s philosophy and place in the world, never resting on the presumption of innocence.

Thus, these novels focus on using Others for *response-able* human relationships, and show the importance of posthumanism being self-recursive. The posthumanism of yesterday cannot be the posthumanism of tomorrow, because relationships change. Throughout my chapters I focus on attitude as humanizing both actor and object, differentiating humans and animals, and the realities of maintaining complex relationships without reducing the needs or guilt of either side. Yet the overarching theme and argument is for a Haraway (and Badmington) based posthumanism: the human is a companion species to all other life on Earth. We cannot force a human reality on animal Others, and cannot assume that humans experience life the same

way. Posthuman theory is a theory of “becoming with,” for both humans and Others (*Species 3*).  
Life is dynamic.

# 1. Androids and Attitude: Avoiding Dehumanization

The main conflict of Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (*Androids*) resides in how to empathize with an undeserving entity while also protecting oneself from them: a matter of humanizing a dehumanizer. Conversely, *Androids* is also about how to avoid making an android *killable*<sup>12</sup> while considering them a danger to society. These are the problems facing the protagonist Rick Deckard, an average bounty hunter of androids.

Deckard is on a mission to kill six escaped androids for money. He lives in a world decimated by a nuclear war, World War Terminus, where organic animals have become expensive idols that each household must have, with electric animals for anyone whose animal dies. Humans are emigrating to Mars and given android servants, while everyone who remains on Earth risks becoming subhuman (as the society defines it) through radiation poisoning. In this world, organic animals, and to a lesser extent their replacement, electric animals, help humanize the humans, alongside the pseudo-religion Mercerism that teaches empathy. Deckard maintains societal boundaries by killing the androids, but eventually develops empathy for the androids. Though he tries to rekindle his natural empathy by buying an organic goat partway through, and though he fulfills his contract, Deckard views the world differently by the end of the novel.

*Androids* follows Donna J. Haraway's posthumanism and *response-ability*, redefined below, in emphasizing that attitude and action, how the individual or agent treats the Other, determines personal humanity by humanizing or dehumanizing them both. However, *Androids* sidesteps the issue of humans being companion species--the animals are commodities, according to Jill Galvan, Ursula Heise, and Sherryl Vint, and the androids are a metaphor for unempathetic humans, according to these theorists, in addition to N. Katherine Hayles and Kevin McNamara. All relationships are weighted on the human side, specifically the empathetic human, to the degree that it does not matter whether or not the androids are killed, so long as Deckard retains his own humanity. By killing the androids in the end and reaffirming their danger, *Androids* makes androids *killable*, which is problematic.

Consequently, I will first review what I mean by humanize, dehumanize, and *response-ability*. This will be followed by the different practices involved in dehumanizing attitudes: Vint sees the Cartesian Mind in *Androids*, while Sims and Galvan see individualism, and various

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<sup>12</sup> This is explained in the Introduction, and in the following section.

theorists (Galvan, Heise, and Vint) see speciesism. Then, I will look at how Dick dehumanizes androids through sex and empathic disability, especially in the light that the androids are presented not as Others, but as empathetically-challenged humans. Dick teaches of the importance of humanizing ourselves and Others, only to dehumanize the androids and make them *killable*.

## 1.1 De/Humanize

Being a part of the human species is a matter of DNA. However, *being human* is just as much about acting humanely as pedigree. When labeling people monsters or inhuman for unspeakable acts (mutilation, murder, genocide), we do not literally mean they have descended from their human form into another, but that their attitude demonstrates a jarring disengagement with humans as real beings. The actor has dehumanized themselves by considering other humans (or animals) as beings to be inflicted upon, not feeling agents themselves.

According to the author Dick, “the theme of the book is that Deckard is dehumanized by tracking down androids” (qtd. in McNamara 434). This demonstrates that Dick’s theory of humanizing is based on attitude and action, that regardless of Deckard knowing the androids to be androids, killing androids makes Deckard feel dehumanized. This easily falls into line with Haraway’s focus on *response-able* relationships, as Deckard ignores any *response-ability* on the part of the androids, considering them machines incapable of genuine response.

Originally created as war machines, androids have been developed into near human entities, such that androids can only reliably be physically differentiated from humans using a bone marrow analysis.<sup>13</sup> Androids are highly regulated, only given to Mars colonists. Any escaped android is hunted down and “retired,” seen as putting malevolent, malfunctioning machines to rest. Most importantly, androids are usually differentiated from humans through the Voigt-Kampff Empathy Test (which will be discussed more in the speciesism section). Empathy humanizes and makes a human, its lack dehumanizes and makes an android. The question in *Androids* is if the androids are dehumanized only by the humans’ lack of empathy toward them, or by having no empathy themselves?

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<sup>13</sup> These are primarily performed on the dead, as the living do not have to give possibly self-incriminating evidence (*Androids* chap. 5).



Haraway's *response-ability* is the opposite of dehumanization. One humanizes oneself and is humanized by another by both giving and receiving responses (*When Species Meet* 71). The expectation that both sides can have a meaningful, dynamic relationship humanizes, in the sense that both treat each other humanely. *Response-able* relationships are ones where neither side sins against Haraway's commandment, "Thou shalt not make killable" (80). As before, the word "humane" implies that both actors will be human, and though that is the main focus of this thesis, I also use "humane" and "humanize" for interactions between humans and animals because there is not a proper word for recognizing and responding to the animal.

In the case of human-human dehumanizing relationships, there are debates on whether or not a dehumanized actor actually considers others subhuman. A philosopher on the phenomena of dehumanization, David L. Smith argues they do not. Pointing to dehumanizers' use of human-implicit terms such as "enemy" alongside animalization terms (subhuman-implicit), and the purposeful humiliation performed by dehumanizers, D.L. Smith contends that a primary aspect of dehumanization is the "dehumanizers' implicit recognition of the human character of their victims" (417).<sup>14</sup> As a good deal of D.L. Smith's work looks at the animalization some dehumanizers perform, his work will be further explored in the following chapter. However, it is important here to note that dehumanization is not always about how the dehumanizer (self-dehumanized agent) categorizes the dehumanized (other-dehumanized object) as human or non-human. It is about their attitude and actions towards their victims, the inhumane acts, regardless of or in fact motivated by category. One could argue that categorization and attitude are intertwined, but that will be addressed in the following chapter.

D.L. Smith's argument demonstrates that dehumanization can be centered on the victim's humanity. It could be said to apply to the killing of androids in Dick's work. Deckard muses before meeting a bounty android named Luba Luft that, "Perhaps the better she functions, the better a singer she is, the more I am needed" (*Androids* chap. 9). Luba is a pivotal android, as she forces Deckard to rethink androids as beings. She is the same android that another bounty Phil Resch later kills for insinuating that he is not human, but as much of an android as her (chap. 12). The androids are dehumanized by the humans to justify their deaths, and it is their human aspect (specifically, that of Luba) that drives Deckard to exclaim, "This is insane" (chap. 12). However, it is more concerning that until Luba, Deckard does not see androids as beings. Even after her

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<sup>14</sup> D.L. Smith looks at dehumanization in war and other situations.

death, Deckard goes on to fulfill his contract and kill the remaining escaped androids, thus upholding dehumanization and killing androids as both negative and necessary. As the pseudo-Jesus/Sisyphus figure of Mercerism, Wilbur Mercer advises Deckard in a vision, “You will be required to do wrong no matter where you go” (chap. 15).

Inherent in the word “humane” is the Humanist sensibility, the myth of an indisputable morality that need only be discovered, an easy answer to how to be human and act ethically. Haraway warns against “mak[ing] killable,” but beyond avoiding cruelty or blanket morality, there is no direct answer on how to be humane (*Species* 80). A “humane” attitude is not just a matter for courts and judges to decide, or scientists with human and animal subjects, but a society’s consensus on what is acceptable. More importantly, the individual must decide what is acceptable. Haraway is interested in an interaction-based ethics rather than a formal code of conduct: “The partners do not precede the meeting; species of all kinds, living and not, are consequent on a subject- and object-shaping dance of encounters” (4). What makes both the agent and the object feel like a human or, more appropriately, like a morally deserving being?

There are various attitudes that contribute to dehumanization and inhibit looking for *response-ability*. These are the Cartesian Mind, with Vint being the main one to connect it to *Androids*, “-isms” such as individualism, that Sims and Galvan examine, speciesism that Galvan, Heise, and Vint analyze, as well as sexism, racism, and any attitude that privileges one actor over the other. Some theorists (e.g. Galvan, McNamara, and Vint) have also fretted on whether or not technology incites dehumanization, even when recognizing the importance of personal attitude in being dehumanized, but technology is just a tool. Viewing the people around us as people, animals as animals, and so on, stems from personal engagement in *response-able* relationships. However, there is the interesting danger of someone literally incapable of feeling empathy, who does not look for responses and dehumanizes those around them. Each of these dehumanizing attitudes and possibilities will now be reviewed to show that attitude humanizes or dehumanizes.

### 1.1.1 The Cartesian Mind

Potential interspecies interactions exist between humans-androids, humans-animals, and androids-animals. Much critical attention paid to *Androids* is on humans-animals, with animals being separated into organic and electric, but science fiction (SF) studies Sherryl Vint looks to

the humans-robots relationship, where humans dehumanize themselves by dehumanizing robots, to examine the cognitive split of empathy-nonempathy: the Cartesian Mind.

According to the famous philosopher René Descartes, reason differentiates humans from the animals. Humans are authentic and rational, while animals are unfeeling automatons (referenced in Badmington 16-17, Vint 112-113). Interestingly, Descartes postulates that human machines could be made, but he assumes that they would fail to reach the synergy of actually being human--they would fail to be more than the sum of their parts. (Badmington 17-19)<sup>15</sup> Posthumanist and animal studies Cary Wolfe clarifies that Descartes does not mean that animals as machines cannot have pain, but rather that the animal individual cannot realize pain because there is no soul and so the pain is not “morally relevant” (*What is Posthumanism?* 45). If moral relevance is tied to a soul, performing painful experiments on an animal is not the same as performing painful experiments on a human, as it lacks moral compunction. A Cartesian Mind makes all animals *killable*.

Based on rationality and separating man from the beasts, Vint sees a correlation in Descartes’s view of animals as unfeeling machines, and how robots are not humans in *Androids*. Vint summarizes, “[robots] appear to act as do humans, but lack some non-material capacity (mind for Descartes, empathy in the novel) that would make them truly the same as humans” (113).<sup>16</sup> Animals lack mind, and this is “used to justify the exploitation of animals” (113). Robots lack empathy, which is used to justify their exploitation by humans as well. Consequently, Vint explains Deckard’s dehumanization through his being forced to perform an “affect and cognition split” by way of a Cartesian mindset, choosing whom to care for (115).

Yet choosing whom to care for is only part of a calculating mindset, a bias that can be easily redressed once seen. A more fickle aspect is choosing how much care to give. A baseline of caring does not mean that a calculating attitude has been escaped. Haraway admonishes:

Minimizing cruelty, while necessary, is not enough; responsibility demands more than that. I am arguing that instrumental relations of people and animals are not themselves the root of turning animals (or people) into dead things, into machines whose reactions are of interest but who have no presence, no face, that demands recognition, caring, and shared pain. (*Species* 71)

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<sup>15</sup> Neil Badmington disagrees with Descartes’s assumption that a machine-human could never pass for a real human, and suggests that Descartes is similar to Deckard in being unable to see real beings (18-19).

<sup>16</sup> See also Vint 118.

Here, Haraway is clearly referencing the Cartesian mindset: animals as machines that react to stimuli. Yet she moves dehumanization from purely being a fact of Cartesian philosophy to any calculation that fails to actually interact with the animal (or android, and which I extend to human).<sup>17</sup> Although instrumental relationships are a fact of scientific life, exercising feeling for or removing discomfort from the subject does not mean the actor has escaped a calculating mindset. Deckard buys Luba a gift, a book of pictures, but fails to save her from Resch and still collects the money from her bounty (*Androids* chap. 15).

Ultimately, Vint argues that Deckard overcomes his Cartesian split (124). Yet the Cartesian Mind is where we begin to see androids not as Others, but unempathetic humans. Vint quotes Dick, “In ‘Man, Android and Machine,’ Dick specifically identifies that the difference between androids and humans as a boundary applied ‘not to origin or to any ontology but to a way of being in the world’” (qtd. in Vint 125). Vint even argues that, “the risk faced by Deckard and other humans in the novel lies in realizing that they already are android-like, so long as they define their subjectivity based on the logical, rational, calculating part of human being” (112).<sup>18</sup> In regards to Deckard’s dehumanization, Vint connects his actions to a Cartesian mindset that justifies unfeeling violence that leads to being an android, an unempathetic person.

### 1.1.2 Individualism and Technology

Another attitude that the humans in *Androids* dehumanize themselves by employing is individualism.<sup>19</sup> Western culture (the US in particular) is famous for focusing on independence of the individual, rather than focusing on the group (a societal philosophy more particularly associated with Eastern Asian cultures). The American Dream is not of a group succeeding together, but the idea that an individual can go to the US and succeed in their own life, by their own means, irrespective of community. It assumes equal opportunity and ability, ignoring discrimination, and creating a one-job-fits-all work expectation. If someone fails at this dream, the folk wisdom is that they are not working hard enough. One can easily see Humanism

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<sup>17</sup> A truly interactive relationship that humanizes both parties is not just about having empathy and pity, pity being something Haraway sees as insufficient, *Species* 22.

<sup>18</sup> On this same page Vint acknowledges android-ification of humans in *Androids* as a “general critical consensus” (112).

<sup>19</sup> See Galvan 417-419, 425; Hayles “Schizoid Android” 423; McNamara 441-443; Sims 67; Vint 118.

implicated in individualism and, by extension, capitalism (which will be discussed more in the section on speciesism). Individualism in *Androids* is another failure to consider *response-ability*. Though some fret that technology exacerbates dehumanizing attitudes, I join the economist Christopher Sims in arguing that the technology (empathy boxes and androids) of *Androids* is meant to enhance empathy and dethrone individualism.

Loneliness permeates *Androids*. Organic animals are mostly extinct, and the cities' populations dwindle as humans emigrate to Mars. The remaining emptiness is oppressive, prompting Deckard's wife Iran to despair and fueling fear of "kipple" (junk) taking over in the slow death of the universe (*Androids* chap. 1, 6). Everyone is on their own and, according to Sims, individualism aggravates this condition by encouraging people to dehumanize themselves rather than looking for *response-ability* around them (67).

One of the main technologies involved in alleviating the alienated human condition is the empathy box. According to John R. Isidore, the most empathetic person in *Androids* who is nonetheless considered subhuman because of nuclear degradation, "...an empathy box...is the most personal possession you have!" (chap. 6). A human (and only humans, as androids are unable to use the empathy boxes) grips the handles on the box while watching a screen. This leads to *fusion*, a mental shift into the mind of Wilbur Mercer, failed Jesus and elevated Sisyphus who can sometimes resurrect dead animals, and who is most famous for walking up a hill while stones are thrown at him by "killers." Fused humans experience Mercer's memory, even garnering real wounds, but more importantly they connect with other fused humans. All fused humans are able to share feelings and exchange thoughts. People feel connected, and are taught how to connect in real life.

It is from Mercer and empathy boxes that humans learn their empathy, especially reverence for animal life, but this belief is destabilized by the androids. At the climax of the novel, androids who have infiltrated state media unveil that Mercerism is made up, that the quasi-Jesus/Sisyphus figure Mercer is played by an actor. The androids also suggest the possibilities for a despot to utilize empathy boxes for evil, as humans are connected into a "single entity" that is susceptible to suggestion. (*Androids* chap. 18)

Agreeing with the androids, contemporary posthumanist Jill Galvan finds the empathy boxes dangerous, and detrimental for humanization. She indicates that the empathy boxes let humans feel like they are rebelling with Mercer while never actually rebelling. Instead, they stay

trapped in their houses as isolated rebels. Galvan also suggests that empathy boxes discourage people from interacting with each other in real life, instead being content with technologically-mediated encounters. (Galvan 416-417).

Part of Galvan's hesitation comes from a scene with Deckard, Deckard's wife Iran, and an empathy box. Deckard has just come home with a goat, and Iran wants to use their empathy box to share the joy she is feeling with others. When she starts using the empathy box, Deckard is "Conscious of his own aloneness" (*Androids* chap. 15) Galvan mourns for Deckard and worries for the community: "this aloneness exactly fulfills the project of the empathy box, as that mechanism is manipulated by the government: in interpellating the political subject and fixing her passively before the screen, Mercer's image serves the purpose not of social solidarity but of disintegration" (416). The empathy box is either a teacher of empathy, or fomenter of solitude and safe rebellion, depending on how one views it.

Though Galvan is right in questioning the empathy box and follows the interesting questions raised by the androids, she fails to examine Deckard's motivation in avoiding the empathy box. While Vint finds technology a poor substitute for the organic (which will be discussed more in the following section), Vint recognizes empathy boxes' use in avoiding loneliness, and sharing happiness (124, 121).<sup>20</sup> Examining the same scene as Galvan, Vint focuses on Deckard's claim that, "They'll have our joy, ... but we'll lose. We'll exchange what we feel for what they feel. Our joy will be lost" (*Androids* chap. 15). Vint claims that Deckard's hesitation shows he still considers everything logically, "He is still thinking in terms of the logic of exchange and scarcity, in which joy circulates in a zero sum game" (121). To misquote the android Pris Stratton, "That's the sort of slip [an individualist] makes" (*Androids* chap. 13; the original being "an android").

Another theorist who argues that *Androids* is about moving away from the dehumanizing effects of technology is Kevin McNamara. McNamara claims that *Androids*, "holds out the hope that we can unplug from the mediated mass-world and, 'by listening to our dreams, become fully human ([Douglas A.] Mackey 92)" (433). One particular technology that McNamara points to for dehumanization is the Penfield Mood Organ, the technology humans use in *Androids* to constantly modulate their feelings. When the Deckards stop using their Penfields at the end,

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<sup>20</sup> Yet Vint also approves of Deckard and Iran moving away from the empathy box to *response-able* interactions (124).

McNamara (and Vint) sees this as a return to “authentic emotion” (McNamara 436; Vint 115). The fear is that technology separates the human from authenticity, which is Galvan’s worry as well.

In a response to McNamara, Sims points to the imbrication of humanity and technology: humans are defined partially by their use of technology (67-69). Although Haraway’s direct commentary on *Androids* is a quip about the movie rendition of Rachael Rosen as a poster cyborg,<sup>21</sup> her philosophy aligns more with Sims:

It is not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine. It is not clear what is mind and what is body in machines that resolve into coding practices. Insofar as we know ourselves in both formal discourse (for example, biology) and in daily practice (for example, the homework economy in the integrated circuit), we find ourselves to be cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras. (*Manifestly Haraway* 60)

One of the myriad uses of Haraway’s cyborg is as an example of humankind’s integration with technology, not a repudiation of technology.

More than simply rebuffing the idea that technology dehumanizes, Sims sees it as a site of humanization. For instance, reacting against the position suggested by the androids and held by Galvan, Sims supports use of the empathy box. First, Sims establishes that the individual remains when fused, regardless of worries that Mercer could lead people to dangerous action, “It is a consubstantial union: the individual awareness is maintained for each user, but each also becomes mentally aware of all the others” (79). Seeing how Isidore uses the empathy box to combat loneliness and anxiety, and that he is able to share pain and experience with others, Sims concludes, “From within this synthesis each individual has the knowledge that he or she is not stumbling through reality alone, that there is in fact an ‘other’ with whom we can actually connect and commiserate” (80). As technology, “Mercerism is the substitute created by Dick’s humans to satisfy their soul” (79). Taking the normative position that technology is not inherently moral or immoral, but rather that the user determines how to use it, Sims appreciates the use of empathy boxes for fulfilling human social needs.

Though interesting, the empathy box has a different place from animals (organic and electric) and androids. One does not have a relationship with a box in the same way as one does with even a simulation of life. There is no expectation or hope of reciprocity. The box does not

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<sup>21</sup> In *Manifestly Haraway* 60.

feel, but is a conduit for other relationships and feelings. The question of correct attitude is a non-issue for the box, although one would of course be surprised if the Deckards suddenly turned on their empathy box and destroyed it. Indeed, one person (Isidore) does destroy his apartment in a dehumanized moment that will be discussed in the section on schizoids and schizophrenics, and it is shocking (*Androids* chap. 18). However, destruction of personal property is different than human-animal relationships. Here, perhaps, *response-ability* is at its limit--the empathy box humanizes the human as part of its function, not because the box responds to the human. Yet humans are humanized through using the box, technology allowing humans to respond to other humans.<sup>22</sup>

Sims is interested in where humans fail to use androids. Technology themselves, androids are laborers and companions. The android manufacturer Eldon Rosen claims that the reason he develops increasingly more human androids is because, “We produced what the colonists wanted” (*Androids* chap. 5). Sims finds them potentially humanizing, “Poignantly, the reason the colonists wanted androids to be indistinguishable from humans is that androids are a technological solution to the major conflict of the novel, the lonely human condition” (73). Yet the androids are not allowed to fulfill this role of humanizing the human through companionship, and Sims finds that this is partly motivated by the uncertain ontological state of the android as both “subject and object” (70).

The Cartesian Mind directs empathy toward humans and away from androids, but androids are also treated as objects motivated by economic necessity rather than philosophical indiscretion. Deckard discovers a human face for the androids, Vint clarifying that the androids are too similar to humans to justify their being treated as objects, yet the unequal partnership remains (116). Both Vint and Sims then pin the blame for continued objectification of androids on economics, Sims wryly articulating, “Of course, the logistical reason empathy is not extended toward androids is that it would become morally complex to have the androids serve as slaves on the colony planets” (Sims 83; Vint 116). If the androids are human, or morally deserving, slavery once again shadows democracy. If the androids are objects, incapable of feeling, societal morality and reputation are maintained. This is of course problematized by Dick’s positioning androids as attitude rather than new being, and in the fact that Dick dehumanizes the androids,

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<sup>22</sup> See environments in literature specialis Aaron Cloyd’s review on how the environment is co-created with humans.



which will be further developed below in the section on N. Katherine Hayles's analysis of "schizophrenics" and "schizoids" in Dick's work.

Certain philosophies normalize attitudes of dehumanization and alienation. Sims's position (which this thesis upholds) is that *Androids* "registers its protest against the dehumanizing effects of individualism and demonstrates how technology can be used as a means to reclaim the essence of humanity" (67). *Androids* humans can use technology to humanize themselves and refute an individualist standpoint. The danger of dehumanization does not lie in the tools that surround us, but always already in how we view interactions with others, whether they are objects or real beings to us.

### 1.1.3 Speciesism

This thesis touches on various "-isms," patterns of thought and belief that encourage harmful hierarchical thinking (racism, sexism, ableism, etc.). Each -ism is irreducible, but there is a common thread--an agent dehumanizing others and thereby dehumanizing themselves. The agent stops looking for responses (*response-ability*) in their fellow human beings, their fellow animals, fellow life, and loses something themselves. Each -ism leads to objectification. Speciesism, discrimination based on anthropocentrism, is a dehumanizing attitude. It places the human above all other considerations and encourages seeing only humans as real, while animals and environments are expendable, consumable, disposable. Thus, speciesism, though not directed toward humans, can show a disengagement with real beings, a lack of *response-ability* from humans to animals.

In *Androids*, humans have to differentiate themselves from the androids, and they do so by claiming empathy as a uniquely human trait. Specifically, empathy towards animals to atone for the mass loss of life following World War Terminus. Ostensibly, this would make *Androids* humans not anthropocentric. However, this is repeatedly shown throughout the book to not be the case: the Voigt-Kampff Empathy Test (VK test) tests for empathy solely on animal exploitation, humans refer to *Sidney's Animal and Fowl Catalogue*, thinking of animals in terms of prices and availability, and humans use animals as a signal of personal virtue rather than as pets or companion species.

The VK test is ironic in its emphasis on animal abuse for determining empathy in humans and androids. Environments in literature studies Ursula Heise questions the VK test's premises:

This criterion of distinction is interesting because the general claim in Deckard's society is that androids do not have empathy with other beings; presumably, to the extent that such an emotional capability is testable at all, it could be assessed through scenarios involving humans as well as animals. But of all the questions in Deckard's repertoire, only one involves humans; all the other ones hinge on references to humans' exploitation of animals. (73)

Empathy toward androids is not tested for (*Androids* chap. 12). Indeed, the one question determining empathy toward humans is only used as a last resort when Deckard is unable to tell if the android Rachael Rosen, the first advanced android he meets and interacts with (and who is on a mission to save androids from bounty hunters), is an android or an unempathetic human (chap. 5). Androids and humans do not matter, and animals only matter in terms of whether or not they are being exploited, not as beings. Animal empathy is the main determiner of being human. Dick highlights this criteria as being faulty through the character Resch, who cares for animals but not for androids, and thereby represents one of Vint's Cartesian scientists (*Androids* chap. 12; Vint 116). Dick's lesson is that empathy cannot be exclusive.

In other novels, postmodernist Hayles finds that Dick uses excessive eating as a marker of immorality, and that in his daily life he experienced shame over eating because of the death of his sister ("Schizoid Android" 426). Keeping with Hayles's foray into Dick's personal life, it is also intriguing that animals as food and commodities is the basis for the VK test. Similar to Hayles, Heise even suggests that although others have interpreted the test as indicting android exploitation, the VK test could be "[Dick's] indictment of Western culture's fundamental insensitivity to and relentless exploitation of animals" (73).

*Androids* critiques Western culture, from exploitation to capitalism. Regarding the VK test Galvan declares, "As Judith B. Kerman aptly puts it, the scenarios that Rick proffers to his android suspect would not, should they generate an apathetic response, 'differentiate [androids] from modern Americans'" (415).<sup>23</sup> It is important to note that it is not just modern Americans that are critiqued, as the VK test points to dog-eating and bull-fighting, references to Korea and Spain (*Androids* chap. 5). Yet Americans are most famous for being capitalists, with markets driven by private individuals that are in competition in a way that Karl Marx famously criticizes for making humans into cogs in a machine (in Vint 118). Science fiction theorist Carl Freedman

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<sup>23</sup> Vint and Nigel Wheale also address this issue, Vint 115, Wheale 300.

and Hayles connect capitalism and alienation with schizophrenia (schizophrenia will be discussed more in the following section). Hayles summarizes, “Freedman points out that the schizophrenic subject, ... evolves as an interplay between an alienated ‘I’ and an alienating ‘not I.’ Under capitalism, schizophrenia is not a psychological aberration but the normal condition of the subject” (“Schizoid” 427).

How capitalism connects to speciesism in *Androids* is not just in the VK test’s rebuke of modern society, but how animals themselves are treated in *Androids*. Animals are enshrined as morality figures, Deckard’s neighbor proclaiming, “It would be immoral to sell my horse,” and Deckard informing the reader, “To say, ‘Is your sheep genuine?’ would be a worse breach of manners than to inquire whether a citizen’s teeth, hair, or internal organs would test out authentic” (*Androids* chap. 1). The moral importance of animals is such that *Androids* humans even replace dead animals with electric ones, strictly so that the humans themselves appear properly human, because as Hayles extrapolates from one of Dick’s speeches, “When one is fake, the other is contaminated by fakery as well; when one is authentic, the authenticity of the other is, if not guaranteed, at least held out as a strong possibility” (“Schizoid” 423). This is Deckard’s situation. His organic sheep is long dead, but his electric sheep feels insufficient. Deckard’s quest to kill six androids is motivated first by the possibility of a real animal, then to pay off the debt of a new goat (*Androids* chap. 1, 15). Real animals are worth killing for, but not as part of a *response-able* relationship.

Vint considers the human-animal relationship as commodity fetishism, animals as a means to an end rather than an end themselves (118). Branching to Marx, Vint finds that commodity fetishism and speciesism promote the same exploitation as the Cartesian mindset, that of an “alienated relationship to nature” (118).<sup>24</sup> Regardless of one’s personal convictions on private ownings, it is “alienating” to consider an animal a commodity or object, as Vint emphasizes, “the animals exist as commodities rather than as beings for the humans in this world” (116). Albeit not as cruel as research labs, Haraway’s worry of calculating instrumental relationships is brought into the home, with each *Androids* human lugging around *Sidney’s Catalogue* of animals, their prices, and their extinction status: the animal as object.

Vint suggests that having a non-commodity relationship with animals will make the humans less android-like (122). Vint sees the Deckards’ break from this incorrect attitude in the

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<sup>24</sup> Vint is not the only one to look at the human-animal relationship through Marx, see Galvan 424-425.

ending, courtesy of a toad Deckard finds and brings home. When his wife discovers the mechanical nature of the toad, Deckard has to decide if that matters. They keep the toad, Deckard acquiescing, “The electric things have their lives, too. Paltry as those lives are” (*Androids* chap. 22). Hardly a ringing endorsement, but Vint is hopeful--“They are learning to treat the toad with kindness rather than as a possession because it is the social relationship - not the ontological status of the toad - that counts” (124). The Deckards humanize themselves by accepting the toad, not splitting empathy between the deserving and undeserving. The relationship is not perfect, though--Vint laments that Deckard and his wife Iran rely on commodities to welcome the toad into their home (124). Commodity fetishism, and capitalism, dehumanizes beings, frustrating *response-able* relationships.<sup>25</sup>

There is a second problem that arises with electric animals in *Androids*. Although Vint rejoices at Deckard keeping the electric toad as a being instead of a commodity, and although the humans all prefer real animals, Vint is worried: electric animals cannot replace real animals. Just as any human in the novel could be an android, any animal could be electric, and as the number of animals dwindles people have to retain moral standing by having an electric animal. Thus the animal’s authenticity in being organic is outweighed by the moral imperative to have an animal in an increasingly lifeless world. Vint is worried about the real world applications, that by turning a response-expectant gaze to electric animals, humans are turning a blind eye to organic animals. Reacting to a piece where Heise discusses real and electric/virtual animals, Vint argues against the idea that fake animals are “a sufficient substitute for real animals” (Vint 112).

This is a mischaracterization of Heise’s stance. Heise acknowledges the uses of animals (both electric and real) as practice for empathy and indicators of status. Heise also admits that Dick’s work can easily be said to diminish the importance of real animals when fake animals will do. Nevertheless, she is hopeful. Heise maintains that Deckard’s transcendence in accepting the toad and thus seeing life in electric animals means that *Androids* advocates “abandon[ing] speciesist prejudice and to accept alternative life-forms as beings with an existence and rights of their own,” all life valued. (Heise 76-77)

Heise’s position is undermined in the novel by the reason behind a transitory woman’s choice to buy an electric animal. A woman buys an electric cat as replacement of her recently

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<sup>25</sup> Multiple theorists point to *Androids* being critical of capitalism, Galvan 417, Hayles 422, Heise 74 McNamara 423-424, Sims 83, Vint 118.

deceased cat Horace, and is confident her husband will never know, as he always kept his distance, afraid of when Horace would die (*Androids* chap. 7). In this way, any difference between electric and organic animals is meaningless, but not in an affirmative way. The husband will keep his distance from the electric cat just as he did Horace, not knowing that it is not the same cat. Heise's proposition that speciesism is rejected rings hollow, while Vint's argument that the attitude is the problem is sustained.

As with any -ism, speciesism is not exclusive of high regard or benefits for the discriminated group. Animals can be revered without being in a *response-able* relationship, their abuses condemned, their high prices reflective of value, organic privileged over electric. All this, but only for the sake of morality, with people still estranged from these animals they place so much importance on. There is no give and take, and *Androids* shows that reverence for animals is not equivalent to valuing animals as companions. Without expecting a response, the animal may as well be electric, unfeeling, dead. It is no surprise that Deckard kills to get the money to buy an organic goat, and feel like he is interacting with a real being again.

## 1.2 Dehumanized from Conception

The first half of this chapter has focused on viewpoints that primarily humans hold that dehumanize themselves and the Others around them, in addition to the tools they use to overcome these, however imperfectly. The second half now focuses on the ways Dick reinforces the idea that the androids are dangerous, dehumanizing them for the reader so that Deckard's fulfillment of his contract is a moral necessity.

Many theorists find that the difference between humans and androids in *Androids* is a matter of attitude, not biology. Dick sees androids as dangers to society, warning that androids are "cruel, cold, and heartless. They have no empathy...and don't care what happens to other creatures. They are essentially less than human" (qtd. in McNamara 435). McNamara notes, "the novel never really disputes the difference in nature between human and android on which Deckard's return to his 'self' depends" (433). Reviewing Dick's personal essays, Galvan summarizes, "If we succumb unwittingly--or, worse, indifferently--to the totalitarian mechanization of our world, we risk becoming androids ourselves" (414). Vint argues that, "the risk faced by Deckard and other humans in the novel lies in realizing that they already are android-like, so long as they define their subjectivity based on the logical, rational, calculating

part of human being” (112). Hayles finds Dick’s the android (or schizoid) to be one, “who withdraws his emotions from the world” (“Schizoid” 435). Heise most fully illuminates the fact that androids are not Others, but humans. Heise analyzes that:

Deckard’s final assertion that electric things have their own lives does not automatically extend to androids ... They are not, like Deckard’s electric sheep and toad, mechanical but organic artifacts. Dick seems willing to blur the line between real and electric animals because both types of animals help to define what is uniquely human; if he is in the end unwilling also to accept androids as humans; equals, it may be precisely because being an android, in the novel, is not so much equivalent to being a technological object as equivalent to having a certain attitude toward the natural world. (74)

In short, the critical consensus is that androids are or can be humans who fail to see *response-able* beings around them.<sup>26</sup>

Androids as written are not truly androids, but Dick’s opportunity to show the dangers of uncaring humans. Thus, Dick dehumanizes androids and portrays them as dangerous through sexism (objectifying them and using the femme fatale) and fear of the serial killer, what he erroneously terms the “schizoid.”

### 1.2.1 Sexism

I have primarily avoided distinguishing the androids as separate beings, due to following other theorists’ example of seeing them as unempathetic humans rather than uniquely nonhuman beings. Nevertheless, the characters recognize the androids as Others and discriminate against them, and Dick the author helps through sexism. Dick dehumanizes the androids using sex, objectifying them by Deckard’s conditional android empathy, the physicality of the androids, and the femme fatale.

As part of his Cartesian Mind, Deckard changes the pronoun he uses depending on whether or not he knows or considers the android to be an android. Generally, if Deckard knows that an android is an android, he refers to the android as “it.” Similarly, Deckard prefers to use the word “it” for electric animals, saving gender for the organic and the word “it” for something that cannot emotionally respond and is not *response-able*. Deckard genders as a weapon, bestowing gendered pronouns as proof he considers the Other authentic beings. Yet after meeting

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<sup>26</sup> Sims in his work addresses the androids as unique beings, 83.

the android Luba Luft, who sings opera and opens Deckard's eyes to android possibilities, Deckard is more likely to refer to androids by gender, even when killing them (*Androids* chap. 19).

However, Deckard's empathy is conditional: he is empathetic to female androids. Luba is the prompting force, Vint noting that Deckard "refuses to reduce his interaction with Luba or the book [he buys her] itself to exchange" in terms of commodity (120). When Deckard discovers, after Luba's death, that he is empathetic to female androids, he tells Resch, a parallel bounty hunter to Deckard who still performs the Cartesian split of caring for humans but not for androids. Unsympathetically, Resch informs Deckard "It's sex" and suggests he have sex with a female android, and then kill her. Resch equates any empathy toward female humans and androids as sexually derived (*Androids* chap. 12). Galvan analyzes, "Resch exactly perverts Rick's empathy for Luba Luft into its opposite--into lust, sexual longing: in short, an objectifying desire, which undercuts rather than corroborates Rick's acknowledgment of Luba's position as subject" (423).

*Androids* takes interest in the physical appearance of the female. McNamara claims that, "the novel characterizes women almost exclusively by the shape of their breasts" (438). What he fails to notice, however, is that only female android and colonial fiction "breasts" and "figure" are described. Rachael Rosen, Deckard's main android contact, is repeatedly described as "childlike" (*Androids* chap. 8, 16), but all the other android women get their turn to have their breasts described: Pris Stratton (chap. 6), Irmgard Baty (chap. 15), Luba (chap. 8, 9), android women on TV (chap. 7, 15), while their reading material of colonial fiction also features busty women (chap. 13, 14). The closest that a non-manufactured woman gets to being sexually objectified is the receptionist--"attractive, with waist-length braided silver hair" (chap. 3). The most explicit sexualization is directed toward the androids, android women being dehumanized in the way that human women have been dehumanized for centuries. This is not to say the human females are liberated, as Deckard tries to have his wife feel, "pleased acknowledgment of husband's superior wisdom in all matters," but the sexual gaze has shifted (chap. 1).

Compared to androids, human women have the more androidic response. Deckard gripes, "Most androids I've known have more vitality and desire to live than my wife" (*Androids* chap. 8). The only time Deckard feels his wife's breast, done while she is experiencing fusion with Mercer, the novel simply states that, "He stood beside her for a time, his hand resting on her

breast; he felt it rise and fall, the life in her, the activity. Iran did not notice him; the experience with Mercer had, as always, become complete” (chap. 16). Iran is one with technology, alive but disconnected, which is why Galvan points to this scene as demonstrating technology’s danger (416-417). Deckard’s wife has retreated from her body, while the android women are sexualized by the male gaze.

Here is where Dick uses sexism to support his argument that androids are dangerous, through his android Rachael. After Resch advises Deckard that his empathy for androids is only lust, Deckard calls Rachael to a sexual tryst to test this theory. During the tryst, Rachael hints at android empathy by wondering if her inability to have children is a loss and worrying about death (*Androids* chap. 16). However, the reason for Resch’s cynicism becomes clear, as post-tryst Rachael reveals to Deckard that she has a mission: get bounty hunters to abandon killing androids by seducing them, even though she does not understand why it works (chap. 17). As Deckard observes, “The idea is old-fashioned,” as the femme fatale fulfills her objective by dehumanizing the male (chap. 17). When Deckard goes on to kill the androids, Rachael punishes him by killing his newly bought, organic goat, forcing him into worthless debt and highlighting her disinterest in animals (chap. 20).

The goat is interesting because it could be proof of Rachael’s empathy. Hayles questions Rachael’s motive in killing the goat, “Why? Because she is jealous of his love for the goat, or in revenge for his killing her friends...? Whichever interpretation one chooses, the action is not consistent with the official picture of android psychology ... incapable of feeling loyalty or indeed feeling anything at all” (qtd. in Galvan, 415).<sup>27</sup> Even Roy Baty, one of the male androids emphasized to be physically and philosophically dangerous, generates sympathy in his attempts to prove androids can feel empathy through drug-induced fusion, and his anguish when Deckard shoots his wife Ermgard Baty (*Androids* chap. 16, 19). There is clearly the possibility of some feeling on the part of the androids, but it is overshadowed whenever they use humans.

Deckard has been treated like an object by Rachael, and here is the turning point for the androids. *Androids* follows a parabola of sympathy for the androids. At the beginning, when the reader does not know any androids, they are an amorphous danger. Then, as female androids are known better, Deckard and the audience begin to sympathize. There is the female android Pris Stratton crying over solitude, Luba Luft singing opera and appreciating art, Ermgard Baty

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<sup>27</sup> Cited as being in Hayles “Schizoid” when it was a “forth-coming book chapter.”



befriending Isidore and reining in the other androids' discrimination, and Rachael Rosen expressing death anxiety while in a tryst with Deckard (*Androids* chap. 13; 9, 12; 14; 16). Yet Rachael's is not the only empathy that is problematized, as Pris and Luba could be acting as well.

Pris befriends Isidore, or more correctly, Isidore befriends her. Isidore is the counterbalance to Deckard in the novel. He is declared "special" by the state, not allowed to reproduce or emigrate because his genes and intellect are in decline from radiation. By *Androids'* medical definition he is subhuman, but through empathy Isidore is the most human in the novel, even caring for androids. Unfortunately for him, Pris is to Isidore what Rachael is to Deckard: the conniving female android. During a meal with Isidore, Pris starts to open up. She informs Isidore, who assumes that the androids alleviate human loneliness on Mars, that "The androids ... are lonely, too" (*Androids* chap. 13). Soon after, Pris cries, yet though she "furiously" swears after her tears fall, the other descriptors of her breakdown all indicate control. Pris "paced slowly, with measured steps..." and "Her voice shook but she managed to continue;" this is not a fit of passion, whatever Isidore thinks (chap. 13). Even Pris's tears, which appear to fall spontaneously, are described as "cold," a word used frequently for the androids (chap. 13; Pris in chap. 6, Luba in 9, Max Polokov in 10, Roy Baty and Rachael in 16).<sup>28</sup> Empathy and authenticity are warmth, which the androids lack.

Similarly, there is the possibility that Luba Luft's empathy is only an act. Luba negates the results of the VK tests by pretending to be foreign and not understanding the words, something Galvan values for Luba saving herself from the dichotomy of android or human by adding in foreigner (*Androids* chap. 9; Galvan 419-423).<sup>29</sup> Vint, Sims, and other theorists appreciate Luba for instilling android empathy in Deckard (Vint 116; Sims 84; McNamara 434). Yet McNamara thinks that Luba is positively received uncritically: "these critics must ignore the pointed irony that she is a diva, a woman who performs emotions she need not feel in languages she need not understand," even pointing to Luba's own confession that "my life has consisted of imitating the human" (McNamara 434; *Androids* chap. 12). Luba acts for her job, why not in real life as well?

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<sup>28</sup> Even Deckard's electric toad is described as cold in chap. 22.

<sup>29</sup> Pretending to be foreign is a tactic employed by Luba Luft and the first listed android Deckard encounters, Max Polokov. Interestingly, these two pretend to be German and Russian, giving a further WWII/Cold War overtone to *Androids* beyond nuclear war.

From physical appearance to motivation, female androids are shown to be enticing and dangerous, falling into the sexist trope of femme fatale. Rachael uses Deckard without looking for *response-ability*, her body the path to human on android empathy, and this ironically proves that androids cannot be trusted empathically. Although Dick's theme is Deckard's dehumanization in killing androids, Dick writes the androids as worthy of being dehumanized.

## 1.2.2 Schizoids and Schizophrenics

There is a psychosocial reason behind the dangerous android female, connected to Dick's past. Hayles finds that Dick formulates androids in multiple writings based on Dick's ideas of "schizoids," "schizophrenics," and the "dark-haired girl" ("Schizoid" 424). One way in which Hayles differs from the other theorists is her blatant interest in Dick's personal influences. Hayles looks at systems theory, how inside/system and outside/observer interact, as a parallel to what Dick does in his novels, the inner world of the protagonist affecting and being affected by the surrounding world (419-421, 429). More specifically, Hayles looks at Dick's personal relationship with women and how that develops in his novels in the figure of the "schizoid."

In *Androids*, androids are unempathetic while humans have a range of empathy. Some humans are equivalent to the androids in empathy and are called "schizoids" (*Androids* chap. 4). According to the American Psychological Association (APA), "Schizoid Personality Disorder" is, "a personality disorder characterized by long-term emotional coldness, absence of tender feelings for others, lack of desire for and enjoyment of close relationships, and indifference to praise or criticism and to the feelings of others" ("Schizoid Personality Disorder"). Although applicable to the androids and Deckard, it should be noted that Dick takes "schizoid" to mean the extreme of unfeeling, to the point that the androids kill without feeling, and thus the word as used in this thesis is not reflective of "schizoid" in general parlance.

The android manufacturer Eldon Rosen warns Deckard, "Your police department — others as well — may have retired, very probably have retired, authentic humans with underdeveloped empathic ability, such as my innocent niece here" (*Androids* chap. 5). Despite this loophole, the expectation remains that if someone fails the VK test, they are an android and should be put down immediately. They are android until proven innocent. Sims frets, "The danger is entirely for [schizoid] humans who, if subjected to the Voigt-Kampff test, would be

‘retired’ without question” rather than androids getting the benefit of the doubt (74).<sup>30</sup> Of course, the novel never produces a schizoid human for the audience--the innocent niece, Rachael Rosen, is in fact an android.<sup>31</sup>

Opposing schizoids are schizophrenics. Hayles summarizes Dick’s view that, “In contrast to his scathing indictment of the schizoid who withdraws his emotions from the world, he saw the schizophrenic as someone who suffers because he projects his emotions too much into the world” (“Schizoid” 435). This is different from modern definitions of schizophrenia.<sup>32</sup> Dick’s schizophrenics have an abundance of empathy, but this empathy is tied to disability by virtue of the term “schizophrenic,” and by the fact that the main schizophrenic the audience meets is considered disabled by *Androids* society: John R. Isidore.

Called a “special” because of changes in intellect subsequent to radiation exposure, Isidore is considered not human by *Androids* society.<sup>33</sup> Isidore is famous for helping the ersatz, animals and androids, despite logically knowing that his empathy is wasted on them--“‘I don’t think Isidore can tell the difference,’ Milt said mildly. ‘To him they’re all alive, false animals included’” (*Androids* chap. 7). Isidore tries to save the cat Horace even when he thinks the original cat is fake (chap. 7). He also offers aid to the escaped androids. Isidore acts as an empathy parallel to Deckard, seeing *response-ability* in everything and not performing a Cartesian split. Unfortunately for Isidore, he also discovers the dangers of androids and is thus punished for his abundance of empathy.

Shortly after Deckard is seduced, Isidore is at home with the escaped androids when two revelations happen at once. One is that Mercerism is false--a TV program run by androids who infiltrated the media reveals that the scenes people experience of Wilbur Mercer’s life were filmed in a studio. This is troubling to Isidore, as he is a staunch follower of Mercerism. The second revelation is the androids’ lack of empathy. The androids Deckard hunts are hiding with

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<sup>30</sup> Sims cites and defers to Anthony Wolk’s reading of Dick, that Dick is influenced by J.S. Kasanin’s writings on schizophrenia, even quoting, “what Dick does with these essays ... is more profound than employing surface allusions” (Sims 74).

<sup>31</sup> Despite his lack of empathy toward androids, Resch still has empathy toward humans and passes the VK test. He is Cartesian minded, not schizoid.

<sup>32</sup> The APA definition of schizophrenia is “a psychotic disorder characterized by disturbances in thinking (cognition), emotional responsiveness, and behavior...” (“Schizophrenia”).

<sup>33</sup> Although schizoid and schizophrenic are used as tropes to discuss empathy, for the most part *Androids* can be seen to be disapproving of promoting specific ideas of an ideal human. For more on disability and eugenics in *Androids*, see Michael Bérubé and Adam Pottle.

Isidore when Isidore finds a real spider. This is the first time the androids have seen a being not mechanical or human. Headed by Pris, they see the number of legs, and immediately set about determining how many legs a spider needs to walk, snipping them off one by one until Isidore drowns the spider out of pity. Isidore then has a psychotic break, wrecking his apartment. He only calms down after fusing with Mercer, who admits to being fake, and gives Isidore a new (probably nonexistent) spider. (*Androids* chap. 18)

In Mercerism, one of the trials of Mercer's life is "the killers." Deckard informs the reader, "You shall kill only the killers, Mercer had told them the year empathy boxes first appeared on Earth" (*Androids* chap. 3). Yet who exactly the killers are is nebulous, especially as Mercer is an allegorical figure (chap. 2, 3, 22). Deckard lands on the androids:

Put another way, a Mercerite was free to locate the nebulous presence of the Killers wherever he saw fit. For Rick Deckard an escaped humanoid robot, which had killed its master, which had been equipped with an intelligence greater than that of many human beings, which had no regard for animals, which possessed no ability to feel emphatic joy for another life form's success or grief at its defeat — that, for him, epitomized The Killers. (chap. 3)

Mercer warns of an undetermined enemy of the human cult, the killers, and who else could fill that void but the androids? Isidore instead imagines bounty hunters as the killers, "merciless," "machine-like" killers, killing, "...until everyone real and alive had been shot..." (chap. 14). Once again, it should be emphasized that this is Dick's definition of schizoid in *Androids* that equates Schizoid Personality Disorder with a serial killer, not the actual modern, medical definition of "schizoid." Dick takes schizoid to a murderous extreme, which mischaracterizes the disorder.

Dick's schizoid starts with a failure to engage in *response-able* relationships. The question is whether or not the androids (and bounty hunters) actually appear as schizoids to the reader, incapable of feeling. Of the scene where they cut up the spider Vint says:

This is typically described as the moment when the androids' truly inhuman nature comes to the surface and all sympathy for them is lost. Another way of reading this scene, however, is as disinterested experiment rather than torture, mirroring the technique of scientists who were (and often still are) able to perform painful experiments on living creatures without any concern. (113)

This argument does not preclude empathetic androids. As Cartesian scientists, the androids have those they consider as experiment-able, and those who are not. They experiment on a spider, rejecting Mercerism, but they do not experiment on Isidore. They have a moral code that is different from that of society, though one that is not unheard of in the field of science today. Thus, Dick's androids are not as inhuman as he thinks, or he is criticizing a wider range of people. Heise's analysis is that, "Combined with the other android's revenge killing of Deckard's goat, this scene confirms precisely the perception of androids as incapable of understanding and feeling with other living beings that much of the preceding text had seemed to portray as mere prejudice" (74). The doubt is removed--androids are dangerous, uninhibited by morality or feeling. They and bounty hunters are schizoids, opposite of the "specials" as schizophrenics. However, schizoids are also connected to the female in the figure "the dark-haired girl."

Hayles ties Dick's dehumanizing schizoid to Dick's personal history and the spawning of the "dark-haired girl," a figure that is sometimes schizophrenic but generally schizoid. Although Dick apparently held this obsession throughout his life, the earliest dark-haired girls are his mother, Dorothy Dick, and dead twin sister Jane. Dorothy is emblematic of the schizoid, from Dick's viewpoint, cold and unable to keep both him and his sister alive, Jane dying six weeks after birth. Dick imagines that Jane would have been representative of the schizophrenic. Dick then searches for empathetic dark-haired girls, Hayles narrating, "These are the figures he intends to rally to his cause to help him defeat the android. But his worst nightmare remains that the android will turn out to be none other than the dark-haired girl." This is of course what happens with Dick's brainchild, Rick Deckard, with Rachael. The android is emotionally charged. ("Schizoid" 426-427)

Another interesting aspect of the "dark-haired girl" is as a measure of reality. Hayles observes that they are "anchors" to reality, helping the protagonist make sense of the world ("Schizoid" 428). Between Rachael and Pris, Hayles finds Pris to be the more schizoid, but Deckard and Isidore both experience reality as unanchored whenever the female androids act more calculating. Deckard and Isidore latch onto Rachael and Stratton, but Hayles points to how their psychotic breaks are preceded by androidic coldness (432-433). Deckard has visions of Mercer after Rachael's cold seduction, and he flies off into the desert for more hallucinations after discovering Rachael has killed his goat (*Androids* chap. 19-21). Isidore also sees Mercer, though connected to his empathy box, and wrecks his apartment after Pris cuts up the spider

(chap. 18). Empathy anchors more than the dark-haired girl does. The more unfeeling she is, the more fake the world appears and hallucinations abound.

In talking about his works, Dick conflates being authentic with having feelings. Dick quips, “To define what is real is to define what is human, if you care about humans. If you don’t you are schizoid and like Pris [a character in *We can Build You*] and the way I see it, an android: that is, not human and hence not real” (qtd. in “Schizoid” 424). I have emphasized “organic” as the difference despite the androids being physically similar, as the androids clearly are “real.” Phrasing humanity as real or unreal is a similar move to the Cartesian split, creating a category of fake beings that are in fact *killable*. It is a problematic stance, but one that explains why Dick wrote the androids’ death.

Dick means for the androids to be morally undeserving because of Dick’s fascination with the unempathetic, reified in the figure of “the dark-haired girl.” Schizoid and schizophrenic are his terms for the extremes of empathy, nonexistent to overwhelming. These terms are problematic, as they equate real life disabilities with tropes of excessive evil or goodness. *Androids* upholds humanizing, *response-able* relationships, but it does so at the expense of dehumanizing androids, presenting them as conniving women and dangerous schizoids.

### 1.3 Deckard’s Problematic Solution

Deckard has a conundrum: to humanize himself, he must humanize the androids. However, they are dangers to society; to humanize society, Deckard must dehumanize the androids. There is a moral compunction to bounty hunting, based on the idea of protecting humans. D.L. Smith describes one mental process involved in justifying dehumanization. He discusses the self-deception people put themselves under, particularly in war, to be able to do their job and survive physically and mentally, “Conceiving of those whom we wish to harm as mere animals makes it permissible to do violence to them, and conceiving of them as dangerous animals renders such violence obligatory” (426). The androids start as Others, inhuman by the fact of being manufactured rather than born. Dick the author then ensures that the androids are known dehumanizers, thus forcing his protagonist to confront them. Cinema and utopian studies Peter Fitting declares of the androids, “their torture of the spider, their attempts to undermine Mercerism, and their inability to participate in that empathic experience,...all make clear in the novel that the androids are meant to be understood as evil and inhuman” (qtd. in McNamara

435). The androids are written to be evil. Dick needs an allegorical figure of dehumanized humanity, and so he uses the android.

The *Androids* answer to what is to be done with the killers, androids, lies in a conversation between Deckard and Resch. Post-Luba Luft, Deckard finds himself empathetic towards her. When Deckard has this realization, that he has “Empathy toward an artificial construct” and that “he felt instinctively that he was right” that there should be empathy, Resch illuminates a flaw in his plan: “‘You realize,’ Phil Resch said quietly, ‘what this would do. If we included androids in our range of empathic identification, as we do animals.’” Deckard responds “We couldn’t protect ourselves.” Identifying with androids humanizes, but leaves humans open to pain, from Deckard to Isidore. Deckard’s solution: androids. “They can use androids. Much better if andys [androids] do it” Deckard expresses to Resch. This would keep humans pure and safe. Deckard accepts that androids need to be killed, and suggests that already dehumanized beings should be the one to do it. (*Androids* chap. 12)

Yet Dick’s creation of the androids muddles real categories of people with the dehumanized androids. Women, especially the “dark-haired girl,” are used to illustrate the danger of androids. They act empathetic and affectionate, forcing Deckard to realize that androids are *response-able*, but it is only an act. Deckard’s empathy is abused by sexual, android women. Androids are also presented as disabled, being schizoids compared to the schizophrenic Isidore, yet this is not a simple case of Schizoid Personality Disorder. They are the killers of Mercerism, that Deckard kills even though he has empathy for them.

Although I have not touched on this, the strange mix of sympathy and danger even extends to the racial commentary in *Androids*. From Antebellum South overtones of android as slaves and McNamara’s observation that “The dehumanizing power of racism was in fact a key factor in the novel’s genesis,” *Androids* could easily be read as Dick’s indictment of white on black racism (432). Unfortunately, Dick creates a monster he finds worth killing, the femme fatale, the killer human, that also happens to be the escaped slave, the one that the bounty hunter policeman has to put down to save humanity. Efforts to create empathy are destroyed by Dick’s insistence that the androids actually are evil. To reiterate Heise when she highlights the death of the goat and the mutilation of the spider, this “confirms precisely the perception of androids as incapable of understanding and feeling with other living beings that much of the preceding text

had seemed to portray as mere prejudice” (74). Deckard needs to stop dehumanizing the androids to prevent his own dehumanization, but Dick dehumanizes the androidic human as evil, *killable*.

## 1.4 Conclusion

An actual android remains a possibility of the future, but Dick’s writing follows a tendency that animal studies works against: the Other as metaphor or trope for human rather than its own being (Wolfe “Human, All Too Human” 567).<sup>34</sup> In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* the need for empathy stems from needing to prove one’s own humanity, the actor humanizing themselves by humanizing others. People must avoid the Cartesian Mind, individualism, and speciesism if they want to be humane and humanized; the human has to see the *response-ability* of the Others around them. Yet Dick creates a *killable* character, the android who uses sex and affectations to manipulate humans and is dangerously incapable of empathy. Thus, Dick creates a moral compulsion on the side of humans to kill the androids. He emphasizes how androids have been dehumanized and abused by humans while equivocating androids with the extremes of negative human attitudes and behaviors, showing that android discrimination is justified all along.

Everything reflects back to the human for Dick, who muses, “Rather than learning about ourselves by studying our constructs, perhaps we should make the attempt to comprehend what our constructs are up to by looking into what we ourselves are up to” (qtd. in Galvan 413). The issue of *Androids* is never about learning to live with another species, but with ourselves. Though Dick repeatedly accentuates the importance of humanizing yourself and others through empathy, Dick fails to humanize when he creates a *killable* subset of humans.

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<sup>34</sup> More on this and Wolfe in the following chapter.



## 2. Monkeying Around: Humans in Fur Suits, or Animals in Human Suits?

In the previous chapter I argue that Philip K. Dick never presents the audience with an authentic Other in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (*Androids*). Dick only presents humans in need of a world-view adjustment, and he problematically dehumanizes these humans to the audience to emphasize the importance of humanization and *response-ability*. In Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Word for World Is Forest* (*Forest*) a similar dehumanization occurs: the Others are human and, due to writing choices, they are dehumanized, for the purposes of emphasizing treating other humans ethically. In *Forest*, Terran humans initially enter the cosmos to colonize and expand. However, they are in a populated universe with multiple aliens. More importantly, all the humanoids they meet come from the same source, the Hainish, so that every alien is actually human, from the Hairy Cetians and the pale Hainish, to the little, green-furred Athsheans, with more variants in Le Guin's other Hainish books. The Athsheans are the most distinct from the Terrans, and as they are the inhabitants of the "new" world Athshe, the Terrans force them into slave labor. As with *Androids*, *Forest* is written to prove the importance of humanizing the Other. The difference between the two novels is that Le Guin upholds the moral nature of the Athsheans, unlike Dick's evil androids. This is because Le Guin wrote *Forest* as an activist piece protesting the Vietnam War, with the Athsheans meant to humanize the Vietnamese to Americans by showing that apparent difference is not important.

The Athsheans and Terrans are problematic, however. Because *Forest* is an activist piece, it connects the Athsheans to real humans instead of them being new, alien Others. This conflation matters because of the oddities in how Le Guin writes the Athsheans. According to Robert Latham, writing on ethics and ecology in *Forest* and of particular import in this chapter, the Athsheans are presented as "noble savages," innocent beings in tune with the land instead of equals with Terrans (117-118). Additionally, following a trope of using animals to teach a lesson in human morals, the Athsheans are animalized by their physical difference from all the other humans in the Hainish Universe. In short, the Athsheans dehumanize real humans by being placed on a pedestal of nature, and by their fur. Meanwhile, the Terrans are presented not as white, civilized colonizers, but as barbarous blacks that the civilized, white Hainish need to

correct. From the Athsheans to the Terrans, *Forest* presents oversimplified stereotypes that undermine Le Guin's purpose in writing in protest of the Vietnam War.

Furthermore, the Athsheans decrease the *response-ability* between Terran humans and animals and the environment. Latham warns that the human aspect of Athsheans ties moral responsibility to injuries against humans, making this novel anthropocentric (117). In the preceding chapter I use "humanize" as a synonym to Donna J. Haraway's *response-ability*, representing any case where both sides of a relationship (human to human or human to animal) respond to the other, and look for responses; this kind of relationship strives to improve the circumstances of groups, regardless of species (*When Species Meet* 71).<sup>35</sup> In *Forest*, the Athsheans as alien-human entities unwittingly reinforce a human bias by failing to imagine a relationship between humans and actual Others, which matters in determining rights for anyone not human. This raises the question: how important is similarity, that the Athsheans are factually human and have custody of their land, in determining rights? Of particular note to this debate are posthumanist and animal studies Cary Wolfe, who warns against any form of rights-bestowing that excludes a group, alongside feminist Susan Fraiman's response to him that worries about the male theorist-distancing from the subject, and Haraway's insistence on recognizing embodied difference and knowledge. Following in Latham and Wolfe's example, I argue that although similarity helps encourage people to extend rights, it cannot be the basis of extending rights. *Forest* is meant to make people care about other humans, but muddies the issue by emphasizing physical and cultural difference. Furthermore, it unintentionally implies that moral caring is tied into similarity, problematic not just for animal rights, as is Latham's concern, but also for human rights.

## 2.1 Activism

Before directly analyzing *Forest* and the peculiarities of the Athsheans, it is important to review the context in which Le Guin wrote: the Vietnam War. One of the US's most infamous wars, the Vietnam War was gruesome. American soldiers dropped napalm on Vietnamese civilians, planted "toe popper" mines, etc., and the communist Viet Cong guerrilla revolutionaries retaliated. In the US there were numerous demonstrations and protests. In 1975, three years after

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<sup>35</sup> Refer to section 1.1 De/Humanize.

*Forest* first came out, the Vietnam War ended, but it retains notoriety as the war the US lost. Le Guin is a famous female science fiction (SF) author who uses her work both for thought experiments and to advocate (Pearson 186, Latham 181). As such, *Forest* is Le Guin's response to the Vietnam War when she could not join in protests physically (*Anarchist Library* "Author's introduction: 1").

Le Guin admits that as an activist piece of work, *Forest* is not very nuanced. She confesses:

In this tale, *The Word for World Is Forest*, which began as a pure pursuit of freedom and the dream, I succumbed, in part, to the lure of the pulpit. It is a very strong lure to a science fiction writer, who deals more directly than most novelists with ideas, whose metaphors are shaped by or embody ideas, and who therefore is always in danger of inextricably confusing ideas with opinions. (*Anarchist* "Author's Introduction: 1")

In short, although *Forest* is meant to protest the war, Le Guin regrets preaching to her audience. Yet preaching is why SF is the basis for this thesis, as it straddles and provides commentary on philosophical questions, societal mores, and socio-political problems. SF does this from the position of fiction, futurism, but with the recognition that SF is perhaps not as distant from us as we think, in terms of time or space; SF is the place for reviewing traditional and new thinking, even if opinion gets mixed in. Although Le Guin wishes she had not made a "preachment" and that *Forest* were not so simple, conscientious and activism-motivated SF books are an important subset of the genre.

Le Guin is correct, though, as *Forest* is simplistic in terms of right and wrong. To illustrate this point, it is necessary to give an overview. *Forest* follows Terrans (the capitalist Americans equivalent) logging World 41 or Athshe for wood to send home. The inhabitants of Athshe, the Athsheans (the Vietnamese equivalent) are turned radical by the Terran presence, as the Terrans treat them as slaves that can be raped and murdered with impunity. The Terrans fail to engage with the Athsheans in a *response-able* relationship. The Athsheans turn from their peaceful ways to wage guerilla war, eventually raiding the main camp, killing all the Terran women, and capturing many of the Terran men. A peace is reached, wherein the Terrans agree to leave Athshe.

The chapters switch between three characters, two Terrans and an Athshean. The two Terrans are the racist Captain Don Davidson and the sympathetic anthropologist "Special"

Captain Raj Lyubov. Although most Terrans treat the Athsheans negatively, Davidson's actions are the instigation for the revolution (*Forest* 71). Meanwhile, Lyubov attempts to renegotiate the Terran-Athshean relationship. He performs anthropological surveys, writing detailed reports on Athshean culture, and ineffectively attempts to get the military-run colony to treat the Athsheans better. Though Davidson is a perpetrator of violence, Lyubov is blamed for the Athshean insurgency for claiming in reports that the Athsheans were peaceable (63-76). Lyubov defends his position by proposing that the Athsheans only turned violent because of Terran action: "We have killed, raped, dispersed, and enslaved the native humans, destroyed their communities, and cut down their forests. It wouldn't be surprising if they'd decided that we are not human" (75). The remaining main character is the Athshean insurgent, Selver Thele of the Ash. After his wife is raped by Davidson and subsequently dies, Selver is the first Athshean to attack a human (Davidson), and becomes a "god" of change to his people, leading the successful uprising to take back his world (*Forest* 188-189).

Part of Le Guin's discomfort with *Forest* lies in the negative purity of Davidson, as he is an unquestionable villain. Le Guin happily declares, "Neither Lyubov nor Selver is mere Virtue Triumphant; moral and psychological complexity was salvaged, at least, in those characters" before lamenting "But Davidson is, though not uncomplex, pure; he is purely evil—and I don't, consciously, believe purely evil people exist. But my unconscious has other opinions" (*Anarchist* "Author's Introduction: 1"). Le Guin creates the same conundrum Dick in *Androids* by creating a morally undeserving being, though her unempathetic villain survives; Davidson ends the novel in solitary confinement on an island, courtesy of the Athsheans. Although not the most humane, this is more nuanced than the androids' fate. However, Davidson is only one case of Le Guin dehumanizing her characters by oversimplifying.

*Forest* has, as Le Guin frets, moral simplicity. The Terrans in general, bar Lyubov, are colonizers and slavers, while the Athsheans have a fall from grace to violence. It is indeed a "preachment." *Forest* sets out to humanize the Other, that is, humanize the Vietnamese to the US people and military. However, are the Athsheans the best way to humanize real life people?

## 2.2 The Human

*Forest* is part of Le Guin's Hainish Cycle, the cosmology of which states that there are multiple humanoid cultures throughout the galaxy that all stem from one source: the Hainish.

Consequently, each first contact on different worlds is between human divergences rather than true genetic aliens; humans from Earth are alien, and aliens from other planets are human. This is a literary SF parallel to all human life on Earth being related, but with greater variations in physical differences. A mix between xenophobia and racism, Terran humans must come to terms with humans beyond the variations of humans on Earth. However, the way the Athsheans are presented complicates this, as they are both noble savages and animalized humans. This dehumanizes real life humans, the Vietnamese. Additionally, the imperial binary of civilized human as white and barbarous human as black (seen in the figure of Davidson), dehumanizes the Terrans, and real life blacks as well.

### 2.2.1 The Anthropologist and the Noble Savage

The “noble savage” is a phrase that highlights the simplistic ways in which indigenous people have been represented historically. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* defines it as, “in literature, an idealized concept of uncivilized man, who symbolizes the innate goodness of one not exposed to the corrupting influences of civilization” (“Noble savage”).<sup>36</sup> The noble savage is not reflective of real people, but is instead a negative commentary on modern civilization. The noble savage is intimately linked to anthropology. Consequently, it is necessary to review Le Guin’s personal anthropological background, before examining the anthropologist of *Forest*, Lyubov, and his noble savage subject, Selver.

Le Guin comes from an anthropological background. Her parents, Alfred and Theodora Kroeber, did anthropological work on Native Americans, while her brother Karl was also involved in the family business by way of researching Native American literature (Pak 112). Taught by the Father of American Anthropology Franz Boas in the field’s infancy, Alfred Kroeber performed “salvage ethnography,” as did Theodora, investigating and chronicling Native American culture before it died out (Starn 181). Anthropologist and writer Orin Starn summarizes the dark irony of this first period of American anthropology in, “--the arrogant assumption of the prerogative to snoop uninvited into other people’s business; the fact that white conquest made it possible for white anthropologists to study Indians in the first place;” and

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<sup>36</sup> The entry further states that, although primarily known from Romanticism in the 18th and 19th centuries, the concept of the noble savage can even “be traced to ancient Greece” (“Noble savage”). For more on the noble savage, see also Brian Attebery, 387.

lastly, the anthropologists' avoidance of documenting the conquest of Native Americans and ensuing trauma (181-182).

Anthropology has a troubled history of imperialist privilege, to include professions of anthropologist objectivity. Ethnocentrism is a natural bias for one's own culture when encountering new cultures, in that one compares new cultures to their mother culture. Older anthropology demonstrates the same innocence-granting distance *god trick*<sup>37</sup> of Humanism in the belief that the anthropologist is not affected by ethnocentrism, but can learn about new cultures objectively. Failure to recognize this bias leads to interesting outcomes, such as anthropologists Sir Edward Burnett Tylor and Lewis Henry Morgan's belief in "sociocultural evolution" from savagery to civilization (see Tylor's *Primitive Cultures* and Morgan's *Ancient Society*).<sup>38</sup>

Although Boas and his students "snooped," Boas did introduce the idea of "cultural relativism," that, "It is my opinion that the main object of ethnological collections should be the dissemination of the fact that civilization is not something absolute, but that it is relative, and that our ideas and conceptions are true only so far as our civilization goes" (Dall and Boas 589). Le Guin is known for following this imperative, exploring different cultures and letting these voices speak for themselves, SF and fantasy academic Brian Attebery and others crediting her with revolutionizing Australian SF in regards to how people wrote aboriginality (396). A commitment to cultural relativism can be seen in *Forest's* anthropologist. However, so can the noble savage.

According to Attebery, a problem in Australian SF aboriginal writing was in how aboriginals were represented. In two opposing ways, real natives were rewritten by the colonizers. The first Attebery argues is that, "In the imaginations of the immigrant majorities, these native groups became associated early on with wild landscape and savagery. Even though the most disturbing savagery was often demonstrated by the settlers themselves, such violent propensities were projected onto the natives" (386). In other words, there was a willful displacement of violence from colonizers to colonized, upholding the imperialist binary that civilized (white) is good, uncivilized (non-white) is bad.

The second way natives or aboriginals are rewritten by colonizers was through the noble savage. Attebery details how, "the land and its people were frequently transformed in immigrant

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<sup>37</sup> See Haraway's "Situated Knowledges" 575-578, 581; also refer to Haraway in the Introduction.

<sup>38</sup> The full titles for these books being: *Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom*; and *Ancient Society: or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery Through Barbarism to Civilization*.

writings into visions of Edenic innocence and paradisaal beauty” (387). Suddenly, the imperialist binary is upended--uncivilized (non-white) is good, while civilized (white) is bad. Initially, this would seem appropriate as a recognition of guilt in invading another’s land, yet Attebery explains:

All of this troubled history means that cultural interactions depicted within sf are laden with longing and guilt. The indigenous Other becomes part of the textual unconscious--always present but silenced and often transmuted into symbolic form. Within Australian sf, Aboriginal characters stand variously for the intractability of the Australian environment, dangers to be overcome, quaint survivals from prehistory, and a spiritual awareness that modern humanity has lost. Often there is no overt mention of earlier inhabitants. (387)

The problem Attebery finds is that the speaker in these texts is still the colonizer. Even when represented positively, the native individual is a trope rather than a human being, a symbol of irretrievable innocence the colonial speaker pines for: the noble savage.

The idea of innocence is problematic. Haraway’s theory on innocence in interspecies relationships is that:

The needed morality, in my view, is culturing a radical ability to remember and feel what is going on and performing the epistemological, emotional, and technical work to respond practically in the face of the permanent complexity not resolved by taxonomic hierarchies and with no humanist philosophical or religious guarantees. (*Species* 75)

Although she is talking specifically about lab animals, this is Haraway’s basis of *response-able* relationships: the agent taking accountability for their interactions with Others. Haraway also derides professed innocence of humans in the figure of the cyborg--“Cyborg writing must not be about the Fall, the imagination of a once-upon-a-time wholeness before language, before writing, before Man” (*Manifestly Haraway* 55).<sup>39</sup> The colonial construct of the noble savage is not about recognizing natives as people with their own cultures, customs, and ideas; it is about projecting naiveté and pity, packaging cultural differences into something quaint and nonexistent, erasing real traditions and people. With this background in mind of intrusive anthropologist and innocent native, we shall now look at Lyubov and Selver.

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<sup>39</sup> This will be further developed in 3.1 “Cyborgs and Malinche;” see also the section on Haraway in the Introduction.

Lyubov is the colony anthropologist, granted “special” captain status as the colony is military-run. He is perhaps best described by the complaints of his fellow Terrans: effeminately weak<sup>40</sup> (which Lyubov joins Davidson in disparaging) and too close to the natives (*Forest* 85-87, 90-122). Empathetic and respectful to both Terrans and Athsheans (even Davidson, 71-72), Lyubov is also a reluctant colonizer. He is too Terran for Athsheans, and too Athshean-sympathetic for Terrans.<sup>41</sup> Latham quips, “The novel’s anthropologist-hero, Lyubov, is everything Captain Davidson is not: empathetic towards the Athsheans and comfortable in the enveloping forest, fondly protective of their mutual innocence and dignity” (117). Although the Athsheans are the ones to repel the Terrans, Lyubov’s anthropological work helps convince the Terrans and other alien-humans to agree to leave Athshe alone after the rebellion (*Forest* 187). Unfortunately for Lyubov, it is after his death. Lyubov is more an academic hero than a white savior, who never loses faith in the inherent goodness of the Athsheans. This is ironic, since the other Terrans use his work on the Athsheans to presume themselves safe from native reprisal, which then leads to the Athshean loss of innocence (76).

The Athsheans are initially peaceable and tied to the land. Latham suggests that although Athshean (human) considerations are most important (discussed later in this chapter), the Athsheans and their land are mutually identified “--like the forest, they are peaceful, close-knit, and actually green--the effect is to naturalize their culture and to see the violence committed against them as an environmental desecration” (117). They are locals tied to the land, with an anthropologist as support. Lyubov considers the Athsheans to be more civilized than the Terrans, on par with the Hainish (the Hainish being problematic for reasons that will be discussed in 2.2.3 “Civilized White, Barbarous Black”). In Lyubov’s words, “To the Hainish, he thought, civilization came naturally...Nobody seemed to fit the human skin so well. Except, perhaps, the little green men? The deviant, dwarfed, over-adapted, stagnated creechies, who were as absolutely, as honestly, as serenely what they were” (*Forest* 81-82). Lyubov’s interest in the two alien-human groups is based on assigning innocence and civility to the Hainish and the

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<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth Cummins notes that, “The Hainish universe, although not hierarchically structured, is male-dominated, and its main characters are heroes who ‘save’ the world with their knowledge of technology and their positions of power. The women are secondary figures, even though they are often influential in the way the Orsinian women are” (157). As Lyubov considers himself effeminate (in a problematic manner), he has stereotypically feminine empathy for the Other, and he dies with all the other Terran women, and as no Terran woman is actually interacted with, Cummins’s critique applies to Lyubov, too.

<sup>41</sup> Lyubov is also the one Terran said to look like a monkey, a “gibbon” (*Forest* 105). He is visually and philosophically in-between.



Athsheans, a naive hero-worship to comment on the depravity of his own Terran culture. Latham claims that Lyubov and Selver's relationship, "bear[s] a lingering noble-savage Romanticism" (117-118). The Athshean noble savage is innocent like the land is innocent, until the colonizer forces them to taint themselves.

The Athshean who breaks noble from savage is Lyubov and Davidson's counterpart, Selver. Having suffered the pain of his wife's rape and murder, Selver turns from his cultural peaceful ways and bodily attacks Davidson. A year later, he begins the Athshean revolution with an attack on Davidson's camp. Although the Athsheans are decentralized, they unite under Selver, raiding various Terran sites, before their main attack on Central wherein all the Terrans females (and Lyubov) are killed and most of the Terran command is captured. Selver becomes a "god" in his culture by bringing a new way of life: killing (*Forest* 188-189). When the Terrans withdraw from Athshe, Selver indicates to the Hainish ambassador LePennon, who is part of the group evacuating the Terrans, that the Athshean fall from innocence to killing is permanent, "There is no use pretending, now, that we do not know how to kill one another" (188-189).

Historian James Clifford designates the Athshean victory as a "successful resistance" to colonization, though he adds that *Forest*, "makes clear there can be no return to a precontact way of life" (224). Selver is an anti-hero who learns the Terran ways of cruelty and death from Davidson, then leads his people out of innocence, to the disappointment of Lyubov (whose ghost haunts him), and the Hainish. The moral simplicity of the situation turns *Forest* into a "preachment" as Le Guin fears, as Terrans are not truly meeting other humans, but idealized natives, noble savages. The Terrans have tainted the Athsheans with their own evil, and now the Athsheans will never be innocent again. Instead, they will always be the fallen noble savage. This argument is not to downstate the real and reaching impacts of colonialism that are still seen today, but to say that human Others should not have to be dehumanized into an idea, and made into symbols of innocence that erases immediacy of real world problems, to recognize that invasion is wrong.

### 2.2.2 Too Animal

Prior to publishing and changed by an editor's recommendation, *The Word for World Is Forest* (*Forest*) had another name: *The Little Green Men* (*Anarchist*, "Author's Introduction: 1"). This title would have prepared the reader to view the Athsheans as humans from the start, to be

juxtaposed in the first chapter of *Forest* against Davidson's point of view of Athsheans as "creechies," similar to the word creatures, and "green monkeys" (*Forest* 21).<sup>42</sup> Yet "*The Little Green Men*" sounds negative and bizarre, like they are diminutive Martians on a stroll. The readers would expect humans, but could also be primed to find them laughable figures. Though the title was changed, the change is insufficient to normalize the Athsheans as humans. They are unsettling, dehumanized humans. Here I shall overview dehumanization according to David L. Smith as to why animal-to-human comparisons are historically negative, followed by Wolfe's indictment of animals being used as metaphors for human problems, before ending on Michaels and his understanding of identities in difference.

The Athsheans are radically different from all the other humans in the Hainish Cycle. Physically, they are 3ft. tall, green-furred, eschewing clothes. They slip between dreaming and waking, and they sleep during a different part of the day than Terran humans. Politically, they are matriarchal yet interdependent, the women relying on the men's dreams for wisdom to lead, and they have no central government. Socio-culturally, they speak a different language from Terrans, interactions involve casual platonic touch, and dreams are as important as life awake. Prior to the Terrans, the Athsheans did not have war, nor killing outside of accidents and mental illness (*Forest* 74). The Athsheans are different from the Terrans on a variety of levels, and each of these contributes to how they are considered inhuman.

Davidson is the only Terran to outright call the Athsheans "monkeys," so it is unclear how monkey-esque the Athsheans actually are (*Forest* 17, 21, 159, 163). Yet Davidson is one of three narrators, meaning that the reader has to rely on three separate visions of what an Athshean looks like. As Davidson is the racist, meant to be the worst of the Terrans, his is the most succinct, easily imaginable, and dehumanizing: the Athsheans look like monkeys. However, even if the Athsheans do not resemble monkeys outside of Davidson's mind, they are radically different and bizarre to the Terrans. The military leader of the Terran enterprise Colonel Dongh fumes, "The fact is that these creechies are a meter tall, they're covered with green fur, they don't sleep, and they're not human beings in my frame of reference!" (77). The Athsheans are or might as well be green monkeys that happen to be genetically human.

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<sup>42</sup> Le Guin does acknowledge the childlike appearance of the Athsheans through her character, Lyubov, terming reacting to the Athsheans as children "the Teddybear Reaction" (*Forest* 114).

“Monkey” is historically laden as a racist term when used for humans. Specifically, black humans. The term “simianization” refers to the practice of dehumanizing or marginalizing a group by referring to them as monkeys. D.L. Smith argues: “it is false to claim that Europeans thought of Africans as subhuman primates because they departed both physically and culturally from European expectations. In fact, Europeans’ simianization of Africans coincided with the transatlantic slave trade, and was rare or nonexistent prior to it” (420). In the previous chapter, Dick’s androids were considered non-human not only to ease the burden of killing escaped ones, but also to facilitate the slave economy (Sims 83 and Vint 116 in 1.1.2 “Individualism and Technology”). If D.L. Smith is correct, simianization (dehumanization) was used for economic reasons, purposefully making people into animals for exploitation. This obviously applies to Davidson’s view of the matter, “Right, but this isn’t slavery, Ok baby. Slaves are humans. When you raise cows, you call that slavery? No. And it works” (*Forest* 18).

Yet in *Forest*, Le Guin is the first to make the humans animalized: the Athsheans are furred. Le Guin needs the Other to be different to make it believable to all audiences that Terrans mistreat them. Consequently, she animalizes the Athsheans through appearance. But Le Guin also needs the Other to be the same to show why the Terrans are morally guilty,<sup>43</sup> so she humanizes them through DNA. Every alien in the Hainish Universe is human. This is problematic, as SF critic Chris Pak contends, “This fact blurs the boundary between the human and non-human sides of the dualism and undermines the related alien/non-alien dualism that informs the colonists’ treatment of the Athsheans” (114). There are multiple humans in the Hainish Universe, and although they all vary in physical appearance, only one looks like a monkey.

Le Guin overly relies on the physical difference between humans and animals and historical treatment of animals by humans to explain her Terrans’ actions. Then, Latham argues, she relies on the human nature of the Athsheans to condemn the Terrans, because she cannot or will not rely on readers’ animal or environmental rights sensibilities, “Le Guin’s abiding humanism, however, makes it difficult for her to articulate an ethic of rights that does not inhere ultimately in human subjects” (117; 117-118). This writing choice legitimates the difference between Athsheans and Terrans, and thus between Vietnamese and US citizens. The important difference is not cultural, but biological. Athsheans are Other on a level that cannot be changed.

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<sup>43</sup> The reason for this will be discussed in section 2.3, “The Too Human Animal.”

In the previous section I discuss the negative implications of using the trope “noble savage” to represent Athsheans. Being monkeys or animalistic in appearance is a different type of trope, but a trope still the same. The monkey-human Athshean is part of a historical trend in writing where animals are used as metaphors. Le Guin solely uses the animal to create a dehumanized human, a symbolic Other. There are a number of ways animals are represented problematically in literature, which animal studies addresses. Wolfe summarizes:

Rather than treat the animal as primarily a theme, trope, metaphor, analogy, representation, or sociological datum (in which, say, relations of class, or race, or gender get played out and negotiated through the symbolic currency of animality and species difference), scholars in animal studies, whatever their home disciplines, now appear to be challenged not only by the discourses and conceptual schemata that have shaped our understanding of and relations to animals but also by the specificity of nonhuman animals, their nongeneric nature (which is why, as Derrida puts it, it is “asinine” to talk about “the Animal” in the singular [*Animal* 31]). (“Human, All Too Human” 567)

The primary focus of Wolfe’s summary is on humans using literary animals for a purpose besides being an animal in ways that erase real animals. In *Forest*, the monkey aspect of the Athsheans is representative of the sociological datum of race, Vietnamese. In this light, the Athsheans are representative of a humanized animal in addition to animalized human, used as an allegory to teach that humans should like humans. The animal aspect is a literary necessity of Athshean identity to explain their dehumanization by the Terrans, but meant to be negligible in Le Guin’s commitment to the unimportance of physical difference.<sup>44</sup>

In one of his articles,<sup>45</sup> identity politics theorist Walter Benn Michaels suggests that how the difference between humans and aliens is presented in SF promotes which theory of difference one uses to differentiate humans, physical or cultural. According to Michaels, “To insist that the difference between humans and aliens is physical is to insist on the insignificance of differences between humans; to insist that the difference between humans and aliens is cultural is to insist on the importance of differences between humans” (650). Aliens through physical difference unites humans as humans, whereas aliens through cultural difference meanwhile can be just another nation, even if they are also physically different. The Athsheans are both physically and

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<sup>44</sup> Being technically human while visibly animal, Athsheans fulfill the intellectually anthropomorphized animal: a human in a fur suit. For more on why this human projection onto animals is negative, refer to Christian Ferencz-Flatz and his take on phenomenologist Edmund Husserl 218, and Haraway in *Manifestly* 205.

<sup>45</sup> On Octavia Butler’s *Dawn* (the focus of the following chapter) and Orson Scott Card’s *Ender’s Game* series.

culturally different from Terran humans, but the cultural difference is explained and overshadowed by the physical difference (Athshean culturally important and biologically mediated dreaming stupors are taken as “laziness,” for instance, *Forest* 107). This is exacerbated by the fact that Terrans and Athsheans share a genome. They are both physically similar and dissimilar, and when the Terrans mistreat them it is because they view the Athsheans as physically different aliens rather than culturally different humans, because they are physically different.

The technicality of being human is outweighed by being a bizarre Other. Had the Athsheans been aliens, not an analogue to actual humans, the speciesist reaction of the Terrans would have directly upheld Le Guin’s purpose of writing: that difference between humans is primarily cultural. Instead, because they are actually humans unlike Michaels’s aliens, Athsheans are too animal to encourage thinking of difference as cultural rather than as physical. This is problematic, especially when looked at through the historical lens of dehumanization that D.L. Smith provides. Le Guin emphasizes physical difference at the same time she tries to abolish its primacy: the little green men.

### 2.2.3 Civilized White, Barbarous Black

The dehumanization of the Athsheans via reductions to tropes are the primary focus of this chapter, yet Le Guin’s activist piece performs another, unintentional dehumanization, in who is considered “civilized” and who is not. Infamously in Western culture (particularly the US), racism means that life as a white person is significantly easier than life as a black person. Worse than that, white has been selected for by eugenicists, Nazis, and any other form of white supremacy, as the ideal race. Le Guin problematically inverts this idea in the character Davidson. To understand why this is negative, we first look at Davidson as ironic colonizer, and then at the ultimate colonizers and “civilized” people of *Forest*, the Hainish.

Davidson is the worst of the Terrans. Not only does he discriminate against Athsheans, he explains everyone’s character by their race, but being white has been displaced by being black:

Here in Java the fifty-five loyal men remaining after the reorganization were mostly eurafs like himself, some afros and afrasians, not one pure asio. Blood tells, after all. You couldn’t be fully human without some blood in your veins from the Cradle of Man. But

that wouldn't stop him from saving those poor yellow bastards at Central, it just helped explain their moral collapse under stress. (160-161)

Davidson feels more human than some of his compatriots because he is black. As SF writer Ken MacLeod notes of *Forest*, "Racism has mutated and evolved to the point where having recent African ancestry - rather than having no trace of it - is to the racist eye what makes one fully human" (in *Anarchist*, "Introduction").

Imperialism, racism, and sexism are indeed not solely a white man's problem. Maria Rubins even refers to the constant use of white men as short terms for these societal issues as white men being "the perennial whipping boy" (762). That is not to say that white men as a group are fully innocent and maligned, but that the shorthand of "white male" for societal problems allows willful ignorance of other culpabilities, like racist white females, sexist people of color, and other permutations of discrimination. Davidson as black colonizer shows how racism is not solved by replacing the group at the "top." Unfortunately, Davidson as Le Guin's "purely evil" character means that there is once again a hierarchy of white as civilized, black as barbarous in *Forest* when Davidson is compared to the Hainish (*Anarchist* "Author's Introduction: 1").

Davidson and the Terrans are not the ultimate colonizers in *Forest*, the Hainish are. White and civilized, the Hainish directly descend from the progenitors of all humans galaxy-wide. Unlike Davidson, Lyubov does not discount anyone's inherent human-ness, but he does believe the Hainish (seen in the Hainish ambassador Lepennon), and the Athsheans, to be superior to the Terrans and other humans:

He looked across the table at Lepennon's white, long-fingered hands, lying left over right, quiet, on the bare polished wood of the table. The white skin was a defect to Lyubov's Earth-formed aesthetic taste, but the serenity and strength of those hands pleased him very much. To the Hainish, he thought, civilization came naturally. They had been at it so long. They lived the social-intellectual life with the grace of a cat hunting in a garden, the certainty of a swallow following summer over the sea. They were experts. They never had to pose, to fake. They were what they were. Nobody seemed to fit the human skin so well. Except, perhaps, the little green men? The deviant, dwarfed, over-adapted, stagnated creechies, who were as absolutely, as honestly, as serenely what they were... (*Forest* 81-82)

Although he equates the humanity of both the Hainish and the Athsheans, the Athsheans are an after-thought to Lyubov, added for their noble savage, stagnated innocence.

Davidson is the primary abuser of biological determinist language, yet here Lyubov explains behavior through biology as well. Lyubov frets about his inability to appear confident, “If only he didn’t lose his temper, if his voice didn’t go weak and husky, if he had poise...” (*Forest* 86). The Hainish never have “to pose” at being human, because to Lyubov they are the ultimate humans. R.M.P. and Søren Baggesen even find that Le Guin’s work shows imperialism as a human “cultural phenomenon” (39). Yet the Hainish come to create a civilized union with their long lost cousins, unlike the barbaric Terrans. They are white civility problematically keeping order among the younger humanoids. In dealing with race, Le Guin slips into tropes of white civility and black barbarism, alongside the idealized noble savage, and the monkey-human, dehumanizing real humans.

## 2.3 The Too Human Animal

While I am riveted on the two adjectives, “little” and “green,” Latham is stuck on the final word: “men.” Different groups are simplified in *Forest*, and these reductions dehumanize them. However, the human aspect of the Athsheans also dehumanizes<sup>46</sup> the relationship between humans and non-human Others, in the sense that *response-ability* is only shown through human-human interactions, as Latham argues (117-118). Human-animal or even human-alien interactions are not fully realized. Consequently, I will review Latham’s position alongside Haraway, Wolfe, and Fraiman, to explain why tying human morality to animals is harmful.

Latham is concerned with how the identity “human” affects moral obligation to the animal and environmental Other. As previously (partially) quoted, Latham asserts:

Le Guin’s abiding humanism, however, makes it difficult for her to articulate an ethic of rights that does not inhere ultimately in human subjects ... The model of moral relation Le Guin finally defends is not surprising given the central bond in her celebrated novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969)-- a friendship, despite differences, between sentient humanoids. (117)

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<sup>46</sup> “Humanize” meaning in this thesis recognizing humans as humans, animals as animals, and treating them with respect.

Le Guin is, in a word, anthropocentric. This is sensible, since *Forest* is an activist piece protesting dehumanization of Vietnamese by Americans. However, while I argue that having any animal aspect at all dehumanizes the Athsheans and consequently real humans, Latham is right to question the human aspect of the Athsheans as well because it upholds speciesism, or animal discrimination in rights discussions. In Le Guin's work, rights are tied to human similarity.

In animal rights discussions there is a question of the relevance of *liking* animals, which is intrinsically tied to the problem of objectivity in Humanism discussed in the Introduction. Haraway counters objectivity with *situated knowledges*.<sup>47</sup> Although explained in the Introduction, a quick review of *situated knowledges* is necessary. Haraway states: "All Western cultural narratives about objectivity are allegories of the ideologies governing the relations of what we call mind and body, distance and responsibility. Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. ("Situated Knowledges" 583). Any theoretical practice that negates responsibility and guilt sits uneasily with Haraway, and claims of objectivity lessen accountability for actors without an accompanying push for change.<sup>48</sup> This is something Wolfe understands when he warns of Humanism's "penchant for the sort of 'pluralism' that extends the sphere of consideration (intellectual or ethical) to previously marginalized groups without in the least destabilizing or throwing into question the schema the schema of the human who undertakes such pluralization" ("Human" 568). With this background on rational Humanism versus *situated knowledges*, we turn to the male-female split in animal rights discourse on *liking*, before illustrating why liking and similarity, and hence the human Athsheans, is frequently detrimental to rights.

Concerning animals, Wolfe, argues, "The ethical and philosophical urgency of confronting the institution of speciesism and crafting a posthumanist theory of the subject has nothing to do with whether you like animals" (qtd. in Fraiman 102). Preferring logos to pathos, Wolfe calls for reconsidering the relationship between humans and animals because of an implicit need, not reliant on emotional reasoning. However, some worry that Wolfe's profession is indicative of preferring distant, emotionless reasoning, over more realistic lived experience.

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<sup>47</sup> Haraway differentiates between *situated knowledges* and relativism, stating, "Relativism is the perfect mirror twin of totalization in the ideologies of objectivity; both deny the stakes in location, embodiment, and partial perspective; both make it impossible to see well. Relativism and totalization are both 'god tricks' promising vision from everywhere and nowhere equally and fully" ("Situated Knowledges" 584).

<sup>48</sup> For more on guilt and change, refer to the final chapter.



Susan Fraiman joins ecofeminists criticizing “rights approaches to animal advocacy precisely on the basis of their complicity with Enlightenment ways of knowing” (106). According to Fraiman, Wolfe’s impersonal rights are indicative of a difference in male and female response. Fraiman starts with feminist and animal ethicist Josephine Donovan’s critique of the big animal rights names Peter Singer and Tom Regan. Donovan asserts that these theorists, by relying on “Enlightenment epistemology...and in their suppression/denial of emotional knowledge, continue to employ Cartesian, or objectivist, modes even while they condemn the scientific practices enabled by them” (qtd. in Fraiman, 101).

Fraiman then connects this Cartesian ethicist approach to Wolfe, and worries that “not-needing-to-like-animals has obvious advantages in strategic terms, as long as one assumes the bundling of nonemotionality and nonfemininity with intellectual credibility” (101).<sup>49</sup> As discussed in section 1.1.1 “The Cartesian Mind” in the preceding chapter, a Cartesian Mind is not representative of a socially healthy individual. Fraiman also associates the male-female split in animal empathy to activism, that although, “Both approaches protest the exclusion of animals and also, typically, deconstruct the tenets of humanist thinking” the male theorists take a “highly political” stance of political passivism, while ecofeminists are politically active in animal rights (106).<sup>50</sup> Fraiman ends her argument, “I suggest we work up to creaturely love by starting with something more modest--the admission that theorizing seriously about animals might have something to do with *liking* them” (115). This difference in approach can be seen in *Forest*, with most Terrans saving all their empathy for other Terrans, while Lyubov (the most feminine) has empathy for all.

However, Fraiman’s emphasis on *liking* is partially misled, and looking at Wolfe’s analysis of Arthur Caplan explains why. A medical ethicist, Caplan professes that people who are severely impaired mentally should not be used for research like apes are because we are related:

[It] has nothing to do with the properties, capacities, and abilities of children or infants who lack and have always lacked significant degrees of intellectual and cognitive function. The reason they should not be used is because of the impact using them would

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<sup>49</sup> Though Fraiman does acknowledge that Wolfe sees the danger of logic based rights (Fraiman 102).

<sup>50</sup> Animality Studies Michael Lundblad argues for different terminology of animals in literature studies, depending on whether or not the motivation of the literary critic is animal rights (“animal studies”) or primarily an examination of how animals are used in literature, such as when animals aspects are ascribed to humans (“animality studies;” 496-497).

have upon other human beings....The assessment of the morals of how we treat each other and animals does not hinge simply on the properties that each possess[es]. Relationships must enter into the equation as well, and when they do the balance begins to tip toward human rather than animal interests when there is a conflict. (qtd. in Wolfe *What is Posthumanism?* 59)

Scientific experimentation becomes an extension of meat politics: it is fine if the subject is an animal, but cannibalistic if the subject is a human. Relationships, in Caplan's reasoning, prove moral merit. Wolfe however terms Caplan's relations as "prejudice on the basis of species membership," otherwise known as "speciesism"<sup>51</sup> (*What* 59).

Following the example of another animal rights philosopher,<sup>52</sup> Wolfe reveals the problem in Caplan's reasoning. Wolfe notes that if one replaces "humans" and "animals" with "white" and "black," Caplan's rights-through-relationships is a tool of human-on-human discrimination (*What* 59-60). Although Wolfe does not explicitly replace the words, this is how Caplan would read: "Relationships must enter into the equation as well, and when they do the balance begins to tip toward white rather than black interests when there is a conflict." This is obviously problematic, the danger in considering *liking* relevant in rights discourses is that non-liking is a staple of discrimination. To restate the problem with a quote from Regan (the same Regan that Fraiman cites as problematically unfeeling): "Let those who are the victims of injustice suffer as they will. It matters not so long as no one else ... cares about it.... As if, for example, there would be nothing wrong with apartheid in South Africa if few white South Africans were upset by it" (qtd. in *What* 60). Objective logic has been used to justify discriminating against and dehumanizing humans, but so has logic based on *liking*, relationships, pathos.

Rights based on *liking* is part of the problem in *Forest*. As established, the Athsheans are humans, however strange their appearance, and the only inhabitants of Athshe that the Terrans can communicate with. Meanwhile, the Terrans are logging and creating a desert of this new-to-them planet. Lyubov advocates changing how Terrans interact with the Athshean environment on the basis that their initial protocols were made, "without sufficient knowledge of the planet to be exploited, its life-systems, or its native human inhabitants" (*Forest* 84-85). Although only the last item on Lyubov's list, Latham thinks that the "human inhabitants" are the sole reason this

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<sup>51</sup> See Peter Singer's "Speciesism and Moral Status."

<sup>52</sup> Paola Cavalieri, in responding to the theorist Robert Nozick, replaced "human" with "white" to see if Nozick's work sounded discriminatory; qtd. in Wolfe *What is Posthumanism?* 59-60.

exploitation of the land is considered questionable. Knowing the Athsheans to be human, regardless of how animal they are, Latham asks, “If the forest were not *someone*’s indigenous world, would it then be ripe for the picking? Can ecological imperialism only be committed against human subjects or their fictional surrogates?” (117-118).

While Le Guin’s characters fixate on how to treat something that claims humanity but does not wear their face, Latham moves the moral line to ask why morality is still based on a human presence, or “human” ownership of the land? Without other humans to hold humans accountable, without *liking* or the human relationship, would humans ever stop exploitation? It is unclear if Latham would prefer a fully animal-alien Other, or no sentient-equivalent to the humans whatsoever, as he considers environmental implications of a human-based morality. Yet the in-between state of the Athsheans is unhelpful for both a human purpose and an animal purpose in presenting humanizing relationships. Too animal to destabilize human racism, too human to destabilize speciesism and environmentalism, the Athsheans are problematic.

The inverse of the animalized human, the anthropomorphized animal, is negative because it projects human reality onto animals and ties morality to similarity. To further examine the reasoning behind this, I turn to Haraway’s concerns on anthropomorphized dogs. Haraway’s main apprehension is that treating dogs as furry humans willfully ignores species difference to the detriment of both humans and dogs, “To regard a dog as a furry child, even metaphorically, demeans dogs and children--and sets up children to be bitten and dogs to be killed” (*Manifestly* 128). *Response-ability* in animal relationships is not blurring dogs into humans, but lies in honoring difference (128-131). Haraway argues for pronouns that recognize dogs and animals as companion animals rather than substitute humans, wryly pointing out, “I resist being called the ‘mom’ to my dogs because I fear infantilization of the adult canines and misidentification of the important fact that I wanted dogs, not babies” (187). We do not care for dogs because they are human, but because they are dogs. Indeed, the one case where Haraway admits it is useful for anthropomorphizing animals, taken from dog trainer Vicki Hearne, is to remind the human that the dog is alive, not a soulless Cartesian machine (*Manifestly* 141). Yet Le Guin’s Athsheans suggest that we must care for the Athsheans because they are human, not because they are beings.

The Athsheans muddy the human-animal distinction. The Terrans are supposed to care for them as humans, but they are physically removed from Terran humanity, and not just

visually. The Athsheans have different needs from Terran humans: they sleep on and off throughout the day, and it is physically dangerous for the Athsheans to have intraspecies sex, a danger they uniquely face among Le Guin's alien-humans.<sup>53</sup> Admittedly, this could be due to the fact that it is Terran men raping Athshean women, a violent act that Davidson revels in until someone points out the inconsistency of thinking the Athsheans are monkeys but raping them anyway (*Forest* 77).<sup>54</sup> However, Lyubov connects the danger of death to size disparity--the Terrans are taller than the little green men (118). Cultural differences can be recognized as a difference between humans, but the disparities in physical needs and compatibilities, coupled with the fur, endangers the Athsheans when their physical difference is not recognized as still morally deserving.

This would not matter if Terrans, based on Americans, treated animals as beings instead of consumable goods.<sup>55</sup> Mistreatment of dehumanized humans can also be linked to this behavior toward animals. Wolfe cites multiple theorists in wishing to protect marginalized, animalized humans alongside animals:

...violence against human others (and particularly racially marked others) has often operated by means of a double movement that animalizes them for the purpose of domination, oppression, or even genocide--a maneuver that is effective because we take for granted the prior assumption that violence against the animal is ethically permissible. ("Human" 567).

Considering the animal to be lesser and not morally deserving means that animalized humans are also considered lesser and not morally deserving.

One can see reason for concern with the animal aspect of the Athsheans beyond simianization and being turned into tropes. If Latham is right that only the human tag encourages treating the Athsheans and their world as morally deserving (117-118), but historically any humanity is overridden by a projected (or in the Athshean case, visual) animality (Wolfe "Human" 567), any animalized human will not be treated well. Ethical treatment of humans cannot be tied to metaphorically animal humans, not until animals are treated better, as Wolfe indicates. Preferably, not at all, considering Haraway's stance; animals are not humans, and so

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<sup>53</sup> See Le Guin's novel *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

<sup>54</sup> Which upholds D.L. Smith's views on dehumanization of humans as humiliation of a human rather than an animal, Davidson unwittingly recognizing Athshean humanity as he violently dehumanizes them (417).

<sup>55</sup> See the preceding 1.1.3 "Speciesism."

ethical (and personable) treatment of animals will not look the same as ethical treatment of humans. Logically, claiming, “I care about animals because I care about humans” or vice versa ignores real life differences, promotes a static one-size-fits-all ethics that is tied to humanity, no better than Cartesian ethics that realizes humans and animals are different and uses that to justify anthropocentrism.

Just as with Latham’s pointed question, “If the forest were not *someone’s* indigenous world, would it then be ripe for the picking?” (118), if the Athsheans had been fully alien, the Terran acts would still have been atrocities. Yet because the Athsheans are both humans and non-Terran humans, the real physical differences between Terrans and Athsheans is discounted. These real differences, that are not equivalent to any differences between Americans and Vietnamese but are solely a product of literary choice, make the Athsheans non-Terran humans rather than a unique species with its own needs and abilities. *Forest* may be about meeting humans *response-ably*, but by mixing a human identity with physical (animal) difference, the moral treatment of both humans and animals is destabilized. The Athsheans cannot be treated as Terran humans (not that most of the Terrans try). Yet, had they not been human, the Terrans probably would not have stopped their exploitation of the planet. In fact, had the Athsheans not been changeable, the Terrans would not have stopped.

Viewing animals or aliens as humans does encourage moral compulsion on the part of the human, but it also sets up the relationship to fail if the Other does not act or look human enough, complacent enough, or if there is no human element at all. Little green men, noble savages, or green monkeys, the Athsheans may be human, but they are never equal. Because of this, both human-human and human-animal relationships suffer.

## 2.4 Conclusion

Le Guin wrote *The Word for World Is Forest* as an act of activism, protesting the Vietnam War and humanizing Vietnamese to American citizens. Yet her creation of the Athsheans upheld difference rather than similarity. The Athsheans are separate from regular humans by being noble savages, innocent caretakers of their planet. They are also animalized humans, green-furred and small, and to be an animalized human is historically bad for humans. Le Guin dehumanizes her Athsheans, and thus real life humans Vietnamese, in her attempt to create innocent, different humans. Terrans and real life black people are also dehumanized through Davidson and the

Hainish, as the racist colonialist Davidson, the most Terran human by being from “the Cradle of Man” (*Forest* 160-161), is barbarous and evil compared to the civilized, white, Hainish. Animalization of the Athsheans would not matter, if it did not rely on the Humanist tradition of anthropocentrism, expecting humans to be morally deserving, and animals to be *killable*.

Yet it is important to recognize that *response-ability* is a process; relationships are constantly in flux as living situations rather than static theories. According to women studies theorist Wendy Pearson, Le Guin recognizes the importance of relationships being processes that can never be completed but must be continually worked on and adjusted (194).<sup>56</sup> In her rush of moralistic simplicity, Le Guin unintentionally dehumanizes and animalizes real people, but that does not negate the importance of her writing. Books are static, in a dynamic world. Reviewing problems in Le Guin’s writing is not to say that her writing is immoral, but is part of the process of constantly reconsidering how we interact with and view the people and beings around us that Haraway and Neil Badmington argue for in *response-ability* and self-reflexive posthumanist theory (*Species* 70-72; Badmington 19-22).

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<sup>56</sup> Pearson is referring to the relationship of human and alien-human in *The Left Hand of Darkness* as a process that can never be done, “there can be no end point at which Genly finally gets the Gethenians and his relationship to them ‘right,’” (194). The same can be said of Lyubov and Selver’s relationship.

### 3. Guilt: The Irreconcilable Calculation

In the two preceding chapters, I focus on cases where the author dehumanizes the same group of humans that they are writing to create sympathy for. In Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (*Androids*) Dick warns that killing androids dehumanizes bounty hunters (in McNamara 434), but then makes the androids *killable*. Ursula K. Le Guin writes *The Word for World Is Forest* (*Forest*) as an activist work to humanize Vietnamese people through the Athsheans, but does this by relying on tropes of innocence and animalized humans. Octavia E. Butler's *Dawn* reduces and thus dehumanizes humans through embodied guilt of human nature, but unlike the other novels does not have a "correct" answer or even a guiltless actor. Moreover, although the Other of the novel, the alien Oankali, exhibits negative aspects of Western society, their identity is not subsumed into human identity. This lessens the dehumanization of the humans, as both humans and aliens are guilty, and means that unlike *Androids* and *Forest*, *Dawn* imagines a non-anthropocentric first contact. This in turn allows a thought experiment in how the human species can negotiate a *response-able* relationship with radically different but powerful beings.

*Dawn* is the first in Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy,<sup>57</sup> consisting of *Dawn*, *Adulthood Rites*, and *Imago*. In *Dawn*, the reader sees through the eyes of Lilith Iyapo, a young black woman who had previously survived the death of her husband, her son, and who now has survived nuclear holocaust and the death of most of the human species by the grace of aliens, the space-faring, tentacled slugs called Oankali. The Oankali offer good health, long life, and a renewed Earth, at the cost of the human species. The Oankali consider the humans too destructive because of the "Human Contradiction," that humans are both intelligent and hierarchical. The Oankali are determined to breed the destruction out of humans. To this end, they sterilize all humans outside of Oankali relationships.

Lilith is conscripted to prepare other humans for the "trade" of culture and genes, and thus implicated in the Oankali's crime. Although she reluctantly performs her duty, Lilith's main lesson to the humans is "Learn and run," wait for the correct time to escape and resist. Although some humans do become Resisters after being released from the Oankali's ship to Earth's surface, Lilith stays with her new, complicated family. Throughout the rest of the series, Lilith

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<sup>57</sup> Also called *Lilith's Brood*.

and her children show the Oankali that forcing the humans is wrong, and the Oankali eventually allow the humans choice: join the Oankali, or go to a human-only colony on Mars.

Guilt and protested innocence drive the story of *Dawn*, showing how philosophical or objectively good intentions are insufficient to ethical treatment, so long as the real being is not engaged. *Dawn* demonstrates that guilt is an important part in making relationships equal, in making both sides *response-able* and thus accountable to each other. This is necessary for any equal meeting between groups or individuals, but especially when one side (the more powerful side) has a seductive philosophy similar to utilitarianism (outcome-based morality), as the Oankali do. As both the humans and Oankali are shown to be morally guilty, *Dawn* is about accepting guilt, and not wielding another's guilt to justify an immoral act.

In support of the importance of guilt in *Dawn* and philosophical tradition, I revisit Donna J. Haraway's cyborg and its deconstruction of holistic assumptions in feminism, origins, and innocence. I will explain the importance of the Malinche figure for Lilith and why Haraway calls cyborg stories, and more specifically Lilith's story, survival rather than salvation stories (*Manifestly Haraway* 55-58, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* 227). Then I will turn to the other guilty party of *Dawn*, the Oankali, and the moral implications of sociobiology and utilitarianism. Despite Butler's own beliefs of biologically determined destruction in humans, she ultimately supports Oankali guilt, showing that even when a philosophy appears innocent and irreproachable, accountability is still needed, lest we become prey to *god tricks* and utility monsters.

### 3.1 Cyborgs and Malinche

Science fiction (SF) studies Benjamin Robertson claims, "Haraway does not bring the concept of the cyborg to Butler to explain Butler, but rather uses Butler's writing to help define the cyborg" (376). Accordingly, to understand the cyborg requires understanding Butler's writing. Most of this thesis has been interested in ways that individuals de/humanize others and themselves, and Haraway's cyborg is a figure invested in humanizing herself in situations where they have been dehumanized by the dominant group. To explicate this, I will dive into Haraway's creation, the cyborg, before turning to a figure she and Butler draw inspiration from, the race traitor figure Malinche. Guilt is an integral question for the cyborg and Malinche, in that Western Humanist tradition privileges the white male and their objectivity over all women, and especially women of



color--they cannot escape being considered in the wrong, and so they must rewrite their stories to reflect the constrained conditions in which they act while false innocence is dethroned.

### 3.1.1 The Cyborg

What is Haraway's cyborg? In the Introduction I briefly surveyed Haraway's cyborg as rejecting traditional origin stories, crossing boundaries (human and animal, human and machine), and being an intersectional person of race, gender, etc. (*Manifestly* 8-11, 16-27). I will now go into more depth, and consider Haraway's racially important cyborg alongside guilt before turning to Butler's cyborg and guilty victim, Lilith Iyapo.

The cyborg is, at its simplest, machine and animal (*Manifestly* 5). Haraway is aware that technology mixes with life, such that "It is not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine" (60). Even if it were clear, Haraway sees humans intimately connected with their technology, "machines can be prosthetic devices, intimate components, friendly selves" (60-61). The cyborg is plainly an example of that interrelation, human and machine. Yet from the beginning of her essay "A Cyborg Manifesto," Haraway presents the cyborg as machine and animal, and as representative of the multiplicity of women's experience (*Manifestly* 5-6).

Haraway recognizes that white women and their experience is only part of women's experience, and that women of color must no longer be erased by assuming that all women have the same experience as white women (*Manifestly* 16-17). Haraway sees writings by women of color in the US as "cyborg writing," taking "the power to signify; but this time that power must be neither phallic nor innocent" (55). This is related to how Haraway depicts the difference in male and female knowledge, Humanist rationalism and its untouchable objectivity, versus the female recognition of "embodied objectivity" that is "*situated knowledges*" ("Situated Knowledges" 581). Traditionally male rationalism performs "god tricks" that create an illusion of innocence, for the rational, but not for the Other (575-578). Haraway uses *situated knowledges* to instead find objectivity in subjectivity, "The moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision...It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see" (583). Individual women's experience matters, because each perspective provides its own truth. Haraway summarizes, "Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original

innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as others” (*Manifestly* 55). Cyborg writing is a manifesto of existence, a demand for recognition.

As such, Haraway’s cyborg grows from feminist SF writing and breaking boundaries, such as Lilith in *Dawn* (*Manifestly* 61-63). To examine Lilith as an implicated cyborg, made guilty by society, Haraway first discusses the Biblical nod of Lilith’s first name: in some extra-Biblical traditions, Lilith is the other wife of Adam who births monsters, a guilty mother from the beginning (63). Haraway then states what Lilith the cyborg does:

A black woman and a mother whose child is dead, Lilith mediates the transformation of humanity through genetic exchange with extraterrestrial lovers/rescuers/destroyers/genetic engineers, who re-form Earth’s habitats after the nuclear holocaust and coerce surviving humans into intimate fusion with them. (63)

Lilith is the new mother of monsters through teaching and reproduction, helping oust the human species through genetics. Lilith as cyborg permeates boundaries, from proving black women exist and grieving mothers exist, to mothering the interspecies generation and questioning the dominant group’s (the Oankali’s) proclaimed innocence. Haraway’s cyborg at once permeates boundaries, and shows that old boundaries were only ever socially constructed (59-60).

Two boundaries that cyborgs permeate are origin stories and innocence. Haraway clarifies origin stories “in the ‘Western,’ humanist sense” as “the myth of original unity, fullness, bliss and terror...” (*Manifestly* 8). A Western origin is humans before the Fall into sin. Origin<sup>58</sup> stories are taken to be tools of Humanist and Judeo-Christian traditions, focused on “innocence” and “wholeness,” which in light of *situated knowledges* is dubious, and this is what the cyborg must rewrite (*Manifestly* 9, 55). To Haraway, Butler’s story is a, “survival fiction more than salvation history” (*Primate Visions* 378).

The importance in moving past Humanist innocence is that it does not hold people accountable, and thus does not engage with the real world. Haraway decries false innocence: “Feminists don’t need a doctrine of objectivity that promises transcendence, a story that loses track of its mediations just where someone might be held responsible for something, and unlimited instrumental power. We don’t want a theory of innocent powers to represent the

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<sup>58</sup> Cathy Peppers examines cyborgs and Butler’s changes to traditional Western origin stories in “Dialogic Origins and Alien Identities in Butler’s XENOGENESIS”--“It is this desire for the alien, the other, for difference within ourselves which, more powerfully than forsaking origin stories altogether, can allow us to recognize the value of origin stories while resisting and changing them from within” (60).

world” (“Situated” 579). Responsibility and accountability also featured in the previous chapter on *Forest*, in regards to anthropology; anthropology is problematic when it is viewed as innocent, academic note-takers or tourists into marginalized people’s lives (Starn 181-182). The cyborg must not be written for by another being, but writes for themselves, reclaiming power and questioning the observer’s innocence.

Yet accountability comes with this power, as Haraway is not moving innocence from oppressor to oppressed. She is not interested in “the innocence of the merely violated,” or “a latent position of moral superiority, innocence, and greater closeness to nature” (*Manifestly* 58). This would be another *god trick*. Instead of decentering negative practices of objectivity and innocence and thus moving closer to equality, power through innocence only changes who is in charge while leaving the structure intact. Moreover, Haraway argues that the cyborg “refuse[s] the ideological resources of victimization so as to have a real life” not centered on “masculine autonomy” and negative stereotypes of women (59).

This is not to say that victims are guilty in their victimization. Victim-blaming is a serious problem, shifting responsibility and guilt away from the dehumanizing agent to the dehumanized, justifying abuse on the part of the agent by pointing to perceived provocations on the part of the victim. However, people are more than moments or periods of abuse. Haraway is warning that an identity based on victimization and innocence is limiting, not empowering (*Manifestly* 58). One can humanize themselves by recognizing that they are not only a victim, but a full person that exists beyond victimization. The cyborg does not let the past define them, but moves through life standing up for themselves and acknowledging that they are human, too. In Lilith’s case, she humanizes herself while being unable to get away from her abusers.

Additionally, one does not need to be a complete innocent for a crime to be wrong. We are all human, making actual innocence unrealistic. The innocent-guilty binary is always already false for Haraway in instrumental relationships between lab animals and researchers, which example is radically different from human-human relationships (*When Species Meet* 71-75). Yet Haraway sees innocence as inhibitive in human relationships as well. Citing the infamous Fall from innocence and ease to guilt and hardship (in Judeo-Christian tradition),<sup>59</sup> Haraway cautions, “Cyborg writing must not be about the Fall, the imagination of a once-upon-a-time wholeness

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<sup>59</sup> There are differences in the Fall and guilt between the Bible and the Qur’an, with Adam and Eve taking personal responsibility in the Qur’an. See the Qur’an, 2:35-39, versus Gen. 3.

before language, before writing, before Man” (*Manifestly* 55). The cyborg moves past origin stories, unified experience, and innocence, to have *response-able* relationships that see and interact with real human beings, rather than projections. Cyborgs humanize themselves in moving past the projections of others.

### 3.1.2 Slavery and the Figure of Malinche

Yet Lilith the cyborg has another problem: how does she defend humanizing herself, when she is part of the dehumanization process, literally de-humanizing the Earth? Both oppressed and oppressor, Lilith is the Malinche. Stuck between two cultures, she has no safe haven. As Haraway analyzes, Lilith cannot hope for salvation, only survival (*Primate* 378). To fully situate Lilith and the importance of her relationship with guilt, I will review Butler’s experience learning about slavery and how she addresses it in her writing, before further examining the figure formed through slavery and complicity, the Malinche.

The obvious dehumanizing relationship that has been critically examined by academics in Butler’s work is that of slavery. While doing research for a novel, Butler “...realized...that I was not going to be able to come anywhere near presenting slavery as it was. I was going to have to do a somewhat cleaned-up version of slavery, or no one would be willing to read it” (in an interview with Randall Kenan 497). Even her “cleaned-up version” was important to get out, more truthful than the portrayals Butler saw growing up, in history lessons that only showed black people as well-treated slaves, or a tour of Mount Vernon where “the tour guide did not refer to slaves but to ‘servants’ and there was all this very carefully orchestrated dancing around the fact that it had been a slave plantation” (in interviews with Stephen Potts 334, Kenan 496). Slavery was (and unfortunately still is, in some cases) rebranded as benevolent. Butler had to negotiate revealing slavery without scaring off her audience.

Butler frequently has unequal power dynamics in her writing, and is famous for her novels that grapple with slavery,<sup>60</sup> yet she pushes against her non-slavery works being branded as neo-slavery narratives. Take her short story “Bloodchild,” where bug-like aliens lay larvae in human males and as a reward the humans are protected and treated well. This relationship is almost the same as *Dawn*; the aliens need the humans for reproduction, and the humans will not

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<sup>60</sup> In particular, *Kindred*, where the main character travels back in time to confront her two ancestors, slave-owner and slave.

survive on their own. The difference is that the fate of humanity does not rest on this alien-human relationship, as the humans of “Bloodchild” are not on the edge of extinction. Instead, this particular group has traveled the cosmos and made a deal with the natives, a deal that ends in larva and male c-sections. Butler does not see this as wrong, but simply a complicated relationship, “And I don’t see the slavery, and I don’t see this as particularly barbaric. I mean if human beings were able to make that good a deal with another species, I think it would be miraculous” (in Kenan 498).<sup>61</sup>

Butler differentiates between writing about slavery and writing SF with other instrumental relationships. These other instrumental relationships are coercive and inhibitive, one side more powerful than the other, negatively viewed by the “weaker” party, but Butler does not present these as neo-slavery narratives, and they should not be read as such. To read slavery where Butler does not intend simplifies morality that Butler has worked to complicate. Analyzing *Dawn* through disability studies, Megan Obourn acknowledges that, “Lilith’s situation can be read as an allegory of slavery, colonialism, and violence done to women’s bodies,” but points out that “Lilith is not made to perform labor (though later she will be impregnated and perform reproductive labor without her verbal consent), nor is she being punished” (116, 115).

Obourn uses this to support her disability reading, which is valid, but it also shows that the Oankali’s actions are not oppression for oppression’s sake, or economic purpose. If it were, the Oankali would be pure evil, incapable of seeing the *response-ability* of the humans. The Oankali do initially ignore the human response, but by the end of *Adulthood Rites* have agreed to let humans have a choice. In contrast to the horrors of SF books like H.G. Wells’s *War of the Worlds*, these aliens interact and change because of their relationships with humans, even as they perform typical imperialist-capitalist moves. Butler’s aliens eventually have humanizing *response-ability*. However, Obourn rightfully connects *Dawn* to slavery when she claims that its purpose is “to rethink the roles of women of color in colonization histories” (124).

Part of the issue in colonization is family, and Lilith as the woman-in-between has a complicated family. On one side, Lilith’s hopes of human survival are realized through her family. Lilith plants the seeds for her children to revolutionize Oankali-Human interaction by

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<sup>61</sup> Postcolonial studies Aparajita Nanda appreciates *Dawn* not being a neo-slavery text because “the Oankali are not ‘white devils’” and “by removing or even questioning the original motives, one ceases to fixate on them, and one can analyze the structure of colonialism in a more theoretical way,” and the possibility that “hierarchy of colonial situations stems from the colonizers’ original motives and acts” (774).

being, in postcolonial and identity politics theorist Aparajita Nanda, “[H]ybrid citizens” and their “home space” (774, 777). Nanda argues that although “home space” is traditionally where colonizers enforce the new order, “covert disobedience or dissent” from a “surrogate mother” such as Lilith can both fulfill the role given her by the colonizers while encouraging revolution (774-776). Lilith can be a double agent, but only if she is accepted by the Oankali as Malinche. Lilith instills value of the human in her son Akin in *Adulthood Rites*. Akin, both Oankali and human, learns to respect both ways of life. He becomes postcolonialist, Nanda proclaiming that Akin “question[s] the Oankali contention that humans would not survive their self-destructive instincts if they were not genetically modified and purged of the ‘Contradiction;’” furthermore Akin recognizes that the cost of not being able to reproduce is too much, unable to balance the Oankali’s gifts of physical health (782). *Adulthood Rites* ends with Akin’s successful petition for resister humans to have their own land on Mars, able to reproduce humans rather than Oankali-Human constructs.

As part of being the “surrogate mother” Nanda alludes to, Lilith’s family is not just her children, but the Oankali (774-776). Although she has a human lover (who dies), a child by the same, and an Oankali couple, Lilith’s main romantic partner who mediates all these relationships is Nikanj, the Ooloi. Oolois are the third sex of Oankali. They facilitate healing, pleasure, sex, and reproduction through their ability to read and manipulate genes and physical sensations. They are mainly problematic in their belief in bodily consent over verbal consent, and worse, their ability to influence bodily consent through chemicals. Alongside the “trade,” this is what makes the Oankali rapists. Throughout the trilogy, Lilith has a love/hate relationship with Nikanj.

Yet the relationship between Lilith and the Ooloi Nikanj takes a different meaning in light of Butler’s words on family. Butler maintains, “Even though I don’t have a husband and children, I have other family, and it seems to me our most important set of relationships...Family does not have to mean purely biological relationships either...Family bonds can even survive really terrible abuse” (in Potts 333). Butler’s philosophy privileges familial (born or chosen) bonds and recognizes the resilience of that bond, even in the face of abuse. Lilith is in a difficult situation: she is indebted to the Oankali for having any life at all, but is forced into a relationship. Even when the Mars colony of humans becomes an option by the end of *Adulthood Rites*, she cannot take it because she is augmented by the Oankali, has a Oankali-Human family, and is a

race traitor, a Malinche. Lilith makes the best of an impossible situation, and still has meaningful, familial relationships, even with Nikanj, be that good or bad. She humanizes herself in a dehumanized situation. *Dawn* is difficult to talk about, because Oankali pleasure and good are tainted by their forcing themselves on humans (which is the focus of the second half of this chapter). No one would argue that the Oankali-Human relationship is positive from the beginning, and indeed the horror of *Dawn* stems from the human inability to say no, or have that statement taken seriously.<sup>62</sup> Yet the Oankali do change, and this particular relationship becomes more equal because of the work of Lilith and her children.

As Malinche, Lilith is in a unique position, oppressor and oppressed. Malinche is a historical figure, the appellation of a slave woman given to Hernán Cortés. Although a slave, Malinche performed the vital service of translation for the Spanish conquest, and even had a son by Cortés. When Mexico broke with Spain, Malinche's name became a derogatory term that is still used to this day to delineate, according to reporter Jasmine Garsd, "a *malinchista* ... a traitor to one's own people, someone who prefers a foreign culture over his [or her] own." (Garsd)

Haraway marries Malinche and cyborg together as oppressed women of color reclaiming self through language (*Manifestly* 56-58). Concerning a rewriting of Malinche,<sup>63</sup> Haraway pronounces, "Sister Outsider hints at the possibility of world survival not because of her innocence but because of her ability to live on the boundaries, to write without the founding myth of original wholeness..." (56-57). Malinche survives even in change. Obourn also connects Malinche with Lilith, and emphasizes the importance of sex in colonization collusion. She states, "Lilith is read and reads herself as a version of La Malinche, or a slave mother--the 'Judas goat' woman of color whose sexuality is used in the service of forwarding white dominance, colonization, and the killing and exploitation of non-white bodies" (133-134). Reading *Dawn* primarily through the lens of disability studies, Obourn adds a binary alongside oppressor/oppressed, that of grateful/angry, "Lilith finds herself in the position of a patient without full control of her own care, both grateful for her bodily health and angry at her lack of ownership of her body" (116). Lilith is also angry that the Oankali chose her to be the "Judas goat" (*Dawn* 75). Yet Lilith persists.

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<sup>62</sup> *Dawn* could be read as neo-Gothic horror.

<sup>63</sup> *Loving in the War Years* by Cherríe Moraga.

Haraway calls Butler's work stories about survival rather than salvation, and Obourn sees this as a connection between disability and colonization, the choice that remains when all other choices are taken away: to survive (*Primate* 378, Obourn 124). Lilith is given the chance to be euthanized prior to fully integrating with the Oankali, but she does not do it (*Dawn* 51-52). When talking with another human in the final book, Lilith frames this non-suicide as her genuine choice in her forced betrayal of humanity (*Imago* 177). Obourn relates this medical choice,<sup>64</sup> to keep living in a society when considered disabled, to having a mixed child as a colonized woman of color:

This reading complicates Lilith's role as a version of La Malinche, a woman of color who aids colonization by translating for or reproducing with the colonizer and is generally read as either a race traitor or a rape victim. In making this a choice not about loyalty or treason, purity or corruption, agency or abjection, but rather about the ethics of living with disability or caring for another who does not read as fully healthy or fully human, Butler opens up narrative possibilities for colonized motherhood as a choice made within highly restrictive, oppressive, and self-negating circumstances. (125)

Lilith humanizes herself. She is not just "a race traitor or a rape victim," she is a person. Being Malinche is about surviving and using the one choice left to hope that some good will come of it. Lilith accepts Malinche guilt for the hope of a livable life, even as oppressor/oppressed.

The Malinche and the cyborg are not figures of innocence, if only because innocence feels impossible. Lilith becomes too alien to be accepted by humans, guilty by association and compliance, but hopes in teaching the humans how to survive their kind will be saved--"*Learn and run!* If she were lost, others did not have to be. Humanity did not have to be" (*Dawn* 272). The Malinche takes on guilt that others might survive. Although feelings of guilt and victimization plague Lilith, she does not see herself as only a guilty victim, but as a potential enabler of survival. She sees her own *response-ability*. It is an anti-colonial victory, predicated on Malinche's guilt. Lilith as cyborg and Malinche represents historical and modern women of color surviving terrible circumstances, humanizing themselves with guilt and hope when dehumanized by the colonizer.

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<sup>64</sup> For more on this, refer to 3.2.2 "God Tricks and Utility."



## 3.2 Oankali and Biological Determinism

In contrast to Lilith's tension of guilt and innocence are the Oankali. The Oankali are innocent, justified even, in their imperial march on humans for one simple reason: biology. According to the Oankali, humans are a doomed race because of incompatible genes, intelligence and hierarchical behavior, which in *Adulthood Rites* and *Imago* are deemed the "Human Contradiction." Meanwhile, the Oankali view themselves positively. Compelled by genetics as the humans are, the Oankali's biological imperative is to "trade," a lust for new genes that, combined with the Human Contradiction and the fact of human nuclear war, justifies their rape of humanity. The Oankali are an interesting mix of embodied knowledge, as they read truth in genes, and objectivity, being granted innocence through their ability to read genes. They are almost like Humanist philosophers in their insistence that their objectivity is correct and that their imperial advance and consumption of the universe is justified. They strive to improve the universe and expand across it, while leaving behind dead worlds. This makes them a commentary on Western society, and yet they are not reduced to human-Others as with *Androids* and *Forest*. The Oankali are the anti-villains who have to rethink their configuration of guilt and innocence, and this matters for having a *response-able* relationship with humans. To explain why guilt and innocence are relevant to the Oankali, I shall first define biological determinism (or sociobiology) alongside Butler's position on sociobiology, review how that provides innocence for the Oankali, before considering the Oankali as utilitarians, and why guilt will always matter in philosophies.

### 3.2.1 Sociobiology and Butler

According to biologist E.O. Wilson, sociobiology is, "the systematic study of the biological basis of all social behavior" (qtd. in Johns 382). Implicit in this definition is the assumption that social behavior is biologically determined, that we act in accordance with nature and genetic predispositions (biological essentialism). Biological determinism is both Butler's personal philosophy and the Oankali motivation in innocence in *Dawn* and all of *Xenogenesis*.

In interviews, Butler alludes to determinist views. For instance, Butler casually accepts sexual dimorphism in motivations as biological, "Perhaps as a woman, I can't help dwelling on the importance of family and reproduction. I don't know how men feel about it" (in Potts 333).

This statement unhelpfully acknowledges differences in gender experience by mystifying the male. The potential for men to be family oriented is overshadowed by the admitted ignorance and Butler's pondering if her interest in family is solely a consequence of her two X chromosomes.

Yet Butler mixes a belief in biological determinism with choice. Her position is that although we are biologically inclined to certain courses of action, we can become self-aware. When asked about sociobiology and *Xenogenesis* in an interview with Stephen Potts, Butler asserts, "I do think we need to accept that our behavior is controlled to some extent by biological forces. Sometimes a small change in the brain, for instance--just a few cells--can completely alter the way a person or animal behaves." Butler tempers that with "Sometimes we can work around our programming if we understand it." The question Butler tries to answer in *Dawn* is, can humans move beyond biological inclination if they know their tendencies? (Potts 333)

J. Adam Johns, having published numerous pieces on Butler, finds Butler to be heavily influenced by Wilson's sociobiology. One idea of Wilson's that Johns sees represented in *Dawn* is innate human biophilia paired with innate human destructive tendencies, which Butler splits into biophilic Oankali and destructive humans to examine human destruction (385-386). Where Johns rightly sees Butler splitting with Wilson (and sociobiology in general) is Butler's pessimism (398). In the rest of *Xenogenesis*, the humans are expected to fail in their Mars colony, a second death of humanity, unless they somehow breed hierarchy out. The problem of hierarchy in the Human Contradiction is that if not tempered by intelligence, humans will wipe themselves out. In *Dawn* these two traits (intelligence and hierarchy) are tied to codes of the body. Their presentation in future generations is likely, but a tendency toward hierarchy and destruction can be overcome by being aware, according to Butler and the Oankali (Potts 333).

To explain how behavior can be biologically determined but also affected by awareness, *Dawn* points to cancer. Lilith has hereditary cancer, but the Oankali fix her genes so that she is no longer in danger. Jdahya, the first Oankali Lilith meets, explains that, had human doctors removed her cancer (which would have otherwise killed her) she probably would have been fine, so long as she had regular checkups, something Lilith already knows and yet had not had a check-up prior to nuclear war (*Dawn* 46). Jdahya then draws the line of danger and necessary awareness to intelligence and hierarchy: being aware of the problem should be enough, but the humans would need to constantly self-evaluate to stop from destroying themselves while

fulfilling their drive to hierarchy, and that may not be enough (46). Seeing the Oankali's lack of faith, Johns visualizes humans escaping their hierarchical gene through mass death in the colony, "selection is also death...humanity can now only aspire to changing through mass death" (391). For Johns, Butler's sociobiological beliefs make change through choice impossible. Butler and the Oankali argue that humans can move past their genetic coding, but that it is unlikely. This reduces humans to codes. This would dehumanize the humans in *Dawn*, were it not for the fact that the Oankali allow the humans a second chance, thus admitting their own guilt (something SF and cultural studies Sherryl Vint argues the significance of in Johns 384, which will be discussed below).

The embodied moral destitution of the humans leaves the Oankali with a conundrum: they cannot let humans continue on their destructive path, but also cannot exterminate them. The Oankali are right to find guilt in the humans, as the humans nuked their own planet, and from the Human Contradiction are liable to continue destroying their world. Thus, conveniently, the Oankali cannot morally allow the humans to procreate without Oankali genes. In *Imago*, Lilith's child Jodahs (an Oankali-Human mix) declares that to let humans procreate on their own is a death sentence (*Imago* 10-12). Once again, David L. Smith's understanding of dehumanization is applicable, "Conceiving of those whom we wish to harm as mere animals makes it permissible to do violence to them, and conceiving of them as dangerous animals renders such violence obligatory" (426). The humans are not considered animals, but they are considered incapable of thinking logically compared to the Oankali (evidenced every time the Oankali justify their actions by claiming the human's body agreed even though the human verbally disagreed), and alongside their danger, the Oankali must act. So the Oankali force human extinction through miscegenation, gaining human genes and physical abilities while erasing negative traits. The perfect colonial venture of dehumanization.

This is further justified by the Oankali genetic need. While the humans are biologically determined to fail, according to the Oankali, the Oankali themselves are biologically determined to fix and mix with them in their sensual "trade" of genes. Jdahya informs Lilith that, "We are as committed to the trade as your body is to breathing. We were overdue for it when we found you" (*Dawn* 51). This of course is complicated by the fact that not all of the Oankali join with the humans--they override their overdue biological imperative (92). Furthermore, the only characters that are ever seen to suffer from a lack of genetic partners are Lilith's Ooloi construct children of

the third novel, *Jodahs and Aaor*, as they devolve into simpler life-forms without human mates (*Imago* 179-182). For them, it is a biological necessity, their dubious seduction of humans necessary to continue living as more than a slug, but they are only two characters in a whole trilogy, and two characters that are a mix of human and Oankali, not Oankali alone. Nevertheless, the “trade” is taken as a biological need for all the Oankali, that they cannot help but follow their instincts, innocent in searching for new life to join with.

Siding with the Oankali, American literature studies Rachel G. Smith argues that the change in *Xenogenesis* is hard but ultimately good. R.G. Smith feels the pain of human passing in Butler’s work, but also sees reason for hope because of what the change from human to Oankali-Human means for all life-forms as a whole: “a logic of life” instead of “the logic of market liberalism.” She contends, “Butler’s trilogy is compelling in its capacity to portray the end of humanity as ethically and ecologically crucial, while at the same time emphasizing the pain of evolutionary usurpation.” The punctuated equilibrium event of evolution the Oankali provide is good and bad, just like everything the humans experience with the Oankali. (R.G. Smith 561)

Johns critiques R.G. Smith’s position because she ignores the biological component. R.G. Smith claims that what is negative about the humans of *Dawn* is “liberal humanism” (556). Humanism is a way of thinking, something that could be changed in other ways than an Oankali-breeding program. Johns is correct, “But Butler, like the Oankali and following Wilson, is a biological essentialist. Her project is not to critique sociobiology as liberal humanism, but to strip optimistic liberal humanism from sociobiology” (398). Butler is looking at the failure to choose, giving into natural instincts. Johns has a negative understanding, “[Butler] imagines a new kind of being, and a future, that are oriented toward death (or evolution) for the sake of life” (397-398). Butler’s philosophy is negative rather than positive or affirmative, and points to real, unavoidable human guilt and Oankali innocence.

Biological determinism is only one negative Oankali practice. In a way, the Oankali are the worst of us. While *Androids* and *Forest* have humans hidden as androids and alien-humans, the Oankali remain uniquely alien while falling into some of the same problems as Western society. Microbiologist and SF writer Joan Slonczewski terms the Ooloi, “the ultimate post-colonialists,” and that “the Oankali are not our opposites, but rather an extension of some of humanity’s most extreme tendencies” (qtd. in Nanda 777, 784). Granted immunity through

biology, the new rationality, the Oankali can perform questionable Western practices with impunity. One of these tendencies is that of consumption.

Haraway casts the Oankali in a sympathetic light when she says they “lost” their home world and origin, but the fact of the matter is the Oankali leave behind dead worlds (*Simians* 227). R.G. Smith sums the disposable restoration of nuclear-ridden Earth:

By the time the aliens awaken the few humans that they manage to save, the planet appears to have its natural vegetation and animal life, but these are merely aspects of vast, portable ecosystems that are made to resemble the old surface of the planet. The trilogy ends with the revelation that the repopulation of the earth will culminate in a catastrophic launching of the surface ecosystems into space, leaving the earth barren once more. (554)

The “portable ecosystem” is how the Oankali survive traveling from place to place, but they are not actually saving the Earth. Earth is a pit stop, soon to be barren again, and they hide that fact from the humans. They condemn the humans, but destroy the Earth just as thoroughly, perhaps more.

As previously established, R.G. Smith does not consider the Oankali way negative. Examining the difference in home being a place that “demands return” versus a portable home that “demands serial departures,” R.G. Smith observes, “Responsibility to place is therefore based on reciprocal connection and usefulness rather than a moral commitment to certain kinds of preservation.<sup>65</sup> Oankali have as deep of a connection to the organisms that comprise their environments as they do to one another”<sup>66</sup> (558). In a way, her position sounds like Haraway’s on instrumental relationships, that *response-ability* replaces a narrative of guilt or innocence as organisms grow together. Yet *response-ability* is how Haraway balances overtones of utilitarianism, which will be discussed in the following section.

Stating that *Xenogenesis* replaces “the logic of market liberalism with a logic of life,” while recognizing that this does not automatically make life better, R.G. Smith argues that pain,

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<sup>65</sup> R.G. Smith’s position seems to acknowledge the same phenomena that Peter Singer describes in “Speciesism and Moral Status.” Singer states that although there is an “official’ morality,” many people clearly consider there to be differences in worth between humans, and “But second and very important, if it is only the slippery slope argument that justifies our talk about the equal value of all human life, what is the cost of maintaining this fiction?” (579-580). He argues for a graduated morality with serious moral implications.

<sup>66</sup> This is referencing organic and life-supporting Oankali ships.

change, and the potential for hope are a good thing (561). She is not alone in seeing the potential in disruption--Mary Papke (who researches female authors) sees the Oankali march as positive:

Without a home world, the Oankali continually change in response to the life forms they meet, and they are, strictly speaking, divorced from ordinary narratives, always in the process of becoming, compulsively driven toward surviving “as an evolving species instead of specializing . . . into extinction or stagnation” (40). (84-85)

The Oankali almost sound like cyborgs with their problematic origins.<sup>67</sup> The idea is that since the Oankali do propagate life and are not holding a specific status quo, their ends are good, even if their means could be better. Their motto could be “biophilic makes right,” but this is faulty.

The Oankali are not solely capitalist on a planet-scale, with planets taking the place of over-used toys, but on a personal level as well. Nanda calls Lilith’s preparation of the humans, “a sacrificial commodity for Oankali consumption” (778). The humans’ commodities are their bodies, which SF theorist Lisa Dowdall compares to the modern neoliberal market and biotech companies, “Like a biotech company, the Oankali assert a proprietary claim over all life forms and over all future profits that might accrue” (512-513). Dowdall argues that Lilith’s experience “within the eugenics program pursued by the Oankali” is akin to slave breeding and contemporary organ markets that still enact scientific racism (509). Medicine is the site where Oankali are most likely to waive rights. They do not perform capital punishments on humans who kill (unless by accident), these humans are instead put to sleep and can be used for any medical reason (*Dawn* 259). Lilith even discovers that her body was medically examined while she was sleeping without consent, when an Ooloi cut her open to look at her cancer before fixing it (27).<sup>68</sup>

All of this is excused by the Oankali’s biologically determined biophilia, and the goods that they bring to the humans. Perhaps the Oankali overly use biology to justify their actions, perhaps they represent renewal of life through traumatic change, perhaps they consume and abuse planets and humans with their colonialism--but they provide medical gifts to the humans, and the humans are destructive. The Oankali provide good, and have good intentions. Yet Butler still requires them to be accountable, Sherryl Vint arguing:

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<sup>67</sup> Haraway addresses their origins, but does not call them cyborgs (*Simians* 227).

<sup>68</sup> Lilith was likely based on Henrietta Lacks, a black woman whose cancer cells were removed knowingly, but kept for science without her consent. Though Lacks died the same year the cells were taken, her cells live on and promulgate scientific research and breakthroughs to this day. (See Dowdall 509; Obourn 116-117).

Despite the many examples of humans reverting to predictable form in the novels, she never collapses the narrative to the genetic essentialism perspective of the Oankali. Despite an almost overwhelmingly negative portrayal of the prejudice and violence which characterize the “pure” humans, Butler refuses to endorse the eugenics perspective that it is a kindness to curtail the reproduction of such “defectives.” (qtd. in Johns 384)

Butler refuses to fully reduce humans to beings without choice. Otherwise, her Oankali would be in the right and innocent for the whole trilogy. Vint is right to point to the triumph of the Resister humans, because it means for all of Butler’s belief in biologically determined behaviors, Butler desires guilt and accountability. The body may explain behavior, but it does not excuse behavior.

### 3.2.2 *God Tricks* and Utility

Their sheer physicality makes Oankali interesting to feminist theorists. As Haraway describes with “Situated Knowledges,” the “god trick” is a myth from the idea of an objective universal truth (or universal point of view) which does not account for lived experience or embodied experience (“Situated” 581-582). Dowdall finds that the Oankali’s use of gene mixing destabilizes self/other identity, noting that, “[Patricia] Melzer therefore reads XENOGENESIS in relation to postmodern feminist theory’s perceptions of selfhood—instead of ‘fragmentation’ there is ‘multiplicity,’ and in place of a ‘scattered and incoherent self’ there are ‘fluid selves’ (16)” (517). *God tricks* are generally opposed by embodied knowledge, with *situated knowledges* (not relativism) forcing recognition that truth is not in distance or objectivity, yet the Oankali are a case where embodied knowledge is used to oppress. Following in Humanism’s footsteps, where the rational human is privileged and, as women studies theorist Wendy Pearson quips, “‘human’ is taken to mean white and male” (185-186), Oankali philosophy privileges Oankali beings and their knowledge over human beings, the inherently innocent over the inherently guilty. To further elucidate how Oankali delineates humans as wrong in similar ways to modern day society, I turn again to Obourn’s take on Lilith and disability in *Dawn* that *Dawn* and the rest of *Xenogenesis* should be read as a disability narrative, her argument being that the story is about overcoming difficulty and not erasing difference (111). Then, I look at how the Oankali justify themselves through utility, the unit of innocence in the philosophy of utilitarianism, before comparing the Oankali to the utility monster.

Obourn gives many examples of ways that both humans and Oankali are ableist in *Dawn* and the following novels. For instance, the human dislike of Oankali tentacles and Oankali-Human constructs that leads to desires for cosmetic surgery on children (Obourn 121-122). On the Oankali side, Obourn suggests that they treat Lilith (and all the humans) as disabled through confinement (first as solitary confinement, then as a matter of chemically opened doors), they do not allow the humans choice (in life, fertility), and they question the human hesitance for Ooloi medical attention (115-116, 120).<sup>69</sup> Obourn is looking at the Oankali waiving human choice, arguing, “To some extent, Lilith’s and the other humans’ weakness lies in their treatment of their situation purely as one of race-based enslavement or colonization, and their nonrecognition of or inability to deal with the paradoxes of the medical and disability models involved in their subjection and captivity.” (117). She finds both sides ableists, discriminating against socially defined disability, but the Oankali are the ones with the power.

Obourn is right to question the Oankali’s ableism, but these books would not be the same without it. Oankali guilt would not be complicated without their good intentions, their belief that they are unquestionably in the right, and their medical ability to deliver on their promises. Lilith only finds issue with the medical boons of the Oankali once she finds out the price: crossbreeding, the death of the human race (*Dawn* 31, 50-51). Yet, as Vint reminds us, Butler does not have the Oankali in the right (in Johns 384). This is because moral calculations that weigh good against evil are not inherently good themselves, as we will see with utilitarianism.

One Western theory that fits the Oankali particularly well and explains the dilemma of the humans is utilitarian theory. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* defines utilitarianism as “hedonistic act consequentialism,” with “hedonism” meaning that pain and pleasure are the ways of determining if an act is bad or good, and “act consequentialism” meaning that if the end result is an increase in overall good, then the act is good (Sinnott-Armstrong). As long as net good is gained, good being pleasure, utilitarian thought supports the action that leads to it. Utilitarianism has an allure in prompting the question, how can it be bad if it provides pleasure,

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<sup>69</sup> Obourn in particular questions the assumption of wanting to be fixed no matter the cost (120). This thesis started as an examination of issues surrounding quality of life and facing death in Nevil Shute’s *On the Beach*. Although more oriented to end of life decisions rather than living with disability, these sources address people’s rights to decide quality of life and death: Atul Gawande, Scott Shershow, Terry Pratchett, Shai Lavi, and Christopher de Bellaigue.



or an increase in good? Good and bad then become a moral calculus,<sup>70</sup> which Haraway dislikes (her position is below) but this is the moral calculus the Oankali undeniably follow. In utilitarianism, guilt becomes tied to outcome, not the action or the motivation beyond increasing utility. The Oankali perform rapacious acts of the greatest improvements that they can see for their own society, regardless of consent or distress, because it increases utility. To consider more carefully how utilitarianism ignores guilt, and suffering, we look at the Father of Utilitarianism, Jeremy Bentham, and animal rights. Bentham is the one who reframed the conversation for animal rights:<sup>71</sup> “The question is not, Can they reason?, nor Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?” (“Of the Limits of the Penal Branch of Jurisprudence,” cccix). Unlike the Cartesian Mind, Bentham validates animal suffering. However, Bentham takes a rather interesting approach on what this means for human-animal interactions.

According to Bentham, the calculation of human enjoyment versus animal suffering means that it is of utility to eat animals. Suggesting that animal death is cleaner by human hands, and that animals do not experience anxiety like humans do, Bentham proclaims, “If the being eaten were all, there is very good reason why we should be suffered to eat such of [animals] as we like to eat: we are the better for it, and they are never the worse” (“Limits” cccviii). He also suggests (on perhaps more solid grounds) that “If the being killed were all, there is very good reason why we should be suffered to kill such [animals] as molest us: we should be the worse for their living, and they are never the worse for being dead” (cccviii). Bentham also finds suffering beneficial, conditionally--animal pain must be “beneficial to mankind,” such as in medical experiments (“Letter to the Editor of the *Morning Chronicle*; March 4th, 1825”). Animal as utility for or danger to the human has purpose in death, thus offsetting moral calculations. Cruelty to animals, pain without purpose, is a different matter for Bentham, “But is there any reason why we should be suffered to torment them? Not any that I can see” (“Limits” cccviii-

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<sup>70</sup> To see the moral calculus of utilitarianism, take the Trolley problem: five people are stuck on tracks with a trolley (or train) about to kill them, but an agent can save them by pushing one person into the way of the trolley (or diverting the train to hit only one person instead). The utilitarian option is to kill the one (provided that each of the people feel pain and pleasure equally). This maximizes the amount of lives saved, in addition to the amount of happiness. However, the agent in the question actively kills one person, rather than passively letting five die--utilitarianism ties guilt and responsibility to the outcome, such that the death of one person becomes a good thing, which is problematic.

<sup>71</sup> In a footnote, of all places.

cccix).<sup>72</sup> Bentham is clear: there is no utility in cruelty. On this, Bentham and the Oankali agree, though the Oankali do not agree with killing animals for any reason and force the humans to be vegetarian.

Although the Oankali split from utilitarianism on the point of death (not even considering capital punishment for humans who murder), pleasure and utility are critical. The drive behind pleasure is such that the Oankali avoid using machinery, preferring to gene edit and “trade” with species to get their ships, transports, suspended animation pods. Lilith asks if the Oankali ever use actual machinery, to which Nikanj replies, “We do that when we have to. We...don’t like it. There’s no trade” (*Dawn* 96). Bizarre cases of animals and plants gene edited to fit the function abound, complicated by the fact that the Oankali can gene edit and therefore avoid a plant or animal becoming too sentient, all because of the Oankali drive to gain new genes. Species not subsumed into the sentient portion of Oankali become living technology that happens to have Oankali influence, while species fully consumed by the Oankali become Oankali not just by culture or philosophy but by genes. It is all for pleasure, made innocent by biophilia.

Pleasure and pain are too narrow, though, something Haraway elucidates in her theory on instrumental relationships. Haraway’s views on humanizing attitudes and *response-ability* are that recognizing suffering is good but not enough:

I would not for a minute deny the importance of the question of animals’ suffering and the criminal disregard of it throughout human orders, but I do not think that is the decisive question,... The question of suffering led Derrida [and Bentham] to the virtue of pity, and that is not a small thing. But how much more promise is in the questions, Can animals play? Or work? And even, can I learn to play with this cat? Can I, the philosopher, respond to an invitation or recognize one when it is offered? (*Species* 22)<sup>73</sup>

The Oankali, for all their ability to share pain and give good gifts, purposely ignore that humans are more than imperfect pre-Oankali bodies, ignore invitations and refutations by the human, because of utility, because of calculation. Haraway’s “Thou shalt not make killable” should be adjusted to “Thou shalt not make nonconsensually changeable,” which Obourn certainly agrees

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<sup>72</sup> In a further anthropocentric move, Bentham worries that someone who is cruel to animals is bad because that means they are probably cruel to people as well, though It should be noted that he does not have a Cartesian split. (“Letter” March 4th, 1825).

<sup>73</sup> As with “A Cyborg Manifesto,” Haraway dislikes identity-reduction to victim for animals, a view she thanks Wolfe for making her think about (*Species* 311).

with (*Species* 80; Obourn 120). The Oankali are a critique on utilitarianism, innocence through utility, and are the utility monsters warned of by Robert Nozick.

A philosopher of politics and ethics, Nozick rejects utilitarianism. For instance, Nozick refutes the utilitarian idea that eating animals leads to more animals existing and thus more life enjoyed, because it is a non sequitur (38). In a move reminiscent of Jonathan Swift, Nozick compares this argument--that it is good to kill and eat animals because more life is enjoyed--to birthing a child that you intend to kill, to argue that the good experienced by the child does not outweigh the immoral peculiarity of killing them, and that just because an animal is raised to slaughter does not make the slaughter right (38-39). Nozick argues that specific goods do not excuse meditated suffering or killing, and that the calculus of some good or utility does not absolve guilt.

This leads Nozick to the villain of utilitarianism. Nozick imagines the extreme, a creature always driven for greatest utility and that can experience greatest utility, the “utility monsters.” They are beings who necessitate sacrifice on the part of others, because the monster’s gain will always be greater, Nozick theorizing:

Utilitarian theory is embarrassed by the possibility of utility monsters who get enormously greater gains in utility from any sacrifice of others than these others lose. For, unacceptably, the theory seems to require that we all be sacrificed in the monster’s maw, in order to increase total utility. (41)

Nozick imagines humans as utilitarian monsters when our joy of eating animals outweighs any misery on their part. He also envisions a murderer who gets “ecstatic” and outweighs the victims’ utility, therefore making the murders utilitarian. The Oankali may not kill, but they are utility monsters when they ignore human *response-ability*. (41)

Utilitarianism is hardly an uncontested field. As legal philosopher Gerald J. Postema judges, “No moral concept suffers more at Bentham’s hand than the concept of justice” (148). Justice in Postema’s terms, guilt in Haraway’s.<sup>74</sup> Utilitarianism, and the Oankali who follow it, escape to innocence by proclaiming that the ends justify the means, moral calculus weighing right and wrong as though they were equivalent in weight. That the Oankali eventually allow the

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<sup>74</sup> Animal rights utilitarian Peter Singer gives a defense on act-utilitarianism in “Is Act-Utilitarianism Self-Defeating?” to demonstrate that utilitarianism will not lead to the complete degradation of society in the search of greatest utility. His main argument is that greatest utility is not served through being underhanded.

humans to settle on Mars, even though the Oankali feel this permittance to be an immoral act, is them growing into a proper posthumanist attitude, one that allows *response-ability*. Even this is predicated on biology, as they only change their minds when an Oankali-Human construct, Lilith's son Akin, argues for human freedom of choice. The Oankali are stuck in their biological thinking, their utilitarian innocence, forcing humans to comply with their ways to serve the greatest utility. That even the Oankali, with their literally embodied knowledge, can be wrong, shows that innocence through any reasoning needs to be routinely checked, like cancer or hierarchy, lest dehumanization become acceptable in the name of utility.

### 3.3 Conclusion

Haraway claims, "Butler's fiction is about resistance to the imperative to recreate the sacred image of the same (Butler, 1978)" (*Simians* 226). Remaining the same lends credence through the weight of history, which is why it is important that cyborgs as feminist women of color reclaim power by changing stories. However, reclamation does not move innocence from the oppressor to the oppressed, but recognizes that innocence creates unbalanced relationships, and never existed in the first place. Survival, not salvation, is the order of the day. (*Manifestly* 55-58)

Guilt reveals the *god tricks* in traditional thinking, allowing all humans to stand together as equally human. Even for beings such as the Oankali, morally upstanding by virtue of sociobiology and their superior gifts of life that increase utility, innocence is false. The ends do not justify the means, good cannot outweigh bad, because they are two different measurements. Utility monsters do not look for *response-ability* in their partners, seeking only the greatest good as defined by them, and this dehumanizes those deemed of less utility. Guilt and accountability ensure that unequal relationships move closer to equality by constantly searching for the next improvement, *response-ability* lying in the process rather than a moral calculation of innocence and good.

## Conclusion

Posthumanism is a theory of *response-ability* and humanization. As Neil Badmington argues, it is a theory that works through Humanism and its problems to become a more equitable philosophy (19-22). As Cary Wolfe appeals, it is about recognizing the human as another animal in a populated world (“Human, All Too Human” 571-572). We humans are part of integrated biosystems, affected by changes to the world around us. In the texts I have chosen, Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (*Androids*), Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Word for World Is Forest* (*Forest*), and Octavia E. Butler’s *Dawn*, humans have to come to terms with the Others around them. *Androids* warns against calculating attitudes, *Forest* of failing to see the human, and *Dawn* of respecting the individual and accountability. Humanizing in this case means recognizing the inherent identity and moral standing of humans and animals, not anthropomorphizing and connecting everything under the umbrella “human.” Treating humans morally and treating animals morally do not mean treating them the same. Humanizing can be easily summed up with Donna J. Haraway’s commandment: “Thou shalt not make killable” (*When Species Meet* 80).

*Androids* and *Forest* directly tackle extending empathy and moral deserving. They argue that personal humanity is proven by extending empathy and consideration to the Other, showing that we humanize ourselves when we humanize the Other. However, they are both anthropocentric in their approaches. In *Androids* the protagonist Rick Deckard begins to see electric animals as more than just circuits, yet the androids are shown as dangerous human attitudes to be eradicated. The android becomes another human face rather than a lesson in the human and the Other, and one that is ultimately killed. *Forest* also fails to imagine a non-human Other, mixing humans and animals in a way that reifies physical difference between humans and erases morally deserving animals. The lessons of *Androids* and *Forest* can be applied to human-animal (or potential human-android) relationships, but are centered on human-human relationships. Androids and animals become analogies for human-human relationships rather than examinations of their own right, tending to the anthropocentric.

*Dawn* has a more difficult task, as it actually deals with non-human (and not real) Others, the Oankali. Following a tradition of humankind being colonized by overpowering Others, Butler imagines unequal, complicated relationships that need to develop *response-ability* and respect.

The protagonist Lilith is a cyborg who must humanize herself, accepting guilt to help ensure the survival of the human species. Caught in between nuclear humans and biophilic Oankali, she chooses to live. Yet the humans of *Dawn* are implicated through the destruction of the Earth and condemned by biology to guilt and self-destruction in the Human Contradiction, legitimizing Oankali intervention. Humans are the junior partner, the subject in an instrumental relationship. The Oankali eventually treat them with respect, but at first only view humans as a problem to be fixed, a being that is missing the Oankali aspect. Similar to the androids in *Androids* and Humanism reasoning, the Oankali act as a stand-in for negative aspects of humanity, particularly colonial and consumer culture. In search of utility, the Oankali utility monster forces one way of life onto humans, dehumanizing them. Yet Butler lets the Oankali recognize their guilt. She is aware of the dangers in such erasure, and by the end of the *Xenogenesis* trilogy humans are given the right to make their own choices. The relationship between humans and Oankali becomes not just concerned about physical well-being, but respect between individuals: *response-ability*.

Except for androids and humans in *Androids*, relationships become more equal in the novels. This is not because the human expects the Other to be the same, but because difference is changed from dangerous to a fact of life. Identity theorist Walter Benn Michaels argues the importance of changing from “difference of opinion,” where truth is debated, to another way of viewing knowledge:

The alternative to difference of opinion is difference in point of view (or perspective or subject position). The point of the appeal to perspective is that it eliminates disagreement—to see things differently because we see from different perspectives (through different eyes, from different places) is to see the same thing differently but without contradiction. (653)

In short, this is Haraway’s *situated knowledges*, recognizing difference in experience without that being an attack on truth. This is an important lesson from the turbulent years in which these books were published, from the Cold War, Rights Movements, protests, and assassinations. Of course differences exist and matter, but never to dehumanize or make *killable*. We live in communities and ecosystems, always already interdependent. Difference makes life.

Having considered human-human and to some extent human-animal relationships in SF, I would like to end on a primary myth of life as we know it: the singular human. In the title of the first section of her book *When Species Meet*, where biology and posthuman theory meet,

Haraway makes a bold statement: “We have never been human” (1). In that section, Haraway celebrates that around 10% of cells in the human body contain human genes, while 90% of the cells are Other, relishing, “I am vastly outnumbered by my tiny companions” (3-4). “Human” is not a pure species, untouched and untouchable by other organisms on the Earth, but “constituted in intra- and interaction” (4). Each human is an ecosystem, interacting with greater and greater ecosystems.

Meanwhile, advances in research on Neanderthals, the favored non-human protohuman, unsettles the myth of singular human in time. Neanderthals and modern humans’ ancestors had sex, more than previously believed, more intermixing, with shared food and kisses. Brushing our teeth, we brush Neanderthal mouth bacteria, furrowing our brow we furrow the Neanderthal (Gorvett). The distribution of Neanderthal genes even affects human health, determining which HPV strain one is likely to be affected by (Gorvett) and how severe Covid-19 infections are (Mortazavi et al.). We do not have to be half-alien like Spock to be complicated life forms. We carry historical Others in our DNA, and they can shape our lives. Haraway is right: we have never been human.

We are not alone in our own bodies, not purely human. We are surrounded and inundated with life different from our conception, bacteria and Neanderthals joining our expected Others of plants and animals. Even technology is taking a stab at life, Google’s weather balloon AI using independent thinking to discover tacking in the wind for itself, one balloon setting a record travel time (Baraniuk). Not quite sentient, but not just code, AI is one lightning strike away from new life.

With these imbrications of life, it is hard to define what makes us human. Perhaps human uniqueness lies in the brain; dualism comes to the rescue, disconnecting real human essence from an alienating body: the pure human of rationalism. This human can survive uploading as it is a pattern, according to robotics and AI developer Hans Moravec, a human consciousness copied over into a technological wonder of a body (in Hayles *How We Became Posthuman* xi-xii). From a dualistic sense, it seems intuitive that the human mind would remain human during uploading onto a computer. The spirit, mind, personality or essence is completely independent of the body, able to have out-of-body experiences, be reincarnated, etc. Capturing that essence on a computer is the next step in science, as shown in the interesting movie *Chappie* (2015), bringing back the dead!

From a materialist standpoint, N. Katherine Hayles questions how Moravec could think uploading possible, and furthermore, “how could anyone think that consciousness in an entirely different medium would remain unchanged, as if it had no connection with embodiment?” (*How* 1). The human is not just a brain, not a disconnected observer. Even if the soul and body are separate, embodiment changes perception. Ironically, given the nature of this thesis, that is a lesson I learned in Sunday school: souls may continue, but to be human is a once in a lifetime experience, a physical encounter that forever changes the soul but that ends at death. It is an encounter that can never happen the same way again, a situation unique for being a mix of seemingly incompatible bits of life.

Being human is a happy accident, a biome of sensation and thought in a world of life. Being posthuman is knowing the occupied world we live in and are, and knowing “human” to be a myth, a term for a phenomena we share but cannot quite explain. We are posthuman, *response-able* beings in conversation with the world around us.



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