

Redefining the “Reality Picture” by
Reassessing Feminist Themes in the Early Cyberpunk Works of
William Gibson and Philip K. Dick

By

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ABSTRACT

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As a literary genre, Cyberpunk permits the existence of characters, plots, settings, and styles that challenge heteronormative perceptions of gender. The representations of women in *Neuromancer*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, and *A Scanner Darkly* highlight a progression towards feminist ideals. Despite this progression, critics have classified these early manifestations of the Cyberpunk genre as non-feminist works that perpetuate misogynistic themes. These critics assert that the female characters in each work are Othered and heteronormative. The previous analyses of these works fail to consider the fictional context of the female characters. In this thesis, I closely analyze the major female characters of each work, paying careful attention to the dystopian settings in which they exist. I further contextualize these characters by closely examining the interactions they have with the female and male characters that exhibit non-feminist traits. By doing so, I reassess these examples of early Cyberpunk fiction from a feminist perspective. The reassessment my analyses provide encourages future scholars to admit and consider the feminist merits of these texts, and of the Cyberpunk genre overall.

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Introduction

In contemporary culture, literature that depicts dystopian settings has become pervasive. Some look to such works as exciting stories of survival and adventure, while others see these narratives as warnings against certain paths of human progress. Science Fiction often serves as the genre through which dystopian settings are examined. For example, the film *The Terminator* offers a warning against the uncontrolled growth of technology. This raises a question: why is Science Fiction so often associated with dystopian fiction? There are other, more optimistic examples of Science Fiction (e.g. space operas), but what explains the cultural fascination with the less romanticized futures that certain works of Science Fiction provide?

The answer is that Science Fiction, as a literary genre, is a vehicle that can reflect and comment on the human condition. This quality also explains why dystopian Science Fiction literature can maintain the same amount of attention as a space opera. While the settings may not be ideal for any human (or creature), they provide insight into the human condition. Consequently, humans are drawn to these works, whether they serve as mysterious mirrors, clever commentaries, or subtle suggestions for and on contemporary society. One such genre is Cyberpunk.

The Cyberpunk genre possesses a number of staple characteristics. First, the environments of Cyberpunk novels are dystopian. The characteristics of certain Cyberpunk dystopias may differ, along with the causes for the fictional dystopian setting. But, whether an overcrowded, dangerous city that spans for hundreds of miles, or an Earth plagued by the fallout of a World War, the settings in which Cyberpunk characters find themselves are challenging and terrifying. Another staple of the Cyberpunk genre is

the presence of “megacorporations.” Megacorporations are private businesses or organizations with enormous power. The power that these organizations wield is a consequence of their tremendous wealth. Very often in Cyberpunk, those with money define strength and weakness, right and wrong, and success and failure. Additionally, these megacorporations are almost always antagonists. The villainous nature of these powerful organizations contributes to and emphasizes the dystopian setting of Cyberpunk. Finally, technology integrates and interfaces with the human body in Cyberpunk fiction. For example, a cyberspace matrix is often found in these works. Cyberspace is, essentially, a digital world into which a character may enter via some form of user interface. The presence of androids (machines made to look like and interact with humans) and cyborgs (humans augmented with machinery) further exemplifies the human-technology interface inherent in Cyberpunk. The dystopian nature of Cyberpunk arises from the uncontrolled growth of the aforementioned technology, along with the irresponsible use of technology and wealth by powerful individuals and megacorporations.

Because of Cyberpunk’s unique setting, the characters that exist in that setting have the potential to explore and test the boundaries of, what could be considered, “normal.” For instance Cyberpunk offers a setting in which heteronormativity, among other normative classifications, may be challenged. Relationships between men and women, or even the dichotomous classification of men and women, do not necessarily need to exist in Cyberpunk fiction. Bodies can be recreated, redefined, or even abandoned in the cyberspace sub-setting that exists in so many Cyberpunk stories. For those stories that don’t include a cyberspace (and even for those that do), the body may still be

redefined and recreated through the introduction of mechanical prosthetics and camouflage technology. Often, the motivation and progression of the plot of the Cyberpunk work revolve around the main characters taking advantage of these recreational (read “re-creational”) opportunities. Many critics, especially feminist critics, have noted this potential, initially citing Cyberpunk as a genre that should tear down the commonly accepted modes of heteronormativity.

However, these critics are quick to note how most manifestations of Cyberpunk fail to achieve their literary and philosophical potential. It is almost as if the critics desire a feminist *utopia*, rather than the dystopian setting of Cyberpunk literature. This is especially true of early works of Cyberpunk fiction. I have already mentioned the genre’s potential for abolishing heteronormativity. Many critics assert that, in Cyberpunk fiction, the major characters appear heteronormative, thereby perpetuating gender roles and stereotypes. This assessment of heteronormativity, along with feminist theory, informs the critics’ analyses. The feminist criticism is based on the philosophical concept of the Other, and the identification of the female characters as the Other in the early works of Cyberpunk fiction.

There are two main distinctions associated with idea of the Other. First, there is the Other as originally defined by G.W.F Hegel in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (*The Phenomenology of Mind*), published in 1807. In the context of this work, the Other is represented as a force that both confirms and challenges identity. Hegel notes that, when one recognizes another (or an Other):

Self-consciousness has before it another self-consciousness; it has come outside itself. This has a double significance. First it has lost its own self,

since it finds itself as *another* being; secondly, it has thereby sublated that other, for it does not regard the other as essentially real, but sees its own self in the other. (Hegel 88)

When one admits the presence of another self-consciousness, there is an immediate and apparently contradictory event that takes place. First, the observer's existence is lost within the Other, as the observer exists only as a different version of the Other. Therefore, the presence of the Other necessarily challenges the existence of the observer. Second, the Other is relegated to inferior status when compared to the observer. Because the observer classifies the Other as a version of himself or herself, the Other does not maintain a sense of identity. Instead, the Other is not "essentially real," and instead serves as a tool to define and validate the existence of the observer.

While feminist theory does not focus as strongly on the process of identification, the simultaneous threat and subversion of the Other remain pertinent in feminist philosophy and analysis. To feminists, women are oppressed through their perceived status as the Other. In this view, women are both coded as inherently dangerous and inferior to men. Hegel goes on to further explain the relationship between the observer and the Other:

The relation of both self-consciousnesses is in this way so constituted that they prove themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle. They must enter into this struggle, for they must bring their certainty of themselves, the certainty of being themselves, to the level of objective truth, and make this a fact both in the case of the other and in their own case as well. And it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained. (88)

Because men perceive women as the Other, they engage in the struggle described above. They must win the “life-and-death” struggle, and therefore subvert the identity of the female Other. This struggle, perpetuated throughout history, has led to the oppression of women and the perception of the female as inferior. In order to promote gender equality, feminists seek to lift the yoke of the Other from woman’s shoulders.

The second distinction of the Other is provided by Simone de Beauvoir in her text *The Second Sex*, published in 1949. In this work, which analyzes the historical contexts and perceptions of women, de Beauvoir sets forth another way in which women may be Othered (that is, relegated to the status of the Other). In the opening to a chapter, de Beauvoir notes that:

Woman appears to us as flesh... woman is akin to *nature*... and through her passivity she doles out peace and harmony: but should she refuse this role, she becomes praying mantis or ogress. In any case, she appears as the *privileged Other* through whom the subject accomplishes himself: one of the measures of man, his balance, his salvation, his adventure, and his happiness. (de Beauvoir, 261-62).

Here, de Beauvoir asserts that women have historically occupied an Othered status that does not threaten the male identity, but rather grants it. Woman is posited in a romanticized position of perceived elevation; she is nature, or harmony. This apparently elevated status is that of the privileged Other. Although this definition does, somewhat, remove the danger associated with Hegel’s Other, it still relegates women to an unfavorable position because it prevents self-definition. De Beauvoir goes on to write “[t]he *Other* is singularly defined according to the singular way the *One* chooses to posit

himself. All men assert themselves as freedom and transcendence: but they do not all give the same meaning to these words” (262). Women cannot define themselves; instead, men define them, and this subversion-through-definition provides men with transcendence and freedom. This liberating definition that men apply actually yields an opposite result for women: women become subject to enslavement and oppression through the assertions of men “as freedom and transcendence.” While each definition of the Other differs, viewing women as either Other yields them as inferior and oppressed. Again, feminists seek to remove the status of the Other from the female.

In the early works of Cyberpunk, more than any other in the genre (or even the umbrella genre of Science Fiction), characters seem to waste their potential by remaining within their heteronormative statuses and roles. The critics of these works assert that the female characters fail to achieve a sort of transcendent status; they display heteronormative behavior and characteristics, despite their fictional surroundings. Additionally, these critics highlight the Othering of the female and non-heteronormative characters in each work. This Othering necessarily relegates these characters to a subservient position, especially when compared with the male characters. Therefore, these critics render the early manifestations of the Cyberpunk genre non-feminist through their analyses.

For example, *Neuromancer* by William Gibson, published in 1984, is often considered a sort of Cyberpunk bible. In this work, the lead female character, Molly Millions, is a cyborg. That is, she has modified her body with technology, becoming part robot. While her status as a cyborg, along with her attitude, present her as a unique and “cool” female character in the book, critics of the Cyberpunk genre often view her as a

failed attempt at a strong feminist character. The failure comes from the fact that Molly still fulfills certain heteronormative stereotypes or roles, despite her setting and the deconstructive potential it possesses. Molly's non-feminist traits could be compounded by her isolated nature, as she sometimes appears as an Other when viewed solely by the male protagonist, Case.

Similarly, the early Cyberpunk works of Philip K. Dick are also considered to have failed to reach their feminist potential. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, published in 1968, the female characters of Iran Deckard and Rachael Rosen could be considered very weak. They both appear to be controlled, or subdued, by the male characters in the novel. Queer critics make special note that the novel does not demolish heteronormativity. This apparent failed potential can again be seen in Dick's other work of early Cyberpunk, *A Scanner Darkly*, published in 1977. While this particular work is not often associated with Cyberpunk (despite fitting neatly into the genre's definition), it supposedly suffers from the same simultaneous containment of potentially liberating and actually limiting qualities that the other two works of early Cyberpunk fiction possess. The way the plot is constructed in this novel allows it to be read like a detective novel with fictional technology. However, this detective quality of the narrative limits the female lead of the novel, Donna Hawthorne. Instead of being cast as a feminist character that breaks heteronormativity, Donna may be seen as a "femme fatale" in a male driven work of Science Fiction Noir. The Noir genre features a male lead, often attempting to solve a mystery. This male is usually "hardboiled," or cold and unsentimental, while another cold and unsentimental female figure, the femme fatale, serves to inhibit the male's successful solution to the mystery. This archetype, usually considered unique to

the Noir narrative, is yet another example of the Othering of the female. Because Donna occupies this position, some argue that she fails to meet her feminist potential, as the femme fatale archetype cannot be equal to the male characters, and any agency that the femme fatale character is granted is given through nefarious Othering forces.

The above perspectives (and the critics who champion and assert these perspectives) may all be supported by the early Cyberpunk texts, to a degree. However, the idea that Cyberpunk fails to achieve its potential as feminist literature precludes a number of important notions. First, the women in each novel must be assessed within the context of their fictional environment. The settings where Cyberpunk narratives take place may not actually facilitate the presence of feminist characters. That is, the dystopian settings of Cyberpunk literature do not necessarily serve as an ideal environment in which female characters may break gender boundaries and challenge heteronormativity, and they do not represent feminist utopias. Indeed, these settings often *force* the women of the novels to behave and exist within a heteronormative and male dominated environment. These women must be compared with the other characters present in each work, and not assessed as standalone entities, as they have been thus far. The previous analyses that examine the female characters independently of their fictional context necessarily inhibit a holistic analysis of each text. And, while certain Cyberpunk females may appear more heteronormative or Othered than the characters found in other works of Science Fiction, they are certainly poignant examples of gender equality and female agency, especially when compared to the characters they interact with.

With this in mind, I argue that it is imperative to reexamine these early works of Cyberpunk fiction, paying careful attention to the context in which the major female

characters exist. Such an analysis would recover the previously understudied progressive and feminist qualities of the texts. These qualities include the championing of gender equality, the ability and agency of the female, and the liberation of women from male definition. Many of the characters in each work possess such characteristics or themes. Some challenge heteronormativity through their characterization and interactions. Others, through displays of violence, demonstrate a level of physical agency usually reserved for male characters. Still others relay a level of complexity that reveals that women escape male definition. All of these demonstrations, when presented in a positive light, support the feminist ideals of equality and acceptance.

In this paper, I perform such a reexamination. These texts are particularly important to reevaluate from a feminist perspective for a number of reasons. First, I have spoken about the appeal of the Science Fiction genre. If feminist ideas can be recognized and accepted in such a popular genre, they have a better chance of reaching global audiences. Additionally, the reclamation of these Science Fiction texts from a feminist perspective may encourage the analysis of other texts, or even inspire new writers to approach the genre from a feminist view point. These early works of Cyberpunk, in particular, must be reconsidered. Cyberpunk, from its inception to present day, remains a popular subgenre of Science Fiction. Additionally, the themes found in Cyberpunk are extremely relevant to modern society. Cyberspace is not that different from the internet, and megacorporations seem less fictional and more real every day. Some may even view contemporary society as a dystopia. If feminist qualities can be found and championed in these close-to-reality works of fiction, perhaps they can be more easily accepted in actual society.

The essence of my analyses of these works relies heavily on considering the fictional context in which the female characters exist. In addition to their context, I also analyze the female characters in relation to the feminist theories described earlier. While I discuss the heteronormative qualities (or lack thereof) of the female characters, I more intensely consider each character's status as an Other. In order to emphasize how perception contributes to the establishment of the Other, I will also analyze the characters' gazes and how they interact. In *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir highlights the power and defining capability of the gaze: "Even if she [a female Other] accepted this authority in her mind, she is panic-stricken the moment she must concretely submit to it. She first of all fears this gaze that engulfs her" (392). This passage reveals that the gaze acts as one of the strongest mediums through which authority, identity, and Otherness are established. Therefore, an analysis of the fictional gazes each female character participates in provides an accurate assessment of her Othered quality.

My analyses will not, however, establish that the female characters in early Cyberpunk literature are entirely, wholly, or ideally feminist. This means that: while they promote certain feminist ideals (e.g. gender equality), the female characters may also propagate misogynistic, or heteronormative, themes. For instance, I do not fully remove the Other status that I identify in many of the female characters. This status is distinctly non-feminist, as it separates the female characters from the male observers, inhibiting their equality. However, I do justify, or forgive, this Othering through my analyses. Therefore, I rescue the characters from being classified as entirely non-feminist. Thus, the presence of feminist characteristics in these fictional females must be acknowledged, and can redefine each work as a progressive text.

I begin in Chapter 1 with William Gibson's *Neuromancer*. It is, perhaps, the most popular text I work with, and has been subject to the most feminist criticism out of all the works I analyze. By comparing the lead female character, Molly Millions, with other male and female characters, I highlight her agency and strength. I then move on to *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick in Chapter 2. This work has had less feminist criticism applied to it than *Neuromancer*. Instead, queer critics have noted what they consider failures in the characters of the novel; these characters are not "queer enough" for the queer critics. I respond to these criticisms as well, as the goals and ideals of queer theorists and feminist theorists are often synonymous. Finally, in Chapter 3, I conclude with Dick's *A Scanner Darkly*. Very few analyses have been performed on this work, especially from a feminist perspective. However, I intend to highlight how parts of the text may be read as work of Noir fiction (a non-feminist genre), while other parts are distinctly feminist. This complexity supports the feminist liberation the female lead from male definition.

The analyses that follow recover a number of the feminist qualities that were previously ignored or unnoticed in the Cyberpunk texts. I accept that these analyses will not yield the characters as ideally feminist characters, nor will the novels themselves become manifestations of feminist ideology. However, noting the inherent qualities of each character, how these qualities relate to feminism, and (consequently) how these early works of Cyberpunk literature act as indicators of progress towards feminist ideals will reevaluate these works from a critically feminist perspective. This reevaluation will, hopefully, allow critics and fans of the genre to better understand and accept the feminist values I highlight in my analyses. Along with the popularization of feminism, I hope that

the feminist themes recovered by my analyses will be integrated into the guidance often associated with dystopian literature and the Cyberpunk genre.

Chapter One: Molly Is a Cyberpunk

William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) is often considered the definitive work of the Cyberpunk genre. In an article that both introduces and romanticizes the Cyberpunk genre, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay goes so far as to say that:

My suspicion is that most of the literary cyberpunks bask in the light of one major writer who is original and gifted enough to make the whole movement seem original and gifted. That figure is William Gibson, whose first novel, *Neuromancer*, is to my mind one of the most interesting books of the postmodern age. (Csicsery-Ronay, 229)

Csicsery-Ronay's assessment implies the creative and imaginative potential of the genre, and this potential becomes classified as feminist potential by feminist scholars. Csicsery-Ronay also seems fixated on the work of William Gibson. Indeed, Gibson exemplifies the foundations of Cyberpunk literature in *Neuromancer*: a dystopian future, megacorporations, cyborgs, a digital matrix, economic hardship, and lead characters with questionable morals may all be found in the pages of his work. And, while I disagree with Csicsery-Ronay's implied assertion that the rest of the (Cyberpunk) literary movement is, in fact, *not* original and/or gifted, I agree that the critical interest inspired by *Neuromancer* on both a personal and literary scale is pronounced.

In order to reassess *Neuromancer* from a feminist perspective, I compare two of the prominent female characters in the novel: Linda Lee and Molly Millions. I focus my analysis on a thematic progression that takes place in the first few chapters of the novel. Before I explain this progression, however, I must explain certain events that occurred (in *Neuromancer*'s fictional universe) before the novel takes place. The protagonist, Case, was a professional hacker before the novel's start. In Gibson's Cyberpunk world, hacking

involves interfacing with a fictional, sensory universe called the matrix: “He’d [Case] operated on an almost permanent adrenaline high, a byproduct of youth and proficiency, jacked into a custom cyberspace deck that projected his disembodied consciousness into the consensual hallucination that was the matrix” (Gibson 5). Case had been one of the best; he had earned the tongue-and-cheek term of “console cowboy,” and made money by stealing trade secrets from megacorporations for other megacorporations (5).

Unfortunately, Case committed an almost tragic mistake. He allowed his hubris to dictate his actions, and attempted to steal from one of his employers. They found out, and “[t]hey damaged his nervous system with a wartime Russian mycotoxin” (6). This toxin destroyed Case’s nervous system in minute and subtle ways. However, because interfacing with the matrix requires the user to be precise and fully integrated with the hallucination, Case lost his abilities as a hacker. This devastated him: “For Case, who’d lived for the bodiless exultation of cyberspace, it was the Fall” (6).

This linguistic comparison recalls Lucifer’s fall from Heaven, and reveals to the reader just how dramatically Case views his (apparent) fate early in the novel. To Case, the matrix is Heaven. When he was able to interface with the cyberspace described in Gibson’s novel, Case had been an angel. By specifically referencing the Fall, Case makes it clear that his loss of skill did not simply cast him out of paradise; he believes himself to be in Hell early on in the novel. He suffers, not only because of the hardships he faces, but because he remembers the joy associated with interfacing with the matrix. Whereas Case had once been a genius hacker, traversing the matrix like an expert navigator, he is now a lowly drug dealer, trying to live off of the combined high of weak adrenaline and amphetamines.

Case's Fall establishes the character's situation at the beginning of the novel, and informs the early stages of the thematic progression that take place early in the novel. The first two chapters of *Neuromancer* reveal Case's transition from a character in a Cyberpunk world to a cyberpunk (a character that successfully represents or interacts with at least one of the staples of the Cyberpunk genre). Case has fallen from his previous life before the novel begins and, consequently, he cannot interface with the cyberspace matrix he previously navigated as a cyberpunk. It is not until Case ascends to his former status as a hacker in the second chapter of the novel that he regains his status as a cyberpunk. This evolution is reflected in Case's treatment and perception of women. First, Case is deeply involved with the character Linda Lee. Then, Case is introduced to Molly, and Linda Lee becomes an afterthought. Finally, Linda Lee is killed, and Case fully accepts Molly into his life. Because these events and shifts coincide with Case's re-ascendance to cyberpunk status, a status which implies facility and success within the Cyberpunk environment of *Neuromancer*, Case's eventual perception of women becomes associated with this positive success. The dynamic quality of Case's relationships with these women actually shows a thematic progression from a stereotypically misogynist viewpoint to a more feminist stance.

I do not mean to suggest that this yields *Neuromancer* a totally feminist novel. There are numerous ideals and practices perpetuated by the characters in the novel that suggest otherwise. However, the work is indicative of *progress*. While some feminist critics condemn *Neuromancer* as a sort of failed experiment, I seek to recover the feminist themes lost in their analyses. Examining the women of the novel, how they relate to one another, how they relate to the protagonist, and how their environment

informs their actions results in such a recovery. The analysis of the novel's early thematic progressions shows that *Neuromancer*, while not being ideally feminist, indicates a progression towards feminism through its narrative. The feminist ideals present in the work include the destruction of heteronormative gender assignments and roles and the presence of physical, female agency.

Most of the feminist critics that have analyzed *Neuromancer* in the past focused their analysis solely on the character Molly Millions. While she is the lead female character of the novel, and therefore must be analyzed in order to understand the feminist qualities of the work, other female characters must be considered as well, in order to show how they influence and inform Molly Millions' character through comparison. Lauraine Leblanc, a critic who focuses only on Molly Millions, claims "It is this breakdown of categories through the use of technology which is at the root of cyberpunk authors' rethinking of gender. In these fictions, gender dichotomies are overcome through the prevalence and use of technology..." (Leblanc). Technology does break down the barriers of gender in Cyberpunk. However, the attitudes of the female characters (usually informed by their Cyberpunk setting), along with the language Gibson uses to describe them play a large part in the transcendence of gender dichotomies that occur within the work. In order to better understand these differing attitudes, word choices, and characterizations, I begin my analysis of the female characters that are introduced in the first chapter, *before* Molly Millions.

In the first chapter of *Neuromancer*, the reader is introduced to the wounded version of Case that, later in the novel, eventually recovers and evolves. Initially, Case has lost his cyberpunk status, and he views women through a misogynist's lens. The

novel opens with the male protagonist sitting in a bar called the Chatsubo. A secondary female character is introduced on the first page of the novel: “Case found a place at the bar, between the unlikely tan on one of Lonny Zone’s whores and the crisp naval uniform of a tall African whose cheekbones were ridged with precise rows of tribal scars” (Gibson 3). This first introduction of a female character in Gibson’s novel does not seem promising. First, Case refers to the woman as a “whore,” a derogatory term that is rarely used to elevate a woman’s position. So, early on in the novel, a misogynistic tone is established. This early misogyny is reinforced by the fact that the whore is one of “Lonny Zone’s.” Lonny *owns* this woman, as shown by the use of the possessive. And, though the name “Lonny” is somewhat androgynous, the reader later learns that he is a male character. The first page of *Neuromancer* indicates that women will play an important role in the novel; Gibson makes sure to include at least one female character (albeit a secondary character) on the first page of his work. The initial characterization of this female character immediately relays a sense of misogyny. However, the shadows of Case’s perceptual evolution are visible, even on this first page.

While the woman is described as an object that is possessed, the description of her physical relation to Case and the African foreshadows Case’s eventual, evolved perception of women. Gibson is careful to note that “Case found a place at the bar...” (3). This language relays the sense that Case is lost, a theme that is perpetuated throughout the early parts of Gibson’s novel. Case, because he suffered the effects of the mycotoxins, no longer possesses his expert ability interface with the matrix. Consequently, he finds himself out of place at the beginning of *Neuromancer*. For Case, “finding a place” does not indicate the successful location of comfort or home. He is merely trying to insert

himself into roles, situations, and places that he knows cannot equal the experience he had as a “console cowboy.” Consequently, his place next to the prostitute does not indicate a permanent, established misogyny. Instead, Case’s discomfort as a character allows the reader to feel discomfort in Case’s choice. He sits next to the prostitute because he needs a place to sit, not because he supports the misogynistic business of pimping.

The description of the African accentuates Case’s displacement. The African man’s appearance is surprising enough for Case to take notice, especially of the man’s tribal scars. And, while Gibson does not provide the reader with a physical description of Case until later in the novel, I feel that I am safe in assuming that most readers would not physically identify with the man’s scars. These scars also serve to mark the opening of the novel as the early phase of a transition period by presenting a displaced, historical relic in a futuristic city. Despite the Cyberpunk setting, Case finds himself next to a man sporting body decoration that mimics the decoration of the characters’ (possible) tribal ancestors. Anachronisms are prevalent in Cyberpunk literature, and this one reveals that Case is just beginning his transition.

This dichotomy of misogyny and foreshadowed progress is also present in Case’s verbal exchange with the prostitute. After he makes fun of the bar’s owner, Ratz, the woman laughs in Case’s ear. He responds angrily after, “[t]he whore’s giggle went up an octave. ‘Isn’t you either, sister. So vanish, okay? Zone, he’s a close personal friend of mine’” (4). The distinctly non-feminist values of female ownership and condescension are obvious in this exchange. Case refers to the prostitute’s laugh as “The whore’s giggle” (4). The repeated use of the word “whore” reinforces the subjugation previously

established and, by referring to the laugh as a giggle, Case reveals that he perceives the woman as childlike. This perception is reemphasized when he mentions his relationship with Lonny Zone. Case is almost telling a child to run along while the big boys (Case and Ratz) have an actual conversation. If she doesn't, Case will tell her pimp/daddy Lonny Zone and she'll get in trouble. Finally, Case chooses to use the word "vanish," instead of "leave." The protagonist doesn't just want the prostitute out of his sight; he wants her out of his reality.

Despite all these counts against viewing Case as a feminist character, Gibson still indicates the groundwork for Case's feminist evolution. For example, in this passage, the use of the word "sister" shows Case referring to the woman without asking for her name, thereby inhibiting the woman's ability to self-define. However, this word also contributes a small but undeniable amount of linguistic equation to the relationship between Case and the prostitute. The use of the sibling moniker also reinforces Case's perception of the woman as a child, but it at least equates the two in a familial setting. Gibson's inclusion of the word "sister" does not immediately yield Case as a character striding towards feminism, nor does it forgive Case of the misogyny he has demonstrated thus far. However, it at least allows the reader to accept (and perhaps anticipate) the possibility of the evolution of Case's perception of women. Even Lonny Zone's description allows the reader to anticipate the failure associated with the misogynistic tone established early on in the novel: "Lonny Zone, the bar's resident pimp, was observing with glazed fatherly interest as one of his girls went to work on a young sailor. Zone was addicted to a brand of hypnotic the Japanese called Cloud Dancers" (16). The pimp's condescending fatherly gaze is "glazed," relaying a lack of clarity to the reader. Gibson's immediate mention of

Lonny Zone's addiction forces the reader to question the character's validity as a whole. Clearly, this pimp character is not representative of truth or clarity in Gibson's work.

After Case's initial interaction with this secondary female character, Ratz introduces the reader to a more prominent woman in Case's life: Linda Lee. Case's relationship with the drug-addicted Linda Lee is presented in the early part of the novel, with his non-cyberpunk persona, and so the reader may view Linda Lee as the female version of the Fallen Case. Consequently, the relationship between Case and Linda Lee reflects Case's initial misogyny. Ratz claims, "I saw your girl last night" (5). Again, the language Gibson employs indicates that women are objects to be possessed. Case responds negatively, implying to Ratz that Linda Lee is not his friend/girlfriend/woman.

As Case waits to meet Linda Lee later in the chapter, the reader is also introduced to the protagonist's hate for the female character: "And that was the part of him, smug in its expectation of death, that most hated Linda Lee" (7-8). Case, in this scene, considers his life after the Fall. He realizes that the drug dealing, drug taking life he lives is a cheap replacement for the exultation provided by his connection with the matrix. Additionally, he knows that he cannot keep up his current existence forever. His methods of dealing are fast and loose, and Case realizes that this unstable method of doing "biz" will probably result in his death. The part of Case that recognizes this instability is the part of Case that most clearly perceives reality; this is the part that understands that Case is removed from his previous, Cyberpunk life. Consequently, this part of Case hates Linda Lee, as the happiness that Linda Lee brings Case is fleeting and based in fantasy (not unlike the high provided by the risks and drugs Case takes). Case's admission relegates Linda Lee's character to unfavorable positions from a feminist standpoint. First, she is not "real," she

represents the illusion of joy, but not the reality. She is, therefore, representative of Simone de Beauvoir's privileged Other. She is granted favorability because of her status as a desired, unrealistic being, and part of Case wants to possess her because she is so fully removed from his sad reality. However, because the protagonist is aware of the futility of his current lifestyle, he becomes frustrated with the lack of verisimilitude associated with a relationship with Linda Lee. She, or rather the happiness that she could provide, is unattainable. Linda Lee becomes both a privileged Other and the subject of the male protagonist's hatred. These two roles are distinctly non-feminist. However, Linda Lee serves as a reminder of Case's eventual progression. His relationship with Linda Lee marks his misogynistic start; he is disconnected from the Cyberpunk life he once lived, and the main female in his life is Linda Lee.

When Case describes how he met Linda Lee, the reader can more clearly associate this female character with Case's wounded, non-cyberpunk persona. He recalls their first meeting and notes that "...her [Linda Lee's] face [was] bathed in restless laser light, [her] features reduced to a code" (8). The way Case describes Linda Lee highlights his desire to reconnect with the matrix, revealing that a relationship with Linda Lee is not the relationship that Case truly desires. The protagonist desires intimacy with cyberspace; he wants to project and elevate himself to a plane that, he believes, is superior. But, because of his wounded state, Case believes that the only way he can assert his freedom and transcendence is through the possession of Linda Lee. Despite the light show occurring on Linda Lee's face, Case is aware that she is still an agent of the physical and a representative of the fleshy, meaty body he feels trapped in. Therefore, she is "reduced" to code. Case goes on to recall that he "...was riding high that night, with a

brick of Wage's ketamine on its way to Yokohama and the money already in his pocket" (8). This description reveals a number of important details that inform the reader of Case's situation. First, Case's futile efforts to maintain a physical high are readdressed. In this memory, he is on drugs, and the specific mention of "...the money already [being] in his pocket" suggests that he was acting rashly with his supplies and his funds (8). This high, as previously mentioned, is not the feeling that Case actually desires. For Case, successful integration with the matrix is the perfect feeling; drugs and risks are a cheap imitation. After the Fall, Case was cast out of the Heaven of Cyberpunk. His relationship with Linda Lee occurs outside of this Heaven. Therefore, the misogyny he perpetuates against Linda Lee is not the misogyny of a Cyberpunk character, but the misogyny of a character that has fallen from Cyberpunk grace.

Case's language highlights the Fallen quality of his relationship with Linda Lee. As the former console cowboy awaits her arrival at a bar, the reader can see that he is high on drugs: "Alone at a table in the Jarre de Thé, with the octagon coming on, pinheads of sweat starting from his palms, suddenly aware of each tingling hair on his arms and chest..." (7). The use of drugs not only associates Linda Lee with the Fallen version of Case, it also suggests that Case's judgment is impaired. Thus, at the beginning of the novel, Case is not the best version of himself; he improves later in the novel. Until this improvement, however, both the reader and Case himself are acutely aware of his shortcomings. Case's comments regarding his lust exemplify this awareness. First, the protagonist mostly limits his description of Linda Lee's character to the physical realm. Other than a brief mention of how "...she'd stood with him in the midnight clatter of a pachinko parlor and held his hand like a child," (hardly a ringing endorsement of Linda

Lee), Case only communicates his relationship through physical needs. First, he mentions Linda Lee's addiction: "He'd watched her personality fragment, calving like an iceberg, splinters drifting away, and finally he'd seen the raw need, the hungry armature of addiction" (8). In this passage, Case assigns all of Linda Lee's personality to the physical signifiers of her addiction; he focuses only on her "...track[ing] the next hit with a concentration that reminded him of the mantises they sold in stalls along Shiga..." (8). To Case, Linda Lee is an animal, recalling de Beauvoir's association of the privileged Other with nature. Linda Lee is only capable of fulfilling her addiction, and the use of the words "fragment" and "splinters" indicates that Case's perception of Linda Lee was actually diminishing. Instead of relaying a sense of concern, or attempting to nurture his female friend, Case can only bitterly observe her downfall. His body language reflects his disappointment: "He stared at the black ring of grounds in his empty cup" (8).

Shortly thereafter, the reader learns that Case is not just disappointed in Linda Lee; he is also disappointed in himself. After limiting Linda Lee's entire characterization to her physical desires, Case can only recall his sexual desire for Linda Lee: "He remembered the smell of her skin in the overheated darkness of a coffin near the port, her fingers locked across the small of his back" (9). Admittedly, these recollections seem endearing and intimate. However, the protagonist, again, limits his experience with Linda Lee to the physical, and this experience does not reflect a feminist relationship. Their sexual relationship is like the drugs they both ingest. It is unfulfilling and purely physical, and the physicality limits Linda Lee's character development. This passage also further associates Linda Lee with the version of Case that has been barred from his Cyberpunk paradise. Although, in this context, the use of the word "coffin" means a very small

bed/apartment, the connotation with death cannot be ignored. Additionally, the mention that the coffin was “overheated” reminds the reader that Case feels as though he is in a hellish situation. Finally, the fact that Linda Lee’s fingers were “...locked across the small of his back” suggests that Case is trapped. Case’s purely sexual and misogynistic relationship with Linda Lee is not something he desires, nor does Gibson paint the relationship as ideal. Case is trapped, upset, and loathing. His misogynistic actions and relationships are associated with his wounded existence; he is out of place in his Cyberpunk setting, and his perception of women reflects this uncomfortable displacement.

Case is aware of his situation, though he does not feel he is able to escape his circumstances at the beginning of the novel. After remembering his sexual experiences with Linda Lee, Case thinks to himself, “All the meat...and all it wants” (9). The tone of this sentence is bitter and sarcastic. Case refers to his body as “meat,” reminding the reader of his desire to experience the bodiless bliss of interfacing with the matrix. The bitterness of Case’s thoughts may also indicate self-loathing. While part of him hates Linda Lee, the tone that permeates the first chapter of the novel relays a sense of general self-criticism. He hates his situation, and the man he has become. Again, this does not forgive Case’s treatment or perception of Linda Lee. However, it does allow the reader to readily accept the potential for an evolution towards feminist perspectives.

After leaving Linda Lee, Case ventures out into the night of Chiba City. At this point, Gibson expands his focus beyond Case and Linda Lee’s relationship. In this part of the chapter, the reader is exposed to the Cyberpunk world that exists *around* Case, but Case has not yet been reestablished as a cyberpunk. However, the examination of this setting points towards feminist ideals. After his encounter with Linda Lee, Case believes

that Wage (a man he does “biz” with) wants to kill him. He wanders the streets for a while, and comes across chrome throwing stars in a window: “They caught the street’s neon and twisted it, and it came to Case that these were the stars under which he voyaged, his destiny spelled out in a constellation of cheap chrome” (12). The aesthetics presented in this description are extremely Cyberpunk. They are neon, twisted, chrome, and (literally) edgy, reflecting the technological and dystopian themes found in the genre. Case’s thoughts reflect his situation at the beginning of the novel, as he voyages *under* these stars, yet is still barred from the Cyberpunk paradise they represent.

Case then makes the decision to visit an information broker, another manifestation of the Cyberpunk genre: “Julie...Time to see old Julie. He’ll know” (12). Immediately, we see that the Cyberpunk world that Gibson presents to both Case and the reader is more closely associated with feminism than Case’s current existence. “Julie” is almost always a woman’s name. However, in *Neuromancer*, Julie is the name of a male character. Gibson, by naming his characters in a non-heteronormative way, dissociates his Cyberpunk world from heteronormativity. This dissociation is strengthened by Case’s subsequent description of Julie: “Julius Deane was one hundred and thirty-five years old, his metabolism assiduously warped by a weekly fortune in serums and hormones...Sexless and inhumanly patient, his primary gratification seemed to lie in his devotion to esoteric forms of tailor-worship” (12). First, Julie’s association with Cyberpunk is magnified by his substance-granted longevity. In Cyberpunk fiction, the modification of the human body through technology (chemical or otherwise) is prevalent. The drug-manipulated metabolism that keeps Julie alive casts Julie as a sort of cyborg; his otherwise “natural” bodily processes have been manipulated through technology.

Second, Julie clearly exists beyond gender. He is “sexless,” and it seems as though his main form of experiencing pleasure (sexual or otherwise) is through the purchase of clothing. The phrase “tailor-worship” may remind the reader of various sexual fetishes.

So, Julie’s bodily modifications clearly denote him as a Cyberpunk character, and his lack of sexuality, along with his moniker, challenge and deconstruct heteronormativity. Although his morals and motives may be questionable, Julie wields informational power that the protagonist needs. This position of power allies agency with non-heteronormativity, an alliance that becomes even stronger later in *Neuromancer*. The inclusion of this character in Gibson’s work makes it clear that heteronormative gender roles do not equate power or influence in a Cyberpunk setting. Case’s first stop on his tour of the Cyberpunk Chiba city allows the reader to first experience the challenging, feminist-allied themes that become more prevalent as the novel progresses.

Case makes another few stops on his tour of Chiba City, the first of which indicates that gender does not determine the ownership of physically violent agency. After realizing he has a tail, Case decides he needs a weapon to defend himself. First, he tries to find a gun. Unfortunately, he does not have enough money to rent one from a young boy named Shin (14). Instead, he ventures to another shop, this one run by a woman: “The Japanese woman behind the terminal looked like she had a few years on old Deane, none of them with the benefit of science” (15). This woman, though scientifically unaltered, is associated with Julie in Case’s mind. Consequently, she is also associated with the Cyberpunk realm that Case is visiting. Case asks to buy a weapon, and after he refuses to buy knives, the old woman brings him a type of weapon called a cobra. The descriptions of both the weapon and the case are important: “The lid was

yellow cardboard, stamped with a crude image of a coiled cobra with a swollen hood... She held the thing up for him to examine, a dull steel tube with a leather thong at one end and a small bronze pyramid at the other” (15). Here, a woman gives Case violent weapons, and the imagery in this section has strong sexual undertones. The weapon itself may be easily seen as a phallic symbol. In this sense, the old Japanese woman *allows* a man to use the violent power of a phallus. The gender of each character does not dictate where the (aggressive/sexual) power lies. The genderless ambiguity of violent power is also expressed by the design on the case of the weapon. It is a “...coiled cobra with a swollen hood” (15). Again, a snake may be viewed as a phallic symbol. However, the inclusion of the phrase “swollen hood” also suggests the presence of a yonic symbol. In fact, it seems as though the female aspect of the cobra is more active in this line than the others; it is swollen, which adds sexual energy to the passage. The cobra is coiled, so the phallus the snake represents is not erect. Therefore, the sexual energy associated with the image may be attributed to the female genitalia.

This entire scene confuses the assignments of gender, power, and agency, revealing that violent power is not associated with a particular gender in Gibson’s Cyberpunk world. The confusion is increased as the novel continues, as Case never actually uses the cobra. At one point, he draws it, “...the spring steel shaft amplifying his pulse” (18). Again, the phallic imagery is reinforced, despite the fact that Case never actually uses it. The reader is unable to precisely identify a gendered progenitor of the violent force/weapon. Previously, I suggested that financial influence was un-gendered. This passage reveals that aggressive destruction, a much more personal and visceral force, is also un-gendered. Together, these examples indicate that agency over one’s life is not

reserved for the male characters of the novel. This thematic truth is best seen in the cyborg character, Molly Millions.

Molly Millions' introduction at the end of the first chapter of *Neuromancer* nicely sums up the differences between Case's fallen existence and the cyberpunk role he wishes to occupy. I mentioned that Case, at one point, believes his previous tail to be a hit man sent by Wage. However, Case learns that Wage has no actual issue with him, and the fabrication originally came from Linda Lee (22-23). It turns out that Molly Millions was tailing the protagonist for her own purposes. When Case makes it back to his cheap motel room, he finds Molly waiting for him: "She had her knees up, resting her wrists on them; the pepperbox muzzle of a flechette pistol emerged from her hands" (24). Immediately, Molly is a violent force, reminding the reader that violent force does not necessarily belong to male characters.

Molly's characterization is also distinctly different from the other women that have been in *Neuromancer* thus far, particularly Linda Lee. In fact, Molly and Linda Lee are foil characters. Despite their foil nature, feminist critics have taken Molly Millions to be representative of all the women in the novel. Instead of comparing Molly with the females that fictionally surround her, these critics choose to compare her to female characters from other, almost utopian, works of Science Fiction. For instance, feminist Nicola Nixon attempts to undermine the strength of Molly's character by comparing her to another female lead in a previous work of Science Fiction. She writes:

Russ's dauntingly powerful (and emasculating) Jael in *The Female Man*, for example, who describes matter-of-factly how her cybernetic boy-toy, Davy, can be 'turned off or on' as she desires, and how her nails and teeth

have been cybernetically enhanced for use as lethal weapons against men, is effectively transformed into Molly...Explicit reworkings of an antecedent female character [Jael], Molly... [is] effectively depoliticized and sapped of any revolutionary energy. (Nixon 222)

Yes, Molly's motivations in *Neuromancer* are not politically driven. And, while I am unfamiliar with the "antecedent female character" Nixon refers to, I assume that this character does display more overt political themes. However, to suggest that Molly is sapped of energy is inaccurate, especially considering that Molly possesses the violent potential implied by Nixon's description of Jael's teeth and nails. Perhaps Molly's energy is not anti-male, and Case cannot be turned on or off at Molly's will (unlike Davy, whose description actually seems to indicate male weakness, rather than gender equality), but when compared to the other female characters in *Neuromancer*, Molly appears active, energetic (both physically and figuratively), and progressive. Linda Lee, whose physical weakness and position as the privileged Other, serves as a foil to Molly's methods of aggressive engagement. As if to signal the fact that she represents a pointedly different type of female character, Molly comments, "[Linda's] gone. Took your [Case's] Hitachi. Real nervous kid" (Gibson 24). Linda Lee is no longer in Case's life, and the drug abuse Linda Lee engaged in yields her more addled and jumpy than the calm Molly Millions.

While the following chapter highlights the introduction and acceptance of feminist themes and perceptions into Case's life, the first only acknowledges the potential for these moves. This is true even at the end of the first chapter. The introduction of Molly Millions, while presenting the reader with an alternative female character in the novel, does not immediately absolve the novel of the non-feminist themes already

established in the narrative. She also perpetuates the possession of female characters when she asks Case, “That your girl? Linda?” (24). Most damning, however, is her initial presentation as an Other. Whereas Linda Lee occupied the space of the privileged Other, Molly’s Otherness is much more intimidating to Case, and is therefore more closely associated with the Hegelian Other. He describes her: “She wore mirrored glasses. Her clothes were black...” (24). Molly’s black clothing relays a sense of mystery, and her mirrored glasses inhibit the development of a relational gaze with Case, as Case cannot know if Molly makes eye contact with him behind her mirrored lenses. Molly Million’s Otherness is also accentuated by the fact that the mirrored glass is actually “...surgically inset, sealing her sockets. The silver lenses seemed to grow from smooth pale skin above her cheekbones, framed by dark hair cut in a rough shag” (24). This technological modification clearly aligns Molly Millions with the Cyberpunk genre; she is a cyborg. Because Case has not yet regained his status as a cyberpunk, he cannot yet understand her at this point in the novel; she is an Other.

Molly Millions’ danger and mysteriousness are reinforced by her threatening speech and actions. After calming a nervous Case down, Molly reneges: “’Cept I do hurt people sometimes, Case. I guess it’s just the way I’m wired” (25). The first part of this quotation disrupts the ease Molly’s earlier words attempted to establish, while the second comment, about her wiring, suggests that she cannot control her own actions. She may possess the violent and aggressive force so often associated with males but, just as Case has not yet reclaimed his cyberpunk-self, Molly does not yet possess the agency to wield her violent power at this point in the novel.

At this point in the novel, Molly Millions is a mystery to Case. However, this ambiguity allows Case to enter a transitional period. Before the end of this chapter, he had been restricted to his earlier conception of reality. Even Molly comments, “I think you screwed up Case. I showed up and you just fit me right into your reality picture” (24). Case’s “reality picture” is inaccurate, as he “screwed up” by assuming Molly was working for Wage. Case is on the brink of reentering and reintegrating with a Cyberpunk life. Molly’s ambiguity as a character at the end of the first chapter serves to highlight the uncertainty of that future. However, her characterization does not preclude the possibility of progressing towards feminist ideals. Indeed, the following chapter indicates such a progression towards these ideals.

The second chapter of *Neuromancer* reveals Case’s growing comprehension, and eventual acceptance, of the Cyberpunk life that he is offered. This comprehension and acceptance also apply to the female character Molly. In fact, it is *because* of Case’s reintegration with a Cyberpunk lifestyle that his perception of women improves, and this improved perception summarizes Case’s relationship with the two most prominent women in his life. Linda Lee is a reflection of Case’s non-cyberpunk self, and thus her relationship with Case is weak and damaging, but Molly and Case have a common goal. At the outset of the second chapter, the reader learns that Molly works for a man named Armitage. This man is interested in restoring Case’s nervous system in exchange for the protagonist’s hacking skills (27). To Case, this means the ability to ascend into the Cyberpunk Heaven he had fallen from. He is initially skeptical, but eventually agrees to have the operation to restore his nervous system (29). This agreement simultaneously binds Case to Molly and initializes the process that re-grants Case his cyberpunk status.

Just before the operation, Case demonstrates the final moments of his Fallen life by having a heated exchange, charged with doubt and accusation, with Molly. Eventually, Case claims, “You don’t know me, sister” (30). This seems defensive, and when Case asks about Armitage, Molly’s response hardly removes her dangerous Othered status, though it does provide some level of justification for her current level of mystery: “What I always think about first, Case, is my own sweet ass” (30). This comment, while leaving Molly in the realm of the Other, makes it clear that she cares about survival. Yet again, Nixon attempts to undermine Molly’s quality as a character by reducing her motivations to simplified urges. The critic “summarizes” Molly’s actions when she claims, “Molly’s ambitions are to make as much money as possible...and to bed Console Cowboy Case, the tough-guy hero of *Neuromancer*” (Nixon 222). Nixon believes Molly’s only motivations are money and sex. The first part of Nixon’s statement may hold some truth, as money often equals power, agency, and, therefore, security in Cyberpunk literature. Perhaps an obsession with money reflects Molly’s self-concern and survival instinct. However, Nixon’s language limits this complex understanding of Molly’s motivations, and Molly makes it clear that money is not what she thinks about “first” (rather, it is her “own sweet ass”). And, while Molly does “bed” Case, the text in the novel does not substantiate Nixon’s claim. In fact, Molly *leaves* Case at the end of the novel. He finds a note that reads, “HEY ITS OKAY BUT ITS TAKING THE EDGE OFF MY GAME, I PAID THE BILL ALREADY. IT’S THE WAY IM WIRED I GUESS, WATCH YOUR ASS OKAY? XXX MOLLY” (Gibson 267). Clearly, Molly’s desire to have sex (along with the sexual word choices she makes when describing her desire to survive) with Case is not so strong as to make her stay with him. This passage indicates that Molly’s concern

with her own wellbeing (a belief that she feels Case should mirror in his own thinking) is constant throughout the novel. Luckily for Case, Molly's self-concern perpetuates his wellbeing after his operation.

When Case undergoes the operation to restore his nervous system, the uncertainty of his future reaches a dramatic and metaphorical level. Gibson writes, "[l]ost, so small amid that dark, hands grown cold, body image fading down corridors of television sky. Voices. Then black fire found the branching tributaries of the nerves, pain beyond anything to which the name of pain is given" (31). The dark imagery and ambiguous language accentuate Case's uncertainty. However, while painful, the operation reestablishes Case as a cyberpunk. The passage that immediately follows the description of the operation shows that Molly evolves from a threatening Other to, simply, a female character (or perhaps a character that happens to be female) in Case's eyes. Early in the paragraph, Molly commands Case to be still: "Hold still. Don't move...Goddamn don't you move" (31). This initially reestablishes Molly as the threatening Other. The motivationally ambiguous phrase, "Stop it, Case, I gotta find your vein" is then uttered by Molly (31). Does she need to find this vein in order to save his life, or kill him? Gibson reveals that the former is true: "She was straddling his chest, a blue plastic syrette in one hand. 'You don't lie still, I'll slit your fucking throat. You're still full of endorphin inhibitors'" (31). In this scene, Molly Millions displays her concern for Case's wellbeing, though she is hardly nurturing. However, the thematic shift from threatening Other to concerned friend, rather than nurturing, or perhaps coddling, woman is actually a more feminist move on Gibson's part. Instead of being limited by the previously established archetypes of feminine concern, Molly demonstrates a kind of concern that a male or

female character could experience as her frantic, panicked, and threatening tone could have been manifested by a character of any gender in a similar situation. She simply needs Case to cooperate so she can administer the proper post-operation care.

Molly also removes some of her mysteriousness through dialogue, relieving her of the non-feminist quality of isolation associated with the Hegelian Other. After Case fully awakens from his operation, he "...found her [Molly] stretched beside him in the dark" (31). Case is already being equated with Molly through language, thereby lessening the metaphorical distance that exists between the male and female characters. She is "beside" him; they are equivalent in position. She hands him a drink and says, "I can see in the dark, Case. Microchannel image-amps in my glasses" (32). She later adds, "It's 2:43:12 AM, Case. Got a readout chipped into my optic nerve" (32). With these two pieces of dialogue, Molly justifies and explains her mirrored eyes. While the mirror lenses she sports still inhibit relational gazes, Molly's willingness to explain their usefulness to Case highlights the growing trust and equality between the two characters. Her eyes, though strange and foreign to the reader, are useful and beneficial in Gibson's Cyberpunk setting. Indeed, the advantages they provide would even be useful in reality. Molly is no longer the threatening Other. She is now approachable, justifiable, and rationally minded.

In addition to the lessening of her Othered status, Molly's character challenges gender roles because of her success and a role-reversed character. For example, her approachability is highlighted by the sexual intercourse that *she* initiates (33). So, in just a few pages, Molly Millions removes her Othered status and, contrary to heteronormative gender stereotypes, initiates sexual intercourse with the male protagonist. This is the first of many situations in which Molly acts as a heteronormative male character would. While

reversed gender roles do present scenarios of challenged-heteronormativity, some feminists (correctly) emphasize the continued presence of those roles, and that they are simply occupied by different genders. Lauraine Leblanc notes that, “[w]riters such as Gibson and Cadigan present female-gendered cyborgs undertaking a role-reversal into masculinity; in many senses, these are transgendered representations, rather than radical revisions of gender” (Leblanc 2). Leblanc correctly asserts that the reversal of gender roles does not eradicate gendered expectations. Her argument suggests that the gender roles are left intact, and the reader only notes Molly’s uniqueness; she is a woman that acts like a man. Despite the fact that a number of Molly’s actions only suggest role-reversal, rather than the abandonment of gender roles, her strength and survival as a character in *Neuromancer* indicate her success as a character and, therefore, the success of the role-reversal. Additionally, none of the other characters in *Neuromancer* view Molly’s “masculine” activity as off putting. Indeed, because Molly’s transgendered characterization is so casually and readily accepted in the novel, the reader can easily see heteronormative standards being challenged. She may not completely destroy the ideas of gender roles, but her character can at least force their assignments into question.

The end of the second chapter of *Neuromancer* firmly establishes Case’s transition from his previous, Fallen life, back into a Cyberpunk reality. After becoming more comfortable, the protagonist and Molly go out into Chiba City one last time. They watch a knife fight (which is considered professional entertainment in the setting of this book), and Case comments, “. . .that even as he’d followed Molly along that corridor, shuffling through a trampled mulch of ticket stubs and Styrofoam cups, he’d sensed it. Linda’s death, waiting...” (Gibson 36). Case anticipates the finalizing, dramatic event

that signals the death of his former, wounded self: the actual death of Linda Lee. Case's physical position highlights this transition. Gibson writes that Case is following Molly in this scene, which symbolizes the direction that Case's life takes. He leaves his former self, his former life, and his former perception of women in the past, and he follows Molly into the future of his Cyberpunk life. After watching the fight for a while, Case actually sees Linda Lee one last time. He only looks at her long enough to recognize her, "[a]nd [then she is] gone. Into shadow" (38). Linda Lee dies from a laser that literally vaporizes her. Her death is sudden and complete; it entirely removes her from existence.

As Linda Lee disappears "into shadow," chaos erupts around Case. A young boy threatens Case with a knife, and then "[t]he face [of the boy] was erased in a humming cloud of microscopic explosions. Molly's fletchettes, at twenty rounds per second" (38). Thus, Linda Lee's death is immediately followed by Molly's continuation of her gender bending practices. This time, she comes to Case's rescue, again revealing to the reader that violent force and agency do not belong to men. In fact, in this scene, it almost seems like it exclusively belongs to women. Case's old perception of women, along with the thematic misogyny that perception represented, is finally gone. It fully disappeared with the rejuvenation of Case's nervous system and the death of Linda Lee. Again, Molly's words fit well: "Fight's over Case. Time to go home" (39). Home, for Case, is a state of existence; he has finally regained his cyberpunk-self, and, consequently, feels at home in his Cyberpunk setting.

Later in the novel, Case encounters a simulation of Linda Lee, produced by an artificial intelligence, while he is trapped in cyberspace. Case, trapped in a vividly real hallucination, comes across the faux Linda Lee as she appears to sleep. In this scene,

Case vocalizes his conviction to remain in the Cyberpunk realm: “You [Linda’s simulation] aren’t anything, . . . You’re dead and you meant fuck-all to me anyway” (236). After Linda Lee’s actual death, Case consciously accepts and moves toward his life as a more cyberpunk, feminist character. Case does succumb to the simulation’s advances in this chapter, and is again filled with the self-loathing he experienced at the beginning of the novel: “It belonged, he knew – he remembered – as she pulled him down, to the meat, the flesh the cowboys mocked” (239). However, because of his refurbished hacker skills and new perspective, he is able to escape the hallucination, and the simulation of Linda Lee: “he turned and walked away, and after the seventh step, he’d closed his eyes, watching the music [music Case’s ears hear in the real world] define itself at the center of things. He did look back, once, although he didn’t open his eyes. He didn’t need to” (244). Case knows that Linda Lee, and the hallucinatory world, are shadows of his past. Instead of dwelling on a false past, he follows the music towards his Cyberpunk reality and Molly Millions.

The third chapter of *Neuromancer* confirms the transition that takes place in the second. In this chapter, Gibson makes it clear that Case’s change in perception and position in the world is permanent; the state of affairs and view of the novel’s world presented at the beginning of the novel are no longer applicable to the protagonist. Case believes “[h]e [is] home” (44). And, though Gibson creates Case’s home as chaotic, dangerous, and violent throughout the rest of the novel, the protagonist’s statement clarifies that his current scenario is comfortable on an existential level. This existence allows Case to coexist with, admire, and appreciate women like (and including) Molly Millions. The gender role reversals and barrier breaking that she represents cause Case no

anxiety. She even symbolically welcomes Case back into Cyberpunk Heaven by purchasing and giving him one of the chrome throwing stars he had previously seen in a Chiba City Shop (45). Gibson makes it clear that Case and Molly are equal in the Cyberpunk setting, thereby perpetuating the feminist ideal of gender equality. As usual, Molly's words are both succinct and prophetic. She asks Case "[s]o we got an axis going, boy? We're together in this? Partners?" (51). Case sarcastically claims he has no choice in the matter, and Molly responds, "[y]ou got it, cowboy" (51). At this point, Case is equivalent to Molly, whether he wants to be or not. Lucky for him, this relationship proves useful and life-saving throughout most of the novel.

Thus far, I have focused on the first, transitional chapters of *Neuromancer*. However, the rest of Gibson's work provides evidence for the continuity of feminist ideals. For instance, we see Molly and Case's gaze finally firmly established later on in the novel. Case, after having his nervous system restored, is able to interface with the matrix. He is also able to interface with a device called a "simstim." This device allows Case to view the world through the eyes of someone who is connected to a transmitter. Therefore, Case can see through Molly's eyes when she connects herself to the transmitter: "Then he keyed the new switch... Then he willed himself into passivity, became the passenger behind her [Molly's] eyes" (56). Case can literally see the world from Molly's perspective. While their interactive gaze is (justifiably) interrupted by Molly's mirror shades, the Cyberpunk technology of Gibson's world allows Case and Molly to experience one shared gaze.

This gaze relationship is, again, not wholly feminist. Case is limited within Molly's body; he experiences her perception as almost oppressive. Molly almost

inadvertently becomes the victor of the life-and-death struggle described by Hegel. Case notes that “[h]er body language was disorienting, her style foreign” (56). Feminist critic Stacy Gillis comments on this particular passage when she writes, “[i]t appears as though Case is unable to read Millions once he is no longer viewing her as an object of his gaze” (Gillis 15). This analysis is accurate, though it fails to consider the entirety of the situation. Yes, although Case actually integrates with Molly Million’s gaze, he is no longer able to fully understand her because she is not subject to his gaze. However, his agency as a character is also removed when he views the world through Molly’s eyes. Again, we see the agency of physical action turned over to the female character instead of the male character. While the simstim relationship that exists between Case and Molly doesn’t necessarily represent the full, non-heteronormative integration of man and woman, it certainly highlights Millions’ agency and Case’s equation with the female cyborg.

Gibson later reconciles Molly’s association with disorientation by re-associating her with guidance. After “flatlining” (interfacing so intensely with cyberspace that one’s brain activity ceases for a short period of time) during a space voyage, Case arrives at his destination: a section of a satellite colony called Freeside. At this point, Case is still shaken from his brain death: “[h]e was numb, as they went through customs, and Molly did most of the talking” (Gibson 123). Here, we see Molly handling the group’s navigation. Again, agency is assigned to the female character. She says “Welcome to the Rue Jules Verne...if you have trouble walking, just look at your feet. The perspective’s a bitch, if you’re not used to it” (123). Here, Molly actually gives Case advice on how to deal with new perspectives. Although the perspective she mentions is not the same as the

simstim perception discussed earlier, it is associated with the feminine through the use of the vulgarity “bitch.” Molly uses the derogatory term to indicate how difficult it can be to handle new perspectives, which reemphasizes the association between women and disorientation. However, Molly also admits that the new perception is only difficult if one is not used to it. By giving Case advice on how to walk, she ushers him into this new perspective. So, Molly simultaneously admits and eases the difficulties of experiencing new perspectives.

Finally, Case expresses his equation with Molly Millions much later in the novel: “She went in just right, Case thought. The right attitude; it was something he could sense, something he could have seen in the posture of another cowboy leaning into a deck [computer-like apparatus], fingers flying across the keyboard. She had it: the thing, the moves” (213). In this passage, Case describes Molly’s entrance into the final stage of a sting operation that he and she participate in towards the end of the novel. Case sees all of this through the simstim apparatus. This time, however, Case does not feel disoriented. Instead, he gains an intuitive understanding of Molly, and equates her physical agency and actions with his status as a console cowboy. He cannot articulate the connection he has with Molly because it is so integral. At this point in the novel, Case completely understands Molly, because he is one with Molly. The male and female leads are equated through the unity of their agency, highlighting the pervasiveness and the strength of the feminist themes in *Neuromancer*.

In this work of Cyberpunk literature, male and female characters can be equal in agency and status. Various forces that society assigns to men can just as easily apply to women in this Cyberpunk setting. Molly defends Case. Case appreciates Molly and

gathers information. They are not man and woman. They are “console cowboy” and “razorgirl,” people defined by their profession and skills. The continued presence of gender identifying suffixes prevents *Neuromancer* from being a fully feminist work, but the presence of feminist ideals in the Cyberpunk novel certainly indicate a progression towards the reassessment of and, hopefully, the liberation and equation of women in society.

Chapter Two: Rick Is Foolish

In this chapter I explore the relationships that exist between the male protagonist Rick Deckard and the supporting female characters in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), a novel by Philip K. Dick. The setting Dick creates in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is bleak and dystopian. The world includes vast, unknowable corporations of enormous wealth, characters of questionable moral fiber, and beings that are humanoid in appearance though artificial by design. In other words, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* takes place in a classic Cyberpunk setting. Consequently, the novel possesses the feminist potential discussed at the opening of this paper.

Many feminist critics and queer-theorists would argue that Dick's narratives fall short of the potential that the Cyberpunk genre possesses. The perceived failure of the genre, overall, has been discussed by numerous feminist critics. For instance, Michelle Chilcoat wrote the following in 2004:

In voicing my own concerns that women be considered equally as capable as men in whatever intellectual endeavor they may choose to undertake, I also speak through the constraints of a hetero- or two-sex system (i.e., women in relation to men). But there are currents in feminism and feminist science that are endeavoring to move beyond the knowledge-arresting binarisms of heteronormativity. (Chilcoat 166)

Chilcoat is responding to the continued presence and dominance of heteronormative relationships in Cyberpunk cinema overall, though this presence and dominance is also found in Cyberpunk literature. Indeed, the movie that is often considered the first

Cyberpunk film is *Blade Runner*, which is based on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Chilcoat's initial statement clearly identifies her as a feminist focused on equality, while her second highlights the permutation of feminist criticism that seeks to question "heteronormativity." The feminists that adhere to this form of criticism take the most issue with the heteronormative characters found in Cyberpunk literature. Similarly, queer-theorists that seek to "queer" (i.e. question and confuse) the heteronormativity of society find the standardized, sexed, and gendered characters in Cyberpunk lacking a revolutionary flavor. When the non-heteronormative characters are relegated and marginalized to and in the role of the Other, whether Hegelian or privileged, there is little room for acceptance.

These criticisms may be valid when passages and characters from Cyberpunk texts are examined non-contextually. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Rick's interaction with human females and female androids may be interpreted as the subjugation of the non-male by the male. Specifically, the portrayal of weakness in women and the Othering of female characters via the gaze supports such an analysis. However, when the same passages are considered with the context of the characters' situations in mind, this subjugation becomes less apparent. The female characters in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* may behave in a manner that could be considered heteronormative, but they do so because they must, in order to survive. This is especially true of the female characters that are forced to have extended interactions with the protagonist, Rick Deckard. The context of the characters' existence, along with the acceptance of Rick's inadequacies as a reliable character, actually suggests the presence of female and queer strength and agency.

In order to highlight the importance of the characters' context, I point out how the gaze is used to Other certain characters, how each participant in the various interactions informs the reaction of the other, and of how the unique characteristics of the Cyberpunk setting come into play. The first interaction I analyze is Rick's first moments with his wife, Iran Deckard. This analysis admits some of the weaknesses associated with Iran's character, but also highlights how Iran's actions are informed by her Cyberpunk setting. I then move on to Rick's first meeting with the female android, Rachael Rosen. This analysis first illustrates Rachael's status as an Other, and subsequent marginalization, but also justifies the initial Othering through the consideration of Rick's ineptitude as a character.

In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, we are introduced to both the male protagonist, Rick Deckard, and his wife, Iran Deckard, on the first page. And, immediately, Iran's isolation from Rick is highlighted: "Now, in her bed, his wife Iran opened her gray, unmerry eyes, blinked, then groaned and shut her eyes again" (Dick 3). This sentence exemplifies Iran's initial characterization as an alien Other in two ways. First, we learn that Rick and Iran sleep in different beds, despite the fact that they are married. While this is not entirely out of the ordinary, the sleeping arrangement does suggest a degree of separation between the protagonist and his wife. Iran's gaze (or lack thereof) reiterates this separation. When open, her eyes are a sad and ambiguous gray color. This description contrasts heavily with Deckard's "...well-disposed feeling toward the world – *his* setting had been at *D...*" (3). By setting a device called a mood organ to *D*, Rick's modifies his disposition to better prepare himself for the day. When her eyes are closed, Iran's gaze is completely removed from the scene. Because only Rick's gaze

remains, it acts as the only identifying gaze in this early scene. Because Rick is unable to understand Iran in this scene, the reader cannot rationalize her as anything other than alien. Even her name, “Iran,” inspires thoughts of foreign lands to most non-Iranian readers.

In order to fully understand and assess Iran as a character, she must be analyzed separately from Rick. Iran is the one who attempts to bring the gaze into the relationship between the two. The protagonist only “...rose from bed, stood up in his multicolored pajamas, and stretched” (3). Rick only sees Iran’s eyes after *she* opens them, and he does not engage her gaze. He creates an identity for her that is based on his own observations, not the interaction (or lack thereof) that occurs between the two. Thus, Rick perpetuates the Hegelian life-and-death struggle, despite his wife’s efforts to initially equate their gaze. While the connection between Rick and Iran continually degenerates, Rick undermines any attempts Iran makes to address this connection through non-interaction.

The alienation of Iran from Rick is further exemplified through their dialogue. After he attempts to console her, Iran’s first response is “Get your crude cop’s hand away” (3). She literally commands Rick to remove himself from her, and, by referring to Rick as a “crude cop,” Iran establishes that she is both separate from, and critical of, the police. As an established and maintained body, the police often represent order. By verbally removing herself from that system, Iran seems to associate herself with order’s binary opposite: chaos. Therefore, Iran furthers her isolation from Rick and establishes her relationship with the chaotic and threatening Hegelian Other. Rick attempts to defend himself by claiming he has never killed a human. Again, Iran vocally allies herself with chaotic and unknown forces: “Just those poor andys” (4). Iran’s response indicates her

sympathy for the (renegade) androids, which Rick must hunt down and, often, destroy. Her word choice echoes a mother like tone, which conflicts with Rick's almost monotonic internal monologue and external dialogue.

Iran's vocal attacks on Rick certainly further the metaphorical distance that exists between the two, but the context in which these vocal rebukes take place must be taken into consideration. She first lashes out at him when he places his hand on her. Rick's physical contact with Iran is an attempt to physically ground Iran and her confusing emotions. Rick foolishly views Iran as a privileged Other, rather than his equal. He, as Case originally does with Linda Lee, attempts to physically possess Iran, in order to maintain an understanding of the world and, therefore, his freedom as a character. Her specific criticism of the law reveals, not only her removal from an established system, but also her desire for the freedom she lacks. The use of the word "crude" accentuates Rick's failure to comprehend his wife, which establishes a new question: is Iran's supposed "Otherness" an actual character quality, or is it a result of Rick's observational and critical inadequacies?

Iran's rebuttal concerning the androids indicates the latter. We know that "those poor andys" can actually be very dangerous, but the reader does not learn this until later in the novel (4). In fact, the construction of the narrative leads the reader down a confusing path. Rick claims he has never killed a human being. Iran then counters with her single line rebuttal. The use of the word "andys" succinctly exemplifies the confusion of this interaction (4). "Andy" is a human name, the shortened version of the name "Andrew." By using this foreshortened term, Iran relays a sense of caring, adoration, and cuteness. However, the word is not capitalized in Iran's statement. In an initial, first

reading of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the reader cannot tell if the “andys” are human, other, beloved, or feared.

The protagonist of the novel fails to directly respond to Iran’s accusation: “I notice you’ve [Iran] never had any hesitation as to spending the bounty money I bring home on whatever momentarily attracts your attention” (4). In this phrase, Rick accuses Iran of performing a stereotypically female action: spending her husband’s “hard earned money.” However, he also does not directly address whether or not he actually kills humans, what kind of beings the “andys” are, whether or not he feels guilt, or even if he agrees with Iran’s indirect assessment of his guilt. Instead of clarifying Iran’s mysterious statement, Rick attempts to dodge the implied question by hyperbolically feminizing his wife. Rick is unclear, and his counterarguments against Iran seem foolish.

Iran’s dialogic removal from Rick is not limited to verbal attacks. At one point, she tries to explain her depressed emotions: “But then I realized how unhealthy it was, sensing the absence of life, not just in this building but everywhere, and not reacting – do you see? I guess you don’t” (5). Before the time in which the novel takes place, the earth had been poisoned by a war. Consequently, many characters (excluding the Deckards) emigrated to Mars. Iran’s depression is a reaction to this poisoning of, and subsequent exodus from, Earth. She notices her husband’s inability to grasp her reasoning, addresses this disability, and then dismisses it. And, by specifically asking “do you see,” the reader again observes the disconnected gaze that the two share. Earlier, Iran kept her eyes shut. Here, Rick cannot cast his metaphorical gaze on the idea that informs Iran’s mood.

Iran’s final declaration in the chapter is, “Okay, I give up; I’ll dial. Anything you want me to be; ecstatic sexual bliss – I feel so bad I’ll even endure that. What the hell.

What difference does it make?” (7). It is difficult to reconcile Iran’s closing statements as anything other than condemning, as she seems to accept her role as the privileged Other. However, an analysis of the circumstances that drive her to physical submission provides some justification for her actions. Rick is literally *unable* to understand her explanation: “...do you see? I guess you don’t” (5). She wants him to understand, but he cannot. Again, does the fault for this failure in communication rest on the shoulders of the husband or the wife? Rick makes very little effort to understand, and therefore remedy, his wife’s emotional conflict. This seems particularly strange, when considering Iran’s explanation for her sadness: “I think that’s a reasonable amount of time to feel hopeless about everything, about staying here on Earth after everybody who’s smart has emigrated, don’t you think?” (6). Unfortunately for the characters of Dick’s narrative, this statement is not hyperbolic. So, why can’t Rick understand Iran’s despair? The answer is the mood organ. Whereas Iran only reluctantly makes use of the device, Rick uses the instrument liberally at the opening of the novel. So, while Iran is facing the realities of their bleak future, Rick is too busy playing with his “organ” to notice. Even Iran’s final physical submission must be considered in the context of Rick’s lack of awareness. Perhaps she realizes that Rick cannot understand anything other than physicality and sex. While accepting this may not be a particularly strong move, it does resonate with the compassionate nature she expresses in the first chapter of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*.

Few feminists would be pleased with the character of Iran if she is as Rick sees her, especially when the technology present in the novel indicates the advancement and, therefore, evolution, of the human species and mindset. Chilcoat writes:

For those who propose evolutionary theory as a way of explaining the inevitability of the two-sex system, for example, it would seem that while just about everything else about the human species has evolved, sexuality remains hetero. The same can be said about cyberpunk film where, when all else is liberated by technology – when the mind is freed from the body or the meat – heterosexuality remains. (Chilcoat, 166)

Chilcoat's criticism refers to a quality of cyberpunk film that, apparently, applies to Cyberpunk overall. Why, when all is "freed," do heterosexuality and heteronormativity remain? The answer is found within the fallacy of the question. In Dick's Cyberpunk setting, all is not freed. Whereas, in *Neuromancer*, Case's connection with Cyberpunk technology allowed his perspective to exceed beyond the limits of heteronormativity, the technology in Iran's Cyberpunk setting results in a war that traps the Deckards on Earth, and Iran's expected use of the mood organ. The mood altering technology Iran is almost forced to use inhibits her emotional freedom, and her husband forces her into isolation through his lack of understanding. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, technology has hindered, rather than helped, Iran Deckard. The heteronormativity of her relationship with Rick is necessitated by her captive state. Her husband cannot understand the simple logic she adheres to, and her place in the Cyberpunk world of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* leaves her depressed. Instead of revealing Iran Deckard's weakness, the first chapter of Dick's work more strongly supports Rick Deckard's ineptitude. A similar conclusion regarding Rick's capability as a character may be drawn when the android character, Rachael Rosen, is analyzed.

In this analysis, I consider Rachael's actions and characterizations in the context of Rick's ineptitude, along with the dystopian setting in which she exists. Rachael is an android, and her nature as a machine influences her quality as a (non)heteronormative character. As an android, Rachael has the opportunity to queer heteronormative characterizations, since she is not limited by the often dichotomized gender systems that humans can fit into. With regards to fictional cyborgs and androids, the queer-theory critic Esperanza Miyake believes that:

...on/off-line cyborgs [androids/anthropomorphic machines] are (re)creating unconfined and unrelated genders challenging the preconceived ideas about man/woman, masculine/feminine. If an on/off-line masquerader [android/cyborg] wants to be a man one day, a woman the next, a dildo using sheep the following day, then he/she/it/he-she-it is realizing and proving that gender, and all other categories, are indeed just a parade. (Miyake 56)

Indeed, if these options were available and utilized by the android characters found in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, then gender categories may be exposed as arbitrary. However, these options are *not* available to the characters, if the characters wish to survive in the dystopian setting of Dick's Cyberpunk world. Miyake asserts that off-line cyborgs (a term she uses to include both androids and cyborgs) are already challenging standardized gender perceptions. This is not necessarily an inherent trait of cyborg or android characters. If their setting does not allow for the android (or, in the case of Rachael, her company) to survive while challenging these norms, one cannot fault the android (or the author who wrote the android) for creating a fairly normative character.

Additionally, if the setting does not allow for the complete, physical integration of the heteronormative male and queer-female characters (as I show it does not), the physical disintegration should not be blamed on the female characters.

The introduction of the android character also challenges the distinctions of the Other I have already discussed. Klaus Benesch distinguishes between the Hegelian Other, the privileged Other, and what may be termed the “technological Other”: “The machine, especially in its cybernetic [i.e. the machine-man interfaces] representations in modern art, thus has come to function as the cultural Other of technological society” (Benesch, 381). Benesch’s analysis of society’s reaction to the technological Other may hold true, but his later analysis of the characters in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is lacking. He writes:

As with the androgynous characters in Philip K. Dick’s science fiction novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968)...we can never be sure of the visual markers of the human nor of those which define the identity of the cyborg...In dealing with the cyborg, we are therefore constantly engaged in negotiating the antagonist aspects of similarity and difference, of recognition and denial... (389-90)

Benesch’s argument is logical, but he fails to consider the situations in which the android/cyborg initiates and encourages interaction with the human subject. His use of the word “we” suggests that the human/normative participant in the interaction is the only proactive force. The human must “deal” with the technological Other, instead of engaging in interaction. This analysis necessarily prevents the human from accepting the Other. Therefore, to conclude that the nature of the cyborg/android yields an

unreachable/unknowable/foreign Other would be perfunctory. This is especially true when the representative of the normative human in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is the inept and incapable Rick Deckard. Analyzing Rachael, with Rick's ineptitude in mind, may not remove her technologically Othered status. However, it reveals her strength and agency as a character.

At first glance, Rachael appears to be a weak and submissive character. Rick first encounters Rachael when he travels to the Rosen Association for the Nexus-6 android testing. As he exits his vehicle, "...he found a young woman waiting for him. Black-haired and slender, wearing the new huge dust-filtering glasses, she approached his car, her hands deep in the pockets of her brightly striped long coat" (Dick 39). Again, we see a woman initially characterized as an Other. And, again, her quality as the Other is almost immediately established through the analysis of her gaze. She is wearing large glasses, which recalls Molly's obstructed gaze in *Neuromancer*. More specifically, she is wearing glasses that serve as a filter. Therefore, Rick cannot connect with her natural gaze. Whatever he submits to her eyes is filtered, and whatever her eyes present to Rick is obscured by the glasses. Her decision to dawn this artifice prevents the two from establishing a gaze-centric relationship during their first meeting. In fact, Rachael is almost armored from reality. Her hands are concealed within the pockets of her coat. This coat is also described as "long," indicating that it covers most of her body. So, despite the fact that she seems to have gone to the roof to meet him, Rick cannot help but notice the physical barriers she has established through her wardrobe. Despite these barriers, Rick notes that her expression is "...of sullen distaste" (39). Clearly, she is not happy to see the bounty hunter, if she can see him at all.

While Rachael's large glasses cut off her gaze from Rick's, and therefore isolate her, I call special attention to the fact that Rachael's glasses are also "dust-filtering" ("Do Androids Dream," 39). The dust that these glasses filter is the poisonous dust of Philip K. Dick's dystopian, Cyberpunk future. Therefore, Rachael's glasses serve a pragmatic and necessary function, not unlike Molly's surgically inset mirrors. Here, Rachael's goggles protect her from the poison of Dick's Cyberpunk world. I ask why Rick is willing to leave his eyes exposed. Does he believe the dust to be harmless, therefore rendering Rachael's eyewear foolish? The answer must be no, as early in the novel Rick admits that though, "[t]he legacy of World War Terminus [the dust] had diminished in potency; those who could not survive the dust had passed into oblivion years ago, and the dust, weaker now and confronting the strong survivors, only deranged minds and genetic properties" (8). So, while Rachael's glasses do present a physical barrier that blocks her and Rick's interactive gaze, his lack of eyewear indicates a lack of judgment. Rachael is trying to preserve the sanctity and intelligence of her gaze, whereas Rick, despite knowing better, leaves his eyes exposed to clear and present danger.

Miyake again discusses how, despite their potential for destroying gender categories, the android characters of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* remain limited by heteronormative definitions of gender. She focuses her analysis on an android other than Rachael Rosen, "Poor Pris, she has been encapsulated within a gender category, forever being the one whom power is exercised over" (Miyake 56). While Miyake chooses to focus on Pris (who plays a more prominent role in the film adaptation of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, entitled *Blade Runner*), this analysis may also be applied to Rachael Rosen. The phrase "whom power is exercised over" recalls the

limiting quality of both the Hegelian and privileged Other, while the android nature of Rachael and Pris recalls Benesch's technological Other. These associations suggest that gender definitions preclude the feminist theme of liberated women. Indeed, Dick's description of Rachael is gendered and, perhaps, the least justifiable from a feminist perspective. Rick notes that Rachael is "Black-haired and slender..." (Dick 39). In many cultures, both of these descriptions indicate that Rachael is physically attractive. However, "slender" also indicates a level of physical weakness. She is an android, but she clearly represents the female form. She has been created, by the Rosen corporation, as "slender," yielding her physically weak. Additionally, her status as an owned android reemphasizes that she is "...the one whom power is exercised over." Because her feminine female form limits her, she cannot be considered a fully feminist character. However, her other characteristics may be salvaged in order to continue to highlight her feminist qualities.

After their first gaze interaction, Rick notices Rachael's distaste and asks "What's the matter?" (39). The protagonist expresses his concern, along with a willingness to connect with Rachael. Unfortunately for Rick, she replies "Oh, I don't know... It doesn't matter" (39). Rachael verbally reasserts her quality as an Other. Instead of clearly responding to Rick's inquiry, she remains vague. Rick cannot connect with her because she refuses connection. When she finally introduces herself, her language leaves her in a place of powerful Otherness: "I'm Rachael Rosen. I guess you're Mr. Deckard" (39). Instead of allowing Rick to introduce himself, Rachael confirms his identity after presenting her own. She wants to be in control of, not only her identity, but his as well. The use of the word "guess" reveals her desire to weaken Rick's identity. To Rachael, he may or may not exist as the person Rick Deckard. He is, instead, a presence that may or

may not fulfill the *role* of Rick Deckard. In this way, Rachael attempts to relegate Rick to the status of the limited Hegelian Other.

While Rachael's expressions establish a domineering tone for her first interaction with Rick, Rick's confusion in this passage reemphasizes his lack of observational and analytical ability. Rick's arrival was preceded by a phone call from his superior, Bryant: "I think I'll talk to the Rosen organization myself, while you're on your way" (36). While Rick was en route to the Rosen association, Bryant set up the very test that the would-be sleuth was to administer. So, Rachael's negativity makes perfect sense. She recognizes Rick as the representative of an official group that possesses the power to shut her family's organization down. With this in mind, Rick's inquiry into Rachael's emotional state does not indicate concern, but foolish confusion. Rick should know that the Rosen association would anticipate his arrival with anxiety. His expression of confusion only weakens his character. In fact, Bryant's desire to construct the experiment ahead of time reinforces Rick's characterization as inept. If his own superiors cannot trust him to do his job on his own, how can we as readers?

When Rachael responds to Rick's foolish inquiry, Rick mentions that she does so "obliquely" (39). This word choice suggests that she is dodging his question. However, I have established that Rick should not have had to ask the question in the first place; an intelligent character would have been able to quickly discern why Rachael would present herself sullenly. In this light, Rachael's dismissive phrase, "It doesn't matter," serves as a fresh start for the conversation (39). Perhaps she believes that Rick should not be judged for his lack of analytical skills. After all, she admits that the tension she feels is a consequence of "[s]omething about the way we [the Rosen Association] got talked to on

the phone” (39). Instead, she decides to personalize the relationship when she “[a]bruptly...held out her hand,” and Rick can only respond “reflexively” (39). Rachael attempts to make an effort, despite Rick’s initial expression of unintelligence. Because of this evident lack of intelligence, we may read “I’m Rachael Rosen. I guess you’re Mr. Deckard,” as a mother or teacher speaking to a child. Rick’s behavior, up to this point, has been that of a shy child’s. Unfortunately for Rick, his problem isn’t shyness. It is, instead, a general lack of analytical and observational skill. Instead of trusting Rick’s perception, the reader should actually be extremely suspicious of Rick’s view of the world.

Shortly after this early introductory exchange, Rick notices an owl perched nearby. Animals are rare in the future of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, so he immediately takes an interest and asks for a price. Rachael responds with: “‘We would never sell our owl.’ She scrutinized him with a mixture of pleasure and pity; or so he read her expression” (42-43). Again, Rachael’s gaze is critical of Rick. Her eyes only relay criticism and judgment. The fact that her gaze possesses qualities of both pleasure and pity suggests that her character is paradoxical, highlighting her quality as a Hegelian Other. In this context, these two emotions are almost binary opposites that represent the coexistence of sadistic strength and assimilative weakness. Despite their apparently contrary nature, both emotions and characterizations are present in Rachael’s expression. Rick cannot determine her emotions, or her motives.

The bounty hunter is finally driven to ask Rachael, directly, about her mistreatment of him. “She reflected, as if up to now she hadn’t known. ‘Well,’ she said, ‘you, a little police department employee, are in a unique position. Know what I mean?’

She gave him a malice-filled sidelong glance” (44). Rachael seems to be unaware of her own motives. By expressing this lack of motive, or rationality, behind her behavior, she indicates her chaotic nature to the reader. She also further removes herself from Rick by belittling and dehumanizing him with her comment about the “little police department employee.” She fails to explain herself fully, instead forcing Rick to guess at her actual meaning. The removal established in this passage is punctuated, again, by the indirect and malicious quality of Rachael’s gaze. Her gaze is “malice-filled,” so Rachael’s eyes almost attack Rick in this passage. The use of the word “filled” indicates that there is no room left in her gaze and it, therefore, cannot receive any content from Rick’s gaze. The interaction (or lack thereof) of their eyes and their gaze is dictated by the maliciousness found in Rachael’s stare. Finally, her glance is “sidelong.” She does not look directly at Rick. So, Rachael casts her hate filled eyes towards Rick, but not directly at him. This concludes and highlights the thematic isolation that Rachael presents through her sarcastic comment, further associating her with the Other.

While Rachael’s words isolate her, Rick cannot seem to wrap his head around basic concepts. He asks Rachael, “What have you got against me?” (43). The answer should be obvious to Rick, but Rachael still must sound it out for him. Rick cannot even do his job correctly. I have already established Bryant’s lack of faith in his inferior. This lack of faith is confirmed when Rick finds an advanced copy of a *Sidney’s* catalogue in the possession of the Rosens. This catalogue lists the prices of animals that survived World War Terminus and the dust, and is the standard against which all pet ownership is tested, and “[a]nnoyed, he [Rick] picked up the supplement. ‘This is a violation of public trust. Nobody should get advanced price changes.’ As a matter of fact this might violate a

federal statute; he tried to remember the relevant law, found he could not. ‘I’m taking this with me’”(46). In this small passage of dialogue, Rick exposes his over-emotional conduct, weak memory, and reliance on physicality. He brings up the illegality of the catalogue because it annoys him. In fact, a sense of jealousy persists throughout this passage. Rick feels as though the Rosen Association has an unfair advantage and this *annoys* him. Despite his focus on the catalogue, Rick cannot remember what law the possession of such a catalogue violates. We are left to wonder two things. Why would anyone trust this man as a representation of the law and order, and did the Rosens actually violate any federal laws?

Finally, because he cannot mentally reconcile the Rosen’s guilt, Rick must, instead, physically possess the evidence. When he claims the catalogue for his own, he reduces what was previously a mental/memory issue to a question of physical evidence. This mirrors his interaction with Iran. He could not comprehend her reasoning, so he tried to ground her and understand her through physicality. Therefore, Rick’s inability to understand is not restricted to his relationship with Iran. Instead, it is a global problem; he cannot even remember the law he represents. When his mind fails him, Rick must rely on physical cues and sensors to establish his reality for him. While Rachael’s actions and words, thus far, have cast her as defensive, they have not rendered her an inept character. Rick, on the other hand, appears foolish.

As the narrative progresses, Rick is actually compelled to give Rachael the Voigt-Kampff humanity test. This test is used to establish whether the subject is human or android by measuring the subject’s physical reactions to unsettling questions. After a few questions, Rick asserts his conclusion: “Are raw oysters more acceptable to you

[Rachael] than a dish of boiled dog? Evidently not... You're an android" (51). Rachael's lack of reaction to Rick's test-driven proposition (eating a dish of boiled dog) frightens and disturbs the reader, as it does Rick. Rachael's lack of reaction indicates a lack of humanness, which reminds the reader of her nature as an Other. Deckard's conclusion (which is later proven correct) reveals Rachael as a dangerous non-human. She is an android, an artificial creature that lacks the same level of empathy as humans (as "proven" by the Voigt-Kampff test). Thus, Rachael inadvertently classifies herself as a technological Other through her answers, which identify her as a machine. And, because Dick's narrative follows Deckard's hunt for rogue "andys," Rachael's alignment with chaotic forces becomes more defined, recalling her association with the Hegelian Other.

While the Voigt-Kampff test further associates Rachael with a number of Othered statuses, it also reemphasizes Rick's reliance on physical grounding, and his lack of self-reliance. First, he asks Rachael a question. Instead of letting her answer, he answers for her, which relieves Rick of having to actually debate Rachael. Perhaps he knows that he cannot compete with her (human or otherwise) brain. Following this question, Rick boldly asserts that Rachael is not human. Instead of confidence, this statement is surrounded by doubt. The subsequent phrase is a qualifier: Rick admits that the *testing* shows that Rachael is not human, though he still cannot decide for himself. He relies on an artifice that measures a few simple, physical reactions (the opening of facial capillaries and the widening of one's eye) to assess the "humanness" (or Otherness) of his subject. Clearly he cannot rely on himself. To punctuate his lack of certainty, he asks the Rosens to validate his claim when he asks "I'm right, aren't I?" (51). Rick, on some level, understands that his reliance on the physical limits him. He attempts to compensate for

this limiting factor through simple verbal interaction with the people he believes to be his *enemy*. That is, he seeks confirmation of his own reality from the people that, he believes, are trying to cloud it. Clearly, Rick is not a master of strategy, or of logic.

Despite the previously established accuracy of the Voigt-Kampff test, Rick is momentarily deceived by the Rosens. Eldon Rosen, Rachael's elder/owner, claims that Rachael is actually human, and Rick's test has failed him. Eldon explains: "Rachael grew up aboard *Salander 3*. She was born on it; she spent fourteen of her eighteen years living off its tape library and what the nine other crew members, all adults, knew about Earth" (52). Even if the reader accepts this explanation, Rachael's characterization as an Other is not relieved. She is, literally, *not of this world*, indicating that this untruthful characterization of Rachael leaves her, at least, in the role of the privileged Other. While she is technically human in this description, Dick's word choice suggests otherwise.

Rick's final demonstration of his lack of intelligence occurs when he accepts Eldon's lie. Admittedly, Eldon's fabrication of Rachael's supposed past spent on board the *Salander 3* is convincing. However, Rick's willingness to accept this lie highlights his lack of confidence in his original conclusion. He tries to demand a bone marrow analysis, which scientifically establishes a subject's nature as human or android. However, the Rosens explain the illegality of this demand, and we are again left to wonder if Rick actually has a grip on the law he has been employed to enforce (52). Rick slowly realizes that his entire operation has been compromised: "I shouldn't have gone for it, he said to himself. However, it's too late now" (55). Rick admits to himself that testing Rachael was fool-hardy. In this passage, he sounds like a child that tries to break the rules and is caught. And, in like fashion, Rachael Rosen responds with, "[w]e have you Mr.

Deckard, '...in a quiet, reasonable voice' (55). In many of their interactions, Rachael acts as the well natured and rational mother to Rick's performance as the irrational, pouty, and foolish child. The power in the relationship clearly leans towards Rachael, and we are left with a stubborn, child-like Rick that cannot get his selfish way.

Even if we ignore all these relationships of power, textual subtleties, and Rick's foolish tone, one fact still stands out from this section. Rick was easily tricked by the Rosens on two levels. First, testing Rachael was too risky to try. Even Rick admits this, eventually. Second, after drawing the *correct* conclusion from the test, Rick is easily tricked into believing that he (and the test) are wrong. If it weren't for a mild, vocal slip up on Rachael's part, Rick would have continued to believe the Rosens' lie (58). Rachael calls the owl "it" instead of "she," thereby revealing the lie that the owl was female, and implying the greater lie: Rachael Rosen is human. Rick is able to catch this error, and deduces that Rachael might actually be an android. So, as he's about to leave, he says "I want...to ask you one more question from the Voigt-Kampff scale. Sit down again" (58). Even when his mind jumps to the correct conclusion, Rick must still rely on the physical scale. Throughout this reading of this chapter, Rick has been revealed as foolish, child-like, reliant, unskilled, and overconfident. The reader has no faith in him, despite his status as the male protagonist. Therefore, the reader recognizes the male gender as fallible, and understands Rick's perception of reality (including his perception of women) to be faulty, at best.

I have discussed, in depth, Rick's failures in this chapter. As the protagonist and, therefore, the main representation of the male gender, Rick's ineptitude prevents the reader from seeing men as superior to women. They do not even represent transcendence,

or assert freedom, as de Beauvoir suggests all men do in her explanation of the privileged Other. They are not “above” the women in the novel. Rachael may also be viewed as a strong character, especially when compared to Rick. This power may be devious in nature; she wields her power as a Hegelian Other. She tricks Rick into believing a lie for an extended period of time. While this action could be considered sinister, it is also a testament to her intelligence. She also wields the power of manipulation, exemplified through her bribing Rick with the owl. Again, this power comes from an arguably negative space. However, in Dick’s Cyberpunk dystopia, power is necessary for survival. Rachael takes advantage of her resources in order to secure her place in the world, while Rick bumbles around, attempting to follow orders and reconcile his warped version of reality with what is actually taking place.

While Rick believes the Rosens’ lie, he makes an important observation: “And Eldon and Rachael Rosen consisted as spokesmen for that corporate entity (The Rosen Corporation). His mistake, evidently, had been in viewing them as individuals” (55). In Rick’s words, a different perspective of Rachael (and Eldon) is presented. They are one being, a notion that is both strange and terrifying, especially considering the Rosen Corporation’s significant power. They are a Cyberpunk megacorporation. This company, which creates beings that are nigh-human, wields untold amounts of monetary power. In this sense, the Rosen Corporation may be viewed as a god-like entity. And the manifestation of this life-creating being is *both* Rachael and Eldon Rosen. For many cultures and societies, the manifestation of a god, or supernatural entity, is either singular or multiple and separate (e.g. Jesus Christ vs. The Holy Trinity). And, if a gender is specified, it is almost always male. The avatar of Rachael-Eldon is aesthetically, sexually,

and spiritually confusing to many readers. Picturing an 18 year old woman and an elderly man as one person can be both difficult and disturbing. The perceived combination of their two genders yields either a hermaphrodite or a sexless being, both of whom are extremely alien to the arguably dichotomized gender system most humans recognize and appreciate. Finally, Rachael-Eldon is neither singular, nor multiple and separate, nor wholly male or female. This creature terrifies and humbles Rick, while also inspiring curiosity and confusion in the reader. As a part of this obviously alien entity, Rachael's alien-ness is reemphasized.

While Rick's strange perception of Rachael and Eldon further Others Rachael, it also symbolically elevates her to an extremely powerful position. She is not just an employee of the Rosen Association, she (along with Eldon) *is* the Rosen Association. In this light, she wields enormous power. On the one hand, the Rosen Association has a large amount of monetary wealth. Money, in Dick's future and most settings of Cyberpunk, is the single measurement against which power may be measured. The power of the Rosen Association may also be observed in their ability to create androids, which are humanoid in nature. We already mentioned that this elevates Rachael and Eldon to an almost god-like status. And, while the god that is Rachael and Eldon combined may be difficult to comprehend, it is a god nonetheless. In fact, because the imaginary Rachael-Eldon combination fails to fit into a particular gender definition, we may view its power as a testament to the power of queer beings. Rachael-Eldon may not be the sheep Miyake was looking for, but neither is it clearly gendered. Therefore, in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, agency and the power of creation belong to neither the male nor the

female. Instead, they belong to the queer, which equates men and women under the queering force of the Rosen Association.

Despite this dramatic characterization, Rick eventually stumbles on the truth of the matter. Rick's discovery of the truth (after accepting the lie) highlights Rachael's submissive quality. He asks Eldon whether or not Rachael knew about her nature as an android, Eldon responds, "[n]o. We programmed her completely. But I think toward the end she suspected... You [Rachael] guessed when he [Rick] asked for one more try [to analyze Rachael using the Voigt-Kampff test]" (59). The Rosen Corporation created Rachael. Her thoughts, including her memory, are not her own. Instead, they are controlled by the Rosen Corporation, whose main representative is now Eldon. So, a masculine centered organization has the power to create life and control women. This removes power from the female sex in two ways. First, they are no longer the only beings capable of making human(oid) life. Second, they are entirely controllable. This weakened version of the female that Rachael represents is not transcendent; Rachael represents the descent of female power. Indeed, Rick's slow discovery of the truth is paralleled by the slow drain of power from the female gender. By the end of the chapter, Rachael is an Other with the potential to wield great and sinister power. However, she, and her power, are also under the complete control of a male entity. In this moment, Rachael best fulfills the role of the Hegelian Other. She threatens a man's existence (Rick), yet her nature yields her inferior to a male figure (Eldon). This roll is undesirable in feminist ideology and prevents Rachael from becoming a fully feminist character. However, the fact that Rick's view of women also casts the female characters as non-feminist may actually count as a point towards their feminist portrayals.

Rick Deckard's perception of women casts them as weak Others that do not understand him. To Rick, Iran's depression is not a serious issue; she may easily make herself feel better using the mood organ. When she does not, Rick questions her motivations and her competency as a human being. Rachael, similarly, confounds Rick. She seems unwilling to communicate with him on his terms, she elusively dodges his questions, and she attempts to deceive him. On an initial reading, the reader's perception may be synonymous with Rick's warped, misogynistic perception. However, I have now established that the negative characterizations of women that Rick presents are a consequence of Rick's own observational and analytical failures. Iran is alien and foreign to Rick because, for some reason, Rick cannot understand her reasonable depression. Instead of putting forth a mental effort to understand his wife, Rick relies on a machine to make her feel better. He also seeks out physical contact, in place of mental understanding. Despite her best efforts to talk with Rick, Iran cannot make him understand. He is too accepting of the simplified reality that he perceives to hear his wife's reason-based angst. She finally submits to him, not because she is possessed by him, but because he is incapable of understanding her in any other way.

When he first meets Rachael, Rick reveals that he is not only a poor communicator, but also an unintelligent and inept character in general. He constantly expresses confusion and consternation over details and ideas that should have been readily understandable. He is easily tricked by Rachael, and, while trickery is often considered deceitful and harmful, Rachael's reason behind her deceit is the success (and therefore survival) of her company. Rachael, in many ways, *is* the Rosen Association. Therefore, her deceit and lies are necessary for her own survival as well. Rachael's

actions are rational, while Rick's inability to grasp or comprehend his interaction with her is a consequence of his own childlike foolishness. When a woman deals with Rick, it seems as though her only option is to drop down to his intellectual level. He clearly cannot elevate himself beyond his simple understanding of the complicated world in which he lives.

Rick's weaknesses are striking, especially when compared to the impressive relative strength of the female and queer characters in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. Iran, though unable to successfully communicate with her husband, is capable of surviving the hellish, poisonous environment in which she lives. Rachael is, similarly, able to ensure her own safety. She also serves as an exemplary case in which a queer female character wields great power and control. These female characters do not fit into the expectations of the feminist and queer critics because they exist in a Cyberpunk setting, and this setting is not a feminist utopia, but rather a Science Fiction dystopia. Within the confines of this setting, the female characters are able to demonstrate strength, cunning, and perseverance. Their status as an Other is present throughout the work, but the Othered quality of the characters is mostly established, and maintained, by the ineptitude of the male protagonist, Rick Deckard. These female and queer characters do not thrive in a feminist and/or queer utopia, they survive (admirably) in a delicately balanced Cyberpunk dystopia, indicating their strength and agency and, therefore, supporting the feminist challenge of the dominance of heteronormativity.

Chapter Three: Donna Is Employed

Whereas in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), Philip K. Dick surrounds his incompetent male protagonist with reasonable female characters, he seemingly does the opposite in *A Scanner Darkly* (1977). In this novel, Dick creates a cast of characters that is almost universally male. These male characters do not demonstrate the incompetency that Rick demonstrates in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, and many of their observational and critical shortcomings may be explained by their drug abuse. However, an initial reading of *A Scanner Darkly* may still encourage the reader to view the most prominent female character, Donna Hawthorne, as a foreign and dangerous force. The protagonist of *A Scanner Darkly* is Bob Arctor, a male undercover narcotics agent. Because the reader often views Donna through Bob's perspective, along with the perspectives of the other male characters, much of her definition as a character results from the male gaze. Consequently, she could be viewed as a subject of male definition. Because of her potential danger and her subjection to the male gaze, Donna's character could be read as a manifestation of the Hegelian Other.

Throughout the novel, Dick's characterization of Donna is ambiguous at best. Without inept male leads present for comparison, Donna's strength as a character is not readily or immediately apparent, though her threatening nature is often pronounced. Indeed, Dick's construction of her dialogue yields Donna both cunning and cruel at times. Similarly, her interaction with the male characters of the novel can appear rational and, simultaneously, cold and ruthless. The reader is left to wonder: what sort of character is Donna? Is she weak and secondary? If not, does her strength lie in her ability to deceive?

How can Donna be so strongly characterized in one passage, and then so differently characterized in another passage, only a few paragraphs later?

In *A Scanner Darkly*, Donna's moral and qualitative ambiguity is reflective of both her circumstance and her complexity as a character. She finds herself in situations that demand her to be almost incomprehensible. The reader is struck by this incomprehensibility because he or she experiences the narrative through the perspective of the male characters. Although, as I mentioned, these viewpoints are less poorly advised than Rick's is in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, they still fall short of reality. In fact, one might consider Donna a successful character because these characters fail to understand her. In order to highlight Donna's ambiguous and complex characterization, I present an analysis similar to my analyses of Iran Deckard and Rachael Rosen of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. Again, this analysis will admit Donna's shortcomings from a feminist perspective. Specifically, Donna's status as a mysterious and dangerous Other is impossible to remove.

Unfortunately, there does not yet exist much criticism on the feminist quality of *A Scanner Darkly*. While this chapter does address the work from a feminist perspective, the presence of critical commentary is important. Therefore, I include scholarly works that analyze Noir fiction. Certain scholars have already noticed the thematic parallels that can exist between works of Cyberpunk and Noir fiction. Stacy Gillis is such a scholar, and she highlights a major characteristic that can be present in each genre: the femme fatal character archetype. She notes:

This female body, as stated previously, is most often encoded as the femme fatale in cyberpunk. The femme fatale serves as the axis of the noir

narrative, referencing a model of non-reproductive femininity whose expression of sexuality is perceived as fatally dangerous to men and the heterosexual family structure. (Gillis 14)

Gillis provides a definition of the femme fatale within the context of Noir fiction that allows her later application of the term to Cyberpunk characters. While Gillis chooses to apply this definition to more famous examples of Cyberpunk women (including Molly Millions), Donna could be viewed as such a character. Her sexuality is clearly non-reproductive (there are no children in the entire novel), and I will show that she is dangerous to many of the men she encounters. This character archetype, while often in a position of strength, is still relegated to the status of a dangerous Other. The femme fatale is considered foreign and strange, especially alongside her male counterparts, and thus the archetype cannot be considered entirely feminist, regardless of her strength.

While Donna's status as a dangerous Other prevents her from representing a fully realized feminist ideal, her circumstances justify her actions, along with her approximate characterization as a femme fatale. Traits that render her cold and unknowable to some also yield her practical and strong. And, while she may not "transcend" her circumstances, she operates more efficiently and effectively than the men in her world. Her Othering moral ambiguity cannot be ignored, but it can be explained by her environment. Dick's language often acts as an additional Othering force on Donna, but the situations and characters that he surrounds Donna with highlight her strength and rationality as a character. I analyze these contrary observations to highlight the fact that Donna actually escapes definition. While this escape from definition does not relieve Donna's threatening quality, nor her isolation (and therefore inherent inequality) from the male

characters, it does relieve her of the oppressive force associated with the identity of the Hegelian Other. She remains a threat to the male characters' lives and, therefore, identities. However, because she is unknowable, she is not limited by male definition. Like Molly Millions in *Neuromancer*, she becomes the victor of the life-and-death struggle described by Hegel and, as the victor, she liberates herself from the status of the oppressed victim.

In order to fully understand the complexities associated with Donna's character, I will provide a brief summary of the plot twist that takes place at the end of the novel. At the end of *A Scanner Darkly*, the protagonist and narcotics agent Bob Arctor manages to secure a sample of *Mors ontologica*, the plant from which the drug Substance D is derived: "A present [*Mors ontologica*] for my friends [the government agents planted at local New Path recovery agencies]..." (Dick 1096). Throughout the novel, Bob tries to obtain a sample of Substance D in order to firmly establish the whereabouts of a drug cartel's headquarters. At the end of the novel, he does so, but at a price. Bob has been tricked by his own agency into becoming a Substance D junkie. They (rightly) believe that New Path, the faux drug recovery organization that secretly produces Substance D, would allow a burned out junkie like Bob to work in their fields. Bob becomes addicted to the drug throughout the novel, losing most of his mind, and is taken to New Path's "recovery" facility by his friend, Donna Hawthorne. Throughout the novel, and their friendship, Bob never knows that Donna is actually *another* narcotics agent, working to deceive the protagonist in order to discover the location of New Path's growing sites.

The deceit of the man and the success of the operation are synonymous. Other agents (i.e. Mike Westaway) cannot gain access to New Path's fields because they are not

convincingly dehumanized by their (faux)drug abuse. The dystopian nature of *A Scanner Darkly* allows a criminal organization to gain much economic wealth and, therefore, power. In this way, New Path could be viewed as a megacorporation, despite their illegal and concealed status. New Path's power forces the government to resort to underhanded tactics. Donna participates in these underhanded tactics and succeeds in planting an addled Bob Arctor in New Path's grow-farms. Donna's sacrifice of the individual good (i.e. Bob's well-being and sanity) for the common good (i.e. the destruction of the New Path drug ring) creates a moral ambiguity that emphasizes her complexity as a character.

This moral ambiguity, while relieving Donna of the onus of male definition, does not elevate Donna to transcendent status. Even if she is "just following orders," she fails to *transcend* the deceitfulness and guile that her dystopian, Cyberpunk setting forces on her. However, while she cannot be condoned for this lack of transcendence, she should also not be condemned. After an initial reading of the novel, the reader learns of Donna's identity as an officer of the law. Her official status motivates all of her actions, and interactions, throughout the course of the novel. When her interactions and characterizations are assessed with this context in mind, Donna becomes a successful navigator of her situation and environment. Her actions, though morally questionable, become rationally justifiable and understandable on a logical level and, when compared with her male counterparts, she stands out in terms of success and facility. This justification, along with her complexity as a character, reveals the subtle ways in which Donna promotes the feminist ideals of self-definition and the facility of the female.

Dick initially alienates/Others Donna from the male characters of *A Scanner Darkly* through her physical location and her approachability. For example, early on in

the novel, Charles Freck encounters Donna. Freck is a friend of Bob Arctor (the protagonists' undercover persona) and an abuser of the addictive drug, Substance D. After visiting a paranoid man named Jerry Fabin (whose paranoia is a consequence of *his* use of Substance D), Charles leaves Jerry's house in the direction of a mall. After pulling over in order to avoid a police man, Freck spots Donna: "A girl walked along now that made him take notice. Black hair, pretty, cruising slow; she wore an open midriff blouse and denim white pants washed a lot. Hey, I know her, he thought. That's Bob Arctor's girl. That's Donna" (868). Despite the fact Freck is able to compile a list of this woman's qualities he is still unable to identify her as someone he knows until the end of this passage. First, she is a beautiful woman with revealing clothing. Then, she is "Bob Arctor's girl" (868). Finally, she is Donna. Charles cannot immediately identify this woman without applying this logic and, by first characterizing her as a relationship to Bob Arctor, Dick buries Donna's character under two layers of male relationships. The reader is unaware of her identity until Charles elaborates. Charles is unaware of her identity until his memory associates her with Bob Arctor.

While this method of characterization subjects Donna by forcing her identity through the strain of multiple male relationships, her status as an undercover agent yields her inability to be identified as an advantage. Her appearance, though noticed by Charles, is otherwise nondescript. Donna is relaying her image exactly the way she intends to. She is difficult to identify, so she can easily maintain her undercover status. However, Charles also notices her, and her beauty. She is just noticeable enough to get "in" (i.e. fraternize) with the people she needs to fraternize with, but is also nondescript enough to get away if she needs to. Charles unintentionally expresses this careful balance Donna maintains

when he realizes that Donna is “Bob Arctor’s girl.” Donna is beautiful and intriguing enough to enter Arctor’s group of friends (all of whom abuse Substance D, and are consequently subject to investigation). However, she remains subtle enough to only attract enough attention as the love interest of the protagonist, Bob.

After Charles approaches Donna, she threatens him with a knife: “He could hardly see the knife, only a tiny section of blade metal, but he knew it was there. She would stab him and walk on” (869). Here, Donna displays caution that verges on paranoia. And, while she can’t necessarily be faulted for being careful, Dick characterizes Charles as a fairly harmless, albeit strung out, character. The fact that Charles could not see the knife clearly introduces Donna’s quality as a subversive character. She is dangerous, and that danger is amplified by its concealed nature. Charles knows Donna, and seems to believe that she would leave him for dead in the middle of the street. Donna seems cold and cruelly efficient, and this passage shows an early moment in which Donna acts as a femme fatale by threatening the life of Charles.

Again, while Donna’s actions illustrate a vicious quality, they must be considered within the context of her career. As an undercover narcotics agent, Donna must be extremely cautious all of the time. She cannot assume that any man approaching her is doing so in good faith, especially when her cover is a drug dealer. Her skill as an officer is also revealed within the same paragraph: “The girl held the knife so well concealed that probably on one else, the others walking along, could notice” (869). Donna’s subversive nature is reemphasized, but so is her skill. Donna’s vicious and concealed stance is probably a consequence of her training as an officer. The paranoia associated with Donna’s violent reaction is not removed by this analysis. However, it becomes

justified from a logical perspective, allowing the reader to better understand Donna's character and reducing her Othered quality.

Charles reacts to this sudden act of violence with a yell, followed by internal dialogue: "I know it's Donna...She just doesn't flash on who I am...Scared, I guess; scared I'm going to hustle her...they're all prepared now. Too much has happened to them" (869). In this passage, "they" and "them" refer to the women of the novel's universe. Charles is actually excusing Donna's behavior here, but despite this apparently benevolent rationalization, this passage serves to show how men attempt to define women, and the language used reflects the oppression associated with the Hegelian Other. During his justification, Charles refers to women in general; When Charles considers Donna's reaction, he realizes that too much has happened to "them," where "them" represents women. He generalizes all women by using this type of language (twice in this particular passage). Charles believes he understands that Donna is acting as all women would. "They," inclusively, have been through too much, and must now be cautious. The final sentence of this passage includes the phrase "...has happened to them" (869). The generalized woman is not acting on her own behalf, but she is reacting to what has happened to her, or what has been done to her (presumably, by a man). There is no room for women to dictate their own actions in Charles' language. "They" are reactionary victims, nothing more.

The language Dick employs in this section subjugates women. However, the context in which the language is used suggests that Charles' ability to discern the truth is minimal, and thus this context challenges the validity of Charles' oppressive words, just as Rick's validity is challenged in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. Charles is first

seen trying to help his friend Jerry capture aphids. The aphids are Jerry's hallucination, and Charles has abused enough Substance D to allow Jerry's hallucinations to briefly become his reality (863). Clearly, his perceptive and analytical skills should not be considered precise. Dick's overall narrative reveals that Charles' assessments are incorrect. Consequently, the themes derived from Charles' warped analysis should be questioned. The drug-addled man believes that Donna is reacting in a paranoid manner because, in his view, *all* women have experienced too much sexual abuse/domestic abuse/etc. While Donna may be paranoid, she is paranoid because of her role as a law enforcement officer. Charles believes that Donna does not recognize him. In fact, it may be *because* Donna recognizes him that she reacts so violently. She has infiltrated Bob's (and, therefore, Charles') group of friends. With these people, she is the most vulnerable. Perhaps she saw Charles' approach as the prelude to violence resulting from true recognition. Regardless, Charles' analysis of Donna's actions is incorrect. This lack of comprehension is magnified by his abuse of Substance D and his subsequent loss of grip on reality. Because Charles' perception of Donna's motivations seems far from the truth, this interaction becomes one of the first scenes in which Donna escapes the limiting effect of male-generated definition.

Following this display of violence by Donna, and subsequent rationalization on Charles' part, Donna verbally defends her actions by saying, "I thought you were going to knock me down and bang me." Charles denies this, and Donna persists. Eventually, Charles is forced to introduce himself, not out of politeness, but to defend his quality as a human being: "I *know* you...And Arctor would snuff me if I did that" (870). By saying this, Charles attempts to establish a firm and friendly connection between him and Donna.

He experiences and recognizes the threat that Donna possesses, as an Othered femme fatale, to his existence. However, his only method of indicating his knowledge of Donna's identity is expressing that identity through her male relationships. First Charles indicates that he knows Donna. He reveals nothing more about her, and he offers no "inside information" that would validate his claim of acquaintanceship. She should feel that her identity is validated simply because Charles recognizes her. He notices that is not enough, so, to further calm Donna, he insists that Bob would kill Charles if he raped Donna. Here, the sanctity of Donna's body is only established through its relationship to a man. Charles doesn't fear hurting Donna, or even her reaction (further evidenced by the calm tone in which he earlier rationalizes her defensive actions). He expresses that he fears Bob's reaction, a man's reaction. Thus, Charles' attempt to pacify Donna is actually another moment in which he initializes the Hegelian life-and-death struggle. Again, Donna should be satisfied with her status as a waypoint that exists in between men. She is known by a man, therefore she exists. A man would avenge her rape, so she should feel safe. Donna seemingly accepts this relational identity, though she does so in order to maintain the secret sanctity of her actual identity as an undercover officer. Thus, Charles' limiting perception of Donna is rendered powerless, and his perception is invalidated once more.

After Charles' enumeration, she responds: "Well, I didn't recognize you...I'm sorta nearsighted" (870). While she says this, Donna takes step towards Charles, indicating her newfound (and growing) sense of safety. She verbally suggests that the misunderstanding was her fault, as she was unable to identify him. Donna claims that she is nearsighted. This both reemphasizes the placement of guilt on Donna and introduces

the role of her gaze in *A Scanner Darkly*. She admits that she is nearsighted, thereby admitting that she cannot see clearly. So, despite Charles' successful indentifying gaze, and his subsequent attempt to initiate an interactive gaze, Donna is unable to participate. Again, this is highlighted by the extreme caution that Donna initially presents. She is only calmed down by Charles' verbal promises, not by the strength of her own gaze. Finally, Donna's word choice in this passage reminds the reader of her childlike nature. She is "sorta nearsighted," not "sort of nearsighted." This foreshortening is characteristic of toddlers and teenagers, and reinforces Donna as a weak, youthful character.

Again, I cannot claim that Donna is a transcendent character. She acts within her circumstances, not above them. Despite this, the above interaction does highlight Donna's awareness of the delicate balance she must maintain. Instead of remaining defensive, she apologizes to Charles. She even adopts a childlike or casual tone by using the word "sorta," perhaps in an effort to ease Charles into a passive state. While she certainly continues the manipulation required by her work, this scene also reveals that she wishes to engage her "subjects" on some level of honesty. After all, Donna is the one who verbally mentions the failure of her gaze when she claims her nearsightedness. While probably untrue, Donna's mention of her pseudo-failed gaze indicates a desire, not only to pacify Charles, but to also have a positive interaction with him. Donna's gaze may not be realistic, or beneficial, to those she casts it on. However, she also makes sure that her gaze doesn't harm or damage her subjects. This distinction further complicates Donna's character and partially (if not, temporarily) reduces the association with danger previously presented by her characterization as a femme fatale.

Donna's early interactions with Charles paint a complicated picture of the leading lady of *A Scanner Darkly*. On the one hand, her actions and reactions yield her cold and mysterious, while the language used to describe her indicates a secondary status to the male characters of the novel. On the other hand, the context of her employment and Charles' warped, drug addled perception justify her actions to the reader. She is a manipulative and threatening Other, and the language used to describe her relegates her to a secondary position. However, her success in her job, even early in the novel, reveals that Donna is a strong woman working within her circumstances. This includes the successful maintenance of her undercover status, which simultaneously emphasizes her isolation from the male characters and liberates her from their limiting, definitional gazes.

To say Donna is a complex character is an understatement, and the intense complexity of her character is further expounded upon by her association with darkness later in the novel. Dick highlights Donna's association with darkness through his description of Donna's gaze. The protagonist of the novel, Bob Arctor, draws the reader's attention to the gaze when he discusses the surveillance of his house, and how it affects his psyche: "As silly as this is, he thought, it's frightening. Something is being done to me and by a mere thing, here in my own house. Before my very eyes. Within *something's* very eyes; within the sight of some *thing*. Which, unlike little dark-eyed Donna, does not ever blink" (1019). Bob clearly antagonizes the surveillance equipment that has been put into his home. Rather than the beneficial force that Case interacts with in *Neuromancer*, Dick instead casts Cyberpunk technology as an oppressive force in *A Scanner Darkly*. The surveillance equipment, put in place by Bob himself, is an attempt by the government to observe the illicit, Substance D-related activities going on in Bob's house.

The equipment is a *thing*, the technological Other suggested by Benesch, that Bob cannot relate too (Benesch 181). In fact, this Other is also closely related to the Hegelian Other, as it exists, solely, as a force for identification and definition. The fact that this Other is in his "...own house. Before [his] very eyes" offends him. At the same time, he acknowledges this Other's power over him. Bob is the affected, while the progenitor of the affect is the frightening *thing*. He is subject to the Other's gaze, he exists "[w]ithin *something's* very eyes; within in the sight of some *thing*"(Dick 1019). The repeated mention of Bob's subjective relationship to the watching Other, along with the repeated use of the noun "thing," finalizes and reemphasizes the power and alien nature of the surveillance equipment.

Dick concludes this description of the surveillance Other's gaze with a comparison: "Which, unlike little dark-eyed Donna, does not ever blink" (1019). Donna's implied difference from the surveillance equipment both highlights her nature as a mysterious Other and her justifiable characterization as a narcotics officer. The word "little" highlights the childlike quality of Donna. The alliteration of "dark-eyed" and "Donna" creates a playful sound, emphasizing this childlike quality. And, while she is childlike, her eyes are also dark. Instead of innocent, Donna's youth-like nature seems to be rooted in mischievousness and deceit. Bob, and the reader, cannot see past the darkness of her eyes. Bob's gaze is therefore intercepted by two obtrusive forces, as Donna's gaze cannot connect with Bob's because it is childlike (whereas his is the gaze of an adult) and dark. And, while Dick does provide Donna's character with some distinction from the heavily isolated Hegelian Otherness of the surveillance equipment, the distance only exists because the equipment doesn't blink. If this is the only difference

between Donna's gaze and the gaze of the surveillance Other, the mention of such a miniscule difference only increases the reader's awareness of Donna's status as an Other. Dick's qualifier does not relieve Donna of being considered a "mere thing," "something," or even "some *thing*" (1019).

Donna becomes associated with the surveillance equipment through Dick's language. However, Donna is also connected to the equipment because both are extensions of the law enforcement body found in Dick's narrative. In this sense, the main difference between Donna and the surveillance equipment is Donna's humanity. She blinks because she is human and she must. The surveillance equipment does not blink because, whereas Donna is an agent of law enforcement, the equipment is a tool. The darkness in Donna's eyes further humanizes her. The surveillance equipment can only record. Donna's function as a law enforcement agent includes making judgment calls and acting based on information. These murky factors are reflected in the darkness of Donna's eyes. Donna's distinction from the Hegelian Other is also relevant in her association with the surveillance equipment. I mentioned that she is considered "something." For the surveillance equipment, this classification as a "thing" highlights the objectified status of the Other. However, because Donna is human, this ambiguous phrase highlights her inability to be defined, which implies her overall escape from male definition.

The darkness of Donna's eyes, along with their blinking quality, does reemphasize the deceit and secrecy associated with Donna's character. These Othering, and therefore non-feminist, qualities cannot be lifted from Donna's character. A dark gaze is mysterious, and a blinking gaze is not fully engaging. However, these qualities

must be considered within the context of Donna's job. Donna is an undercover law enforcement agent. If she were discovered, she would be endangered, and her operation would be put at risk. Therefore, her deceit becomes a necessary extension of her operation. And, her operation involves the dismantling of the criminal organization that produces Substance D. Therefore, her deceit contributes to the dismantling of this organization, a pursuit which may easily be defended as noble. She is manipulative, but manipulates in order to uphold the law and to vanquish the only clearly identified antagonists in *A Scanner Darkly*: New Path/The manufacturers of Substance D. Despite this required manipulation, Donna still attempts to remain friendly and amiable with the drug addicts she deceives; Bob's use of the alliterative phrase "dark-eyed Donna" sounds playful, indicating his friendly feelings toward her (1019). These feelings of friendship are shared by most of the characters in *A Scanner Darkly*, and are reciprocated by Donna.

Dick compounds Donna's confusing nature towards the end of *A Scanner Darkly*. The protagonist, Bob Arctor, has been tricked into serving the government as an, unknowing, undercover agent. He is a drone for his superiors, sent into the lair of New Path (the criminal organization producing Substance D) in order to discover the truth behind Substance D. Unfortunately for Bob, his mind is sacrificed to drug addiction and the subsequent throes of withdrawal. And, while Donna Hawthorne plays a part in this "necessary sacrifice" as an undercover narcotics officer, she also seems to regret the loss of someone she considers a friend.

As I mentioned, this dichotomous characterization is never fully resolved in the novel. This creates confusion in the reader and in the other characters in the novel. The confusion, and implied complexity of Donna's character, is best highlighted in her

conversation with Mike Westaway. Mike is another undercover agent working at the rehabilitation center that Bob attends under the name “Bruce.” This center is a cover for New Path, and while Mike will never be invited to the farms where Substance D is grown, Bob/Bruce is invited because of his dilapidated state. The conversation that takes place between Donna and Mike regards Bob’s current state of affairs and mind.

Mike meets Donna at a McDonald’s. The first words spoken belong to Donna: “Have we really been able to duke him?” (1079). This statement defines the interaction that will take place between Mike Westaway and Donna Hawthorne, and initially associates Donna with guile, deception, and impatience. First, the included dialogue does not indicate any greeting between the two. Instead, we know that Mike “...made a phone call and then met Donna Hawthorne at a McDonald’s fast-food stand” (1078). Therefore, Donna’s first words reveal her impatience and initially display her hostility towards Mike. Thus, Donna’s threatening quality as the femme fatale is vociferated early in the conversation. Her words also serve as a barrier between her and Mike. Despite the fact that she is speaking to him, Donna is clearly focused on another topic: the successful deception of Bob Arctor, whom she also objectifies through her language. Instead of referring to him by name, Donna instead asks about “him.” This objectification, combined with the tone of this phrase, exemplifies Donna’s isolated status. In this one sentence, Dick summarizes the alienation that exists between the male characters in *A Scanner Darkly* and Donna. She has no interest in either Mike or Arctor as people. Instead, she cares about the roles they play in the deceit she participates in.

Donna’s quality as a femme fatale is further highlighted by the content of her conversation with Mike. Gillis identifies the standard relationship between the male lead

and the femme fatale in Noir fiction and Cyberpunk when she writes, “[t]he valorisation of rationality and order is key to an understanding of the gender politics of cyberpunk in which reason and activity are located within the masculine body, as opposed to the dangerous female body” (Gillis 13). According to Gillis, the femme fatale is devious, mysterious, and deceitful. She cannot be understood, or sexually possessed, by men, and the male protagonist must transcend her deception in order to uncover the truth. This analysis of the relationship between the men of Noir fiction and the femme fatale archetype can be applied to Donna and Bob’s situation, which necessarily prevents Donna from gaining status as a fully feminist character. Her body, which Bob unwittingly desires, contains the chaos that disrupts Bob’s life. He attempts to apply rationality to his situation, which Donna undermines through her deception. Consequently, Bob is thrown deeper into the muddy false-reality that he has failed to navigate. By acknowledging Donna’s association with the femme fatale, she becomes isolated from, and detrimental to, the innocent male lead, Bob. This relationship does not champion male-female equality, as it puts the male at the mercy of the female, and it is therefore non-feminist.

Dick’s language, when analyzed independently of Donna’s status as a law enforcement agent, casts her as childish, impatient, cruel, and Othered. However, when her status as an agent is taken into consideration, I suggest that the question “Have we really been able to duke him [Bob]” is not entirely reflective of Donna’s status as a femme fatale, but is also reflective of her disbelief of the situation, along with her propensity to be efficient (Dick 1079). She refuses to refer to Bob by name, not to dehumanize him, but to prevent risking her and Mike’s entire operation. The fact that she asks this question so quickly does not reveal impatience, but Donna’s desire to efficiently

establish that the plan is working, and that Bob's sacrifice may actually be successful.

The analysis of Donna's words in the context of her employment provides justification for her tone and word choices. Again, Donna does not transcend her circumstances.

However, her operation within her circumstances suggests a high level of professionalism and grace, indicating her strength as a character.

This professionalism and grace confuse the application of the explanation provided by Gillis. It is true that Bob's attempt to rationalize his life is undermined by Donna's deceitful efforts. However, Donna's actions are the consequence of a rational (and, perhaps, cruel) plot to infiltrate New Path. Therefore, rationality is not *entirely* located in the male characters in *A Scanner Darkly*. This confusion of Donna's role as the femme fatale (long with the perception of Dick's work as an example of Noir fiction) again reflects the complexity of Donna's character. At once, she is both a femme fatale and a rational police officer. She is relegated to the status of a mysterious Other, and she is elevated to the status of a level headed law enforcement agent.

Mike's perception of Donna also suggests the delicate balance associated with Donna's character. Mike "...studied the pretty, dark-haired young girl across from him and could perceive, in her intelligent face, why Bob Arctor – No, he thought; I always have to think of him as Bruce. Otherwise I cop out to knowing too much: things I shouldn't, couldn't, know" (1079). Mike first describes Donna as a "...pretty, dark-haired young girl across from him..." (1079). The initial focus is on Donna's aesthetic value, as she is young and pretty. Both of these descriptors reinforce the limiting potential of Mike's gaze. Mike only sees Donna as the girl that is across from him, so we again see a character reducing another to an object. She is "the girl," and her only definition, in

Mike's mind, centers on the fact that she is across from him. Donna can only be defined by her relationship to men.

Mike also mentions Donna's intelligence, but does so by mentioning it within the context of her face, revealing that, for Mike, any non-corporeal qualities she possesses are superseded by her physical appearance and beauty. While Mike only sees the physical being in front of him, my analysis indicates a complex and intelligent character lurking behind Donna's dark eyes. With this in mind, the reader can accept that the intelligence in Donna's face is indicative of actual intelligence. Throughout my analysis, I have pointed out numerous occasions when Donna behaves craftily and professionally, revealing the intelligence that Mike is able to observe. When he mentions the mental vigilance he must keep, he is perhaps reacting to Donna's display of professionalism. Regardless, the picture of Donna that Mike paints is not the actual Donna. In fact (and partly because of her status as a mysterious femme fatale) the actual Donna may be entirely incomprehensible. While this, again, yields the lead female as an isolated Other character, it also relieves her of the limiting and subjugating analyses of her male counterparts in the novel.

Donna experiences feelings of remorse and sadness regarding Bob's state of affairs. The feeling of empathy and sympathy are apparently so foreign to her that "an expression of sorrow crossed her face, straining and warping its lines" (1079). Just considering Bob's pain "warps" Donna, suggesting that her natural state does not welcome sympathy. The active connotation of "straining," along with the past tense usage of the word "cross," also suggests that the expression is temporary. Therefore, Donna's realization of Bob's pain is only momentary. Her shift in expression is followed

by a single phrase: “Such a cost to pay” (1079). Donna expresses her understanding regarding Bob’s sacrifice. However, the wisdom of this phrase is quickly undermined by Donna’s subsequent action; immediately after saying this, she “...drank from her Coke” (1079). This statement of action is simple, direct, and almost unimportant. By placing this innocuous phrase next to Donna’s assessment of Bob’s extreme sacrifice, Dick again creates cognitive dissonance. She realizes that she needs to acknowledge Bob’s sacrifice, but she can’t seem to be bothered by it for too long. The language used in this section makes it seem as though Donna’s thirst is more pressing than her concern for Bob.

This passage, which shows the rapidity with which Donna’s emotions appear to change, reflects a loss of composure, despite Donna’s consummate professionalism. Therefore, the descriptions Dick includes must be considered with Donna’s professional nature in mind. Her facial expression is, again, a reaction to Bob’s plight, revealing Donna’s humanity and pity. The expression is temporary because Donna is able maintain her composure in her line of work; the reader never knows if the success of the “Arctor operation” marks the end of Donna’s career as an undercover agent. Her status as an Other is reemphasized, as she must control her reaction and, therefore, render her interactions with the male character, Mike Westaway, dishonest. However, her ability to self-define is also exemplified through her self-control. The straining and warping of her face is simply Donna trying to keep herself under control. Dick follows the description of Donna’s facial expression with a comment about her drinking Coke. Again, this rapid shift from verbal emotion to a physical display of controlled indifference highlights both Donna’s professionalism and her emotional humanity. She feels terrible for Bob, but cannot reveal her emotions because of her line of work. She struggles with the morality

of her deceit, as the successful deceit of Bob means the loss of his humanity and the gain of the intelligence required to stop the criminal organization, New Path.

Finally, Dick again connects Donna and darkness at the end of her conversation with Mike, and this last connection summarizes the dual characteristics of the threatening Other and the liberated woman that exist within Donna. Dick writes, “[r]aising her eyes, she confronted him, darkly angry” (1079). This is the first time that Donna makes eye contact with Mike, as she has to raise her eyes. Up until now, Donna has been withholding her gaze from Mike, thereby impeding their connection and maintaining a sense of Otherness. And, though eye contact is made, that eye contact is confrontational, and “darkly angry.” The interactive gaze that occurs between Donna and Mike is full of conflict and rage, and those angry emotions originate from Donna. There is guile associated with this anger, and it reinforces the danger of Donna’s mysterious Otherness.

Dick includes the modifier “darkly” when he describes the rage in Donna’s eyes. While “darkly” could mean grim or fierce, the reader cannot help but associate the word with the title of the novel: *A Scanner Darkly*. The title is a reference to 1 Corinthians 13:12: “For now we see through a glass, darkly” (*King James Bible*, Corin. 1.13-12). Here, “darkly” indicates that the view is obstructed. This coincides with a passage of Bob’s dialogue, in which he utters the title of the book: “What does a scanner see? He asked himself. I mean, really see? Into the head? Down into the heart? Does a passive infrared scanner like they used to use or a cube-type holo scanner like they use these days, the latest thing, see into me – into us – clearly or darkly?” (Dick 1019). Bob refers to the hologram scanners that have been installed in his home for surveillance purposes, and he hopes that they see clearly; he hopes that the scanners record a clear and definite truth.

However, he fears (and, perhaps, knows) that the scanners actually see darkly; he is afraid that the images that are recorded are altered, unreliable, or otherwise deceitful. These two conflicting conclusions reflect one of the primary themes of Dick's novel: perceived reality versus actual reality. In this case, the "darkly" view represents perceived reality. By describing Donna's gaze as "darkly fierce," Dick associates Donna with the fabricated and unclear reality, and the mystery that Bob must overcome in order to survive. Mystery is clearly a major theme in this Cyberpunk work, and it is also the driving force in Noir fiction. When describing the detective novel (a manifestation of Noir fiction) and how Cyberpunk relates to Noir, Gillis remarks:

In contrast, the female body is one which is acted upon, in being made cyborgic, but which never acts in that it is never a key interface with technology. This is achieved through the genre's reliance upon the tropes of film noir, drawing upon its heavily-stylized motifs, urban settings, and reliance upon the hard-boiled masculinity of the detective narrative. This equation of masculinity and rationality is fundamental to the detective narrative and the order it promises.... (Gillis 13)

In order to return stability to his life, Bob (though not particularly hard-boiled) must be the rational male force that overcomes female chaos. He must clarify the darkness perpetuated by Donna. Donna, as the femme fatale, threatens Bob's stability and his identity.

Gillis' comment holds true for Bob in that the order of his life depends on surmounting Donna's deceit. However, Donna is not a cyborg like Molly Millions, nor an android like Rachael Rosen, nor does she "never act." So, in addition to ignoring the non-

cyborgic females that occupy the gray area between Noir and Cyberpunk, Gillis also ignores the possibility that the chaotic nature of the femme fatale could be (and often is) a result of her agency as a character. Gillis also implies that all chaos is detrimental, while the order of *A Scanner Darkly* itself actually depends on Donna's successful deception. The protagonist descends into chaos, and causes disorientation in the reader. However, because Bob is successfully deceived, the ending of the novel implies that lawful order is restored to the fictional universe of *A Scanner Darkly*. It's almost as if Bob's well being is closely tied with the Noir narrative (and its definitions), while the "common good" is closely tied with Donna's deception. Therefore, Donna becomes the representative of order, not Bob. Consequently, if the reader were in Bob's position, Donna would be an entirely non-feminist character. However, because the reader has the privilege to know the "whole story" by the end of the novel, he or she is made aware of Donna's qualities as an arbiter of order. By both embracing and rejecting the archetype of femme fatale, Dick shows us that women often escape definition, especially the rigid definitions associated with male perception. Therefore, Donna serves as an example of feminist liberation.

Additionally, Dick's language highlights Donna's humanity, adding to her complexity and, therefore, her strength as a feminist character. Dick's description of Donna's gaze does linguistically associate the female lead with a femme fatale character type. However, it again recalls Donna's employment as an undercover agent. The aggression associated with the phrase "darkly angry" is more explicit when one considers her professional status (Dick 1079). I have highlighted Donna's complexity as a character, along with her efficiency as an agent of the law. Consequently, her fierce gaze becomes a

break from her normal action as a character. She loses her composure, indicating that Mike's comment, "Life asks an awful lot," struck a nerve (1079). She dislikes that Mike can so easily marginalize Bob's sacrifice, and reveals her anger in a rare display of true emotion.

In the above reading, Donna appears as a threatening and cold Other. She also appears professional, self-reliant, and complex. The language Dick includes in his narrative relays a theme of weakness in women. Donna's introductory interaction with Charles suggests that she is incapable of definition without being tethered to a male character. This linguistic interaction also introduces her childlike and (subtly) dangerous nature. Following an analysis of her meeting with Charles, Dick's characterization of Donna may lead the reader to further accept her role as a femme fatale. Specifically, her association with darkness, and the connotation that Dick creates with darkness, places Donna into the role of a mysterious Other. Finally, her conversation with Mike Westaway compounds the dehumanizing and infantilizing qualities that Donna accumulates throughout the novel. In this conversation, her language displays impatience, anger, aloofness, and maintains her incomprehensible nature. Because Donna is the primary female character in *A Scanner Darkly*, she becomes the representation of women in Dick's narrative. And, because of her characterization as a (femme) fatal Other, one might conclude that the Cyberpunk novel *A Scanner Darkly* does not support the equality of men and women.

This conclusion may be supported by individual instances in and independent assessments of the passages I have picked out. However, the setting of this novel, along with Donna's situational context, provides perspective that allows the reader to draw a

different conclusion about the female lead's character. Donna is indeed a subversive character, in that she tries to hide a particular reality from the male protagonist, Bob Arctor. The last subject of analysis, Donna's conversation with Mike Westaway, reveals Donna's preoccupation with deceiving Bob. This segment also reveals that Donna is an undercover agent, like Bob, working for the government to find the source of Substance D. So, while she successfully deceives the protagonist of the novel, she also fulfills her duty, and allows Bob to (unknowingly) infiltrate New Path's drug facilities.

Donna perfectly sums up her complexity as a character: "I am warm on the outside, what people see. Warm eyes, warm face, warm fucking fake smile, but inside I am cold all the time and full of lies. I am not what I seem to be; I am awful" (1081). Dick makes special mention of the steadiness of Donna's voice as she says this, along with the smile she sports. I argue that even Donna is too hard on herself. Donna's status as an undercover agent, revealed at the end of the initial reading, informs all of Donna's "questionable" behavior. During my analysis, we learn that Donna is efficient because she must be, mysterious because the safety of her life and her job necessitates it, and emotionally complex because her job forces her into morally ambiguous situations. She is not transcendent; Bob is not saved by Donna while New Path is taken down. However, she is also not a wholly maleficent character. She reacts and survives in the dystopian setting in which she lives.

Philip K. Dick, as a note, claims that "This has been a novel about some people who were punished entirely too much for what they did" (1097). This statement easily applies to the drug addicted characters of *A Scanner Darkly*. However, this statement also applies to Donna, as she lost her friend, Bob, to drug abuse. She also lost her faith in

herself as a human for her participation in the government's final effort to confront and dismantle the untouchable antagonist of the novel: New Path. While I cannot claim that Donna's regret and confusion over the moral ambiguity martyrs her, I do believe that the skill she portrays throughout the novel, along with her admission of doubt and confusion towards the end of the novel, yields her a justifiable character. She is equal to, if not greater than, her male counterparts. Whereas Dick goes on to describe the drug addicts as "...children playing in the street; they could see one after another of them being killed – run over, maimed, destroyed – but they continued to play anyhow," I believe Donna is also in the street, trying push the innocent out of traffic, to safety, as best she can (1097). While she does not succeed in doing so with Bob, it is implied that she does manage to stop the drug trafficking and, in doing so, she demonstrates female facility and escapes male definition. Thus, Donna serves as an example of an emotionally complex character that supports feminist ideology.

Conclusion

Molly Millions, Iran Deckard, and Rachael Rosen all possess characteristics that, at once, yield them excellent examples of strong feminist characters, and strong warnings against misogyny and the blind acceptance of heteronormativity. While other critics focused on the non-feminist qualities that the characters possess I instead focused my analysis on their feminist qualities. I agree that these non-feminist characteristics must be admitted; I do not believe that they wholly counteract or nullify the Cyberpunk female's demonstration of feminism.

This is especially true when one considers the context in which these female characters exist. Their environments are harsh and unforgiving versions of the near future. In the works I examined, these near-future scenarios do not always feature a world that abandon male dominance or heteronormative societal standards. Instead, some of these works feature dystopian settings, and the female characters need to work within the boundaries of male dominated society in order to survive and succeed. The fact that these women remain bounded by these societies prevents them from being entirely feminist characters. Additionally, their methods of navigating these dystopian futures sometimes compound their non-feminist qualities by casting them as Others. However, they still demonstrate admirable behavior within their dystopian context.

Consider Molly Millions. In my argument, I asserted that Molly Millions is closely related to the Cyberpunk genre. This close relation to the genre itself is reflected by the fact that, as Case ascends to the cyberpunk version of himself at the beginning of *Neuromancer*, his perception of women improves from a feminist perspective. Additionally, he grows closer, and more equal to, the female character Molly.

The Cyberpunk setting of this novel, though not palpably misogynistic, is certainly dystopian. Molly makes it clear that her own survival is her primary concern, and that she will go to any lengths to achieve this survival. This explains her characterization as an Other throughout the narrative. She is concerned about her survival above anything else, including Case's (and, therefore, the reader's) perception of her. Despite this, she does make efforts to relate, and explain herself, to Case. She describes the technological function of the lenses she has had surgically inset into her skull. This removes some of the gaze-centric disassociation that Case initially experiences when he meets Molly. Later in the novel, Case actually gets to experience Molly's gaze via the simstim. This experience is disorienting and foreign at first, reinforcing Molly's status as the Other. However, Molly also guides Case through other disorienting scenarios, and Case experiences a moment of pure integration and understanding with and of Molly towards the end of the novel.

The female characters in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* are similarly complex from a feminist perspective, though much more of their behavior is informed by the male dominated situations in which they exist. Iran Deckard, the wife of the protagonist, is initially cast as moody and extremely unreachable. However, this is because the reader experiences the narrative from Rick Deckard's perspective. In my analysis, I elucidated the numerous shortcomings Rick has as a character. These shortcomings, along with the dystopian setting in which Iran lives, explains her non-feminist actions, and actually recasts some of her dialogue as attempts at comprehension and equality (both of which are feminist themes).

Rachael Rosen is also characterized as separate and foreign when compared to Rick. She is an Other that Rick encounters, and this Otherness is accentuated by the fact that she is actually an android. Unfortunately, Dick does not take full advantage of the nature of Rachael's character, at least from a queer or feminist perspective. Instead of challenging misogynistic perspectives of women through her characterization, Dick often presents Rachael as heteronormative, and her status as a technological Other cannot be removed. Despite these shortcomings in Rachael's character, Rick's shortcomings as a character at least partially explain the failed interactions that take place between the two. Rick and Rachael cannot connect (on a gaze centric level or otherwise), partially because Rick is too foolish to understand his own circumstances. Additionally, the dystopian setting again informs Rachael's removal from Rick. The Cyberpunk setting and circumstances of Rachael Rosen explains the glasses she wears, the lies she tells, and the power she wields over Rick. So, while Rachael Rosen is not an entirely queer/feminist character, she at least displays strength and agency in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*.

Donna Hawthorne, the main female character in *A Scanner Darkly*, is more difficult to analyze. However, I applied the same examination to Donna that I applied to Molly, Iran, and Rachael. I relied on the definitions and arguments that connect Cyberpunk and Noir fiction in order to highlight the contrary and complex nature of Donna's character. From Bob Arctor's perspective, she is a femme fatale. She is dangerous, deceitful, and unknowable. In order to restore order to his life, Bob must overcome Donna's deceit. He cannot, and, consequently, by the end of the novel, he loses his mind to Substance D. The femme fatale character type is a non-feminist character.

She is necessarily separate from the male characters she encounters, and constantly reasserts her foreign, Othered nature through her actions and conversations.

From an outside perspective, one that knows Donna to be an undercover narcotics agent, Donna becomes a force for reason and order, rather than chaos. She is still deceitful; even the reader is unaware of Donna's employment as a law enforcement agent until the end of the novel. However, her machinations work towards a greater good: the eradication of the detrimental effects of the drug, Substance D. Ironically, Donna's attempt to restore order through the eradication of the drug relies on Bob's destroyed sense of order through the abuse of the drug. This seemingly contradictory notion, along with the contrast provided by Dick's linguistic characterizations of Donna and the implied justification of her actions through her situation, relays her complexity as a character. Donna shows the reader that women cannot be limited to a single definition. And, while one of the possible definitions that applies to Donna is notoriously non-feminist, the liberation from singular definition is a feminist move.

The women in these texts are not wholly feminist characters. Instead, they are characters that, in some scenarios, behave as feminists would, relay feminist themes, and encourage feminist thought. Consequently, the texts themselves cannot be considered feminist manifestos. They can, however, be considered popular, engaging, and guiding works of Science Fiction that relay key feminist themes. Therefore, their importance to feminism is apparent. The recovery and establishment of feminist ideals in *Neuromancer*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, and *A Scanner Darkly* highlight the progressive nature of these books, along with the feminist potential of the Cyberpunk genre overall.

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